

RAINBOW

Theological Foundations of Prison Ministry India



Dr FRANCIS KODIYAN MCBS

Anchoring on Christian spirituality, *Rainbow* develops the spirituality of Prison Ministry India. Illustrating the reformatory spirituality with its different stages such as pre-formative, formative, per-formative and post formative *Rainbow* enhances the spirituality of those who serve at the rehabilitation centres for released prisoners through the personage of the father of the prodigal son. Highlighting the personality traits of the Good Shepherd *Rainbow* delineates the spirituality of those who do outreach ministry for the least, the lost and the last.

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Books

1. Religious Conversion Trajectory 1998.
2. Conversion Trajectory of Charles de Foucauld 1998.
3. Saga of Divine Providence: The History of Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India 2000.
4. My God and My Lord: The Ecclesial Identity of the Syro-Malabar Church 2002.
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Dedication
His Holiness
Pope Francis

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CARE FOR PRISONERS

The Church's spiritual tradition,
basing itself on Christ's own words (cf. *Mt* 25:36),
has designated the visiting of prisoners
as one of the corporal works of mercy.

Prisoners have a particular need to be visited personally
by the Lord in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Experiencing the closeness of the ecclesial community,
sharing in the Eucharist and receiving holy communion
at this difficult and painful time can surely contribute
to the quality of a prisoner's faith journey
and to full social rehabilitation.

Taking up the recommendation of the Synod,
I ask Dioceses to do whatever is possible
to ensure that sufficient pastoral resources are invested
in the spiritual care of prisoners.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* 59.

FOREWORD

Gustavo Gutierrez begins his book *A Theology of Liberation* with the following statement: “This book is an attempt at reflection, based on the Gospel and the experiences of men and women committed to the process of liberation in the oppressed and exploited land of Latin America. It is a theological reflection born of the experiences of shared efforts to abolish the current unjust situation and to build a different society, free and more human”¹. The spread of liberation theology all over the world and its contributions in different spheres of Christian life have already proved that these claims of Gutierrez are not without foundation. In writing a foreword to the book of Francis Kodiyan MCBS on the *Theological Foundations of the Prison Ministry India* the statements of the founder of the liberation theology came to my mind.

Liberation theology considers poverty as evil and condemns exploitation with the slogan “preferential option for the poor”. This is biblically oriented and based on the words and deeds of Jesus. Jesus Christ declared the poor blessed (Mt 5,3; Lk 6,20) and he himself wished to be poor for us (2Cor 8,9)². By committing oneself to the removal of poverty and exploitation liberation theology defines theology as critical reflection on Christian practice in the light of the Word of God.³ The official teaching authority of the Church promotes and appreciates the option for the poor⁴ and considers it as reflecting the original vision of the Church. Pope John XXIII and John Paul II called the Church as the Church of the poor and Pope Paul VI said that the ‘basic

ecclesial communities 'a real hope for the Church'. Thus basic concern and vision of liberation theology is the expression of the mission and ministry of the Church.

At the same time, the official teaching authority of the Church criticized the methodology of the liberation theology in fighting against exploitation and oppression and its use of Marxist paradigm. Although there are positive and negative aspects in the articulation and praxis of liberation theology, the official teaching authority of the Catholic Church agrees to its positive aspects and disagrees to its negative aspects. It is an undeniable fact that liberation theology has tremendously influenced the Church, society, theology, spirituality and faith expression in all the continents since its birth in 1968 up to this day and has wonderfully contributed to the authenticity of the Christian faith. I am not neglecting the drawbacks of it or claiming an absolute validity of liberation theology; but highlighting its positive contributions to the Church and theology all over the world. By criticizing the problems involved in it and denying some of its aspects the Vatican authority has never denied the positive aspects of liberation theology.

Why do I start with the statement of Gustavo Gutierrez and highlight the positive contributions of liberation theology? It is only because I am asked to introduce a book on the spirituality of a contrary movement - Jesus Fraternity - started in India in 1986 whose members dedicate themselves mainly to the reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners with the motto of caring for "the least, the last and the lost". The founding fathers of this movement, Francis Kodiyan and Varghese Karippery, involve themselves in many projects with the intention of caring for the last, the lost and the least.

All these projects are realized in the frame of the official structure of the Church, which means that these pioneers identify themselves with the official Church and want to be united with the leadership of the Church and work in full co-operation with them. I was never involved in the ministry of Jesus Fraternity, but always informed about its activities and was closely following the development of this movement since 1983. Therefore, I am familiar with the history of the Jesus Fraternity especially through the book of Francis Kodyan – *The Saga of Divine Providence – The History of Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India*.

The range of Jesus Fraternity is thousand times wider than the Prison Ministry India; therefore, I prefer to call them by their original name – Jesus Fraternity – which began in a prayer group at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kerala. On 8th September 1989 this ecclesial movement was recognized by the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Conference and on 24th August 2000 this was recognized by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, having a bishop as its Chairman. Jesus Fraternity today has a national centre in Bangalore with a national director, staff, publications, periodicals and has more than 7000 members from among priests, religious, sisters and lay people. Most of the priestly training centres in India have units of Jesus Fraternity. It has 25 rehabilitation centres all over India run by different religious congregations, and a research and documentation centre in Bangalore.

I call Jesus Fraternity as a contrary movement to liberation theology in a subcontinent like Latin America and not as a contradictory movement to liberation theology. This is due to two reasons. First I recognize the validity and importance of both movements for witnessing the Gospel values and

regaining the original and authentic nature of Christian life and to identify themselves with the first Christian community among whom the spirit of the Gospels and of Christ reflected in the most authentic and genuine form. Second, being same in the fundamental option and perspectives liberation theology and Jesus Fraternity emphasize two different aspects in their basic concerns, philosophical perspectives and in the realm of praxis.

Jesus Fraternity takes up the challenge of fighting against moral degradation of the human society and has great success in it. I do not neglect the aspect of remedying the moral degradation in the fundamental option for the poor. The criminality in exploitation and oppression is a grave sin and the structural sin is more serious than we think. The fight against moral degradation of Jesus Fraternity has another important theological and spiritual dimension namely visiting, helping and rehabilitating prisoners and prostitutes. To visit prisoners and to rehabilitate them is never an easy task. The members of the Jesus Fraternity establish a cordial relationship with prisoners through their visits and programs in Jail and then they try to help them by means of rehabilitation centres when they are released. The present work of Francis Kodiyan, the founding father of this ecclesial movement suggests spirituality for the members of the Jesus Fraternity. It will inspire not only the members of Jesus Fraternity, but also all those who seek religious experience.

The term prisoner has an important role in the mission and ministry of Jesus. During the time of Jesus there was a notorious prisoner called Barabas about whom Pontius Pilate asked the Jewish authorities: "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabas or Jesus who is called the

Messiah?" Barabas was a criminal and had committed murder. The chief priests persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabas and to crucify Jesus (Mt 27,17-19). For Jesus and for the followers of Jesus, there is the awareness that the criminal Barabas was considered better by the Jewish priests and leaders of the community than Jesus himself and the criminal was freed and Jesus was crucified. It is not because Jesus did any mistake but because they were jealous of the goodness of Jesus (Mt 27, 15).

Among those imprisoned there are even innocent people who are cheated and mistakably or intentionally accused and condemned of crime. Jesus Fraternity does not consider the criminal in any way an inferior citizen nor as bad people nor the rest of the citizen better than these people; but the members of Jesus Fraternity impart the message of love, peace and harmony and give them friendship and company. This way of relating with the imprisoned inspires prisoners and helps them to transform themselves to begin a reformed lifestyle. Their main thrust is to be like Jesus of Nazareth who loved, cared for, sacrificed himself on the cross, never judged people on the basis of their social positions nor on the basis of mistakes committed in life, but demanded to be dependent on the loving providence of God like the birds of the air. Jesus was fully detached of the social and human preoccupations or prejudices. He sees the heart of human beings, the inner mentality and attitudes of them. Therefore, the approach of Jesus to the other human beings was true and authentic. Jesus is called a man for others. Fully and truly to become a man for others, especially to those who need love, acceptance and care is the motto of the members of Jesus Fraternity as I understand from their perspectives and activities. This is genuinely human and thoroughly Christian.

St Paul says that he has become a prisoner for the sake of Christ (Eph 3,1). He claims to be a prisoner in the Lord. From prison Paul appeals the believers to lead a life worthy of the calling with humility, gentleness, patience, hearing with one another in love, making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit the bond of love (Eph 4,1). Compassion to those who were in prison was considered as an important quality of those who work for the greater glory of the Lord (Heb 10,34). One of the consoling and rewarding words of the Lord at the last judgment as presented in the Gospel is: "I was in prison, and you visited me" (Mt 25,36). Biblically and theologically speaking caring for prisoners is an important ministry and mission of the Christians. There are many who do it. Prison Fellowship International and their activities in different countries are examples for this. In India it is not the official Church authorities who initiated this ministry, but Jesus Fraternity. It is a good thing that a small step in the course of time became a big movement with regional and national centres, with well coordinated activities, officially sanctioned and sponsored programmes and thus becomes an important wing in the general and common frame of the official Church.

The name of the book expresses a wide range in the vision: *Rainbow: Theological Foundations of the Prison Ministry India*. The author states in the introduction that this book is a sign of his long time commitment to the prisoners' reformation, rehabilitation and reclamation; a sign of his love for the lost, the last and the least. He mentions also about the need of books on spiritual and theological foundations of prison ministry. It is actually a lived spirituality, a spirituality, which the members of Jesus Fraternity practised since last two decades. When I read these statements I was reminded

of the concluding statements of Gustavo Gutierrez in the first chapter of his famous book, *A Theology of Liberation*: “It is for all these reason that the theology of liberation offers us not so much a new theme for reflection as a new way to do theology. Theology as critical reflection on historical praxis is liberation theology, a theology of liberating transformation of the history of humankind and also therefore that part of humankind – gathered into *ecclesia* – which openly confesses Christ.”²⁵

Theology should be determined by praxis. In this sense, the claim of the author about the theological and spiritual foundations of the Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India shows an authentic approach in theologizing in the context. The freedom of Jesus and of the first disciples in witnessing to the truth, proclaiming the good news and committing themselves to ‘the last, the lost and the least’, should be reflected in the multifaceted activities of the members of Jesus Fraternity. In this book the activities of the Jesus Fraternity are well conceptualised and effectively articulated. This conceptualisation of what they believe and do is presented to us for our reflection and discussion. Not only can the members of the Jesus Fraternity but also anyone interested in reading spirituality be enriched by this presentation. In this sense, the spirituality of the Jesus Fraternity is praxis determined spirituality.

The presentation of the theme theological foundations with its content and scope gives a three dimensional approach to a spirituality namely the personal spiritual experience, the communitarian experience and the systematic presentation of the spiritual phenomena. The substantiation of this idea with the help of the views of the prominent spiritual thinkers and

theologians do support the views of the book in a general Christian theological and spiritual outlook and understanding. The statement, “the most important feature of spirituality as one’s personal relationship with God” is acceptable to any seeker of God-experience regardless of cast and creed.

Prison Ministry India has been doing a wonderful service to the society by consoling, caring, and rehabilitating the incarcerated because of their public scandal due to the commitment of crime. In the same way, the call to conversion and reintegration in the society are really in the line of the original and authentic message of Jesus. Relationship between spirituality, religious experience and the mystical experience as the greatest religious experience and love of God and love of neighbour as the greatest marks of Christian spirituality do express the core of spirituality, which the author recommends to the Prison Ministry India.

The claim that solid spiritual foundation is the secret behind the success of prison ministry, ‘living a Jesus centred spirituality and leading a people oriented life’ should be a reality in the coming years too. This ideal and the experience of its fulfilment in the eyes of the founders today should not be a past history when we look back after next few years, but an ever thrusting spirit and vision or an ever imbibing force. Trust in the Lord, no craving for possession, total commitment and sharing are reflected everywhere in this ministry. Jesus Fraternity can be proud of their success in establishing so many centres in this short period of time and motivating so many people to co-operate with this ecclesial movement.

The author advises that the members of PMI are expected to bear witness to Christ’s person, work and words. Experience of being called, discerning the spirits,

constant prayer and hard work are some of the significant aspects of the spirituality of the PMI. Study of the Bible and propagation of the bible values to the prisoners through different artistic and literary performances and the practice of traditional Christian spiritual exercises and activities provide the movement and its members a balanced approach to Christian life and spirituality. The approach and attitude to the mission namely caring the last, the least and the lost in the attempt to care for prisoners and criminals are supported by their commitment to a traditional spirituality and submission to the ecclesiastical authorities make the project possible and keep it from deviating from the Christian doctrine and principles.

In this way, the PMI has taken a prudent and an intelligent approach to prison ministry. The fall of the famous liberation theologian Leonardo Boff although he gives even today many authentic contributions and of many outstanding theologians and social workers caused due to their self-reliance in their thought and action and commitment to their conviction even when the ecclesiastical authorities were of another opinion. I do not judge those earnest theologians and social workers, but appeal for working together to spread the mission and message of Christ. In this respect PMI provides excellent examples for all those involve in different ways to spread the mission and message of the Gospels.

As the co-founder of this ecclesial movement, as the one who wrote its history of the first two decades, and as the first director of the reformatory research and documentation centre of Prison Ministry India, Francis Kodyan is the best person to write and speak about the spirituality of PMI. He has done his job very well. His intimate relationship with the

past, present and future of this movement and ministry, his participation in different regional, national and international prison ministry conference, his travel in all the continents as the personal secretary to His Eminence Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, the former president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in the Vatican, and his undertaking of different significant responsibilities in the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (MCBS) surely have given Francis Kodiyan sufficient knowledge and experience to write this book. I am sure that this work as a burning flame will illumine and guide the members of PMI and all those who seek spiritual enlightenment based on Gospel values. I congratulate the author, Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan mcbs, for this inspiring book on spirituality and wish the readers genuine spiritual wisdom and insight.

28th July 2007
Bangalore

Joseph Pandiappallil
Feast of Blessed Alphonsa
Jeevalaya Institute of Philosophy

ENDNOTES

- 1 Gustavo Guittierez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll, 1973, xiii.
- 2 Quoted from the Final Report of the Synod of Bishops held in 1985. See Gustavo Guttierrez, *A Theology Liberation*, xxvii.
- 3 *Ibid*, 12.
- 4 See *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 42; *Gaudium et spes*, 1.
- 5 Gustavo Guttierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 12.

