



PRISON VOICE

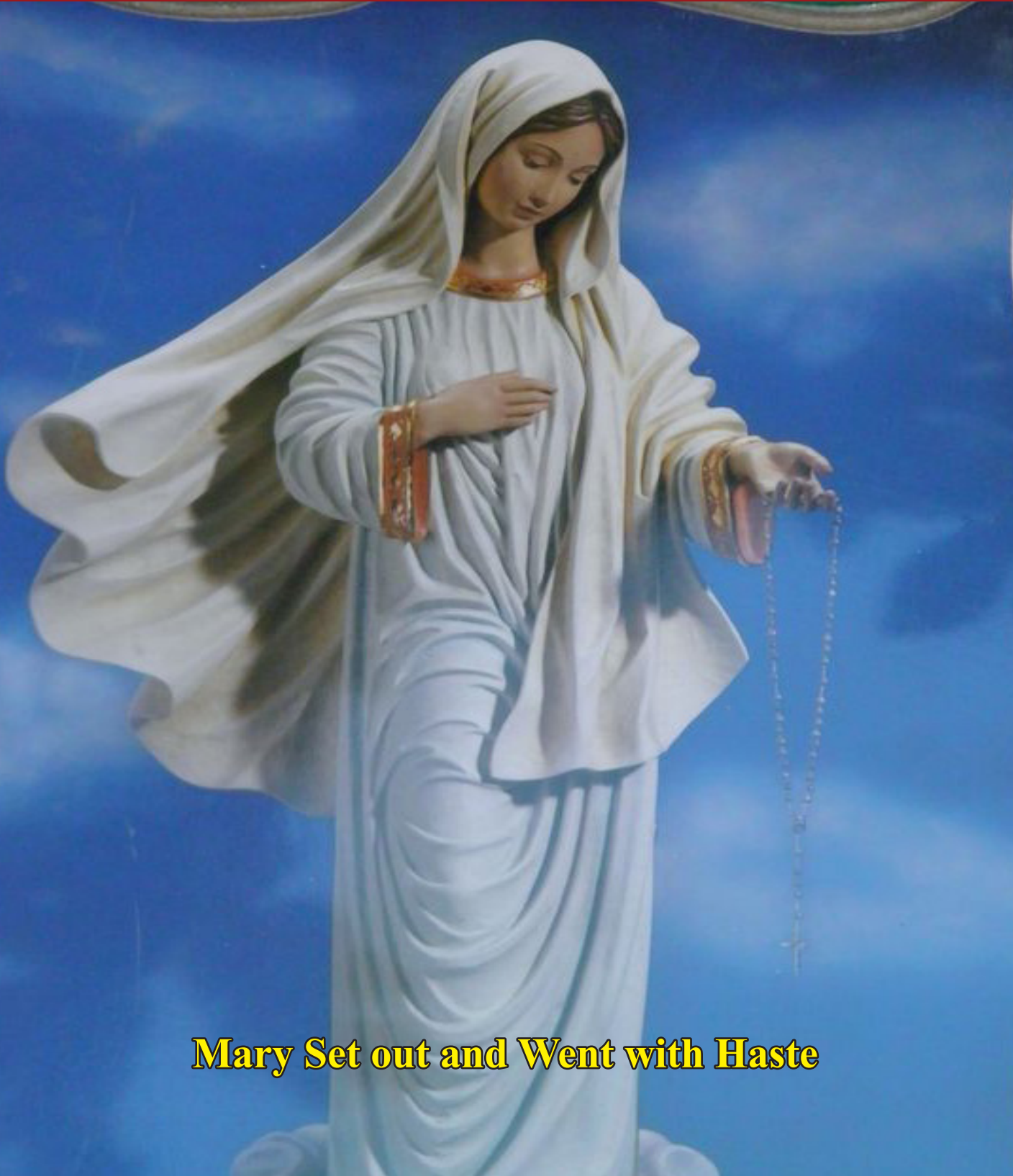
September 2023

Vol. XX

Issue 9

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹40/-



Mary Set out and Went with Haste



**Assistance to Prisoners' Family,
PMI Chennai Unit**



Formation of Madikeri PMI Unit



**Independence Day Celebration,
Guwahati Prison**



**Independence Day Celebration,
Nanjangod**



**Independence Day Celebration,
Nanjangod**



**Kolbe Day Celebration,
Irinjalakuda Prison**



**Medical Assistance to Observation
Home, Pune**



**Medical Camp at Goharganj
Subjail**



Onam Celebration Women Prison, Thrissur



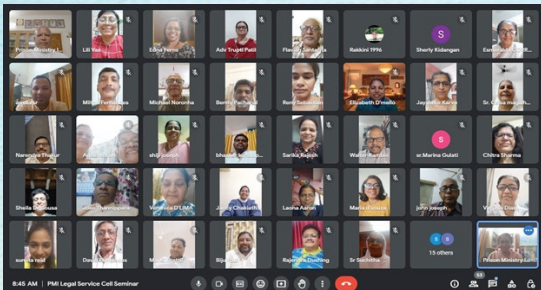
PMI Bengaluru Unit Members with Premodaya Girls



PMI Gathering, Velloor



PMI Karnataka State Executive Meeting, Shimoga



PMI Legal Cell Clinic Inauguration, National Office, Bengaluru



PMI Meeting Irinjalakuda Unit



PMI MP State Gathering



PMI MP State Gathering



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration, Ahmedabad**



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration, Anand**



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration, Baroda**



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration, Bengaluru**



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration, Bengaluru**



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration, Bengaluru**



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration, Bengaluru**



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration, Bengaluru**

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PRISON VOICE

NATIONAL MONTHLY



In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth"

(Lk 1,39)

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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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Mother Mary and Mother Teresa

Mother Mary

In a family, mother's birthday is very dear to the children, for it reminds them of her tender motherly love, care and concern. In her they see the source of life, love, goodness and the meaning of life. This is true also of Mary, our heavenly Mother. Meditation on her reminds us of the unique place she holds in our Christian life, as well as the love and protection we, the Church, have always experienced through her. In the birth of Mary, we see therefore, the unfolding of God's plan, the approaching nearness of our salvation. We realize the significance of her birth for the whole human race as it was one of the greatest events in salvation history. Though one of us in every respect except sin, she was destined by God to be the immaculate mother of our Redeemer. Her birth filled heaven and earth with joy. In the fullness of time, she brought forth the Savior who drove away the darkness of sin. By offering her Son for the salvation of mankind, she was instrumental in bringing about a new humanity, a new world, renewed in Christ. In celebrating her Birthday we recognize our God-given solidarity, and realize that God saves us in Christ through other persons, who are bound to us as brothers and sisters. This assumes special significance for the brethren behind the bars. When we put on Christ, to love and serve and sacrifice ourselves, as Christ loved, served and sacrificed himself we reproduce in our lives Mary's values and attitudes. Let us pray that all Christians may run to Mary their heavenly Mother with filial confidence and seek her motherly intercession in times of need and difficulties as well as learn to love and cherish those virtues which are

EDITOR'S VIEW



Sr Amala DC
Chief Editor



dear to her and live lives as children worthy of her.

Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa is one of the greatest humanitarians the world has ever produced. Her entire life was devoted to serving the poor and needy. Despite being a non-Indian she had spent almost her whole life helping the people of India. She was undoubtedly a saintly lady with oodles of kindness and compassion in her. Mother Teresa is an inspiration for millions for generations to come. She came to Kolkata after finishing the work assigned to her in Dublin. On coming to Calcutta she founded the Missionaries of Charity with the intention of reaching out to the poor and homeless people around and gave them care and shelter. Later on, she extended these services in other parts of India and outside. Before starting her charitable work she worked as a teacher for almost 20 years at the Loreto-Convent School at Entalli in Kolkata which she left as she became more concerned about the poverty surrounding the school. Mother Teresa spent most of her life for the welfare of the poor and the abandoned in India. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 for her humanitarian services to the poor. However, she donated all the money to the poor of Kolkata in charity. Through her intercession let us pray for the mission of PMI and have her compassion for the people behind the bars..

For People Living on the Margins: Pope Francis' September Prayer Intention

“Let us pray for those people on the margins of society in subhuman living conditions, that they may not be neglected by institutions and never be cast out.” Pope Francis launched that invitation on Tuesday as he released his prayer intention for September 2023, which is for “people living on the margins”.

Stiff Necks, Indifferent Hearts

In The Pope Video for September, produced by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, he reflected on the indifference endured by many people who are marginalized. “A homeless person who dies on the street will never appear among the top stories of search engines or newscasts,” he lamented, wondering how our societies could have reached such a level of indifference. Pope Francis attributed this indifference to a “throwaway culture in which millions of men and women are worth nothing compared to economic goods”. He said our “necks are going to get stiff from looking the other way so we don't have to see this situation.”

Culture of Welcoming

The Pope then urged everyone to pay attention to people who face marginalization, even if it results from “poverty, addictions, mental illness, or disability.” “Let's focus on accepting them, on welcoming all the people who need it,” he said. In response to such indifference, he held up a “culture of welcoming, of providing shelter, of giving a home, of offering love, of giving human warmth.” And Pope Francis concluded by inviting every Christian to pray for those people “on the margins of society living in subhuman living conditions.”



Widespread Poverty and Hardship

A press release accompanying his prayer intention noted that The Pope Video for September contains images of homeless people, street children washing car windshields, and people with various disabilities. According to the UN, over 10 percent of the global population, or 700 million people, live in extreme poverty. Another 1.6 billion people dwell in inadequate living conditions, even in developed nations. “Similarly, reports from the World Health Organization reveal that one of every eight persons lives with a ‘mental disorder,’ and that 16% of the world's population lives with a ‘serious disability,’” according to the press release.

Hearts of flesh

Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, echoed the Pope's prayer intention, inviting us to have hearts of flesh and not of stone. “Welcoming is more than helping: it means putting the other person at our level, rediscovering a sister or a brother we have lost,” said Cardinal Czerny. “We are transformed into one Body through prayer.”



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is important that we raise some questions on our ministries to get more clarity and better orientation towards our ministries. Who needs prison ministry? Do the prisoners need us? Does the Prison Administration feel the need of our prison ministry? Many Directors and Superintendents of prisons are not enthusiastic about our prison service these days. It has become very difficult to get permission to do our prison ministry in some prisons.

In order to render educational, counseling and spiritual service to the prisoners, we have to meet the demands of the administration by providing book, pens, sewing machine, musical instruments, computer, etc. Demands differ depending on the officers and places. Gradually, we find in one or the other place, the officers asking us to pay the salary of the music / computer / English teachers and also the allowance to the students.

We have been giving into the demands and expectations of the prison administration because the prison ministry is our need. We cannot sit and ignore the prisoners who are desperately in need of some relief, education, counseling and skills development. Keeping in mind the welfare of the prisoners because the Holy Bible has a lot to say about helping the prisoners. "I was in prison and you visited me... Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Matthew 25/36-40). "He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free (Luke 4/18b).

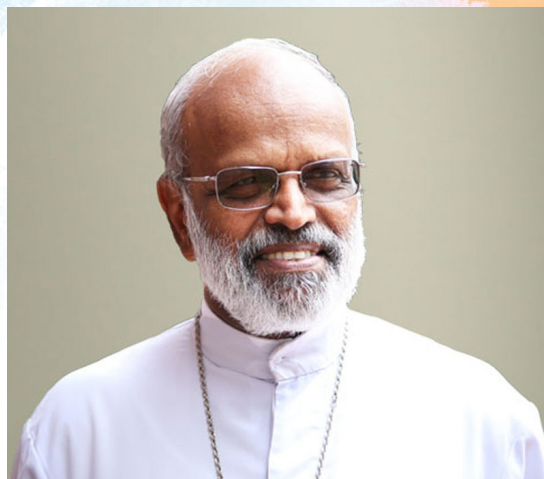
As long as the prisoners are there in the prison, the prison ministry has to continue. I extend my congratulations and thanks to all the members who are continuing their prison service in the midst of all obstacles and challenges. May the Lord bless Prison Ministry India!

Archbishop A.A.S. Durairaj SVD
Archdiocese of Bhopal.

Prison Ministry India: Rooted in Prayer and Divine Intervention

Prison Ministry Madhya Pradesh Regional Convention was held on 20th August 2023 in Indore. It was a moment of grace and to meet and interact with volunteers of Prison Ministry who are doing an excellent job in the prisons of Madhya Pradesh reaching out to our brothers and sisters who are behind bars. There were almost 200 participants from 9 dioceses of Madhya Pradesh region. Their service is in fact a vocation: a call within a call. Through their humble service and efforts in spite of the difficult situations in Madhya Pradesh, the love of Jesus is proclaimed in the jails.

The life of Mother Teresa and St. Maximilian Kolbe are the true witnesses of Jesus' love. "Do not expect your friend to be a perfect person but help your friend to become a perfect person that is the true friendship," says St. Mother Teresa. Maximilian Kolbe became a true friend for another prisoner in the Nazi concentration camp. Prison Ministry Sunday makes the entire nation through the church to be true friends to the people behind the bars. As Catholics, are we able to identify this ministry as a mission of Jesus? Mathew 25:36 says, "I was naked, you clothed me, I was sick you looked after me, I was in Prison, you came to visit me." After visiting Tihar Jail and working with the inmates in the jail, Sr. Inigo Joachim says that Prison ministry is a most compelling



**Most Rev Chacko Thottumarickal SVD,
Bishop of Indore**

ministry and prisoners treat us like angels. Thus, it is a God's Mission and people are waiting for us and they need our presence.

Most of us may misunderstand that it's a social service. But it's a vocation and mission of Jesus. It's our duty to reach out to our brothers and sisters who need our care, love, justice and support. So that we may be able to reach out to many more and to transform their lives and their family. We need to take an extra step to bring changes in lives of the prisoners and their family. I would like to appreciate the works of our prison ministry volunteers who are selflessly serving our brothers and sisters and at the same time I pray that they may continue to do the work of Jesus and reach out to many more who are suffering and in agony. Our ministry is not just social service. It is rooted in prayer and divine intervention. Thus, our prayer should be transformed into service for the people of God. They too are the children of God. They need our care and support. Let us extend our hands towards them and be with them.

“Conversion of the Heart”: Medjugorje Mother Mary’s Message

Introduction

On 26 August 2023 by the grace of God I was blessed to visit the apparition hill at Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina where since June 24, 1981 the Blessed Virgin Mary has been appearing and giving messages to the world. Even after 42 years the way to the apparition hill is filled with pilgrims from all over the world echoing with the sound of the recitation of rosaries in different languages. Our Lady of Medjugorje, also known as Queen of Peace and Mother of the Redeemer, proudly announces that God exists. He is the fullness of life and to enjoy this fullness and peace, you must return to God. Mother Mary gave messages to six youngsters from the village of Medjugorje: Ivan Dragičević, Ivanka Ivanković, Jakov Čolo, Marija Pavlović, Mirjana Dragičević and Vicka Ivanković. She told them: “You must not wait for the sign before you convert; convert soon. This is a time of grace for you. Deepen your faith. Have conversion of your heart.” On 13 May 2017, Pope Francis declared that the original visions reported by the teenagers are worth studying in greater depth. As a pastoral initiative, after considering the significant number of people who go to Medjugorje and the abundant “fruits of grace” that have sprung from it, the ban on officially organized pilgrimages was lifted by the Pope in May 2019. However, this was not to be interpreted as an authentication of known events, which still require examination by the Catholic Church.



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

Political Scenario

At the time of the apparitions, the village of Medjugorje was in Bosnia and Herzegovina, part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a federation of various Slavic nations. There were tensions among the nations, exacerbated by religious difference: most Croats are Catholic, most Serbs are Eastern Orthodox, while the Bosnians and Herzegovinians are a mix of the two and included a third group – the Bosnian Muslims. The death of President Josip Broz Tito in early May 1980 had led to anti-communist backlash and the build-up of ethnic tensions, destabilizing the country. Yugoslavia was moving towards political, economic, and national collapse. The political crisis generated the economic crisis and the public debt soared. The Albanian anti-Serb riots in Kosovo in 1981 were an example of national dissatisfaction. After Tito’s death, the security apparatus enhanced its activities against the perceived “enemies of the state”, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the apparatus was most loyal to Tito. In addition, the election of the Pope John Paul II from communist Poland and the Catholic Solidarity Movement intensified the conflict between the Vatican and the Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe. Marian apparitions in Medjugorje, with the anti-

communist movement in Eastern Europe led to the downfall of communism. Michael Budde in his book *Beyond the Borders of Baptism Catholicity, Allegiances, and Lived Identities*, writes that as it gained a national and international reputation, the Medjugorje pilgrimage site became a formidable symbol of the power of religion in the fight against the Communist Yugoslav regime.

Medjugorje Marian Apparition

On 24 June 1981 around 6:30 pm, fifteen-year-old Ivanka Ivanković and her friend, a sixteen-year-old, Mirjana Dragičević, were on a walk to talk and have a smoke. Ivanka was startled to notice the shimmering silhouette of a woman bathed in a brilliant light on nearby Mount Podbrdo. She immediately said, “Mirjana, look, it’s Gospa!” (Our Lady). She brought this to Mirjana’s attention, but Mirjana scoffed at the idea and they continued on their way. They then met Milka Pavlovic, 13, who asked them to help bring in the sheep, so the three returned to the nearby hill, where all three saw the apparition. They were then joined by their friend Vicka Ivanković, 17, who saw Mother Mary. She was so frightened and ran down the hill. Driven by curiosity, she returned with Ivan Dragičević, 16, and Ivan Ivankovic, 20 who were picking apples. Ivan Dragičević was so frightened that he dropped his apples. These six seers told the Franciscan friar Father Jozo Zovko, who was the parish priest at St. James Church in Medjugorje, that they had seen the Virgin Mary. He was initially sceptical. He noticed that the seers became agitated if anyone hinted that they were lying and he was taken by the fact that their physical descriptions of Our Lady were consistent with each other. They described her as “a young woman about twenty years old, with blue eyes, black hair, and a crown of stars around Her head;

she wore a white veil and bluish-grey robe. Each of the children said they had not been able to see the Virgin’s feet, but described Her as hovering just above the ground on a white cloud, and said that she spoke in a singing voice.”

Prison Ministry India

Through all Marian apparitions in the history - Fatima, Lourdes, Guadalupe, Champion, Knock, La Salette, Beauraing, Gietrzwald, Laus and so on - Mother Mary continues the clarion call of conversion of heart and repentance. Mary continues to ask us to pray the rosary for the conversion of sinners. This is very close to the heart of Prison Ministry India as our ceaseless endeavour has been the conversion of prisoners. Let’s continue our mission of converting the hardcore criminals behind bars by reciting the rosary and offering the sacrifice of her son Jesus Christ. In Gietrzwald she proclaimed: “I am the Queen of Heaven who prays for the conversion of sinners, and I wish you to do the same. Make a general confession and offer Communion for the conversion of sinners.” Our Lady of Laus asked for sinners to do penance, a chapel of Eucharistic adoration to be built so that Jesus could convert sinners, and a house for priests to be built so the priests could administer the sacraments to sinners.

Conclusion

As in ancient times so in modern times Divine Interventions and apparitions cleanse and guide the world. Just as in ancient times God sent Jonah to Nineveh, “In 40 days Nineveh will be no more.” In our time, He has sent the Virgin Mary for 40 years to the village of Medjugorje, giving messages to be followed and to return to God by observing His commandments with repentance and conversion of heart.

From Death to a New Life

Jenny's Predicament

Jenny was a very popular person, admired by all his friends and comrades as a helpful person. He was a good husband and a loving father to his children. He was successful in his business, and he was known as a good social worker in the parish. He was closely associated with all the activities of the parish and cooperated with his parish priest in organizing programs in his parish. In short all knew him as a good catholic, and a successful business man though his business was only at a small scale. One evening as he was returning home after his work, he made some purchases of groceries for his family and returned home late. After parking his car, as he entered the front yard of his house, he was surprised to see that someone had emptied a lorry load of mud and sand in his yard. He was infuriated at seeing his neighbor's action and made his blood boil with anger with no information having been given to him. Jenny felt that it was an infringement by taking advantage of his land with no intimation given to him. On contacting the man, rather than apologizing, he was irritated with Jenny for having made a call to him and blaming him. He then brought a group of his friends to defend himself. Some of them spoke rashly and the argument between them grew into an altercation. The people who were brought there were growing quarrelsome and started raising their tight fist to attack Jenny. As the fighting spirit in the group got worsened, Jenny felt that he was all alone on his side. For a moment Jenny was puzzled. He was gripped with fear of being attacked by the gang. He was scared of the whole group and dreaded the thought that they would pounce altogether on him suddenly.



Sr Adele Korah SCCC

The one responsible for the whole problem was enraged and charged at Jenny moving towards him. At this point, Jenny felt the need to defend himself. He had a folded knife in his pocket which he had taken for his needs in his house. He took it out to threaten the crowd, but in an impetuous action he thrust the knife on the man who moved towards him. It was a fatal blow and the man fell flat. Jenny was shivering and was trembling with fear, not knowing what would be the consequence.

Incarceration

The friends lifted the wounded man and rushed him to the hospital where he was declared as brought dead. Subsequently the police were informed and Jenny was taken hand cuffed to the station and kept under custody. Later he was shifted to the local sub jail. Jenny's wife and children were crestfallen and dejected as Jenny was the breadwinner of the family. His wife along with her relatives assisted them in employing an advocate to plead his case. The advocate assured that he would help him to obtain a bail and later get him released. But the victim's family and friends were over smart to see that his bail application got rejected. They were able to pay large amount to their advocate and succeeded in seeing that Jenny was given a very severe judgment in the Sessions court, so that he would never return to the family or town. He was punished to undergo imprisonment

until death. Jenny was shifted to the central prison Bangalore and was admitted in the convicts' section. One can guess the feelings of a prisoner who receives a judgment that meant that he has to be in prison till the end of his life without any ray of hope for returning to his family. He felt totally cut off from all those whom he held close to him and was deprived of the presence of all who loved him, wife, children and friends and he missed them all. In such a situation he felt frustrated and disheartened. He felt that God alone can be close to him. He came to the prison chapel for getting some consolation in prayer. That was the time I met Jenny in the chapel. During the prayer meeting he was able to raise his heart to the Lord seeking forgiveness from the merciful Lord. I gave him assurance that I will be in touch with his wife and children and will help them in accepting their situation and offer them the help that they need. He was not in depression, but the thought of living in the prison for his whole life, kept haunting him.