INTRODUCTION

SWISS EXPO 2002

Switzerland, the only directly democratic republic in the world, is an affluent and superbly beautiful country. In July 2002, I was on holidays at Galgenen, a small village on the banks of Lake Zurich¹. In commemoration of the 710th anniversary of independent Switzerland there took place the 2002 Swiss Expo². It was held in four different places: Biel/Bien, Murten, Yeverdon de la Bas, and Neuchatal/Neuenburg.

On July 26, 2002, Daniel Mächler of happy memory took me to Neuenburg to visit 2002 Swiss Expo. We stayed in a temporary hotel made out of hardboard at Yeverdon de la Bas on the banks of Lake Neuenburg. On the morning of the 27th we went to see one of its most famous podiums, an artificially made rain and rainbow at Yeverdon de la Bas. This podium was erected in Lake Neuenburg. Thousands of minute pipes took in water from the lake and sent powerful sprays into the sky creating an artificial rainfall and clouds. When the sunshine reflected on the rain and clouds there appeared an artificial rainbow. As clouds gathered on all sides of the podium rainbows appeared on all sides. Wherever we looked there was a rainbow with its mysterious mixing of colours. Marvellous! Beautiful! Excellent!

SPIRITUAL RAYS

While watching the beautiful artificially made rain, clouds and rainbows I was reminded of the spiritual life, which like a rainbow has infinite colours. Rainbow, an arc

of prismatic colours formed by reflection of the sun's rays on falling rain³, has all possible colours. Likewise, the Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India has many spiritual flavours, fragrances and colours. Some of these flavours, fragrances and colours are already developed and became prominent during the first two decades of the Jesus Fraternity's existence. Many are still in the dormant stage and will be developed in the future by generations to come.

A rainbow cannot be seen throughout the year nor can it be seen 24 hours a day. It is a rare experience that appears only in certain special circumstances and disappears without our warning. This is similar to the God experience. We receive deep and powerful experiences of God not everyday but occasionally. These divine experiences swiftly vanish. But its influence and spiritual power may remain permanently. As rain and rainbows come and go, spiritual experiences come and go, giving us an experience of happiness and consolation; providing us the grace, strength and courage to carry the daily burdens and to pass through the difficult situations.

BIBLICAL RAYS

There are only few references to the rainbow in the Bible. The Hebrew *gesbeth*, the ordinary word for a bow, is used for rainbow in the book of Genesis. The interpretation of the bow in the sky is given at the close of the flood-story, where it is called "the sign of the covenant" of Yahweh with Noah that there should be no more flood:

I now set my bow in the clouds and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I gather the clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, I shall recall the covenant between myself and you and every

living creature, in a word all living things, and never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all living things. When the bow is in the clouds I shall see it and call to mind the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth, that is, all living things (Gen 9, 13-16).

As the first rainbow in the history of mankind was a sign of the covenant between God and the earth, the book *Rainbow* is a sign of my lifelong commitment to the prisoners' reformation, rehabilitation and reclamation. God took the rainbow, which had hitherto been but a beautiful object shining in the heavens when the sun's rays fell on falling rain, and consecrated it as the sign of his love and the witness of his promise. Similarly, *Rainbow* is a sign of my love for the lost, the least and the last.

"See the rainbow and praise its Maker, so superbly beautiful in its splendour. Across the sky it forms a glorious arc drawn by the hands of the Most High" (Eccle 43, 11). I consider the Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India as a rainbow, a symbol of God's faithfulness and mercy and would like to join with the writer of Ecclesiasticus and say, "See the Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India and praise its Maker, so superbly beautiful in its splendour. Across the sky it forms a glorious arc drawn by the Hands of the Most High".

Prophet Ezekiel speaks of the glory of Yahweh in terms of rainbow, "The radiance of the encircling light was like the radiance of the bow in the clouds on rainy days. The sight was like the glory of Yahweh" (Ezk 1, 28). The prison ministry, whether we do it by visiting the prisons or prisoners' families, or by serving at the rehabilitation and reformation centres, we should do it in such a way as to bring greater glory to the Lord.

The rainbow forms a striking part of the vision of St John in the book of *Revelations*. “I saw a throne standing in heaven, and the One who was sitting on the throne, and the One sitting there looked like a diamond and a ruby. There was a rainbow encircling the throne, and this looked like an emerald (Rev 4, 3)”. As this represents the symbol of hope and the bright emblem of mercy and love, Jesus Fraternity/ Prison Ministry India shall always emanate the rays of hope, mercy and love to those who are incarcerated.

DIVINE MERCY RAYS

Saint Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938) speaks of a divine mercy rays that gush forth from the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. Jesus revealed to her His Divine Mercy for the world, especially to hardened criminals and sinners. “Even the most hardened sinner, if he recites the Chaplet even once, will receive grace from My Infinite Mercy. I want the whole world to know My Infinite Mercy. I want to give unimaginable graces to those who trust in My Mercy”⁷⁴. The two rays denote Blood and Water. The pale ray stands for the water which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the blood which is the life of souls. These two rays issued forth from the depths of the Eucharistic Heart when it was opened by a lance on the Cross. *Rainbow* proclaims to the prisoners worldwide Jesus’ infinite divine mercy for the lost.

SUPERIORITY OF SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE

Stephen R. Covey, in his latest book, *The 8th Habit. From Effectiveness to Greatness* after analysing various human intelligences such as Physical intelligence (PQ), mental intelligence (IQ), emotional intelligence (EQ) and spiritual intelligence (SQ) asserts the superiority of Spiritual

Intelligence. Spiritual intelligence, which represents our drive for meaning and connection with the infinite, is the central and most fundamental of all the intelligences because it becomes the source of guidance of the other three⁵.

Unlike IQ, which computers have, and EQ, which exists in higher mammals, SQ is uniquely human and the most fundamental of the three. It is linked to humanity's need for meaning, an issue very much at the forefront of people's minds... Sq is what we use to develop our longing and capacity for meaning, vision, and value. It allows us to dream and to strive. It underlines the things we believe in and the role our beliefs and values play in the actions we take. It is, in essence, what makes us human⁶.

Many books have been written describing the historical, biblical and rehabilitational aspects of the prison ministry; however, no book has been written so far on its spiritual and theological foundations. Hence *Rainbow* illustrates the spiritual flavours, fragrances and colours of the Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India.

Rainbow, the theological and spiritual foundations of the Prison Ministry India, though primarily meant for those who involve in prison ministry, can be of benefit to all Christians irrespective of their denominations. This is not a utopian spirituality but a lived one, which for more than two decades, the PMI members have been practising and have been witnessing to its wonderful results.

STRUCTURE

Apart from the forward, introduction and bibliography, the book is structured in six chapters. The first chapter, Christian Spirituality, briefly delineates the concept of

spirituality in general and secondly, it discusses the significant aspects of a Christian spirituality. The second chapter highlights the salient features of the spirituality of the Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India. The third chapter illustrates the various characteristics of the reformatory spirituality. The fourth chapter analyses the spirituality of the good shepherd. The fifth chapter develops the spirituality of the father of the prodigal son with its application to the prisoners' reformation and rehabilitation centres. The final chapter discusses the different prayer methods of the PMI.

The spirituality of the Prison Ministry India with its focus on reformatory spirituality manifests some of the fundamental features of the spirituality of the third millennium and hence *Rainbow* can be beneficial for all those who march towards the ultimate being in the third millennium.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I place on record my indebtedness to all those who assisted me in completing this work on the theological and spiritual foundations of the Prison Ministry. Most of these pages were written in Switzerland either while I was at St Martin Parish House, Galgenen or at Johanna Carlen's House at Oberriet. I express my heartfelt thanks to Alois Arnold, Maria Gamma, Marie Mächler, Edith Kälin, Daniel Mächler, Claudia Hirschi, and Johanna Carlen from whom I experienced the breadth and width, depth and height of fatherly, motherly, sisterly and brotherly love. I remember with gratitude Brother Edward Dailey, CSC who corrected the manuscript. I am indebted to Rev Dr Joseph Pandiappallil for his insightful forward and brother Antony Madathilchira for his cover design. I acknowledge my appreciation towards the staff and students of Sanathana and the whole MCBS

community where I learned the basic principles of spiritual life. I thank National Printers' staff for the excellent printing and binding of this book.

It is my hope that this study on the theological foundations of prison ministry, which is the first book published from the Reformatory Research and Documentation Centre (RRDC) of Prison Ministry India (PMI), will serve as a guide for those who are involved in prison ministry and in other ministries to the least, the lost and the last.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Galgenen, a village having about 4,500 people, is situated between Stockberg on the South and Lake Zurich on the North. To the East is Siebnen and to the West, is Hoher Etzel/Lachen.
- 2 On 1 August 1291 that Switzerland came into existence as an independent country by the unification of three Kantons: Schwyz, Uri and Unterwalden, and took the common name Helvitia.
- 3 Rainbow, one of the most spectacular light shows observed on earth, is sunlight spread out into its spectrum of colours and diverted to the eye of the observer by water droplets. It is a group of nearly circular arcs of colour all having a common centre. The rainbow is made up of seven colours - red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. In fact, it is a whole continuum of colours from red to violet and even beyond the colours that the eye can see.
- 4 Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy, *Blessed Sr. Faustina Kowalska*, Warsaw-Cracow 1993, 23.
- 5 Stephen R. Covey, *The 8th Habit. From Effectiveness to Greatness*, Simon & Schuster, London 2004, 53.
- 6 Danah Zohar – Ian Marshall, *SQ: Connecting with our Spiritual Intelligence*, Bloomsbury, New York, London 2000.

Chapter One

Christian Spirituality

INTRODUCTION

Albert Einstein in his *Living Philosophies* wrote in 1931, “The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious - the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. He to whom this emotion is strange, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed”¹. Man, a biped animal, has a soul. Man has not only a biological or corporeal life but also a spiritual life. That is why as Albert Einstein believed we sometimes wonder and stand rapt in awe. Many are not conscious of this most significant aspect of human life and many who are aware of this fact do not lead an active spiritual life. Few endeavour to live a devout life, and among them, only a few reach its heights and very few reach its zenith.

All major religions - Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Taoism, Jainism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, and Sikhism - offer a unique spirituality, a way of salvation. Spirituality takes birth and develops in a particular historical context, evolves from the needs of time, and often, is a response to the problems of the people. It has its own historical development, divisions, schools, types, and contributions. For instance, Christian spirituality can be divided into the Western and Eastern, or Catholic and

non-Catholic spiritualities. Within Catholic spirituality itself there are many schools such as the Carmelite, Franciscan, Dominican, and Ignatian schools of spirituality or the biblical, apostolic, patristic, medieval, modern and contemporary spirituality. This chapter, which lays a theological foundation for the spirituality of the Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry that will be dealt within the following chapters, briefly discusses spirituality in general, religious experiences and Christian spirituality in particular, and some of the salient features of the spiritual trajectory.

SPIRITUALITY

The word *spirituality* comes from the Latin word *spiritualitas* which has its root in the noun *spiritus* and the adjective *spiritualis*². These terms were used to translate St Paul's *pneuma* (spirit) and *pneumatikos* (spiritual). Its counterpart in Hebrew is *ruach*, which has a range of meanings such as spirit, breath, wind, that which gives life and animation to something. Spirituality focuses on the inner dimension of the person, the deepest centre, the spiritual core, and the transcendent dimension where one experiences ultimate reality³. It animates a person's life of faith to greater depths and perfection.

Today the term *spirituality* has become very popular, frequently replacing such expressions as devotion, piety, the interior life, life of the soul, spiritual life and spiritual theology. In popular sense, it means the nature of believer's personal relationship with his/her god, beliefs, practices, traditions, dogmas, rituals, etc. It consists of perceiving and internalising one's true nature and relationship to the rest of existence such as God, world, and self⁴. The interpersonal relationship between God - something greater than oneself,

and man which includes an emotional experience of religious awe and reverence -, and between man and universe forms a central defining characteristic of spirituality.

Spirituality gives meaning and significance to life, derives purpose, provides values, beliefs, world views, standards, ethics to one's life. It unfolds one's true self, mission, life goal and the meaning of one's existence. Through spiritual life one becomes able to experience the transcendent or can develop the transcendent dimension in one's life. An active spiritual life not only removes illusions or false ideas but also develops one's will power, wisdom, insights and intuitions.

The term *spirituality* refers to three distinct but related levels of meaning: 1) an individual's spiritual life, which is the lived experience of a person, 2) the spiritual life of a community, the lived spiritual experience within the context of a community, and 3) the study of the first and second levels of spirituality as a discipline, which systematically studies the spiritual phenomenon and scientifically explores into one's inner experience⁵.

Dr. John Ponnore describes spirituality as the sum total of all that makes up the process of growth toward the Transcendent Reality, transforming the person and his/her relationship to the concrete human context of the person as a response to the promptings of the Transcendent Reality⁶. Gordon Wakefield explicates spirituality as the way in which prayer influences conduct, behaviour, manner of life, and attitudes towards other people⁷. Hans Urs von Balthasar defines spirituality as:

The basic practical or existential attitude of man which is the consequence and expression of the way in which he understands his religious - or more generally, his ethically committed - existence; the way in which he acts and reacts habitually throughout his life according to his objective and ultimate insights and decisions⁸.

Innumerable definitions and descriptions of spirituality are available. However, the most important feature of spirituality is one's personal relationship with God, the Transcendent, which is capable to humanise and divinise oneself and as a result able to live in harmony with oneself, one's neighbour and nature.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Spirituality and religious experience are closely associated.

A. Vergote defines religious experience as an intuitive perception of the signs of God⁹. The practice of religion that involves inner experience and sentiments such as feelings of the presence of God in the heart, provides different types of religious experiences. There are numerous types of religious experiences such as a charismatic experience, a peak experience, a mystical experience, thoughtlessness stage, and so on¹⁰.