Prayer Meeting in Prison

I had started weekly prayer meetings as a spiritual help for the inmates of the prison who came to the prison chapel. I believed that besides counseling, spirituality can give strength to the suffering brethren apart from prayer and meditation on God's personal, unconditional love could lead persons out of despair. It is in the presence of a loving and forgiving God that people languishing within the prison can find consolation. Or else having been deprived of human help from their dear ones who are their main support, there is every possibility of persons going into depression and despair. In such circumstances, the presence of a person of compassion and understanding who can lead them in prayer can be of great help. In the deep experience of the love of a

living God, they receive the needed strength to face the loneliness and deprivation. God assures, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you, for I am the Lord your God the Holy One of Israel, your Savior" (Isaiah 43:1).

A Ray of Hope in Jenny's Life in Prison

At every prayer meeting Jenny was the first person to start his prayer. I recall the times when I started the prayer meeting with one single person and that was Jenny. On some days, it was when Jenny started singing praises of God that the others joined in prayer one by one. His faith was deepened in prayer. Gradually he was drawn to repentance for the crime he had committed. In the counselling sessions he realized his weakness which led him to the heinous crime of murder. He recalled the many occasions in his life when he caused pain and hurt to his own wife and children by his angry words and unruly, defiant actions. He came to an understanding that he had not made any serious effort to control his anger. He got convinced of the necessity for getting control over his temper. It was when his anger got the better of him at the wrong time, he ended up stabbing his opponent, committing a grievous crime, facing serious legal consequences and criminal charges. When he became angry, resentment and irritation followed that caused him to strike out verbally and physically. "Refrain from strife and your sins will be fewer for the hot tempered kindle strife." "In proportion to the fuel, so will the fire burn and in proportion to the obstinacy, so will strife increase" (Sirach 28:8,10) Jenny started reading and meditating on God's word

regularly, as he felt the need to get his anger issues under control. Jenny turned to the Lord in repentance and prepared himself for a good confession. True repentance is decision to amend one's ways. Believing that he needed the power of the Holy Spirit to control his temper, he started reading the books available about the power of the Holy Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit that can bring peace and joy in his life. He borrowed my book on the Holy Spirit and got a photo copy of it as it was not available on sale. So firm was his determination to begin a new life led by the Holy Spirit. He was strengthened and with the reception of Holy Communion, he received a new anointing of the Holy Spirit. Jenny placed his hope firmly believing in God's promises and started reciting the Creed, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty' 33 times a day. He believed in the words spoken by Moses to Israelites, "The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still"(Exodus 14:14). Trusting in God, I approached a good advocate to help him to appeal in the High Court, as he was the only bread winner for his family. Jenny's judgment copy was submitted to him. I agreed to arrange for the expenses of his court case with the help of his relatives and other benefactors. The advocate studied scrupulously the judgment meted out to him by the Sessions court and consented to do his best.

Prayers Answered

The Lord said to Hezekiah who prayed to him with faith, "I have answered your prayer" (2Kings20:5) Jenny's prayer too was answered. Jenny who called out to the lord in his distress was consoled by the Lord through the revision of his judgment. The judgment given to Jenny by the Sessions Court was to undergo imprisonment until his death. The Lord in his mercy granted him reduction of his punishment. He

received the happy news that his punishment was reduced to just seven years as per the judgment of the High Court. Great was his joy when the Lord rewarded his faith in His mercy and forgiving love. The Lord who brought his people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, was merciful to Jenny, and brought him out of prison as he had already completed seven years by then. Jenny returned to his family as a new man. He was no more the man who once burst out in anger at any one who thwarted his path. As one strengthened by the Holy Spirit he entered his family and the society as one specially blessed by the Lord. Jenny believed and felt that Jesus who welcomes every stray sheep back into his fold had accepted him as his son and blessed him with His own Spirit. He began a new life relying on God who alone can strengthen him in his weakness.

A New Life in Christ

Jenny had to face the people in his surroundings being aware that he had on him the stigma of a criminal, who had come back from prison. But in his behavior every on looker could sense that he was a man renewed in Spirit. He noticed how his wife was cheated by business men in his absence and how hard he had to work to make up for the big loss. But he accepted everything with total self-control. He thanked the Lord for the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit he received during the period of incarceration through prayer and the study of the Word of God. In calmness and patience he made up for the loss in a short period of time. He built a new house and I had the privilege of rejoicing with him for the blessings he received from God's abundant goodness and mercy." And my God will supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen (Philippians 4:19,20).

7 Ways to Pray for A Loved One in Prison¹

If you have a loved one in prison, you are probably concerned for their situation and well-being. You may feel helpless because of what they are going through and wish you could do more than writing letters and visiting them. You can! Here are seven ways to start praying for your loved one in prison. Intercession will invite God to do vastly more than any one person could do in their behalf. Start praying for your incarcerated loved one and watch God move in their lives - and in yours!

1) Pray the Scriptures over Your Loved One

In Hebrews 4:12, the Bible says that “the Word of God is alive and active.” In Isaiah 55:11, God promises that His Word “will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” It only makes sense, then, to infuse your prayer time with God’s very own powerful, eternal words. In his book, *Praying the Scriptures: Using God’s Words to Effect Change in All of Life’s Situations*, author Judson Cornwall states that “when we let the Bible become our prayer, we are praying an inspired vocabulary.” Almost any Scripture verse can become a prayer. For instance, Nehemiah 8:10 says, “Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” You can pray this verse as a covering of joy: Your Word says that Your joy would be our strength, Lord. I pray that joy, that strength, over my loved one. Let them not grieve but instead flourish in Your joy.

2) Pray for Their Personalities, Talents, and Challenges

Ask God to help your incarcerated spouse, family member, or friend submit those areas in their lives that are strengths - and those that are weaknesses - to His care. Only God can take what we might view as an imperfect gift, even our worst parts, and transform them into excellence for His glory. Pray that God would keep your loved one from hopelessness, depression, and anxiety.

3) Pray for Their Health and Well-Being in Prison

Being incarcerated can lead to feeling isolated, sad, and anxious. Pray that God would keep your loved one from hopelessness, depression, and anxiety. Pray that He would give them a will to be well and to feed on His Word. It’s important to note that many people in the Bible suffered from fear, sadness, loneliness, grief, and despair: Peter, Jonah, Paul, David. Pray that God would speak to your loved one as He did to Elijah, in a “gentle whisper” (1 Kings 19:12), and that He would provide what they need at this very moment, whether it be encouragement, an invigorating time of exercise, or His protection from any harm.

4) Pray that the Incarcerated Would Make Good Use of Their Time

As Dan Kingery, executive vice president of correctional advancement at Prison Fellowship, likes to tell the men and women behind bars whom he serves, “Don’t do the time - use the time.” Ask God to help your loved one to not spend this time going through the motions, but to see it as an investment that can pay richly later -if they use it wisely. Pray that they would sign up

¹ Prison Fellowship International.

for positive, life-giving programs in their facility, such as the Bible study or prayer groups, and perhaps consider furthering their education while incarcerated. Aaron Pettes, a former prisoner now doing well on the outside, says that, thanks to his praying mother and family, things changed for him in prison when he began living in preparation for the day he was released. He took countless classes and courses, wrote and published two books, and even began an in-prison ministry. Now Aaron works as a re-entry specialist helping other formerly incarcerated individuals re-acclimate to their communities.

5) Pray that Their Knowledge of the Lord Would Grow More and More

Ask God to soften your loved one's heart toward Him, that they would surrender their will to His and seek His ways. Pray as Paul did, in his letter to the church in Colossae, that God would "fill you with the knowledge of His will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives" (Colossians 1:9). And pray that their trust in God's goodness would be anchored deeply within them.

6) Pray that They Would Be a Contributor

In your prayers for those in prison, ask that God would give them a sense of agency. Pray that instead of simply allowing circumstances to take place around them - in prison, this is naturally the structure of things - God would give them the desire to be an agent of change. This could be something as small as inviting someone to partake in a positive pastime or speaking an encouraging word to a cellmate. Ask God to show your loved one, and you, His will for this time.

7) Pray that Your Loved One Would Connect with Good People in Prison

While your loved one is behind bars, ask God to make it possible, Kingery says, that they would affiliate or associate with emotionally and spiritually good people that would promote the best in them and expect the best from them. Pray as well that God might provide them with a mentor to provide your loved one with friendship and guidance. Finally, ask God to show them, and you, His will for this time. Pray that He would teach both you and your loved one how to seek His face and remain close to Him.

Creating a Healthy Culture Behind Bars

For more than 40 years, we have been going into correctional facilities, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with those behind bars and offering the hope of true transformation. Through the use of Bible-based programming, and with the help of thousands of committed volunteers, lives are being changed, hope is being restored, and darkness is being replaced with the promise of a future. Through in-prison programming like the Prison Ministry guides incarcerated men and women through a holistic life transformation to lead lives of purpose and productivity inside and outside of prison.

Joyous Moment for PMI Udupi Unit

One undertrial prisoner was in Hirriadkka jail on warrant case. With the intervention of PMI Udupi and continuous follow-up with the advocate PMI could deposit cash surety of Rs.5000/-. In the court of ACJ & JMFC Kundapura, he had been released on bail yesterday on 29 August 2023

PMI Madhya Pradesh State Conference

It gives us immense pleasure to celebrate the 8th PMI Madhya Pradesh State Conference in Indore on August 20, 2023. God is so gracious that He always cares for us in his loving hands. Bro. Sunnylal Avarappattu, MMB, the state coordinator welcomed the august gathering. Though the Chairman Bishop Mar James Athikalam couldn't attend the conference due to some unavoidable reasons he has conveyed all his paternal blessings and message to all the participants. On this auspicious day, we were blessed by the presence of the Archbishop of Bhopal, Most Rev Dr Sebastian Durairaj, to inaugurate the state gathering. He urged that the prison ministry is the work of God. We have to continue to work, visit jail, and do all that could be done for the welfare of our brethren behind bars until we find that there are no more jails that we can visit. The cultural bonanza from different schools on this occasion solemnized the day. The Most Rev Bishop Chacko Thottumarickal SVD, Bishop of Indore, presided over the conference. In prison, there are both innocents and wrongdoers. If there is nothing wrong, then there is no need to have jails at all. Bringing peace, justice, and development is our responsibility. There is nothing to fear, come what may. God is with us. And he gives us the strength to carry forward the mission that is entrusted to us. The keynote address was delivered by Rev Fr Wilfred Fernades, the PMI Central Regional Coordinator. He highlighted that all of us are here to serve. We are the love bombs to be exploded not to kill but to heal the brokenhearted. He drew our attention



Sr Shirley Kidangan OSB

to a question that made everyone meditate and get in touch with our deeper sagacity. Do I consider my visit to jail a message from God? Can we go and visit the prison with brotherly and sisterly affection to serve and transform their lives? There were two resource persons who motivated the gathering and made the day more authentic and constructive. The social activist from Varanasi Rev Fr Anand IMS motivated the participants with his topic, 'A call to serve prisoners' and in the second session, he spoke about the 'Relevance of Prison Ministry as Jesus' disciples'. He has first-hand experience of being in jail many times. He also shed light on the many doubts of the participants from different points of view.

Rev. Fr. Francis Scaria, the Rector of KPRT Ashta, sparkled the minds of all who gathered with the topic 'Prison Ministry: A Biblical Perspective'. He brought about all the references from the Bible in relation to prison ministry and convinced the gathering that it was Jesus' ministry and will be continued as his ministry. We are bound to be more fervent, desirous and love ministry. Only when we reach out to the less privileged people in the prison, we could fulfill the word of God in our lives as it is written when I was in prison you visited me. In each of the person behind the bars we see the face of Jesus. To add more

conviction and passion to our ministry there was a sharing session from a released prisoner. She emphasized the great timely help, counseling and motivation that she received when she was lonely, frustrated, disappointed and hopeless. This reminded of these lines, "The world stand in need of liberation my Lord..., yes we are bound to unshackle their uncertainties, turmoil mind and the vacuum that has been created due to the sudden action their behaviour. The volunteers also got a golden opportunity to share their experiences while working in different jails. Every volunteer will have their own rich, colourful and motivating stories to share and enlighten others. Each volunteer is a precious gem polished with both negative and positive elements and that made their lives more precious and committed. There were around 200 participants from eight dioceses. The state report was readout by the secretary Sr Sherly Kidangan. All the diocesan coordinators presented their reports from their own respective places. It was a great eye-opener and an encouragement for everyone. Br. Sunnlyal Avarappattu, the PMI MP state coordinator concluded the session with a short evaluation of the diocesan programmes and presented the action plan to become more focused. The Indore diocese shouldered all the responsibility of having this conference and did the best under the proficient guidance of Rev. Fr. Shinoj SVD, the diocesan coordinator of Indore. Hats off to Rev. Fr. Shinoj, as he envisaged the dream of a state conference to make it a reality, and the whole program was on live in the Atma Darshan TV.

The conference was a grand success just because of abundant blessings from our heavenly Father, along with the joint and

collective collaboration, cooperation, support, and encouragement from all the diocesan coordinators, participants, and well-wishers. The programs of the day were concluded by the celebration of the Holy Eucharist by Bishop Chacko SVD, the bishop of Indore, as the main celebrant. Fr. Shinoj SVD thanked all the dignitaries and participants.

Madikeri PMI Unit

Happy to inform you that Madikeri PMI Unit has been formed. The office bearers are: Coordinator - Sr Philomena SJT; Asst Coordinator - Ms Annie Fatima also in charge of legal committee; Secretary - Ms Anita Pinto; Joint Secretary - Ms Sagaya Mary also in charge of Sports committee; Treasurer - Ms Elizabeth Johnson. Support is assured from Sr Lobo for the Medical committee. Bethany convent sisters were also present and extended full support. Our sincere thanks to Rev Sr Jayarani, Provincial SJT; Sr Superior of St Joseph's convent and Bethany convent; lay associates of both Tarbes and Bethany congregation and the large presence of Sisters of St Joseph of Tarbes and Bethany convents. We wish them our wholehearted support.

Harsh Conditions in China's Jails 'Add up to Torture'¹

When Romanian Christian, Marius Balo, and a mid-ranking Chinese Communist Party (CCP) official found themselves sharing a cell in a Shanghai jail, both men retreated to opposite corners of the cell to pray to their gods with the one book they each possessed. Balo held in his hands his late mother's Orthodox prayer book, which the Romanian consulate had been able to deliver to him in jail. The CCP official clutched his copy of Mao Zedong's Little Red Book. What happened next is a summation of the difference between the hope that religious faith offers, versus the hatred, fear, and barbaric inhumanity preached by dictatorship of any kind, and Communism in particular. Balo noticed that the more he prayed from his book, the more peace he felt and the more reconciled he was to his circumstances, however tragic and painful they were. Yet he observed that the more his Communist cellmate read from Mao's Little Red Book, the more anxious, agitated and angry he became, pacing up and down the cell for nights on end. Balo's story of how he ended up in a Chinese jail is one that the whole world needs to hear. But before telling it, it is important to note that while it is special, it is not unique.

According to Peter Humphrey, a British citizen who spent two years in prison in China, there are an estimated five million prisoners in China - excluding the several million more who are interned in the gulags

of Xinjiang and Tibet - and of these, up to 5,000 are foreign nationals. The vast majorities are either Chinese-born foreign citizens or Africans, but there are hundreds of inmates who are of American, European, or Asian nationality. Three weeks ago, I had the privilege of hosting Balo and Humphrey in London, where they testified at a hearing in the British Parliament, spoke at a think-tank, and met parliamentarians to tell their story. Among the foreigners who have served time in China's prisons, they are the first to speak out publicly about their ordeal. Balo went to Beijing in 2010 as an English teacher. Humphrey has been involved with China for 48 years, studying Chinese, working as a Reuters foreign correspondent, and then building a corporate due diligence consultancy business in China. While teaching English in Beijing, Balo was recruited to a part-time position in a Chinese financial services company providing credit loans. He was one of only a few foreigners in the business and had little to do with the front-line operations.

Yet in 2014, the Chinese police raided the company, accusing it of contract fraud of which Balo had no knowledge at all. He was arrested, tied to a "tiger chair" for a 24-hour interrogation, and spent the next eight years in jail. For the first two years, Balo was held in pre-trial detention in a 12-square meter cage, along with a dozen other inmates, none of whom spoke English. Each morning began at 6 a.m. with prisoners forced to watch their cell mates defecating in the only toilet available - a hole in the corner of the cell directly beneath the television that blared out CCP propaganda and patriotic songs which inmates were forced to watch. It was

¹ UCA News July 20, 2023.

as Balo recalls, an “indoctrination program.” For those two years, he never saw daylight. “I was never tortured physically - everything was psychological torture,” he said. “I could not contact anyone. The only time I was allowed out of the cage was for questioning. When I went to court, they shoved a bag over my head.” Both Balo and Humphrey witnessed and experienced forced prison labor. Prison campuses contain entire factories, they claim, producing a range of goods including sports shoes, apparel, hardware items and electronic items such as keyboards and appliances for global brands.

“China’s entire prison system holding many millions of prisoners is a gigantic, self-perpetuating commercial enterprise, which brings profits to the state, income to prison officers, and funds prison operations,” Humphrey said. “Prison officers are employed as labor supervisors, marketing and sales managers, and get bonuses for high production output,” he added. Chinese inmates would wake up at 6 a.m. and soon afterward be marched to the factories, as Balo and Humphrey would watch from their windows. “The sick and the elderly would be piled one on top of the other in a rudimentary cart and pulled behind the marchers,” recalls Balo. “They had to sing ‘The Chinese Communist Party is my mother’ as they marched.”

Foreign prisoners were generally exempted from heavy factory labor but would be forced to perform manual tasks, such as packaging goods. Balo packed Christmas cards for the Tesco supermarket chain, while Humphrey witnessed prisoners packaging for labels such as H&M, C&A, and 3M.

Since his release, Humphrey has received reports of prison labor used to produce pregnancy test kits and personal protective

equipment (PPE). According to Humphrey, China’s prison system is used to make “huge profits” for the Chinese government. “There is no incentive to release prisoners early. There is every incentive to keep prisoners in prison for as long as possible to squeeze more labor out of them,” he said. The Chinese prison system also “weaponizes” prisoners’ health and denies medical care to those who will not agree to false confessions, according to Humphrey. Suspected of having prostate cancer even before he was jailed, Humphrey was denied medical treatment. He fought a heroic five-year battle against advanced cancer after his release. Balo saw at least two foreign prisoners die of cancer after they were denied treatment. Multinational companies manufacturing in China ought to do proper due diligence to ensure their supply chains are not using forced labor, child labor or other forms of exploitation.

Yet a new Chinese law that took effect this month effectively categorizes corporate due diligence investigations as espionage, with potentially a life sentence for anyone convicted of the crime. Humphrey ended up in jail because a well-connected Chinese employee of a multinational whom he had been hired to investigate got wind of his inquiries and pulled some political strings. The next thing he knew, his perfectly legitimate consultancy business went crashing through the floor as the Chinese police came knocking on the door of his Shanghai apartment.

Today, he believes there is no way that multinationals can “satisfactorily” check whether a Chinese company is corrupt or is using prison labor or other forced labor. “The only way to avoid this risk is not to manufacture in China at all,” Humphrey believes. At the apex of this system of

injustice is China's so-called justice system - where, according to Humphrey, there is no such thing as a fair trial, no proper police investigation, no defense witnesses allowed, no defense evidence presented and no prosecution witnesses called. Witnesses for the prosecution only present their testimony in writing, and it is almost entirely coerced and submitted under duress. "Among the millions of prisoners in the system, not a single prisoner has had a fair and transparent trial. Not a single one," Humphrey said. As a result, 99.9 percent of prosecutions in China result in convictions and sentences, and 99.9 percent of appeals are rejected. "The entire system is arbitrary and subject to the whims of Communist Party officials," he said. Forced televised confessions are increasingly used, where the accused delivers a coerced confession from a prison cage, broadcast on national and international networks - as Humphrey personally experienced.

For the best part of a week, I listened to Balo and Humphrey - who became my friends - painstakingly, painfully and repeatedly tell their story. And each time I listened to them, the more determined I became to ensure that their voices are heard. For 30 years, I have been involved with China, and for many years I have been speaking out about the repression of dissidents, bloggers, journalists, lawyers and civil society, the persecution of Christians and Falun Gong, the genocide of the Uyghurs, the crime against humanity that is forced organ harvesting, the atrocities in Tibet and the dismantling of Hong Kong's freedoms. But through Balo and Humphrey, my conscience was awakened to the fact that not only are political prisoners a human rights matter - every prisoner held for alleged common crimes is also a victim of human rights abuse

in China. In their aggregate, says Humphrey, the harsh conditions in China's jails "add up to torture." And every prisoner - no matter what they are charged with, no matter what the truth of their guilt is - is a human being. Yet the Chinese system does not recognize that. Arguably, Balo's prayer book saved his mind and soul. Mao's Little Red Book tormented his CCP cellmate. In that very dichotomy lies the truth about China today. And it should guide our response to the brutal, criminal regime that clings to power in Beijing.

Rakhi Festival at Jharsuguda Sub Jail

Sr Mercyan SU

Raksha Bandhan is a festival dedicated to brothers and sisters. The term "Raksha Bandhan" literally means "the bond of protection." PMI Jharsuguda Unit executive members along with Sisters from different congregations, parish priest Fr Fuljames SVD, Fr George SDB, a few parishioners had the privilege to tie the Rakhi and to wish and pray for the prisoners at Jharsuguda Su-Jail. As they miss their siblings to celebrate this feast, we assured them that we are there for them. This brought great joy at the same time many female prisoners were in tears. They also received sweets, fruits, and useful articles as gifts. May this festival strengthen the bond of life and protection. Thank you

Mother Teresa: A Hymn to Life and Mission: Archbishop of Calcutta¹

Nirmala Carvalho

Archbishop Thomas D'Souza celebrated a mass on the day the saint would have turned 113. Followed by a stop at the tomb of the nun and a prayer to pay homage to an existence "completely at the service of others". Her "reliance" on "divine providence" and having been "chosen" by God. Mother Teresa's existence revolves around "life, giving life... she always said: a life that is not spent for others is not worth living," said Msgr. Thomas D'Souza, archbishop of Calcutta, in a Eucharistic celebration on the day the Saint would have turned 113. The function took place this morning at 6 local time in the mother house of the Missionaries of Charity, with a final stop at the tomb of the nun. Her existence, he continues, was "spent completely in the service of others" and looking to the source of life which was "Jesus in the Eucharist".