C.D. Brand affirms that studies of religious experience do not prove what Freud in his *Civilisation and its Discontents* suggests. Freud is of the opinion that all religious experience derives from the child's feeling of helplessness and the longing it evokes for a father¹¹. Instead, as H.M. Hughes narrates, religious experience is the result of fellowship between God and man. It is based on the assumption that there is some super human power at work within us, lifting us above the narrow limits of our private and particular existence, renewing us and

also transforming our relations with our fellowmen. It is not the mere outcome of subjective physical states, but has an objective reality in fellowship with the Divine life¹².

K. Rahner and B. Lonergan have blazed a more direct trail to understanding the role of experience in spiritual life. They began from the revealed truth that God exists and acts on our behalf in Christ Jesus and through the Spirit. By starting from revealed truth rather than from empirical data, they have extended the importance of experience in the spiritual life far beyond what William James envisioned. Thus experience becomes a category within theological anthropology. Therefore, religious experience is both human and divine, both immanent and transcendent¹³.

B. Lonergan, quoting F. Heiler describes seven common features of the seven important world religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Zoroastrian Mazdaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism:

That there is a transcendent reality; that he is immanent in human hearts; that he is supreme beauty, truth, righteousness, goodness; that he is love, mercy, compassion; that the way to him is repentance, self-denial, prayer; that the way is love of God, so that bliss is conceived as knowledge of God, union with him, or dissolution into him¹⁴.

All religious affirmations of belief and worship are ultimately grounded in the living spiritual consciousness of God. Experience is not the aim of worship, but it is the medium through which God can be found. According to Lonergan, being in love with God, as experienced, is being in love in an unrestricted fashion. All love is self surrender, but being in love with God is being in love without limits or qualifications or conditions or reservations¹⁵.

The experience of God by the apostles was a synthesis¹⁶. A. Godin states that it is a synthesis actively established and maintained between a perception, a human meeting and an interpretation born of faith that goes beyond perception and meeting. Experience of the inner God is always indirect, mediated by signs which in the end must be interpreted by faith. In other words, this is the highest and most complete form of experience accessible to man¹⁷. Man's awareness of God does include intellectual, volitional, and emotional elements¹⁸.

The criterion for the authenticity of any religious experience does not lie in the intensity of emotion or in the extraordinary phenomena. Instead, as M. Simpson points out, it lies in the fruit of God's love coming to expression in the person's life: peace, patience, kindness, joy, the willingness to bear other's burdens, to forgive, not to bear resentments. All of these are summed up finally in a readiness to lay down one's life for others. Communion of love with God, which is man's religious consciousness, can only manifest itself in the fruit of love, the fruit of the Spirit which is the love between Father and Son, poured out upon each one of us, and who dwells within our hearts¹⁹.

MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

Mystical experience is the greatest religious experience²⁰. It is a personal and corporate experience of God. It is the ordinary development of a life of grace²¹. E. Underhill defines the mystical experience as consisting in an overwhelming knowledge of God and of one's own soul, a knowledge that absorbs and eclipses every other centre of interest²². M. Szentmártoni describes the psychological significance of the concept of mysticism as a disposition in which the spirit enters in direct, immediate, and intimate communication with

a sacred principle which is inaccessible to the senses and to reason. In religion, mysticism is expressed in the orientation of the entire existence - affectivity, will and intelligence - towards transcending the narrow boundaries of profane existence, and it reaches its heights in the illumination of ecstasy which one seeks to attain through certain practices like prayer, purification and asceticism²³.

The characteristics of mystical experience are varied. According to W. James, ineffability, transience and passivity are some of the characteristics of mystical experience²⁴. G.A. Maloney adds imperceptivity, renunciation, ecstasy and fusion to it²⁵. E. Underhill underlines four other characteristics: 1) true mysticism is active and practical, not passive and theoretical 2) its aims are wholly transcendental and spiritual, 3) the changeless One for the mystic is a living and personal Object of Love, and 4) living union with this One is a definite state of enhanced life²⁶. As M. Simpson writes the mystical religious experience may be expressed by terms such as the transcendence of God, the immanence of God, the power of God, and the personal nature of God as love²⁷. Religious experience, climaxing in mysticism does not necessarily mean that one will experience mystical phenomena such as locutions, visions, mystical marriage and so on. These are not the core or essential aspects of mystical experiences. Rather as G.A. Maloney states, mysticism has to do with the total liberation from the personal bondage and with the total surrender to God²⁸.

Peak experience is one of the often-spoken spiritual experiences. The most prominent propagator of peak experience is A. Maslow. He defines it as a secular, mystical or transcendental experience or more precisely, as the raw material from which can be constructed not only religion but also every

other type of human philosophy such as educative, political, aesthetical etc.²⁹. He counts about 25 points as the important constitutive elements of the peak experience. But A. Godin makes a summary of the same as follows: 1) a breakthrough of the existence, 2) a vital value, 3) an actively received gift, 4) the release of the characteristics and the recoveries, 5) and finally the capacity of regression. Self-actualisation can be a near mystical experience because the self actualising person has peak experiences. These are feelings of great joy, ecstasy, and cosmic identification³⁰.

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

The mystery of Jesus Christ is the only criterion by which any spirituality can be called Christian. The pivotal point of Christian spirituality is Jesus Christ. The backbone of Christian spirituality is the interpersonal relationship with Jesus Christ and through Him with the Heavenly Father guided by the Holy Spirit. It is born out of and built up on the basis of Christian religious experience. It signifies the Christian perfection, and is the entirety of the activities of the human spirit. If spirituality is a particular style of God experience, Christian spirituality is a Christian style of God experience, experiencing personally the warmth and depth of Jesus Christ's love, compassion, forgiveness and commandments. Christian spirituality is one's Christ-experience in and through his/her ecclesial traditions. It is the experience of God in Jesus Christ through the liturgical life of his/her mother Church.

The Gospel, the basis of Christian spirituality, is the best means for the interpersonal relationship with the Triune God. It provides the concrete example of Jesus Christ to be imitated. Kilian McDonnell states that Christian spirituality

is a style of appropriating the gospel and embracing the total mystery of Christ³¹.

B Fraling explains some of the significant characteristics of Christian spirituality as follows: 1) Christian spirituality is the Spirit of Christ who unites us with the Father and gives us his charism and specific duty, 2) it is a moulding of an entire person so as to give a concrete shape to his faith-life, relationship with God and men, 3) the inner experience has to be translated into an external realisation, 4) its communicability deepens the faith of others, and 5) a lived spirituality should cater to the prevailing concrete historical situation³².

Jesus experience is one of the fundamental traits of Christian spirituality. When one has a profound Jesus experience as that of St Peter on the shore of Tiberius (Jn 21, 1-23), St Thomas after the resurrection of Jesus (Jn 20, 19-29), St Paul on the way to Damascus (Acts 9, 1-31), he/she cannot remain idle but be a missionary, preaching the love of Christ which he/she experienced.

Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India were born as result of our deep Christ experience in the Holy Eucharist. We experienced the unconditional love Jesus Christ while praying at the Malankara chapel of St Thomas Apostolic seminary, Vadavathoor, Kerala, India. We felt that it was a command from the Eucharistic Jesus that we go in search of the lost sheep such as prisoners, slum dwellers, beggars, prostitutes and so on.

The most important sign of Christian spirituality is love, love of God and love of neighbour. "You must love the Lord your God with al your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this:

you must love your neighbour as yourself” (Mk 12, 30-31). When one genuinely loves God and neighbour he/she will also be able to love the animals, plants, and every living being in the universe. If one loves everything, he/she will be able to perceive the hidden divine mystery in everything. And thus one will be able to experience that the whole universe his/her family, God his/her father, and all living beings his/her brothers and sisters.

One of the notable characteristics of Jesus’ spirituality is his desire to do the will of God, his determination to obey Father God. Jesus always sought to do the will of His Father. “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work” (Jn 4, 34). In Gethsemane garden before his passion and death Jesus prayed, “father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me, Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine” (Lk 22, 42). Paul affirms Jesus’ fundamental option in obeying Father God in his letter to the Philippians, “Who being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross” (Phili 2, 6-8). Because of Jesus’ fidelity in obedience he could say at his death on the cross, “Everything is fulfilled” (Jn 19, 30).

His Holiness Pope John Paul II in his apostolic letter to the religious writes, “By obedience they intend to show their awareness of being children of the Father, as a result of which they wish to take the Father’s will as their daily bread (Jn 4, 34), as their rock, their joy, their shield and their fortress (Ps 18, 2; VC 91). Obedience, enlivened by charity, unites the members of an institute in the same witness and the same

mission, while respecting the diversity of gifts and individual personalities (VC 92). From its very beginning Jesus Fraternity has a tradition to do only the will of God and never dance in tune with the whims and fancies of its members.

Another feature of Jesus' spirituality is that he focussed on the lost sheep, the sinner, the sick, the marginalised, the oppressed, the downtrodden, rejected, neglected and the victimised. We will be discussing this and other aspects of Christian spirituality in detail in the coming chapters.

Christian spirituality can further be identified by its beliefs, values and lifestyle. The significant Christian beliefs are found in the Holy Bible, Apostolic and patristic writings, Creeds, teachings of the ecumenical councils, and doctrines of the Church. The important Christian values are based on the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity as well as on the moral and human virtues. Promise of redemption, love of neighbour, self denial, humility, simplicity, obedience, etc some of the other salient values of Christian life. Christian lifestyle means the real, human life in which our beliefs and values are embodied and expressed.

Christian spirituality not only deals with prayer and religious experiences but it also encompasses one's entire life in all its diversity - relationships, work, love, suffering, creativity, and so on. Often it begins with a primordial experience of Jesus Christ, and gradually develops into a sustained relationship with Him, which in the course of time, finds an outward expression in a way of life³³. One who leads a genuine spiritual life takes seriously the mandate to identify with the poor, working in solidarity with them and for them. Hence spiritual practices can never be at odds with the welfare of the planet and of each person who inhabits it.

Spiritual experience and its expressions are often conditioned by the socio-cultural realities. Many great spiritual movements have been emerged as a response to the then existing socio-cultural problems. Action for justice, as the fruit of an authentically lived Christian spirituality, takes many forms, from the immediate alleviation of food and housing needs, to care for AIDS patients, to lobbying for just legislation, to paying a just wage, to improving education, and so on.

In brief, Jesus Christ is the pivotal point of Christian spirituality. It is an interpersonal relationship with Jesus Christ, the head of the mystical body, and with the human beings, the members of the mystical body, guided by the Holy Spirit, and leading to the Heavenly Father.

GROWTH IN SPIRITUAL LIFE

Spiritual life is not static. It is dynamic; ever moving either upward or downward. This dynamic spiritual development can have certain stages, a trajectory. We explain these spiritual stages with the help of some of the classical spiritual authors like Dionysius the Areopagite, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and William Johnston.

DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

Dionysius the Areopagite³⁴ envisioned spiritual perfection in three stages: the purgative, the illuminative and the unitive³⁵. The purgative way, the way of the beginners, characterised by the discursive prayer, is marked by the progressive purification of the senses and of the attachments that hinder total self-surrender to God. This is a slow and painful confrontation with one's bad habits, vices and sinful

concupiscence. With the help of grace, the beginner struggles to overcome them.

This purification may continue through experiences of dryness or desert or through psychological and physical sufferings³⁶ during the illuminative stage. This is characterised by simple and affective prayer and deeper awareness of the roots of one's sins.

During the unitive way the soul enjoys habitual contemplation, a high moral life, the flowering of the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit³⁷ and finally spiritual marriage³⁸. Though slight emotional disturbances occur, they may not seriously affect the profound union with the Lord. As St Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians, "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known" (1 Cor 13,12).

In short, suffering that comes to us for our own purification is a precious occasion to participate in the paschal mysteries of Christ³⁹. This participation, which represents the first stage of spiritual trajectory, is often a lifelong phenomenon, and sometimes it may be a reality that even continues in the life after death i.e., according to the Catholic faith, the life in purgatory⁴⁰.

ST TERESA OF AVILA

St Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) developed further the concept of spiritual growth in her *Autobiography* and in her book, *The Interior Castle*. She compared spiritual development to watering the garden and mansions or castles.

In her *Autobiography*, St Teresa of Avila compared the spiritual growth to four ways of watering a garden. The four ways are watering the garden with a bucket, with a waterwheel, by the help of a stream, and by rain⁴¹. Likewise spiritual life as it advances becomes easier.

In *The Interior Castle*, St Teresa of Avila used the term mansion to describe the spiritual development. According to her, the soul is like a castle having seven mansions, each containing many rooms. Progress in spiritual life lies in passing from the first mansion to the second, to the third and so on until one rests in the seventh and the innermost mansion where the King is⁴². The first mansion represents the beginners, and the second, those who began regular prayer. With the third mansion, the prayer of simplicity begins. The fourth mansion represents the prayer of quiet. The special gifts of visions, locutions, ecstasies come to many in this mansion, which represents the prayer of passive recollection. At the same time there can be aridity, darkness and distractions as part of the purification of faith. The fifth mansion represents the prayer of union. At this stage, prayer becomes very easy but this stage may not be prolonged. The sixth mansion is a period of trial and problems of both an interior and exterior nature. In the seventh mansion the soul experiences the prayer of spiritual marriage. Here the soul rests in the Lord in a close and intimate union with him⁴³.

ST JOHN OF THE CROSS

John of the Cross (1542-1591) in his books, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Dark Night of the Soul*, explains the spiritual trajectory, especially the role of suffering in spiritual growth, in terms of an ascent of a mountain which consists of different dark nights.

According to him, the passage from the purgative to the unitive way is marked by a particularly intense period of darkness and aridity. This period is described classically by John of Cross as the dark night of the soul. The dark night is due to an inflow of God into the soul. This is like a ray which strikes and pierces the soul, leaving her wounded. Blindness comes, due to the intensity of divine light just as the excessive light on the road to Damascus blinded Paul. It is a process of purification to help the soul in its journey towards God. No longer is God experienced in affective prayer. The person feels abandoned and experiences only darkness. But in reality he or she may be drawing closer to God. In fact, the person may be so close to God that God can no longer be known in the categories of ordinary experience and intellect. The light of God's presence has drawn so close that the person is blinded and experiences the light as darkness⁴⁴.

John of the Cross distinguishes the dark nights of the soul as the active night of the senses, the passive night of the senses, the active night of the spirit, the passive night of the spirit and finally as night vision⁴⁵. The active night of the senses refers to a deliberate mortification of the appetites. It is a time for the purification of the exterior senses such as sight, taste, hearing, speech, and touch. The purification of the interior senses, imagination, memory, desire and intellect, happens later. In the passive night of the senses, God takes over and applies a system of mortification untainted by the earlier admixture of the self⁴⁶. The transition period from night of senses to the night of the spirit is very subtle. The night of the spirit is also called the night of faith and the night of doubt.

During the active and passive nights of the spirit, the light which has thus far guided the soul goes out. Or so it

seems. Rather it shines stronger but, because the soul's eyes are still trained to the old perspectives, the new light seems to bring darkness. Thus God's light appears as darkness. Here one believes not because one has seen or heard or experienced but, only because of the fact that one believes (Jn 20,29)⁴⁷.

All these nights finally lead the soul to the night vision or the unitive way. The soul in this stage engages either in pure contemplation or in works of pure charity and arrives at a knowledge of God which is almost continuous and as full as it can ever be in this life and sees all creation in a light shining directly from the Blessed Trinity⁴⁸.

As the purification differs with different people so the mansions and the nights of different people may differ. The particular mansion or night of some may be longer and intense while for some others it may be very short and mild. It is difficult to hold the view that everyone experiences the mansion or dark night of the soul precisely as it is described by Pseudo Dionysius, St. Teresa of Avila or St. John of the Cross⁴⁹.

WILLIAM JOHNSTON

The Irish Jesuit, William Johnston who spent more than 25 years in Japan, takes a practical approach in his book, *Being in Love*. He explains growth in spiritual life in terms of essential and existential prayer.

Essential prayer deals with essences. It concerns itself with what God is and what man is. Here the individual reflects on God's attributes, His love, mercy, and goodness. This form of prayer can be attained by human effort assisted by ordinary grace.

Existential prayer is a form of mystical contemplation where one has an existential consciousness. This deals not with what God is but *that* God is; not what man is and what I am but *that* man is and I am. It is the prayer of just being. In this prayer one just is; I just am like the flowers of the field, the birds of the air and fishes of the sea.

Existential prayer has two stages. In the first stage there exists a separation between the individual and God and hence it is imperfect. In the second stage, the perfection of prayer is reached as the person becomes totally forgetful of self and is only aware of God. This is a sitting in loving emptiness and in loving awareness with an unconditional and unrestricted love for Jesus crucified. Existential prayer is nothing but being in love⁵⁰.

All four classical spiritual trajectories – purgative, illuminative, and unitive; mansions, dark nights, and essential and existential prayer - point to the basic dynamism of the Christian spiritual life, that is, a life of ongoing purification⁵¹, which is a divine training or pruning to reach the spiritual perfection or ultimate union with the Lord. In other words, the spiritual life is a lifelong process of kenosis; it is a journey towards Jerusalem, a paschal journey with constant participation in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

A deeper awareness of these spiritual trajectories would assist us to better understand and appreciate the sufferings we undergo in our day-to-day life. For instance, when one realises that he or she, despite much effort, is continuously sleeping during prayer or feels for a long period of time tastelessness or lack of interest in prayer or experiences dryness, desolation or undergoes unreasonable sickness, misunderstanding, failure, etc we need to realise that the pruning process of God is at

work. This realisation helps us to easily welcome, accept, enjoy and make use of such experiences creatively and positively.

CONCLUSION

Spirituality is a basic and practical attitude of man which is the consequence and expression of the way in which one understands one's religious existence. It is the way in which one acts and reacts habitually throughout one's life according to his/her ultimate objectives, insights and decisions.

Christian spirituality is the interpersonal relationship with Jesus Christ, the head of the mystical body and with human beings, the members of the mystical body, guided by the Holy Spirit and leading to the Heavenly Father.

The criterion to measure the quality and quantity of Christian spirituality is love; love of God, neighbour and nature. If one has this divine and human love this will be manifested in his/her search for the spiritual quality in others. One is spiritually dead unless one reaches out to the fine quality dormant in others. For it is only with the God enthroned in the innermost shrine of the other, that the God hidden in me, will consent to appear.

Spiritual life is not static but dynamic. The classical authors defined the growth in Christian spiritual life in different ways. Dionysius the Areopagite explained it in terms of purgative, illuminative and unitive stages. St Teresa of Avila illustrated it by means of images such as watering the garden and interior castles. St John of the Cross made use of such terms as the ascent of Mount Carmel and dark nights. William Johnston expressed this concept in terms of essential and existential prayer.

ENDNOTES

- 1 ALBERT EINSTEIN, *Living Philosophies, A Series of Intimate Credos*, Ams Pr Inc. New York 1931.
- 2 WALTER PRINCIPE, "Toward Defining Spirituality", *Studies in Religion*, 12/2 (1983) 130. The Pauline roots of the term refers to a person indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God (1 Cor 2,14; 3,3). SANDRA M. SCHNEIDERS, "Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?", *Horizons*, 13/2 (1986) 258.
- 3 BERNARD MCGINN-JOHN MEYENDORFF-JEAN LECLERCQ, eds., *Christian Spirituality. Origins to the Twelfth Century*, The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York 1989, xiii.
- 4 New Age people regard spirituality not as a religion per se, but as the active and vital connection to a force, power, energy, spirit, or sense of the deep self.
- 5 JOHN PONNORE, *The Spirituality of the Diocesan Priest*, Raipur 1998, 11.
- 6 JOHN PONNORE, *The Spirituality of the Diocesan Priest*, Raipur 1998, 13.
- 7 GORDON WAKEFIELD, *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, SCM Press, London 1983, 5.
- 8 HANS URS VON BALTHASAR, "The Gospel as Norm and Test of all Spirituality in the Church", *Concilium*, 9/1 (1965) 5.
- 9 A. Vergote dedicates the first chapter of his book *Psicologia religiosa* to the study of religious experience. He begins with the etymological meaning of experience, analyses the theme of experience in recent religious literature and goes on to the nature and structure of religious experience in the primitive religions and critically analyses the religious experience of today. See A. VERGOTE, *Psicologia religiosa*, Borla, Torino 1967, 43-100. See also his books *Interprétation du langage religieux*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1974; *The Parental Figures and the Representation of God*, University Press, Leuven 1980; *Religione, fede, incredulità*, Edizione Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo, MI 1985. C.A. BERNARD, *Traité de théologie spirituelle*, Le Cerf, Paris 1986, 71.
- 10 For a study on mystical, paranormal, charismatic and regenerative experiences see, P. DONAVAN, *Interpreting Religious Experience*, Sheldon, London 1979, 3-20. See also M. SZENTMÁRTONI, *Psicologia della religione*, Editrice PUG, Roma 1994, 77-104. Every experience, be it affective, speculative, aesthetic, scientific, moral or political may have religious qualities. *Religious*, as a quality of experience, signifies something that may belong to all these experiences. Therefore, all

experiences are potentially religious and contain a possible religious dimension, since religion is a perspective on life and a quality given to the experience by one who experiences it. However, H.N. Malony makes a qualitative and quantitative distinction between religious experience and other experiences. According to him, the qualitative distinction is that the object to which the organism responds in religious experience is trans-empirical and is perceived to be different from mundane reality. The quantitative distinction is that the attitude toward and the feelings about such a reality are more encompassing and more intense than toward other stimuli. See H.N. MALONY, «Religious Experience. A Phenomenological Analysis of a Unique Behavioural Event», *The Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 9 (1981) 326-334.

- 11 C.D. BRAND, «Conversion», *Encyclopaedia Americana*, VII, Americana Corporation, New York 1977, 704. See also S. FREUD, *Civilisation and its Discontents*, tr. J. Riviere, Doubleday, New York, 11-12. (It is originally published in 1930. The publishing year of the translation is not available).
- 12 H.M. HUGHES, «Religious Experience», in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed., J Hastings, T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1911, 631.
- 13 T. DUNNE, «Experience», in *New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed., M Downey, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota 1993, 366.
- 14 B. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1994, 109.
- 15 B. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, 106.
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- 41 See TERESA OF AVILA, *The Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila*, I, tr. K. Kavanaugh – O. Rodriguez, AVP Publications, Bangalore 1982, 78 ff.
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- 45 See JOHN OF THE CROSS, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, tr. K. Kavanaugh - O. Rodriguez, ICS Publications, Washington, DC 1979, 73 ff. See also H.V. ZELLER, "Prayer. The Three Classical Degrees", *Word and Spirit*, 3 (1982) 121; William JOHNSTON, *Being in Love. The Practice of Christian Prayer*, Collins, London 1988, 118-119.
- 46 See H.V. ZELLER, "Prayer. The Three Classical Degrees", *Word and Spirit*, 3 (1982) 126.
- 47 See W. JOHNSTON, *Being in Love*, 115-121.
- 48 See H.V. ZELLER, "Prayer. The Three Classical Degrees", 141. See also FRANCIS KODIYAN, *Conversion Trajectory of Charles de Foucauld*, 120-122.
- 49 The first three mansions of Teresa of Avila are similar to the active night of the senses of John of the Cross. The passive aspect of the night of the senses begins with the fourth mansion or sometimes in the third, with the prayer of simplicity, and ends in the fifth mansion. The active night of the spirit begins with the fifth or sixth mansion while the passive night of the spirit is compared to that of the sixth mansion. The night vision which is the most intimate union in love with the Lord corresponds to the seventh mansion. See R. FARICY, *Seeking Jesus in Contemplation*, 59-61.

- 50 See WILLIAM JOHNSTON, *Being in Love*, 40-56; See also FRANCIS KODIYAN, *Conversion Trajectory of Charles de Foucauld*, 122-124.
- 51 It is to be noted that the development from the purgative to the unitive stage may not occur always in discrete and logical steps. Sometimes, for example, purification comes even in the later stages of illumination or union. It does not mean that all necessarily pass through these stages. We must be aware of the uniqueness of each human being and of all the marvellous ways of God in leading people to Himself. However, with some modifications we can apply these spiritual trajectories to many people.

Chapter Two

Spirituality Of the Prison Ministry India

INTRODUCTION

What is the spirituality of Jesus Fraternity (JF) and Prison Ministry India (PMI)? What is the identity, lifestyle, and uniqueness of the Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India? Is the Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India a social work agency or a prayer group? The history of the Prison Ministry India is a saga of divine providence, which manifests the immense divine, providential and spiritual experiences its members enjoyed as they became fully immersed in prison ministry¹. The secret behind the great success of the Prison Ministry India is nothing but its solid spiritual foundation; its spiritually rooted lifestyle, action plans and reformatory and rehabilitative methodologies.

This chapter, the *Spirituality of Prison Ministry India* briefly explains the significant colours of the spiritual rainbow of prison ministry. This spirituality is divided into two parts: Jesus centred and people oriented; each having seven spiritual aspects like the colours in a rainbow.

JESUS CENTRED

Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem, lived in the company of sinners, died on the cross to save them, constantly calls

us to love and serve the lost. This is the pivotal point of the spirituality of PMI. Only through a personal relationship, an intimate friendship with Jesus, and participating in his paschal mystery are we able to partake in his mission, glories and riches. This Jesus centred spirituality, like a rainbow, has seven significant spiritual rays. Prison ministry members shall be overwhelmed by the love of Father God, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit, empowered by the Word of God, nourished by the sacraments, enlightened by the spiritual exercises, and fortified by the ascetical practises.

OVERWHELMED BY THE LOVE OF FATHER GOD

The Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Perfection of perfection, the source of all mysteries, the light that enlightens everything (CCC 234), is the solid rock on which PMI is founded. Its members frequently experience the Fatherly love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ and the unceasing guidance and fellowship of the Holy Spirit. All dreams, projects, and activities of the PMI emerge from a profound union with the Triune God.

God the Father, the fountain of being, life, light, love, hope and faith², through the patriarchs, judges, kings, prophets and finally through His only begotten Son manifested his unconditional love and care for each one of us. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (Jn 3,16). Luke expresses this clearly with the portrait of the father who unconditionally loves his prodigal son (Cf. Lk 15; CCC 238-239). Only those who experience this unfathomable love and care of God the Father will be able to share that same love with others.

ABSOLUTE TRUST IN GOD

God created the world out of nothing. The earth and sky came into being out of nothing. The birth and growth of the Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India is somewhat similar. It sprouted and grew out of nothing. Every idea, prayer method, and every new step for the renewal and rehabilitation of the lost sheep began out of nothing. It was like Abraham's deep leap into darkness, the journey from his native land Ur to Canaan, the land of milk and honey (Gen 12 ff.); it was like the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt under the leadership of Moses (Ex 12 ff.).

In the beginning the Jesus Fraternity had nothing in the bank except absolute trust in God. The members had neither great plans nor huge dreams; they only wanted to follow the first step revealed to them. When they expressed a readiness to go forward according to the step revealed, gradually the second, third and the other steps were made known to them. They never wavered or doubted about what to do, instead, they moved forward with firm conviction and faith.

One of the fundamental elements in the lifestyle of Jesus was simplicity and utter poverty. He taught: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: the kingdom of heaven is theirs" (Mt 5, 3). He told the rich aristocrat: "Sell everything you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven" (Lk 18, 22). Jesus' early disciples followed him, leaving everything (Mt 4,18-22; Acts 2, 44-45). The best example would be that of Francis of Assisi. This nothingness is one of the basic experiences of the Jesus Fraternity. The Prison Ministry India can meaningfully exist only when its members experience this aspect of nothingness.

Nothingness is a sort of negation or emptiness. This negation is to be perfected by the absolute trust in God. This emptiness is to be filled by complete attachment to God. This total dependence on God was the spirituality of the early Christians. Peter as their head expressed this well at the Beautiful Gate of the Jerusalem Temple, "I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk" (Acts 3, 6). Jesus' disciples had neither silver nor gold. What they had was trust in the power of the name of Jesus. This total dependence on God, in his name, in his power, is what is lacking in present day disciples of Jesus³.