Reflecting on the first reading, focused on the Book of Ruth, the prelate recalls how the saint depended on "divine providence" and on being "chosen" by God who has always guided her existence and her journey of faith. "She satiated-added-her thirst for Jesus by being with the poorest of the poor" facing "the many challenges" and "giving her life for the mission". The word "thirst" is the one that best characterizes her life: of God, of Jesus, of his word, of the cross, of humanity. A thirst for God that is a guide to salvation, redemption: "He-says-satisfies this thirst, she is a thirsty mother who has been satisfied in Christ for her whole life". Secondly, her life was devoted to "complete

transparency" and "full authenticity. In today's Gospel Jesus says he is not like the hypocrites, who say one thing and do another."

The prelate observed that the life of Saint Teresa "was authentic because she lived according to the principles of Jesus" and according to the ideal of humility "finding the face of Christ in every poor, indigent and suffering person". Her source "was the Eucharist" and every mass was "an opportunity to carry on one's mission" by working "with fidelity to Jesus until the end of his life". The archbishop of Calcutta then invites us to reflect on one of the most appreciated quotes from the missionary of Charity: "Life - he said - is an opportunity, take advantage of it. Life is beauty, admire it. Life is a dream, make it come true. Life is a challenge, meet it. Life is a duty, complete it. Life is a game, play it. Life is a promise, keep it. Life is a pain, get over it. Life is a song, sing it. Life is a struggle, accept it. Life is a tragedy, face it. Life is an adventure, dare it. Life is luck, create it. Life is too precious, don't destroy it. Life is life, fight for it."

At the conclusion of the Mass, Msgr. D'Souza spoke at the tomb of Mother Teresa, lighting a candle and emphasizing once again the importance of "protecting, promoting and defending life". He concluded: "The mother's life inspires us to protect life in all its phases; today, unfortunately, we hear of killings every day, so we must oppose the culture of death and promote life". Finally, Sister Christie led the assembly in Mother's favourite prayer for Peace: "Let me become an instrument of peace", then the children of the Shishu Bhavan orphanage sang "Happy birthday to Mother".

¹ <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Archbishop-of-Calcutta:-Mother-Teresa-a-hymn-to-life-and-mission-59026.html>

Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration, Goa

Every year the Catholic Church in India celebrates Prison Ministry Sunday to remember and pay homage to the Patron Saint of prisoners St. Maximilian Kolbe and to pray in a very special way through his intercession for our brethren behind the bars, their families, their victims and the prison staff dealing with them on a daily basis and also to recognize and appreciate the dedicated service rendered through regular visits, concern and love by the volunteers, besides encouraging and motivating them in their noble mission. This year the theme taken was: “Today, you will be with Me in Paradise” (Lk.23:43). St. Maximilian Kolbe, Patron of Prison Ministry India, offered his life for a co-prisoner in the Auschwitz death camp. Kolbe’s love bomb explosion in Auschwitz healed and saved thousands of broken hearted prisoners and continues to illumine millions today.

Central Jail, Colvale

We have a Central Jail in Colvale, North Goa where about 600 of our brethren are incarcerated and about 50 volunteers take turns to visit them under the guidance of Caritas Goa. The Prison Ministry Sunday is celebrated in Goa Diocese once a year in different parishes on the second Sunday of August which falls close to the feast of St. Maximilian Kolbe 14th August. This year it was celebrated on 13th August in St. Anthony’s Church, Siolim, North Goa - a beautiful church indeed surrounded by green pastures. The programme of the day was systematically planned by the organizers and meticulously executed. The Parish Priest, Fr. Soccoro Mendes, Assistant Parish Priest Fr. Francis Fernandes and the parishioners cooperated so well with the organizers that



David Fernandes

everything went off on time and perfectly well, even the climate smiling by giving us a dry sunny day. His Eminence Philip Neri Cardinal Ferrao was welcomed by Rev. Fr. Maverick Fernandes and immediately at 8am the Holy Eucharist commenced with a solemn entrance procession of volunteers and celebrants carrying a symbolic Banner with the following words printed - “Together we can change the world”.

Philip Neri Cardinal Ferrao

This was followed by the handcuffs, chains, photos of St. Maximilian and Jesus in prison and his Lectionary. While Sr. Shirley, a volunteer read the commentary, another walked the aisle and placed the symbols on the altar. Assistant Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Francis Fernandes welcomed the Cardinal, priests, nuns, volunteers and the faithful. His Eminence in his brief message before the Mass congratulated and thanked the volunteers for their yeomen service to prisoners. He also reminded us that Jesus too was in prison, suffered for us and saved us. Our diocesan patron St. Joseph Vaz was a prisoner in Sri. Lanka. He urged that we have to change our vision towards prisoners and not look down on them as criminals but with love and mercy. All may not be able to visit the prisons but all can pray and offer sacrifices. He quoted Mahatma Gandhi who reminded everyone that all are prisoners, but the difference is that they are caught and we are not. We all are guilty of the sins of anger, self-centredness and pride, and we need to repent and ask God’s forgiveness. He also

said that St. Maximilian Kolbe was put in a dark cell but he did not despair instead he brightened the cell for others by prayers and sacrifices even at the point of giving his life for another person. He further called on all the participants of the Mass in the words of our Holy Father Pope Francis to build a Synodal church by going to the peripheries of the society.

Long – Listen – Learn and Liberate

Fr. George Fernandes in his inspiring homily took us through the Old Testament illustrating how Joseph, Samson, Ezekiel suffered with faith and the strength of the Lord. We need to be rooted in Christ to see miracles. God chose us not only to visit the prisoners and give them rosaries, scapulars or medals and Bibles but we have to be divine persons who are spiritual, giving them hope and healing. They have to be reformed and transformed by our very lives. And this can be done by implementing the following program of action: 1 – L: Long - We must long to meet them. He cited the inspiring example of Sr. Jane, our late coordinator that even when she was sick with swollen legs, would be ready to go by 2 pm to visit them. 2 - L: Listen - to them with attention. Our Holy Father says to listen to one another. Listening itself has a great value to release tension and revive oneself. 3 - L: Learning - We should not be pre-occupied about what we are going to teach them but be ready to learn from them, their concerns, emotions, what are their plans for the future, etc. 4 – Liberate - We go to prison in the name of Jesus who came to save us and hence we too must try to reform, transform, release and rehabilitate them. St. Maximilian did the same thing as he walked in the footsteps of Jesus drawing strength and courage and finally giving up his life for his co-prisoner. Thus he gave us a very simple but practical message.

David Fernandes

Our Co-ordinator Mr. David Fernandes read out the whole year's report of the prison ministry which was written in detail mentioning all the programmes and activities conducted for the spiritual, moral and intellectual development of the inmates during the year. Rev. Fr. Maverick Fernandes the Director, proposed the vote of thanks for Cardinal Philip Neri, the Parish priest, Assistant Parish Priest, Choir, Volunteers and their families, Prison Officials and the Self-Help Groups who prepared snacks for all the volunteers. He cautioned us not to be judges in condemning the prisoners but to love and pray for their reformation and transformation because God alone is the Judge. Finally, all the volunteers posed with our Cardinal for a group photo and had a taste of the good snacks prepared by the Self-Help Group. The anchoring of the whole programme was done by Sr. Gilda Mattos. St. Maximilian Kolbe, the martyr of love and the Patron Saint of Prison Ministry taught the truth through his life. May he intercede for the fruitfulness of this ministry and may Mary, our Blessed Mother whom he loved dearly and whose devotion he spread throughout his life, guide and protect us as we rededicate ourselves to the integral development of our brethren behind the bars.

“Mary said to the angel, “How shall this be, since I have no husband?” 35 And the angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born[d] will be called holy, the Son of God”

(Lk 1, 34-35).

The Benefits of Working While Incarcerated¹

Most prisoners are expected to work while serving their sentences. Even though men and women behind bars are not paid very much, they can still benefit from working while incarcerated. For example, they can gain helpful skills and experience. Some programs even make it easier to find jobs after prison.

Work Assignments in Prison

There are all sorts of jobs that incarcerated people do in prison. The most common kind of job is prison support. That includes things like cooking and cleaning. However, prisoners might also work on a farm or in a factory. Examples of other jobs that are available to prisoners in many facilities include: Adult continuing education instructors and tutors, Librarians, Equipment room assistants, Referees or umpires, Clerks who stock commissary shelves and fulfill prisoners' orders, Chapel orderlies. There are other jobs besides prison support as well. For instance, prisoners could manufacture things like signs or license plates. Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Programs even let prisoners work for private companies while they're in prison.

Outside of Prison

Sometimes, incarcerated people work outside of prison. The National Park Service has hired prisoners to fight wildfires in several states, with the prime example of California, where incarcerated workers provided invaluable assistance in containing historic blazes. In addition, South Dakota's Department of Corrections has also trained prisoners to fight wildfires.

Work Release and Re-entry

When prisoners are close to finishing their sentences, they might enter a work-release program. These programs can make reentering society much easier. When

prisoners are approved for work releases, they can start working in the free world even before their official release date. In other words, they can leave prison early so they can get a job. Participants live at work-release centers. This kind of program can lower recidivism, meaning participants are less likely to re-offend. Residential reentry centers can also help prisoners find work. These centers are sometimes called halfway houses since they help prisoners transition between their time in prison and their new life outside. The centers help them find a job and a place to live. There are many other reentry programs that help former prisoners find jobs in the U.S. One example is the Televerde Foundation which serves incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. Televerde mentors and trains the women so they can start successful careers. EDWINS Leadership and Restaurant Institute also helps prisoners by training them in cooking and food service. Many of their graduates have even started working at the EDWINS restaurant. Prison Fellowship also offers reentry support. Two of our reentry partners are HonestJobs, the nation's largest network of employers who are intentionally hiring people impacted by the justice system and Cross Walk, a faith-based program that helps former prisoners find housing and employment.

Benefits

Some prisoners are paid for working, but not all of them are. Still, there are benefits to working while incarcerated besides earning money: Giving back to society by becoming productive citizens; Preparing for a successful career after prison; Developing work skills, including soft skills like timeliness and responsibility; Learning to work on a team; Finding a job more easily after prison; Reducing violence in prisons; Reducing the total cost of incarceration. No job will guarantee a prisoner's success. But working can still play a part in their restoration, preparing them to start over after prison.

¹ Prison Fellowship International.

Don't Cry for Me India

Pratap Naik, SJ, Goa

Don't cry for me India - When we were in tears, pain, homeless, displaced refugees. Perpetrators of violence and destruction intentionally kept silence. Intellectuals, secularists, those who shed crocodile tears preferred to remain silent. Those who dared to speak were silenced by threats and harassment!

Don't cry for me India - Animals have greater respect, dignity, rights, and protection in this land. We the marginalized community has to suffer pinching, punching, pissing, molesting, groping, acid attack, lynching, murder, rape, gang rape, burning, naked parading, persecution, segregation. Intimidation, humiliation, suppression and oppression seem to have become the culture of the nation!

Don't cry for me India - When our houses, belongings, places of worship were burnt, destroyed and looted. Leaders were engrossed to erect giant statues, monuments, to build "houses of gods" on public lands utilizing public funds, for self-glory and to boost their ego. All this they did in gods' names to establish their hegemony and one identity.

Don't cry for me India - The history which we studied in our school days is set aside. Myths and newly created fantasy stories are forced on us as truth. The principle of "Unity in diversity" is replaced by 'Unity in uniformity' in all domains systematically, steadily and boldly.

Don't cry for me India - Instead, we cry and pray for you losing your credibility and past

glory. You are heading towards dictatorship, fascism, fundamentalism, fanaticism and anarchy. You have reached the brim of annihilation, a stage beyond redemption through the destruction of all that we achieved for decades.