ECO-SENSITIVE

When we become nothing, and when we are filled with God by our absolute trust in Him, then everything becomes ours. Whatever God has, becomes ours too. So it is an experience of everything and not of nothingness. If we have ten thousand rupees we say that we have ten thousand rupees. If we do not have any rupees at all but have absolute trust in God we can say that we have everything. Together with the Psalmist we can say, "God is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Ps 23, 1). The whole universe and its living beings become our own, our brothers and sisters. God created and takes care of them. All inanimate beings such as sand and stone, all vegetative beings such as the plants and trees, all animal beings such as birds of the air, fishes of the sea, creatures in the forest as well as the whole of mankind become our brothers and sisters. We begin to look at them with reverence and love⁴. We begin to take care of them. Indian sages express this cosmic consciousness in Sanskrit: *Vasudeika Kudumbaka*, "The whole universe is my family".

When Francis of Assisi reached this stage of nothingness the entire universe and its creatures became his own. He called them brothers and sisters. Fire, mountains, trees, rivers, sky, moon, stars and sun became his brothers and sisters. This is the extension of our existence, the extension of our horizon of love. We extend our existence and our love away from ourselves, from our family and community towards the whole universe. Like the Indian sages who prayed, *Loka samasta sukhino bhavantu*, we should be able to pray for the well being of the entire cosmos.

This eco-sensitive spirituality is very significant today as we experience the dangerous effects of global warming, deforestation, water scarcity, ice melting in Antarctica and irregularities in rainfall. The Jesus Fraternity has been practising this spirituality of the nature since its very beginning. Many a time the sea shores at Thalassery, Tirur, the mountains at Wayanad, Malabar, High-range and the rivers like Periyar, Kaliyar, Pumba, became places of theophany and epiphany where Father God affectionately told us, “You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you” (Mk 1,11), where with firm conviction we proclaimed our absolute faith in you, “You are the Christ, the son of the living God” (Mt 16, 16).

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Those who live a life of poverty in spirit (Mt 5,3) manifesting out of their nothingness and total dependence on God through acts of faith, prayer and fasting, inevitably experience divine providence. The never-ending love and care of God the Father provides many occasions to experience His divine providence.

This divine providence is not simply a feeling that whatever we ask will be provided by God, rather, it is a firm faith that if God cares for the lilies in the field and birds of the air how much more will He care for us (Mt 8,25-34). It is the deep conviction that God will take care of and fight for us as he did for the Israelites. When we begin a life of faith in the Triune God we enter into a divine track and into His divine plan of salvation. The moment we enter into His track from then onwards He takes care of us. We receive His Spirit. We are overwhelmed and completely led by His Spirit like Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Elisha, and the other prophets

In order that God stands for us, our will must be in accordance with His divine will. We need to know the will of God and we must live and act according to His divine blueprint. To grasp His divine blueprint and to work for its realisation we must have complete trust and humble dependence on divine providence.

The Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India completely depends on the providence of God and on the generous contributions of local people. Every renewal and rehabilitation centre has its own benefactors, who regularly contribute their mite for the daily maintenance of inmates and institute. This points out the fact that it is the responsibility of society, and of the local people to look after and to bring the prisoner back to the main stream of society⁵. In short, BDP - Bank of Divine Providence - is the bank of Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India⁶.

The PMI lifestyle of constant prayer and fasting reveals also the total reliance on divine providence. The habit of prayerful reflection and the search for the divine plan open

up a dynamic milieu containing new insights and enthusiasm. Moreover, they unveil before us the face of the crucified Christ in tortured prisoners, prostitutes and street children. Through Christ centred prayer our selfish ambitions and false motivations are corrected and purified by the precious blood of Jesus⁷.

REDEEMED BY THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF JESUS

Jesus, the Son of God, sent by the Father to do His will, died on the cross, is the only asset of Jesus Fraternity. Through his death and resurrection Jesus accomplished the mission and consequently fulfilled the mystery of reconciliation and redemption. “When Jesus had received the wine, he said, ‘it is finished.’ Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (Jn 19,30). Jesus not only forgives sins and heals the wounds of the sinners but also nourishes and redeems them by his Body and Blood. He has the water of eternal life (Jn 4,14) and is the bread of life (Jn 6,35). He came that they may have life and have it abundantly (Jn 10,10). He is the resurrection and the life (Jn 11,25). He is the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14,6). He shed for us even the last drop of his blood. “One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out” (Jn 19,34).

Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India firmly believes that Jesus is the saviour of the world. “Only in Jesus is there salvation; for of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved (Acts 4,11-12). He saved the world by emptying himself and obeying to the point of death on a cross.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality

with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phili 2,5-10).

JESUS BEARERS, WITNESSES AND GIVERS

PMI members are Christophers, that is, Christ bearers (Gal. 2, 20; Phil, 3, 12; Phil 1, 21). We are true instruments of Jesus and present Jesus everywhere and to everybody. Jesus speaks through us; we are the voice of Jesus, His hands reaching out to all.

We not only see Jesus in others (Mt 25, 40; 1Jn 4, 20) but also bear witness to Him. It is difficult to see the face of Jesus in the murderers, robbers and other criminals, but like Francis of Assisi who kissed the leper we love and take care of prisoners. Like Mother Teresa of Calcutta we see the presence of Jesus among prisoners, prostitutes, street children, drug addicts, beggars and so on.

We give Jesus to others (Acts 4, 12; Gal 4, 19). We are not merely sympathetic towards prisoners; we introduce them to Jesus who is the saviour of the world. In order to do this we must have first His salvific experience in order to convey it to others⁸.

LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

PMI members derive pleasure from the company and constant guidance of the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit of the Lord

led the prophets, we are always led and assisted by the Holy Spirit. We are to be ever open to the Spirit and are to be trained in listening to the Holy Spirit who speaks through everybody, even through those who are new and weak.

St Paul in his first Letter to the Corinthians affirmed in no uncertain terms that we are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3,16; 6,19). The indwelling of the Holy Spirit springs forth in us the fruits (Gal 5,22-23), gifts (1Cor 12-14), and charisms of the Holy Spirit. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the door through which we enter into this Spirit-filled life. "In order that we may be unceasingly renewed in Him (Eph 4,23), He has shared with us His spirit who, existing as one and the same being in the head and in the members, vivifies, unifies and moves the whole body" (GS 7).

DISCERNMENT OF THE SPIRIT

Grasping the divine blueprint, the will of God, is a difficult process. Here discernment of the Spirit is an important factor. Always seeking the will of God is the way of the Jesus Fraternity. Before launching any project the fraternity members make sure that it is the will of God.

Absolute dependence on divine providence does not mean that we do not plan anything. We need to plan well but we are ready to submit everything to the process of discernment. God, the greatest architect, has a plan for each one of us, not for our destruction but for our better future and goodness (Jer 29,11). He knows every minute detail about our life. Every second of our life is planned by Him. We must trust in Him and seek His will for us and with our free will we must realise it⁹.

PMI members should be experts in the art of discernment of the Spirit. Personal prayer, group prayer, prayerful discussion, consultation with experts, and a final word from authority are effective means in understanding and discerning the plan of God.

In 1986, the God of the Jesus Fraternity taught us a good lesson in the discernment of the Spirit. It took place in connection with the visit of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Kottayam, Kerala. A religious sister, who introduced us to the Kanjikuzhy slum and Kottayam prison, suggested that we distribute food packets to those coming to see the Pope so as to earn some money for the forthcoming prison pilgrimage. Our prayer group members studied this proposal, prayed over it and finally came to a unanimous decision to abandon the idea. We took the decision to abandon the idea of distributing the food packets fully guided by the Holy Spirit and without any selfish motives. We all felt that it would not be proper for us seminarians to do this during the papal visit. This decision was proved sound when we came to know that those groups who prepared the food packets met with a great loss because only a few people purchased them.

We need to have inner silence in order to listen the tender voice of the Spirit and should not have any blocks to hinder the voice of the Spirit. In the same way, we should also be vigilant so as to recognise the evil spirit who may speak even through leaders, animators and sometimes even through spiritual directors and close friends.

We learned the subtle lessons of discernment through another incident that took place in 1988 at Purakkad, Kerala. This was in connection with the festival of love directed by Fr George Kuttickal, mcbs¹⁰. One evening we were conducting

the art and cultural programme in collaboration with the local village children. The majority of them were non Christians. Already some leaders gave us signals of their lack of interest in our ministry. It was getting dark and the programme was going ahead and reaching the climax of giving the message of love. All of a sudden someone from our group suggested that he felt we needed to end the programme immediately. Within seconds this message was shared with everybody in the group and within minutes we stopped the programme without giving the message of love for which we worked the whole day. Some were dissatisfied about the abrupt cancellation of the programme. After ending the programme, we went back to the church. No one in our group could state any convincing reasons for calling a halt to the program other than a feeling that it was necessary to stop it. As usual we all gathered at the parish church of Purakkad to evaluate the day's work and to plan the next day. While we were discussing the events of the evening, one of the parish trustees came and told us about the failure of a trap planned by fanatics. They planned to kidnap two girls who were participating in the programme and place the blame on us thus causing us to be put in jail. Not knowing these plans and guided by the Holy Spirit we stopped the programme before the enemy could sprint their trap. We all praised and thanked God who saved us from a great tragedy. These experiences taught us some significant lessons about the discernment of the Spirit, and the lifestyle of Jesus Fraternity and prison ministry.

- 1) There are different spirits in the world such as the Holy Spirit, human spirit, and evil spirit.
- 2) When we do apostolic activities we should be one in mind and one in heart, enjoying inner peace, joy and harmony.

- 3) Our work for the Lord and His people should always be without selfish motives.
- 4) There should be an earnest desire to always, everywhere and at any cost do the will of God.
- 5) We should work always for the greater glory of God and not for our own glory.
- 6) We should do things entrusted to us by being fully open to the Spirit.
- 7) Obedience to ecclesiastical authorities and spiritual directors is a must.
- 8) Preparatory prayer and fasting is always very helpful.
- 9) We should lead a grace-filled life, a holy life without grave sins¹¹.

GREAT DIVINE DREAMS

God has great dreams for each one of us. He also has great dreams for hardcore criminals. Similarly, PMI members should be visionaries: they should be optimistic, having great dreams, visions, plans, projects to pray for, to discuss, to believe in and to work hard for. The prime duty of the Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India is to reveal the divine dreams for the prisoners and to help them to realise these dreams in their lives.

St Paul was in search of Christians to persecute (Acts 9). Jesus called him. Paul became a great missionary, lion among missionaries. He laid the theological foundation for the Church. Francis of Assisi was an affluent and pleasure-seeking youth. Jesus called him. He renewed the Church and came to be known by some as the second Christ. God's dream for a prisoner or a prostitute not merely transforms that

person but leads him or her to reach the apex of conversion, i.e., the highest level of conversion such as that achieved by a saint, a great missionary, a scientist, an artist, etc¹². For the realisation of our dreams it may be beneficial to understand in depth the following teachings:

1. Dreams must be concrete rather than abstract. This means that we should know every minute detail of the dream/project.
2. Before launching the project be fully convinced that this is willed by God, for the greater glory of God and for the betterment of those who are related to it.
3. The green signal or permission to move ahead from ecclesiastical authorities is required; this states that as far as can be discerned the project is according to the will of God.
4. Have the courage to abandon the project, if authorities do not sanction it.
5. When we are convinced of a dream and that it is in the plan of God, work hard to realise it at any cost, making use of all potentialities and possibilities.
6. For the accomplishment of projects personally pray and fast, and ask prayer and fasting from many others.
7. We must believe first that Jesus by His merit will help us to realise the project and should thank the Lord in advance.
8. We should speak to others with firm faith in the Lord that by the grace of God the dream will be realised within the scheduled time.

9. We should fix a time and a date of the completion of the project and make it a point to complete the project within this prescribed time limit.
10. Common discussion and unanimous decision are of absolute importance.
11. Wait for opportunities and occasions and make use of them as they come to us.

The construction of Valook bridge nearby Vilangad in Thamarassery diocese, the realisation of the first rehabilitation centre for male released prisoners at Vettukad, in Thrissur Archdiocese, and the accomplishment of the first rehabilitation centre for female released prisoners in Thiruvananthapuram are best examples for the actualisation of divine dreams according to the above mentioned principles.

The same principles can also be utilised to transform ourselves and help many others to succeed in their attempt to renew themselves. The important thing is that we should believe that the Lord desires it and is happy about our renewal, and that our conversion is the will of God. If it is the will of God it is my task to accomplish it with hard work and total dependence on the divine assistance.

The Bible women in Maharashtra can be a typical example for this personal religious conversion. In 1992, during my studies on the people and culture of Satara and Solapur districts in Maharashtra, I came to know the Bible women. My research to find their roots took me to a place called Khed nearby Pune and to a person called Pandit Ramabhai and her Poona India Village Mission (PIVM). Pandit Ramabhai, a Brahmin by birth, became Christian and launched many charitable works in Maharashtra. One of her

projects was the renewal and rehabilitation of fallen women. She believed, dreamt that these women can be transformed and brought to the main stream of life. As her dream and belief she began to work for their reformation and some of them became powerful preachers of the Word of God. These women acquired the courage to preach the gospel among the staunch Hindus at Pandharpur, one of the famous Indian Hindu cities. Likewise, each released prisoner who comes to the rehabilitation centre is to be reformed and made great. Thanks to the grace of God and the hard work of the Jesus Fraternity members we have many transformed prisoners who do marvellous deeds for the glory of God and betterment of mankind¹³.

ADVENTUROUS AND HARD WORKING

The Christian life is adventurous. Very few of us taste this adventurous dimension of Christian life. In order to experience its taste we need to dive deep into the life of faith like Abraham. The PMI lifestyle encourages its members to experience the adventurous aspect of the Christian life. For instance, we voluntarily undertake great projects for God and His people only by faith. We do things not by keeping money in the bank but putting our trust in the bank of divine providence. Many times we wanted to visit prisons when the authorities denied permission at the outset. We prayed, prayed the rosary in front of the prison and we experienced how God sent His angels to open the closed doors.

Our trust in divine providence should not hinder us from working hard. We do not expect that as a result of our prayer and fasting angels will bring us whatever we need. Instead we work hard by making use of our God given

talents and human powers. Hard work is the hallmark of the spirituality of PMI. As Joseph, Mary and Jesus worked hard we work hard. We should enjoy doing manual labour, even doing menial works as Gandhi the Father of Modern India. As the Second Vatican Council's decree on religious life suggests, "they should bring their powers of intellect and will and their gifts of nature and grace to bear on the execution of commands and on the fulfilment of the tasks given to them, realising that they are contributing towards the building up of the Body of Christ, according to God's plan" (PC 14).

EMPOWERED BY THE WORD OF GOD

The Word of God, with which the universe was created, God became man, and mankind was redeemed, is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb 4,12). The constitution on *Divine Revelation* of the Second Vatican Council declares: "The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures as she venerated the Body of the Lord... She has always regarded and continues to regard the Scriptures as the supreme rule of her faith" (DV 21).

The PMI gives prime place to the Word of God and constantly finds her nourishment and strength in the Sacred Scriptures (CCC 104). We drink abundantly from the Holy Bible, the best tonic, especially when we are engaged in ministries. We give special importance to the breaking of the Word of God during Holy Mass, in which the Word of God is officially read and interpreted. Likewise, in prayer meetings of the Jesus Fraternity Word of God is to be read, explained and prayed over.

REFORMATIVE PROGRAMMES

Every programme of the PMI for prisoners is strictly biblical. For instance, the puppet show is based on the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. The rhapsody has been on the theme of Zaccheus; the street-play on the prodigal son in Luke, chapter 15. The moral instructions we give, the orchestra we play, the counselling and tele-counselling we give are rooted totally in the Word of God. The programmes conducted by seminarians for prisoners are also totally inspired and based on the Word of God. For instance, the articles in *Pulari*, (Dawn), the periodical prepared by seminarians to distribute to prisoners, should be inspired by and based on the Holy Bible. During every prison visit we make it a point to distribute many copies of Bible.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATIONS

The history of the PMI reveals that in prisons many personal transformations of non-Christian and nominal Christian prisoners take place by listening, reading, studying and sharing the Sacred Scriptures alone. The Word of God, especially the passion narratives play a great role in the transformation of prisoners.

Once in an Abalamandiram (shelter for girls) in Kerala, a woman from a broken family decided to commit suicide due to misunderstandings with her family members and due to the mental persecutions she had to undergo in the shelter. During counselling I explained to her the suffering of Jesus, who is innocent. I guided her to read the passion narratives in the gospel. Strengthened by reading the passion narratives she brought the poison bottle and gave it to me. She assured me that she will live a gospel-based life.

Research studies carried out by Prison Fellowship International show that Bible study helps prisoners to review their behavioural defects¹⁴. D. A. Phillipy, chaplain of Tennessee State Penitentiary, developed a Bible study course designed to integrate Scripture into the thinking, feelings and behaviour of prisoners. The areas of this biblical study include anger, depression, anxiety, relationships with authority, self-discipline, trust, work, money, the use of leisure time, sexuality, the helping relationship and conflict¹⁵.

NOURISHED BY THE SACRAMENTS

The sacraments, the best means of sanctification which confer the grace of Christ, are the main spiritual food of the Catholic Christians. Active participation in the sacraments helps us to bring about the full realisation of human and Christian potentialities. This consists in the progressive divinisation that results from a sharing in the mysteries of Christ in the sacraments and in the reproduction of the patterns of Christ's life in day-to-day life. It is the result of divine initiative and human co-operation (Cf. Jn 6, 44; 15, 5). The risen Christ, with the fullness of grace, communicates this to the members of his Mystical Body through the sacraments. The life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is nourished by spiritual aids, especially by active participation in the sacred liturgy (Cf. AA 4).

SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

Through **Baptism** the sacramental character is impressed on the soul, and the true sharing of God's life in sanctifying grace is infused¹⁶. Together with this new principle of being there is also given at baptism a whole series of new principles of living, the infused virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, through

which one's whole life and activity are transformed, divinised and conformed to the teaching and example of Christ.¹⁷

Confirmation, the sacrament of growth in the Spirit, strengthens us to fight the battle between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of evil (Eph 6, 10-18).

In the *Holy Eucharist*, especially at the Holy Mass, the broken body and shed blood of Christ nourishes us and enables us to grow in the spiritual life. The Eucharist, the celebration of the paschal mysteries - passion, death and resurrection - is a celebration of the forgiveness of sins. What baptism has begun, the Eucharist continues and brings to completion. It is an experience of God's holiness and his graciousness. The Eucharist cleanses our sins and brings us to a deeper repentance and a firmer purpose to live what we celebrate.

The Holy Eucharist, the sign of unity and the bond of charity is the authentic Catholic source of spiritual life. "From the Eucharist, grace is poured forth upon us as from a fountain, and the sanctification of men in Christ and glorification of God to which all other activities of the Church are directed, are achieved with maximum effectiveness" (SC 10).

The PMI took its origin from the Holy Eucharist. There is no idea in the history of Prison Ministry India that was not revealed through the Holy Eucharist. Whatever we did for prisoners, the origin and all the developments of the organization came from the Holy Eucharist. We need to develop a personal friendship with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. It is at this table the Jesus Fraternity members receive all spiritual nourishment.

Eucharistic contemplation and Eucharistic adoration, the Catholic spiritual practices that acknowledge the continued presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, who said “I am with you always; yes, to the end of time” (Mt 28,20), are mighty means of gaining spiritual strength for the Jesus Fraternity members. By this very religious pause, the person feels more tranquil and more confident in facing the life realities. More than a relaxing technique, it provides a profound, internal, and existential peace¹⁸.

ENLIGHTENED BY SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Besides the sacraments, the Catholic Church provides an abundance of spiritual exercises such as the divine office, personal prayer, meditation, examination of conscience, spiritual reading, the rosary, and the way of the cross which are ladders to reach spiritual heights.

The constitution on the *Sacred Liturgy* emphasising the importance of the ***Divine Office*** states that Christ continues, “His priestly work through the agency of His Church [...] not only by celebrating the Eucharist, but also in other ways, especially by praying the Divine Office” (SC 83). The Liturgy of the Hours invites us to march ahead to the spiritual heights and perfection of the psalmist, Mother Mary, and other biblical models like John the Baptist, and Zechariah. It introduces us to the right spiritual attitudes, motives, virtues and values found in the lives of the holy people in Sacred Scripture and provides a familiarity with them by creating holy thoughts, images, aspirations, and dreams.

PERSONAL PRAYER

The entire history and mystery of the PMI can be summarised in one word, prayer. It is from prayer and through prayer that the whole concept of the Jesus Fraternity came into being. Brother Varghese got the idea of love-bomb during his personal prayer before the crucifix at the St Thomas Apostolic Seminary in Kottayam, Kerala. Brother Francis received confirmation of his commitment to work for the conversion of sinners while praying before the Blessed Sacrament at Elijah Ashram, Niravilpuzha, Kerala. Immediately, after sharing the idea of love-bomb, their first decision and action was to pray regularly before the Blessed Sacrament at the Malankara chapel of St Thomas Apostolic Seminary. Father Varghese writes about this in his book, *Prisoners Our Own Brethren*: “Everyday in the afternoon we sat before the Blessed Sacrament for half an hour and prayed for the different groups of dejected people such as alcoholics, prisoners, sick, drug-addicts, slum dwellers etc”¹⁹. In short, a praying person is the nucleus of the Jesus Fraternity. As Father Sebastian Kochupura affirms, “Prayer is the powerhouse of prison Ministry India. It gets strength through personal and group prayer”²⁰.

One of the common decisions of Varghese and Francis during the initial years of the Jesus Fraternity was to spend at least a week in prayer in a prayer centre during summer holidays. Besides reviewing the different aspects of their life, this experience deepened their friendship with Jesus and thereby revealed the divine blueprint for them. It also deepened their friendship, their God experience, and helped them to learn the art of listening to Jesus. Thus the mountains and valleys at Kurusumala, the surroundings of Aurobindo and *Aura ville* ashrams in Pondicherry, the silent and serene

atmosphere of Elijah Ashram at Niravilppuzha, and the gardens echoing the unceasing chanting of divine names at Anandashram, Kanjankad became places of divine revelation and power for the founders of Jesus Fraternity.

GROUP PRAYER

The PMI functions through prayer groups. Its basic cell is the prayer group and the basic cell of the prayer group is the praying and fasting person. The seven or nine member groups consist of persons from different states in life: priests, religious, laymen and laywomen, with each group having an animator and a secretary to serve and guide. Each one prays personally every day, fasts once in a week and comes together once every week to pray as a group. With the power received from their personal and communal prayer, they visit every week the neighbouring prisons, rescue homes, families of victims, and serve them according to their needs.

The personal prayer of Brothers Varghese and Francis before the Blessed Sacrament gradually led them to form a small prayer group within their philosophy class. This group gathered once every week to praise and thank the Lord and to intercede for the sick and sinners under the leadership of Father Matthew Elapanickal from the Kottayam diocese who was then the seminary procurator. This prayer group was the first seedbed for sharing, discussing, discerning and deciding the different concrete means of the love-bomb explosions.

In 1985 in preparation for the All-Kerala Prison Pilgrimage there evolved another prayer group involving brothers from different classes in the seminary theology and philosophy programs. They gathered together under the guidance of Father Thomas Vellilmathadam who was the first

Jesus Fraternity director. As Father Varghese writes, “From September 1985 onwards we started a prayer chain and fasting for six months. Each one of us took three or four jails among the thirty nine jails in the region for special prayer”²¹.

After the first All-Kerala Prison Pilgrimage when the team members returned to the seminary for the next academic year there was great enthusiasm among the other seminarians to participate in this mission. As a result, gradually there began Jesus Fraternity prayer groups in almost all classes of St Thomas Apostolic Seminary.

When the Jesus Fraternity was recognised by the Kerala Catholic Bishops’ Council, the bishops, noting the powerful influence of the Jesus Fraternity on the formation of seminarians, asked us to begin Jesus Fraternity prayer groups in other major seminaries of Kerala²². Accordingly, Jesus Fraternity prayer groups were begun at St Joseph’s Pontifical Seminary, and at Carmelgiri Seminary in Aluva.

Over the course of time, Jesus Fraternity prayer groups were also begun near every prison in Kerala. Efforts continued to begin prayer groups attached to every prison in India. Already 900 units are formed and Jesus Fraternity volunteers work hard to begin units nearby other prisons.

There are different types of prayer groups. Some are near prisons; others are in seminaries, renewal centres and in connection with state, regional, and national offices. There are prayer groups also for leaders. The fundamental duties of every prayer group, either in the seminary or outside are personal prayer and fasting, weekly prayer gatherings and chain fasting for the reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners.

The uniqueness of the Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India is its basic nature of prayer and the prayer group system. Why is Prison Ministry India a prayer group? The most important goal of all our activities is to bring forth human transformation, character change both in ourselves and in prisoners. Is it possible? Humanly speaking, it is impossible but for God everything is possible and by the grace of God we can transform even the hardened criminals. How is this transformation possible? It is impossible by human effort. Conversion can take place only by the grace of God. So we need prayer and fasting. Secondly, we work in devil's court. We deal with criminals, hired killers, mafia people, murderers, kidnappers, robbers who are all disciples of the devil and his kingdom. Ours is a war not against human beings but against evil spirits and Satan's kingdom. To such a ministry we need to be spiritually equipped. As St Paul writes:

Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Eph 6, 10-17).

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Jesus asked Peter to put out into deep water and pay out his nets for a catch. Peter blindly obeyed the Master. When they had done this they netted such a huge number of fish that their nets began to tear, so they signalled to their companions in the other boat to come and help them. They came and filled both boats to the sinking point (Lk 5, 4-7). When we feel that the projects and dreams entrusted to us by Jesus are so heavy, we need to seek help, especially spiritual assistance, prayer and fasting from others. This is even more necessary in the reformation process of individuals. Mary, the Mother of God, often suggested during her apparitions, in different places to different people, the reciting of the rosary for the conversion of sinners.

The Jesus Fraternity requests prayer and fasting from many others for the reformation of prisoners under their care. The *Covenant House* for the runaway boys in New York makes use of the prayers of numerous others for the effective functioning of their mission. The prayers of their friends and supporters give the children the strength and the grace to go on when they have no strength left of their own, and no apparent reason to try²³. Likewise, *Prison Fellowship International* has a *Prayer Calendar* describing prayer requests for each day of the month. It is distributed to all its members, requesting special prayers for the renewal of prisoners all over the world.

Every programme of the Jesus Fraternity whether for prisoners or for its members should be performed with intense prayer and with the prayer support of others. The Jesus Fraternity members pray before, during and after every programme. When the Jesus Fraternity members conduct programmes in prison some members pray before the

Blessed Sacrament, praising and thanking God, interceding for the success of ministry, and for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them so as to renew themselves, the prisoners and thereby to renew the face of the earth. They request intercessory prayer from many people outside the group, for example, from novices, religious, retreat centres, and perpetual adoration centres. During prison pilgrimages, importance has always been given to intercessory prayer, and if possible, before the Blessed Sacrament. The purchasing of land and the construction of the first rehabilitation centre at Thrissur, and the first female renewal centre at Thiruvananthapuram occurred only because of the intense prayer and fasting of hundreds of novices in India. We wrote to every novitiate house in India asking prayer and fasting for the accomplishment of these projects²⁴.

The prisoners in Rome's *Regina Coeli Prison* give us a wonderful example of intercessory prayer. At the beginning of July 2000, a cardboard box arrived at St Bernadette's Grotto in Lourdes. Father Vittorio, the Franciscan chaplain of the prison, brought it there. Before it was placed at the feet of Our Lady in Lourdes, the box had been passed around from wing to wing, cell to cell among piles of dirty laundry, three-tier bunk beds with rusty springs and pornographic calendars hanging on paint chipped walls. Prisoners were asked to write and place an intercessory prayer in the box to be given to Our Lady²⁵.

CONTEMPLATION

Every religion has its own method of contemplation. Hence, there are the Christian, the Buddhist, the Hindu, and the Sufi contemplation methods. Each of these types can be subdivided into other methods. For instance, in Christian

contemplation there are the Ignatian method,²⁶ the method of centring prayer²⁷, and existential meditation.²⁸ What is important for Jesus Fraternity members is constant contemplation of the model of Jesus in order to imitate and aspire to the same perfection. Through contemplation we discern and develop a concrete Jesus figure to imitate. Continuous contemplation of this figure will help us to grow in self-awareness, and awareness of one's mission. Through contemplation one becomes conscious of one's being a member of Christ's body. This develops an intense intimacy with Jesus²⁹. Profound contemplation leads to profound conversion. Profound conversion leads to authentic compassion. Therefore, contemplation is the root of conversion and compassion is the fruit of conversion³⁰.