Don't cry for me India - You are broken, wounded, torn apart and fragmented by casteism and other isms. Hatemongers, fundamentalists, extremists, terrorists, children of darkness are multiplying, and allowed to sow the seeds of hatred, division, and violence. They lead citizens from light, peace, and truth to abyss of destruction!

Don't cry for me India - We cry for your godfathers, respected butchers, criminals whose hands are soaked with blood yet they label us as anti-nationals, terrorists, when we expose their wicked, crooked deeds. Their weapons are threat, dismissal, imprisonment, torture, killing and mesmerizing speeches with lies. Yet, they too will meet the same fate of the great dictators whom God crushed to eat the dust.

Don't cry for me India - You are the cradle of multi religions, regions, languages, cultures, ethnicity, food habits, clothing, traditions, philosophies, theologies, skin colours, and many other lively features. Your beauty and integrity are rooted in the unity of lovely multiplicity.

Don't cry for me India - We your children who were timid, silent, and frightened so far, will become the voice of the voiceless. Now we refuse to be caged, we will no longer remain as silent spectators. Now we will rise as prophets of hope and sing the great song of freedom "Where the Mind is Without Fear..." to free and rebuild our shattered Motherland.

¹ Courtesy: Church News Asia 30 July 2023

A Deep Sigh after many Years! Arrest to Bail!

There is no Indian who does not know the incarcerated Fr Stan Swamy SJ and Bhima Koregaon or Elgar Parishad. Fr Stan Swamy's arrest shed light on this case when he was arrested on October 8, 2020, in Ranchi. What is Bhima Koregaon? Which means the battle of Bhima Koregaon: It is a battle that took place in 1818. It was part of the third Anglo Maratha War that led to the end of the Maratha rule in Western India and the establishment of British rule in Western India. It was fought on the 1 January 1818 by a very strong 28000 member Peshwa Army against a smaller 800 member British Army in which there was a large contingency of Indian soldiers who were of the Mahar caste and were the sub caste of Dalits. From the 1st of January 1818 to the 1st of January 2018 is the 200th anniversary of the battle. So there's a massive celebration that was planned from the previous night, which is the 31st of December. The Elkhart Parashad was supposed to be a some male and a cultural event organised by 250 Dalit organisations. They were performances, song and dance and some speeches. Some of the people who spoke that day Prakash Ambedkar, Justice Khulse Patil, Radhika Vimula, Jignesh Mawani and several others, 35000 people had gathered at this Elkhart Parashad program.

The Arrest

The next day, the 1st of January, the large group gathered at the Bhima Koregaon Memorial to celebrate that anniversary. They were allegedly, according to reports, attacked by mobs belonging to right wing groups. The violent clashes broke out between the two caste groups, the Mahars and the Marathas. Several people who were



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

gathered there were injured. A 28-year-old Dalit man was killed on his way back home. On 28 August 2018, five human rights defenders were arrested and several others' residences, including Father Stan Swamy's, were raided in a coordinated crackdown by Pune police in different parts of India. The activists have been accused of being involved in the Bhima Koregan violence, which occurred on 1 January 2018 during the commemoration of the 200 year anniversary of a battle the Dalits had won against the Peshwas (upper caste rulers). They were all arrested in different cities under a host of charges, including terrorism-related charges. Following an application to the Supreme Court against the human rights defenders' arrests, they were placed under house arrest under police supervision.

On Bail

Vernon Gonsalves and Arun Ferreira filed bail applications before the Pune Sessions Court on 5 October 2018. On 26 October 2018, Special Judge K. D. Vadane of the Pune (UAPA) Sessions Court rejected the bail applications of Sudha Bhardwaj, Vernon Gonsalves and Arun Ferreira. The three human rights defenders were produced before the Pune Sessions Court on 27 October 2018 and remanded until 6 November 2018. On 28 July 2023, the Supreme Court of India granted bail to human rights defenders Vernon Gonsalves and Arun Ferreira, accused in the Bhima Koregaon case in 2018. 16 human rights defenders were arrested in the Bhima

Koregaon case, 10 of whom remain imprisoned while human rights defender Gautam Navlakha has been put under house arrest.

Bishop Allwyn D'Silva

"The release of Arun and Vernon has brought me great joy as they are my relative and friend. I have seen the pain in the heart of a wife, mother and child to see both of them in Prison. Their verdict by the Supreme Court has lifted up my spirits because the Judiciary in India Especially the Supreme Court is somewhat independent from the claws of other agencies. Their release is an act of greatness for our country. I hope the laws change for the benefit of undertrials so that the families do not suffer. May God bless our Motherland" said Bishop Allwyn D'Silva, uncle of Mr Arun Ferreira. Bishop Allwyn D'Silva was the former Chairman of Prison Ministry India.

Rakshabandhan Celebration, Banda & Lateri Sub Jails

PMI Volunteers organised a wonderful Raksha Bandhan Programme with Tree plantation at Sub Jail Banda on 29th August 2023. The jail officials were very welcoming and supportive and they appreciated our service. Messages of repentance, forgiveness and freedom were given. PMI Sagar diocesan unit conducted Raksha Bandhan celebration at Lateri sub jail of Vidisha district. Programs were organized by Fr. Anthony Payapily, Charity Sisters, Nirmala convent school staff and students.

PMI Volunteers Orientation Program, Shimoga

Sr Helen Moras

The prison ministry volunteers orientation programme was held on 13th August 2023 at Bishop's house, Shimoga, as part of the Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration. 18 PMI volunteers were present for this programme. Most Rev bishop Francis Serrao being the Episcopal advisor for PMI, Karnataka state, addressed the group and explained the spirituality and origin of Prison Ministry Referring the context of old and new testaments. Bishop also appreciated everyone for taking up this challenging ministry to reach out to the last, least and the lost.

Sr Theresa Mascarenhas the state coordinator for Prison ministry explained to the group regarding Antihuman trafficking with facts and figures. Sr Helen Moras coordinator for Shimoga diocesan PMI unit presented the report of the prison ministry mainly working in Shimoga, Chitradurga and Davangere. Further she said through our prayers and sacrifices we are able to reach out many provided we have a generous heart to move forward.

Fr Eugene Lobo SJ was generous enough to break the word of God for us through Eucharist. We prayed for all the volunteers of PMI who are tirelessly working for the people behind bars. We did pray for the prison victims and their authority that they may be kind enough to care for them. After lunch we had a fruitful discussion and sharing session. At 2.30 pm we concluded the orientation programme with a vote of thanks and thanksgiving hymns to God.

PMI Karnataka State Executive Meeting

Dr Michael Noronha

The PMI Karnataka State Unit Executive meeting was held at Chaitanya, SMSSS, Shimoga on 25th August 2023. The meeting began with a prayer led by Bangalore PMI Team. Sr Theresa Mascarenhas, PMI Karnataka state coordinator welcomed the participants. Dr Michael Noronha PMI Karnataka state secretary readout the minutes of the previous meeting. The minutes were proposed to be adopted by Bro Dolphy and seconded by Ms Veera Pinto. Most Rev Francis Serrao the Episcopal Advisor and Bishop of Shimoga delivered his message on “The Need for Spirituality for the Success of Prison Ministry Activities”. He said that we can call the Prison Ministry a ‘Ministry’ only when there is Spirituality. He defined ‘Mission’ as the expression of an experience of God who is LOVE. He led us through the journey of Moses who was given the role of liberating the Israelites from the Egyptians and the various ways in which he faced oppression. Encountering oppression is a part of any ministry. Moses’ encounter with God in the burning bush gave him the strength to liberate the people even though it took 40 years of walking in the wilderness despite oppression because Moses did not give up his Mission. If there is no experience of God our ministry is social work and the message of Karl Marx is sufficient for us to serve as an NGO. But if our work is a mission then God’s presence is a must. God has always remained faithful to the Covenant. Psalms speak of our fidelity to our mission and seeing our fidelity, nations will follow. He narrated the incidents of God

experience of Jesus during His Baptism. Jesus had an experience among the people both rich and the poor.

Thereafter reports by the diocesan units were readout by the coordinators or their representatives for the following dioceses: Bangalore, Belgaum, Bellary, Chikmagalur, Gulbarga, Mangalore, Mysore, Mandya, Shimoga and Udupi. A discussion followed on the reports and the following suggestions were made: 1) A separate report of the Bhadravati diocese is to be given on the action taken on PMI Sunday, its collections and Prison activities. 2) The PMI state coordinator should report to the KRCBC about the non-participation and non-submission of reports on PMI Sunday by the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara dioceses. 3) Bangalore archdiocese was advised of the following action plan: To use the local Catholic institutions to build PMI units in sub-jails under their jurisdiction and not take the lead of going to every sub-jail when there are institutions and parishes around these sub-jails. 4) The next KRCBC meeting will be held in Bangalore from Sept 12th to 13th 2023 and the State Coordinator shall include in the report the following issues: a) Every Diocese shall contribute 10% of its gross PMI Sunday second collection from Parishes to the State PMI Treasurer every year. The State PMI Team shall in turn contribute 10% of the gross amount received from diocesan units to the National PMI. 6) The secretary desired to know from the Karwar diocesan representative why there was no representation at previous meetings by the Karwar diocese and why there was no formation of the Diocesan Service Team. The member assured that he would ensure that the team is formed before the next Executive Committee Meeting. 7)

Every diocesan unit shall form an executive committee in the Central/ Sub Jail PMI units comprising a Coordinator (a Religious to start with); and a Laity comprising Asst. Coordinator, Secretary, Joint Secretary and Treasurer. The roles of these office bearers are to be explained by the Diocesan Coordinator during formation. 8) The coordinator shared her meeting with the Udupi and Mangalore PMI members and said Udupi was well-managed and could be taken as a model by other units. 9) It was decided to have the next Karnataka State Executive Committee Meeting at Bengaluru in the month of February 2024, the date to be ascertained on knowing the availability of the Bishop of Shimoga by the state secretary and communicated to the Bangalore PMI Coordinator.

The coordinator shared her visit to Mangalore and Udupi PMI units and suggested that an age limit of up to 75 years be fixed for PMI Membership. The suggestion was not accepted by the members as the senior PMI members are very vibrant in other units and doing a lot of good work for the prisoners, their families and the victims. Instead, it was suggested that the Coordinator of the Mangalore PMI Unit should have the vision to involve all the members by utilizing their services in the girls and boys' homes run by the women and child welfare department; involve them in family visits; contacting advocates to help the prisoners know about their case status; helping prisoners get the DLSA Government advocates for poor prisoners within the prison; regular counselling etc. The absence of Sr. Lavina, Joint Secretary, State PMI and non-discharge of her official functions or communication with the team was taken up and the need for a new Joint Secretary was

sought before the members. The members suggested Sr Helen Moras to be the Joint Secretary till the end of the present term of the State PMI Executive Committee. The Bangalore coordinator raised the issue of an individual PMI Member collecting funds in the name of PMI and independently serving the prisoners without subjecting herself to the Bangalore Unit. The matter was brought to the notice of the National Coordinator but no action was taken. The bishop suggested that the matter be informed to the archbishop and a letter is sent by the Coordinator to the Provincial of this member.

Vote of thanks was proposed by Sr. Nakshatra thanking the Bishop, the director of Chaitanya Fr Roshan and all the PMI executive committee and members present. Thereafter the members joined a Photo session and attended the Holy Mass presided by the bishop and concelebrants. After the Eucharistic celebration, the members joined for lunch and then dispersed.