The Jesus Fraternity encourages its members to daily contemplate at least for half an hour. Contemplation is nothing but being in love. It is a being in love with the Triune God as well as a being in love with our fellow human being. In other words, contemplation, especially Eucharistic contemplation makes easy to see the face of Jesus among prisoners.

REVIEW OF LIFE

The review of life or what is traditionally known as the examination of conscience is a spiritual exercise that helps one to grow in the spiritual life. It helps one to discover the roots of evil and allows one to determine the occasions where one fails, and those things against which one has to be on guard. An attentive study of one's faults and their causes helps to know one better and to protect from future dangers. It is also the best means of seeing God's mercy at work³¹. Herbert Alphonso names it as the consciousness examine and defines it as follows: "It is, in prayer, a reorientation of

the heart which begins in thanksgiving, then moves towards being centred on the Lord through one's very real experience consciously accepted"³².

L. M. Savary suggests that the review of life is an effective means for achieving inner healing. It makes us realise how much Jesus loves us. Feeling loved by Jesus, we will be stimulated to love him in all the events of our lives and in the lives of others³³.

GOD EXPERIENCE

The God experience is being in love with God in an unrestricted fashion, without limits, or conditions and reservations³⁴. It is a deep interpersonal union between God and man, but at the same time this communion includes the whole universe. Jesus was a man of prayer who enjoyed a profound experience of God the Father. Similarly, the hallmark of the Jesus Fraternity is the God experience. Like Jesus who regularly prayed to the Father, and the disciples who could say, "which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have watched and touched with our own hands" (1 Jn 1,1), the call to the Jesus Fraternity is a call to a profound God experience. It is a call to experience the phenomenon "You in me and I in you" (Jn 17, 21).

As members of a prayer group, we should have a God experience. Most of us are priests, brothers and religious sisters who work in different fields such as schools, hospitals, slums, offices, etc. When the traditional apostolate fails to provide us with a deep God experiences our ministry in the Jesus Fraternity will provide occasions for experiencing God. We will have many opportunities for an increase of faith, for experiencing the joy of fraternity, the power

of divine providence, and experiencing the magic of the accomplishment of divine dreams. We will experience that God fights for us, defends us, and carries us on His wings.

We must examine ourselves after many years of work in prison ministry whether our faith increased. Whether we had experiences of God and of divine providence?³⁵ The criterion for the authenticity of any religious experience does not lie in the intensity of emotion or in extraordinary phenomena. It lies in the fruit of God's love coming to expression in the person's life: peace, patience, kindness, joy, the willingness to bear other's burdens, to forgive and not to bear resentments³⁶. It is manifested in the readiness to lay down one's life for others. The best criteria to check whether a person has the spirituality of the Jesus Fraternity can be verified by asking the question: "Do I notice an increase of the God experience, a doubling of faith, a joy of fraternity, a satisfaction in serving Jesus in the lost, the least and the last, by my active involvement in the Jesus Fraternity ministries?"

FORTIFIED BY ASCETICAL PRACTICES

The Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the magisterium and the sacred liturgy invite us to do penance for our own personal sanctification and for the sanctification of the whole world. The Catechism of the Catholic Church recommends three typical and traditional ways, fasting, prayer and almsgiving, as the most important ascetical practices (CCC 1434; Cf Tobias 12,8-10, Is 58,3-10). Christian asceticism is based on the emphasis given by Jesus to self-denial and self-emptying. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mk 8,34). Ascetical practices invite us to incorporation into the death and resurrection of Christ. Like St Paul who practised asceticism,

“I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified” (1 Cor 9,27) Jesus Fraternity members voluntarily practice asceticism.

Jesus condemned the abuses in the Jewish penitential practices, insisting that they are to be done in a proper spirit and not merely for external manifestation (Cf. Mt 6,1-18). Pope John Paul II asserts that internal conversion and external penance be closely linked:

Penance means, in the Christian theological and spiritual vocabulary, asceticism, that is to say the concrete daily effort of a person, supported by God's grace, to lose his or her own life for Christ, as the only means of gaining it; an effort to put off the old man and put on the new; an effort to overcome in oneself what is of the flesh in order that what is spiritual may prevail; a continual effort to rise from the things of here below to the things of above, where Christ is. Penance is therefore a conversion that passes from the heart to deeds, and then to the Christian's whole life³⁷.

Penance is an absolute requirement of the gospel for anyone who alienated himself from God. When Paul VI taught through the Apostolic Constitution on penance, *Paenitemini* that all the faithful are obliged by God's own law to do penance, the whole tradition of the Church was behind him ³⁸. Penance is needed to do reparation for our sins and sins of the world.

FASTING

Fasting has been the backbone of the Jesus Fraternity/ Prison Ministry India. Hundreds of priests, religious, seminarians and lay people do chain-fasting and prayer for the success of the ministries undertaken by the Jesus Fraternity.

J. Edwards in his *Religious Affections* argues that prayer and fasting are the principal means of renewing and manifesting holy affections. For him, prayer and fasting, ordered by Jesus Christ and received through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, warms the heart, increases devotion, reveals the glory of God and the weakness of man, renews and strengthens the covenant of God, beseeches the fullness of the Spirit and helps to advance Christ's kingdom³⁹.

Our tiny daily sacrifices, which we offer together with the daily Holy Mass for the reformation of the lost, become very effective means in transforming hardcore criminals⁴⁰.

MAXIMUM INCONVENIENCE

One of the ascetical practises that the Jesus Fraternity practices is to work with maximum inconvenience. This we took as our lifestyle not only because it is the most effective method, but also because it is only when we work with maximum inconvenience, we will have the occasions to experience divine providence.

The first All-Kerala Prison Pilgrimage taught the Jesus Fraternity members that the apostolate with maximum inconvenience is more effective than the one with maximum convenience. We believe that the hardships we undertook during the prison pilgrimage really played a great role in the renewal of prisoners and in the development of the apostolate towards the lost sheep. All the preparations for the prison pilgrimage we did together with our priestly studies. We were very particular that due to this ministry we should not neglect our studies. We made use of all our free times for this apostolate.

During prison pilgrimages we always depended on public transport services. It was not easy because we not only had our personal luggage, but also Bible bundles, packets of books and periodicals to distribute to the prisoners, as well as our musical instruments. It was like an exodus. Sometimes seeing our luggage buses did not stop to take us. But always the grace of our Lord was with us and we were able to arrive at every prison at the exact time as fixed in the programme.

For instance, when we arrived at Badagara prison it was 2:00 pm and the temperature was 45 degrees Celsius. Sweating and gasping we reached the prison with our luggage. The superintendent, a communist, had already decided not to permit us to perform the programme. But when he saw us coming carrying different bundles and wearing our white cassocks he was pleased and co-operated with us. He told us that he had never in his life seen Catholic priests and brothers working like this.

On another sunny day, at noon, we came to the Koilandy prison. The superintendent was a Catholic. Noticing our arrival carrying lots of luggage he said, "O my brothers, are you coming like this; I thought you might come by a vehicle of your own. It's unbelievable". Later he wrote to the seminary Rector in appreciation of our hard work, enthusiasm and the amazing success of the programme.

RICHNESS IN SUFFERING

Often, in spite of our sincere effort to live a life that glorifies God and gives happiness to our brethren, we undergo unexpected, unreasonable and unnecessary sufferings that can be spiritual, psychological, emotional or physical. In such situations, we are forced to ask ourselves, why is this

happening to me? Why at this time? What is wrong with me? In order to understand and appreciate better the suffering that comes our way, it may be good to learn the role and meaning of suffering in the spiritual life.

In one's ongoing spiritual development, suffering plays a very significant role because it is the most nutritious spiritual food and the best means of growth in the spiritual life. Suffering, according to the Johannine perspective, is a process of pruning so as to bring forth more fruit. "Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more" (Jn 15,2). For St Luke, suffering that is not due to our mistakes, is an unrighteous wealth with which we can win friends, and which is one of the precious treasures in heaven. "Make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes" (Lk 16,9).

Suffering, for the author of the Letter to the Hebrews, is a process of training. Since we are the legitimate children of God the Father, He trains us through suffering.

My son, do not scorn correction from the Lord, do not resent his training, for the Lord trains those he loves, and chastises every son he accepts ... Of course, any discipline is at the time a matter for grief, not joy; but later, in those who have undergone it, it bears fruit in peace and uprightness (Heb 12, 5 ff.).

Above all suffering is an invitation to purify and sanctify ourselves and the world by participating in the paschal mysteries of Jesus Christ which as a consequence will help us to grow in spiritual life.

PEOPLE ORIENTED

The spirituality of the Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India is Christocentric. Jesus Christ, the Son of God is the epicentre of the Jesus Fraternity. Anchored in Jesus Christ, the Omega point, the Jesus Fraternity members extend their ministry to people who are lost, oppressed and marginalised such as prisoners, prostitutes, street children, beggars, etc. The salient spiritual rays of the people oriented spirituality of the Jesus Fraternity can be illustrated as follows: that it is a free divine gift and a vocation and it is a call within the call to search, serve and save the lost-last-least; its volunteers need to be adorned with the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, enriched with fraternity, shall always be one in mind and one in heart, and above all shall embrace the spirituality of being.

A DIVINE GIFT AND CALL

Mother Teresa, foundress of the Missionaries of Charity, during her talk on the second national gathering of Prison Ministry India held in Delhi, said that it is a beautiful gift of God to take care of people, men and women in jail. Prison ministry is something beautiful for God and it is a real gift. Of course, it is a divine gift and a grace to handle with care the most precious gift, human beings in the form of prisoners; to reintegrate them into the mainstream of family and society. As a gift we should gratefully and reverentially receive it. As it is a God-given gift, a charism, it is our duty to nurture it and thereby bring forth from it hundredfold fruits⁴¹.

The history of the Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India proves that we do this well. That is why the small seed of the Jesus Fraternity that sprouted in the nursery of St

Thomas Apostolic Seminary within in a short span spread all over Kerala and now to the four corners of India. We need to appreciate the gift of persons with love, patience and compassion in order to develop the hidden humanness and divineness within them. No human being is born as a criminal; a criminal is made by the negative pressures of one's life situations, and by the discriminative and oppressive structures of society. It is the duty of the prison ministry volunteers to quench the never-ending thirst of human beings for love, acceptance, recognition, transformation and development.

Every member of the Jesus Fraternity has the right to contribute something for the development and extension of this ministry. If we examine the history of Prison Ministry India we can understand that it was the members and not the founders who took initiatives in launching new missions and activities. For instance, a newcomer in the small prayer meeting proposed sending Christmas cards to prisoners. The Holy Spirit works, uses and even speaks through newcomers. We should have the patience to listen them and a willingness to properly discern with them.

Prison ministry is a call, a divine call, a call within the call. It is a call not to do something, but a call to be. It is a call to be a prophet, a physician, a psychologist, a spiritual director, a scientist, a reformer, a researcher, a good shepherd, a lamb of God, the salt of the earth, the light of the world and above all a call to be in love. As a prophet it is our duty to make prisoners aware of their sinfulness and deviations, and to bring them back to God. As a physician it is our duty to treat the physical illness of prisoners. As a psychologist it is our duty to listen, counsel and to cure their mental problems. As a spiritual director it is our duty to make them aware their

spiritual stage and to guide them along the right track, which leads to eternal life. As a scientist it is our duty to record and analyse their problems, propose solutions, and to publish findings. As a reformer it is our duty to reform ourselves, our units, the prisoners entrusted to us, and the whole Church. To do this we must have the qualities and aptitudes of the Good Shepherd, the Lamb of God who dares to offer himself as ransom for others.

THE LOST, THE LAST AND THE LEAST

Why we do prison ministry? Is it because Jesus said, “I was in prison and you visited me”? Prisoners and prostitutes were included in the company of Jesus. He visited the tax office of Matthew, the tax collector. He sees Matthew sitting at the tax booth. Seeing him, Jesus says, “Follow me” (Mk 2,13-14). We know that going to tax booth and similar locations, is not an unusual or an accidental thing in Jesus’ life. It is part and parcel of his way of life and in fact one of his most effective methods. In John, chapter 4, while going to Jerusalem, Jesus deliberately waits at Jacob’s well at Sychar, for the Samaritan woman. At the Pharisee’s house he forgives the woman who washed his feet with her tears (Lk 7, 36 ff).

This is the person oriented ministry of Jesus; the ministry of reaching out to the sick, the sinner, the poor, the oppressed, the neglected, the victimised, the marginalized, the lost, the least and the last. It is the lifestyle of the Good Shepherd to leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, to go in search of the lost and to lay down his life for them (Jn 10,11). As Jesus said, “I am sending out like sheep among wolves; so be cunning as snakes and yet innocent as doves” (Mt 10,16). Inviting us to do this type of ministry, Jesus asks us, “Are you ready to leave the ninety-nine and go in search of the

one who is lost” (Lk 15,4)? It is a question of a fundamental option and a decision, an option and decision for the least, last and lost, for the criminal, outcasts, and victims. We should ask ourselves whether we stand with the healthy or with the sick? Whether our parishes and communities stand with the righteous or with the sinner? Whether our institutes stand with the lost or with the saved?

There is no doubt that sinners and tax collectors were friends of Jesus. When Jesus was at dinner in the house of a Pharisee, a number of tax collectors and sinners were also sitting at table with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many of them among his followers. When the scribes of the Pharisee party saw him eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners”? When Jesus heard this he said to them, “It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. I came to call not the upright, but sinners (Mk 2,15-17). It becomes all the more clear at his proclamation in the synagogue of Nazareth: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of Lord’s favour” (Lk 4,18-20).

Are not prisoners and prostitutes anti-social elements in our society and therefore to be punished and imprisoned? Are not they beyond reformation and rehabilitation? Is it not a waste of our energy, time and money to look after them? These are the frequent questions reflecting the attitudes of many ordinary people. Police officers also often ask us: “Father, why do you spend your time and energy for the betterment of these rascals and social parasites? Why don’t you work for

good people who may bring forth a hundredfold in results? Is it not an impossibility to reform these criminals?" Our answer to these questions is nothing but the attitude of Jesus towards the lost. This positive attitude and approach of Jesus towards the sinners should also be the attitude and approach of the Jesus Fraternity.