Prison Ministry India, Khurai Unit Raksha Bandhan Celebration

Prison Ministry India, Khurai Unit with the cooperation of Management, Staff and Students of Holy Family School, Khurai celebrated Raksha Bandhan in Khurai Sub Jail on 28 August 2023. The students performed a dance imparting the message of Love between Brother and Sister. The Staff orchestrated a song on the occasion to indicate the dependency of man on God. Sr Anjali, the principal assured the inmates of our prayers and service. A short message on the importance of fulfilling the promise of the day was conveyed to the inmates of Sub-Jail Khurai.

PMI Legal Cell Inauguration, National Office, Bangalore



Dr Michael Noronha

The inaugural session of the PMI National Legal Cell was held online google meet on August 5th 2023 from 07.30 to 09.30 in the evening. His Lordship Most Rev Jose Pullickal, CBCI Chairman for Prison Ministry India, inaugurated the PMI National Legal Cell at Bengaluru and blessed the participants and the office. His Excellency appreciated the initiative and said that this was much needed for a ministry like PMI as legal recourse is the only way for rendering justice to the incarcerated. In his welcome address Fr Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, the PMI National Coordinator, who took initiative in forming the Legal Cell at the PMI National Office and endeavored to bring in many members from different states of India for networking and collaborating in mitigating the suffering of prisoners and the poor in need of justice. Fr Kodiyan brought to light the fact that Bishop Jose was one of the seminarians in the Jesus Fraternity Prayer Group at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam from where emerged the Prison Ministry India national movement and how the Bishop donated his own house and property for the first PMI home for prisoners' children called Snehadeepam at Inchiyani, Kanjirappally.

Fr Manuel D'Silva the PMI legal cell director at Sindhudurg welcomed and introduced Adv Trupti Santhosh. Advocate Trupti delivered the keynote address giving elaborate information with case studies and tips on "Dos" and "Don'ts" by the members of PMI when they deal with prisoners and legal matters. She narrated

incidents happening inside the prison and the compassionate and humane side of the prison officials in helping the prisoners solve their problems. A detailed explanation of the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) on providing free legal aid to prisoners initiated by the Supreme Court of India was given to the members with information on whom to approach for providing Government advocations from DLSA, and how to take up the responsibility as a Para Legal Advisor to the DLSA was given to the participants. She also narrated the difficulties faced by the released prisoners who are abandoned by their family members and the efforts made to provide them with some employment for their daily sustenance. Madam also explained the difference between providing cash surety and personal surety so that members can be cautious while extending help to the prisoners without getting themselves into trouble. Members thereafter participated in a question-answer session during which they raised their doubts and got clarification from Adv Trupti.

Mrs Lily Vas PMI volunteer from Mumbai led the Prayer at the commencement of the Program; Adv Reni, the newly launched Legal Cell Director and Dr Michael Noronha PMI Karnataka State secretary proposed vote of thanks; Sr Amala DC, PMII National secretary compared the program. The meeting ended with a group photo of the 96 participants.

“Christians Are India’s Hope”: Rani Maria’s Murderer Samandar Singh

Fr John Paul Gill, OFM Cap

Samandar Singh killed a nun in 1995. After that, he converted to Christianity and today he is a different man. He helps Tribals and for him Sister Rani’s family has become his own. Sadly, he agrees that a climate of anti-Christian hatred is currently sweeping across India. He urges his compatriots to see the truth in the presence of missionaries in the country. “I accept full responsibility for my heinous murder of Sr Rani Maria. I cannot say that I was instigated, because my own hands stabbed her repeatedly and for this, I will regret my actions till the day I die,” Samandar Singh told Asia News. He is the man who on 25 February 1995 stabbed to death Sister Rani Maria.

Whatever the outcome of that will be, Sister Rani Maria has already accomplished a miracle. Her assassin has repented and has become a member of her family. “In my own small way,” he said, “I try to follow her example, helping those who are less fortunate than me, like Tribal Christians and all those who are marginalised.” After his arrest in connection with the nun’s murder, he was tried and sentenced to prison, where he spent 11 years. During that time, his wife divorced him and his first son died. Behind prison walls, he began plotting how he could take revenge against the man who pushed

him to kill the nun. But he also received a visit from another nun, Sister Selmi Paul, who happened to be the murdered nun’s own sister. She hugged him and called him brother. He was profoundly touched by it, so much so that from this embrace his journey of repentance began. He gave up plans for revenge and accepted the sorrow caused by the murder.

Eventually, Samandar was released because of a petition signed by Sister Rani’s family, the provincial of the Clarist congregation and the bishop of Indore. When his release was slow in coming, a delegation went to see the local governor to plead his case. “Only you Christians can truly forgive,” the latter said. “You are a great example. Go, I shall do all I can to get him released.” Once he was free again, Samandar began to treat Sister Rani’s family as his own. “I regularly visit her tomb,” he said. “For me, it is like a sanctuary of peace and strength.” “I want everyone to know that Christians work to make India great. The missionaries give us hope through their service, which is to make us a strong and independent people.” He does realise though that India’s right-wing hate Christians. “Before they drove me to kill, I heard so many hate-filled lies about the missionaries and Christians. They used to tell me that Christians converted people through tricks and that their work with the poor was only for show. Now however I can say without a doubt that the missionaries do nothing but work and help the poor and the marginalised. They have not secret design, other than serve God.”

A Grateful Tribute to Late Sr M Joy Panikulam SCSC *“Thou Will Keep Her in Perfect Peace.”*

Sr Ajaya SCSC

Sr Joy – A Blessing

Sr. M. Joy Panikulam was born on 27th May 1942. On 2nd August 2023 after 53 years of dedicated religious life she left for her heavenly abode to be united with the Lord. Every person's life is within a plan of God. It was the same with Sr. M. Joy too. According to God's plan, she was given to the congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, Central India Province, Raipur as a very precious gift. Her life was a blessing to the Congregation, the Church and Society.

Herald of Prison Ministry in Chhattisgarh

Sr Joy worked for the welfare of the inmates of prison and in remand homes in most of the prisons in Chhattisgarh since 2000. She was the pioneer in many units and very successfully coordinated the group. For our congregation this ministry was a new venture. Like our cofounder Mother Maria Theresa Scherer, she dared to plunge into this new mission. The sayings of our cofounder came true, “The need of the time is the will of God.” Venturing into this ministry was the need of the time. She had to face many challenges and difficulties of various kinds but she never looked back. She approached and motivated Bishops of other five dioceses namely, Ambikapur, Jashpur, Raigarh, Jagdalpur and Raipur of Chhattisgarh State to come forward and join

Prison Ministry at the National level and to work for this noble cause. She assisted them to establish their own units and coordinated with them.

“Amma” of Brethren Behind Bars

Sr Joy had a very good rapport with prison authorities in Ambikapur and later on in Bilaspur. She got permission very easily to visit the inmates and organise programmes. She was an inspiration to the women inmates of prisons. They used to call her with love “Amma” meaning mother. Whenever she visited them, they used to gather around her. Tirelessly she organized activities and programmes for them so that they developed some skills. She went to the female ward with the volunteers weekly and conducted literacy programmes, tailoring and craft classes, value-based education, etc. She used to approach principals and superiors of schools and convents respectively to present some value-based programmes for female as well as male wards in prisons on various Indian festal occasions. She organized regular meetings, seminars and get together with the volunteers. She invited volunteers of even other dioceses to participate in our diocesan level seminar. She cooperated with the national team and invited their suggestions. At times she invited them for a seminar so that volunteers were kept updated with national issues of prisons. She kept the volunteers united, appreciated them and acknowledged their dedicated service. She was an inspiration to all of us. She motivated the volunteers to participate in national level conferences of prison ministry. She had a very good and cordial relationship with all the Bishops. They personally came to the prison to celebrate

the Holy Eucharist at Christmas and Easter and gave very inspiring messages to the prison inmates.

Sr Joy was a beautiful soul inside and outside as well. She helped inmates to become better versions of themselves every time she visited them. She was in fact their anchor. She welcomed all with open arms and was a compassionate, loving and humble person. She would go out of her way to help the inmates of prisons. She smiled at them with inner warmth and loved them without measure. She was their strength and motivator. Her service to the inmates of prisons and her spirit of kindness will never be forgotten. It was her great passion to work for the Prisoners.

PMI Warrior

Sr Joy used to go around Schools, getting children motivated to help the prisoners in cash and in kind. She used to collect money for release of prisoners and has released many from various jails. She used to distribute tailoring machines and recreational materials to occupy the inmates. She also inspired the volunteers to work for the children in Remand Homes. Children used to wait for her and the volunteers. They were given classes to complete their studies. One could see on their bright faces their eagerness to learn. Throughout her ministry as a religious, Sr Joy engaged herself in various apostolic activities, but her true passion lay in the prison ministry. Recognizing the plight of those incarcerated, she actively worked for the unnoticed jailbirds. She dedicated her time, efforts, and compassion to reach out to prisoners, providing them with spiritual guidance, support, and hope. It was indeed her great passion to work for prisoners till

her last breath. On August 2, 2023, she peacefully passed on to meet the “master of her life.” She has left us physically but her loving presence will endure forever in the hearts of those who encountered and lived with her. Your courage, generosity and strength, Sr. Joy, will stand as an example for many and you will always be remembered. May you enjoy eternal bliss with the Lord!



Fallen Men May Rise Again on Wings of Prayer

One day I was praying my morning breviary at Kolbe Home Chapel, Carmelaram, Bengaluru. The recitation of the hymn written by Padre Diego from his poem On Wings of Prayers “fallen man may rise again on wings of prayer, again” struck me and I thought how true this is with regard to the reformation, reintegration and redemption of prisoners. Prison Ministry India does this amazing redemptive ministry for the fallen men and women through prayer, fasting, mortifications, voluntary sufferings, intercessory prayer, Eucharistic adoration, contemplative prayer and above all by offering the Most Holy Mass, the precious Blood and Body of Christ. The fundamental task of every PMI Volunteer is to liberate and redeem the incarcerated through our daily spiritual exercises. This article highlights the spiritual ways and means used by PMI to release and redeem our fallen men and women behind bars.

Jesus' Mission

Jesus our saviour came to this world to raise and redeem fallen men and women. He categorically proclaimed this at the synagogue of Nazareth by reading from the book of Isaiah “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 set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s Favor” (Lk 4, 18-19). Going to the tax booth of Levi Jesus declared, “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners” (Mk 2, 17). Going to the house of Zacheus Jesus said, “Son



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

of man came to seek and save the lost” (Lk 19, 10). Illustrating the parables of the lost coin, lost sheep and the prodigal son Jesus explained the significance of repentance, “There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (Lk 15,7). When people brought the fallen woman caught in adultery Jesus said, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (Jn 8, 8). Most importantly after every fall on the way of the Cross in Via Dolorosa Jesus arose and moved on ahead to Calvary to die and redeem the fallen humanity. Prison Ministry India continues this searching, serving and saving mission of Jesus.

Wings of Prayer

St Augustine once said that fasting and almsgiving are the two wings that we need for our prayer to rise up to God. Fasting, almsgiving, and prayer strengthen us in our journey. They protect us from temptation. They help us resist the devil. They open us up to God’s wisdom. They pave the way for the breakthroughs that Jesus longs to give us. What wings are to a bird, and sail to a ship, so is prayer to the soul. I was thinking these days how prayer played the vital role in the birth and growth of Prison

Ministry India. As St Paul in his first letter to Thessalonians wrote, PMI volunteers need to pray without ceasing (I Thess 5,17) so as to liberate and redeem the incarcerated. "O that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest," said the Psalmist (55:6). Prayer is something like that, giving me a means to go where I need to go. But then wings also offer a refuge in the Psalms, a safe haven, God's shelter. "Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings" (Ps 17:8). As Helen Steiner Rice writes, "On the wings of prayer our burdens take flight. And our load of care becomes bearably light. And our heavy hearts are lifted above. To be healed by the balm of God's wonderful love. And the tears in our eyes are dried by the hands, of a loving Father who understands all of our problems, our fears and despair, when we take them to Him on the wings of prayer".

Fallen Men

Evil entered into the breasts of angels - even envy, ambition, pride, rebellion; and they fell, fell never to rise again, "High in the bright and happy throng, Satan, a tall archangel sat; amongst the morning stars he sung, till sin destroyed his heavenly state. It was sin that hurled him from his throne. Grovelling in fire the rebel lies: 'How art thou sunk in darkness down, son of the morning, from the skies!'" As St Paul in his letter to the Ephesians writes "Awake, sleeper, arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you" (Eph 5,14). For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, but the wicked stumble in time of calamity (Proverbs 24,16). "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Pt 2,4). God who condemned the fallen angels, was merciful to the human race,

forgave them and offered them eternal bliss. "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23, 42)

Will Rise Again

Last 42 years I have witnessed the rising of many a prisoner to liberation and redemption by the precious blood of Jesus and by the prayer and fasting of PMI volunteers. Through our prayer, fasting, prison visits, counselling, offering of Holy Masses and rehabilitation centres thousands have been released, repented, reconciled, rehabilitated, reintegrated and redeemed. The best example shall be Mathew Albin who was once a hired killer but through PMI intervention transformed and has been running a charitable institution called Shanti Bhavan at Punnapra in Alappuzha since the last 27 years for the mental patients, destitutes and wandering beggars. Every PMI Rehabilitation Centre can narrate hundreds of similar stories of reintegration and redemption thanks to the hard work and commitment of PMI volunteers.

Prayer for Fallen Sheep

Eternal and loving Father, look kindly on Your only-begotten Son. See the heavy Cross prepared for Your only Son and have mercy on Your people. I offer to You all the pains, suffering, and Precious Blood of Your Son Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, for all Your People who have abandoned their faith and will abandon in the mountainous hills and deep valleys of this world. May they, through the falling of Your Son under the Cross, have strength to rise again and stand firm in the true faith. Through the ocean of His Precious Blood dumped under the Cross on the streets of Jerusalem strengthen all who are eager to do Your Will, Amen. Precious Blood of Jesus Christ – Strengthen our weakened souls. Amen.

St Mother Teresa and the Incarcerated

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

Wahlberg first entered prison at age 17 and served his five-year sentence at various medium and maximum-security prisons. Most of his sentence was served in the segregation unit, or “the hole.” “It’s a nightmare that you can’t wake up from” Wahlberg writes in *The Big Hustle*. The way an act of kindness can change an inmate’s life is memorably illustrated in the new memoir, Jim Wahlberg’s ‘*The Big Hustle*’. Like a modern-day Augustine’s *Confessions*, *The Big Hustle* reveals Wahlberg’s gripping conversion story from a violent criminal to a devoted and faithful Christian. The book includes many stories from his time, including both his own experiences and the stories of other men he met there. He found moments of friendship and kindness, but much of his time in the maximum-security prison was dehumanizing and torturous. He recalls, “The mental pressure was just so intense. You did not want to fall out of favour with the other prisoners and hardened criminals who could kill you or torture you or make your life a living hell, just for one mistake”. After serving his five-year sentence, Wahlberg was out of prison for six months before he committed another crime and received a six-to-nine-year sentence. It was during this second sentence that a brief encounter with Mother Teresa changed his life.

Call to Love the Incarcerated

On June 4, 1988, Mother Teresa happened to visit the maximum-security prison where Wahlberg was living. During her visit, Mother Teresa and the sisters from her order joined the inmates for Mass, kneeling beside them as “brothers and sisters before Christ”, Wahlberg recalled. Mother Teresa

gave a 15-minute address to the prisoners. She told them, “I will not forget you. I have you in the palm of my hand. You are precious to me. I love you.” Wahlberg vividly recalls the transformative impact that Mother Teresa’s compassion had on him. He writes, “For the first time in my life, I saw the face of Christ. The face of love! Mother Teresa knew that we weren’t just inmates. Prisoners! The wretched of the earth! We had names, we had stories and we had souls. When asked by the press why she had come, she responded simply, “You must find the face of God on the faces of these prisoners.”

Wahlberg ended up becoming a faithful Catholic in prison, thanks to both Mother Teresa and to the influence of a holy prison chaplain, Father Jim Fratus. He received the Sacrament of Confirmation not long after Mother Teresa’s visit, and was released on parole after serving half of the minimum of his sentence. “That moment with Mother Teresa changed my life,” he wrote decades later in *The Big Hustle*. Mother Teresa and Father Fratus brought Christ’s love to Wahlberg when he was a deeply troubled young man. Later, James M. Wahlberg became an American activist, speaker, director, producer, and writer. He is the author of *The Big Hustle: A Boston Street Kid’s Story of Addiction and Redemption*.

Mother for the Incarcerated

Twenty-eight years ago, Mother Teresa of Calcutta quietly visited the Regina Coeli prison in Rome. Father Vittorio Trani, a Conventual Franciscan and prison chaplain for 38 years, explained to CNA that Mother Teresa visited the prison in May 1994 and he related about the event, “She came somewhat incognito. I gave permission so they would let her in (because of the heavy security measures) but I didn’t tell anyone about it. She came in and attended Mass with a few detainees. It was very emotional,”

he remarked. “We had set aside a nice chair for her in the middle, but when she came and saw it, she looked at me and said no and went to another simple chair that was at the back,” the priest recalled with a smile. “Like other great saints, Mother Teresa has a lot of importance here also because the detainees see her as someone close (to them), she had that ability to be close to people,” he noted.

Mother Teresa Addresses PMI Volunteers

Mother Teresa often accepted invitations to talk, as they would offer her an opportunity to draw the world’s attention on the poor and needy. Here’s one such interview when she talked to Anto Akkara, an Indian rights advocate and journalist with international media. Mother Teresa spoke to Anto Akkara on November 17, 1995 at the Missionaries of Charity’s ‘Nirmala Sishu Bhavan’ centre in New Delhi. Anto Akkara asked Mother Teresa, “I heard you in September telling Catholic clergy in prison ministry that ‘to care for men and women in jail is to do something beautiful for God’. Are you planning to enter the prison ministry?” and she replied “We are already taking care of people from jail. Hundred and ten non-criminal women are already with us in Shantidhan (abode of peace). And soon, 22 boys will come to us from jail. Our Brothers will take care of them. West Bengal state Government has decided that non-criminal persons should not be kept in these kinds of places and asked us to take care of them. They should live in an atmosphere of love. They need to be loved”. The second national convention of Prison Ministry India was conducted at Navinta Retreat centre, in Delhi from 22 to 24th of September, 1995 and Mother Teresa addressed PMI volunteers.

Who is this Saint of the Gutters?

Who is Mother Teresa of Calcutta? Who is this Saint of the Gutters? Well, Mother

Teresa herself gives her identity: “By blood, I am Albanian. By citizenship, I am an Indian. By faith, I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the Heart of Jesus.” And this saint’s feast is celebrated on 5 September. Born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu was born of Albanian parents on August 26, 1910, in Skopje, in what is Macedonia today. Mother Teresa came to eastern India’s Kolkata city, formerly Calcutta, in 1929, as a missionary of the Sisters of Loreto. Later, in what she described as a ‘call within a call’, she founded her Missionaries of Charity congregation in 1950 to serve Jesus in the distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor. She obtained Indian citizenship the following year. Mother Teresa earned 124 national as well as international honours for her works of mercy, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. She died on September 5, 1997 at the age of 87 and St. John Paul II declared her Blessed in the Vatican, on October 19, 2003 She was canonized as St. Teresa of Calcutta on 4 September 2016.

Festal Blessings

Prison is one of the most blessed places, because God is most felt there. Jesus Himself said, “I was in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25:36). One of the 7 corporal works of mercy is “to visit the imprisoned” and Mother Teresa did it. It is in prison, the prisoners encounter God in their nothingness. The disciples of Jesus, after His resurrection, encountered Him in their nothingness, when they were in a locked room for fear of the Jews. Prison ministry is different from other ministries, because our encounter is with the ones who are thrown out, judged and condemned by society, and who are broken and deprived of their freedom. Festal Blessings of the Saint of the Gutters! May she intercede for us to the God of the Lost to bless us with passion to go to the peripheries as Pope Francis invites us!



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration, Bhavnagar**



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration, Guwahati**



**Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration,
Holy Rosary Church**



**Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration,
Infant Jesus Church, Bengaluru**



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration, KGF**



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration, Kurnool Diocese**



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration, Pune**



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration, Vijayawada**



**Raksha Bandhan Celebration,
Goharganj Subjail**



**Raksha Bandhan Celebration,
Lateri Subjail, Sagar**



**Raksha Bandhan Celebration,
Lucknow Prison**



PMI Pondicherry Gathering



**Raksha Bandhan Celebration,
Subjail Banda**



**Raksha Bhandhan Celebration,
Juvenile Home, Kanduva**



**Sports Articles Distribution to
Open Prison, Devanahalli**



**St Maximilian Feast, St Joseph
School, Nandyal**



**St Maximilian Kolbe Day
Celebration, Pala**



**St Thomas Church Youngsters, Dharmaram
Visiting Open Prison, Devanahalli**



**Welcoming Aurangabad Central Prison
Superintendent Mr Jayant Naik Sir**



**PMI Volunteers' Visit to Meerut
Prison**



PMI Sunday Celebration, Pune



**PMI Volunteers' Visit to
Observation Home, Pune**



**PMI Volunteers' Visit to Rescue
Home, Pune**



PMI Onam Celebration, Aluva Prison



PMI Orientation Program, Shmoga



PMI Palakkad Unit Members Visiting Our First Rehabilitation Centre for Released Prisoners, Thrissur



PMI Pune Visiting Restaurant at Open Jail, Yerwada



PMI Volunteers Celebrate St Maximilian Kolbe Feast



PMI Volunteers Gathering, Ernakulam



PMI Volunteers Visit Bhavnagar Prison



PMI Volunteers Visit to Subjail Coonoor



PMI Volunteers with Aizawl Bishop



PMI Volunteers with Outacomund Bishop



PMI Volunteers' Visit to Aizawl Prison



PMI Volunteers' Visit to Golpara Prison



PMI Volunteers' Visit to Hussan Jail



PMI Volunteers' Visit to KGF Jail



PMI Volunteers' Visit to Lateri Sub Jail



Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration**



Prisoners' Release, Udupi



Rakhi Celebration, Vidisha Subjail



Rakhi Festival, Jharsuguda Subjail



**Raksha Bandhan Celebration in
Yerwada Prison, Pune**



**Raksha Bandhan Celebration
Khurai Subjail**



**Raksha Bandhan Celebration,
Ashok Nagar Jail**



**Raksha Bandhan Celebration,
Bareilly Subjail**