SEARCH, SERVE AND SAVE

On 10th July 1994 I visited the Hintelbank prison in Bern, Switzerland. There I met Sr. Rita Silvia of the Little Sisters of Jesus of Charles de Foucauld. She voluntarily lives in the prison in order to search out, serve and save the prisoners⁴². Sr. Carmelita and Sr. Lissie from St Anne's Congregation and volunteers of Prison Ministry India live in the Bangalore Central prison in India serving prisoners. Jesus Fraternity members go in search of people and live a life of simplicity in the midst of the most rejected, dejected and the poorest people. There is challenge. There is risk. There is adventure. There is simplicity. There is spirituality. There is mysticism and there is martyrdom. In this sense, the ministry of Jesus Fraternity foreshadows the theology, ministry and spirituality of the third millennium. It is true that the Jesus Fraternity lifestyle is adventurous and thrilling but at the same time it is risky, dangerous and it is a play in devil's court. As the roaring lion he is waiting for every chance to defeat us at each and every movement.

Jesus Fraternity members make a radical decision for the sinner and for the lost and they develop the adventurous and revolutionary ministry of reaching out to others. This is the dynamic, action-oriented lifestyle of Jesus, instead of a comfortable armchair ministry, or the traditional presbytery centred ministry. People have been coming to us for centuries

and we may think that they will still come. But such days may not last long. The countdown of such days is at hand. The signs of the time tell us that it is high time for us to go in search of the people in their shelters as Jesus and the apostles did. It may be prisons, brothel houses, red light districts, railway stations, bus stations, casinos, underworld centres, slums and other inhuman situations where the fate of man is to be caught up constantly in sinful situations. The greatest responsibility of today's clergy and religious is to prepare new generations for the person oriented reaching out ministry of Jesus.

An analysis of Church history shows that the Church spent most of her time and energy on those who came in search of her and not on those who did not come to her. Convinced of the important role of the Church to search, serve and save the sinners, the Jesus Fraternity decided to focus on prisoners, prostitutes, and the like as its target groups. Therefore, the method of prison ministry is to go in search of sinners, to find those who are not coming to the Church and to save them for the Lord⁴³.

This searching, serving and saving attitude of the Jesus Fraternity has been rooted in the teaching and lifestyle of Jesus who said, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25 35-36). Pope Benedict XVI explains this in his first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*: "Jesus identifies himself with those in need, with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). Love of God and love of neighbour have become

one: in the least of the brethren we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus we find God” (DCE 15).

Jose Pulickal, one of the pioneers of Prison Ministry India and the founder of *Snehadeepam*, an institution for prisoners’ children, highlights the significant role of the Jesus Fraternity in searching, serving and saving the outcasts of the society.

The ministry of PMI is particularly formed and established ... for the homecoming and transformation of those who have gone astray, abandoned and lost in the sinful clusters of the social systems. The volunteers take special care to move in search of every deviated person especially prisoners, prostitutes, juvenile delinquents, etc. even in the midst of risks and difficulties⁴⁴.

Sr. Fidelis of the Holy Cross Sisters, the founder of *Jeevodaya Ashram* for released female prisoners at Bangalore, expresses her experience in serving the lost sheep through the following words: “We realise that when we begin to live for the lost sheep of God, we become effective instruments in the hands of God the Father and become part and parcel of His wonderful, redemptive, master plan”⁴⁵.

ADORNED BY VIRTUES

The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity are the foundation of Christian moral activity, which gives life to all the moral virtues (Cf. CCC 1812-1813). Like Abraham who dared to offer his only-begotten son as a sacrifice to the Lord, life of the Jesus Fraternity members should be filled with faith, hope and charity.

Faith, “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11,1), enables the mind to assent to God’s revelation. This means an assent to and an acceptance of God’s Word of salvation through Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ, which is a gift of God and a supernatural virtue infused by Him (CCC 153), is the surest means to overcome the world (1Jn 5,5) and to live a holy life. We can purchase it from the divine sphere, for “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3,16)⁴⁶.

The lifestyle of the Jesus Fraternity provides its members ample occasions to constantly practise the theological virtue of faith. By faith its members fully trust in the Lord, and completely surrender to the will and master plan of God (Rom 8,31; Phili4,13; Is 40,31). It is only through faith that the Jesus Fraternity bought land and constructed buildings at Vettukad, Thiruvananthapuram, Bangalore and Ernakulam. The chapel construction at the open prison, Nettukaltheri needed two lakhs of rupees. Father Sebastian writes that to begin the construction there was only 20 rupees given by an old widow⁴⁷.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, the theological virtue of hope never permits us to be disappointed because God’s love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (CCC 2658). It is with hope that we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1817). C. A. Bernard opines that hope purifies one’s memory, makes him to remember the favours received from God and even to remember personal merits. The soul

supports itself only with this help of God and it turns itself to things above and depends only on the power of God⁴⁸. It is the prayer of the Church and our personal prayer that nourish hope in us (CCC 2657. Cf. also Ps 40,2; Rom 15,13).

The greatest theological virtue, charity, helps one to establish a love-bond with God, others and oneself. It is by charity that we love God above all things, and our neighbours as ourselves (CCC 1822). We need to advance to the higher levels of this charity according to the model of Jesus who loved his own 'to the end' (Jn 13,1), who died out of love for us, while we were still enemies (Cf. Rom 5,10; Mt 5,44). St Paul enumerates the different manifestations of true love in his first letter to the Corinthians:

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude, not irritable, love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things» (1Cor 13,4-7; CCC 1825).

D L Gelpi explains the deeper meaning of Christian love:

It seeks out the triune God as the transcendent object of its love. It longs to dissolve and abide with Christ in God. Christian love discovers in Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection the supreme revelation of divine love, and the final outpouring of the Holy Breath on all flesh. Christian love recognises divine love's universal scope. Nevertheless, while it longs for union with God Christian love acknowledges that such union flows from one's willingness to imitate in this life the atoning character of divine love. The atoning divine love incarnate in Jesus reconciles humans to one another and to God by forgiving in advance any wrong, by sustaining that forgiveness even in the moment of rejection, and by offering

to others the possibility of reconciliation even before they repent⁴⁹.

All aspects of a Jesus centred spirituality should be overshadowed by unconditional divine love, the first and most important commandment, “love God” (1 Cor 13). This divine love can best be manifested by loving the least, the lost and the last.

Love in its climax is self-immolation as Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross. Out of the overflow of our love we will be able to sacrifice ourselves for the Lord and for the people. Martyrdom is a special call from God to bear witness to the love of God. In our daily life we have many occasions to participate in this martyrdom.

Besides the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity every Christian must develop the moral and human virtues. Being members of the Jesus Fraternity, it is their duty to develop the virtues particular to the fraternity’s charism: prayer, service, God experience, work with maximum inconvenience, etc.

ENRICHED BY FRATERNITY

Every human being is a child of God, created in the image and likeness of God, and is redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. Hence all human beings are our brothers and sisters, children of the heavenly Father. The fundamental principal of the spirituality of fraternity emerges from the commandment of Jesus Christ, “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Mt 22, 39-40).

Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India is primarily a fraternity, where sisters and brothers, whether they are bishops, priests, women or men religious, or lay people, live

together as one family with “equality, fraternity, liberty and responsibility”. This fraternity is based on the fraternity of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and is extended to prisoners, prostitutes, street children, beggars, drug addicts, AIDS patients, as well as to angels and saints in heaven. All become one family.

As it was in the early Christian Church, there exists an atmosphere of deep personal friendship and communion among the Jesus Fraternity members. Fraternity means a spring of friendship, neither selfish, nor simply peripheral but a deep and genuine, developing from a single being and reaching to every being in the cosmos, a universal brotherhood. It was from the deep friendship between Varghese Karippery and Francis Kodian that the whole concept of the Jesus Fraternity developed. Whenever the beginnings of disagreement, misunderstanding, and animosity emerge among members, something quite natural among human beings, they are to be cleared as early as possible. If one cannot fully reconciled with one’s brothers how can he/she work for the reconciliation of others⁵⁰.

To be at the service of others is one of the best signs of real fraternity. While I was at Aurobindo Ashram for personal prayer I noticed a young boy from Andhra Pradesh who always tied a bathing towel around his waist and enthusiastically performed voluntary services to others. Out of curiosity, one day I asked him, “Why do you carry the bathing towel around your waist”? His reply was thought provoking. He said that carrying the bathing towel around his waist is a symbol; symbol of my ardent desire to do service for others. Likewise, in the Jesus Fraternity all are at the service of others. By this genuine service to others we prove that we are genuine brothers and

sisters to others. A community where all are brothers and sisters implies that all are equal, equal in dignity and worth; giving the other the respect due to the person and looking upon the person in faith as an image of God, redeemed by Christ⁵¹.

The fraternal spirit is manifested not only by encouraging and appreciating our brothers and sisters but also by timely corrections and healthy criticisms. When we organise prolonged programmes, everyday we evaluate the activities and plan the coming day events. This daily practice of self-evaluation, criticism, analysis and planning were very important during the All Kerala Prison Pilgrimages.

True fraternity leads to the communion of saints. The term 'communion of saints' has two closely linked meanings: 1) communion in holy things, 2) and communion among holy persons (CCC 946-948). Here, we speak only of the communion of holy people. The pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified, and the blessed in heaven together form one Church. The most important member is Christ, its head. In this communion, the merciful love of God, and his saints are always there to pray for us (CCC 962).

Christian communion among our fellow pilgrims brings us closer to Christ. Likewise our communion with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as from its fountain and head issues all grace, and the life of the People of God itself. Quoting from *Martyrium Polycarpi* the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "We worship Christ as God's Son; we love the martyrs as the Lord's disciples and imitators, and rightly so because of their matchless devotion towards their king and master. May we also be their companions and fellow disciples!" (CCC 957). The saints are saints because of their

participation in the paschal mysteries of Christ. Their lives are true images of the goodness of Christ. Saints are living images, which enable our believing and hoping and loving within the concrete particularities of our life stories⁵².

Mary, Mother of God, is also the mother of the members of Christ. "By her complete adherence to the Father's will, to his Son's redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the virgin Mary is the Church's model of faith and charity" (CCC 966). The Jesus Fraternity has a great devotion to Mary and Joseph. Many times we experienced the powerful intercession of Mary in our ministry for prisoners. Often when the authorities unnecessarily denied permission to conduct programmes for prisoners Mary came to help us.

ONE IN MIND AND ONE IN HEART

Harmony reigned in the early Christian Church. They were one in heart and one in mind. "The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul" (Acts 4,32). The same unity is the Jesus Fraternity's secret of success. We work for the lost sheep united in mind and heart.

How can one develop unity? The most important thing is to love the other as Jesus loves him/her. Secondly, we need to pray, and, if needed, to fast for unity. Thirdly, we need to dialogue with the person. Fourthly we work together. Sharing our deepest personal longings, praying together, undergoing suffering together, undertaking great projects for the Lord and for His people are very helpful in creating unity among group members.

Practically, the Jesus Fraternity achieved this unity in spite of many differences and great diversity through deep group prayer, fraternal sharing, and hard work. Prayer, the

best means of unity, removes misunderstanding and brings forth harmony among members. Those who pray together are united together. During the prison pilgrimages it was the common prayer that bound us together and helped us to work together ignoring differences of opinions.

Many non-Catholic churches and denominations are actively involved in prison ministry. Prison ministry provides us occasions to practice ecumenical principles underlined in the Church documents. Our work in prisons with one in mind and one in heart together with other denominations is a great Christian testimony. The Jesus Fraternity began with the support and encouragement of Dr Kunjumon Chacko, the founder director of Prison Fellowship India who is a member of the Baptist Church. During the initial five years, we visited prisons on behalf of Prison Fellowship India. Dr Kunjumon Chacko wrote to the prison superintendents informing them of our visits. In the course of time the Jesus Fraternity developed a warm relationship with the Prison Fellowship International and its head office in Washington, DC. In 1996, I personally visited the Prison Fellowship International headquarters and discussed possibilities of working together. Since then the Jesus Fraternity regularly participates in the international meetings of Prison Fellowship International.

His Holiness Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Inuente* speaks some of the significant characteristics of the spirituality of communion in its number 43, which certainly are our guiding principles:

A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us.

A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as “those who are a part of me”. This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship.

A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a “gift for me”.

A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to “make room” for our brothers and sisters, bearing “each other’s burdens” (*Gal* 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy. Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, “masks” of communion rather than its means of expression and growth (NMI 43).

The Jesus Fraternity, as a Catholic Christian movement always and everywhere manifests its Catholic nature. In matters related to morality and faith it always follows Catholic teachings. At the same time, it is all embracing, welcoming the lost irrespective of caste, creed and colour. Who are not lost in this world? Who are not least among us? Who are not the last among us? We all are lost, we all are least and we all are last. Hence the Jesus Fraternity spirituality is an all-embracing spirituality for the entire universe⁵³.

SPIRITUALITY OF BEING

By spirituality of being we mean a spirituality of silent example. It is a spirituality of preaching not by words but by life witness. It is a spirituality of presence like that of the Holy Eucharist. After years of social work and active apostolic life, a “do-er” - a man of doing, one should become a “be-er” - a man of being. The world is fed up and polluted by preaching merely by words. The time has come to preach with one’s being, with existence, with one’s life.

The spirituality of being demands from us a certain amount of silence and solitude. Charles de Foucauld writes about the significance of silence in spiritual life:

The soul needs this silence, this recollection, this time to forget the created universe. It is during it that God establishes his kingdom in the soul and shapes inner spirit, the spirit of intimate life with God, the soul’s converse with God in faith, hope and charity. ... It is in solitude, in life alone with God, in the recollection, which is forgetful of everything created, that God gives himself wholly to him who thus gives himself wholly to God⁵⁴.

The Jesus Fraternity has always placed importance to being rather than just doing. What is significant is our life witness, our lifestyle. Like the Eucharist and like the flower, it is by our existence, way of doing things that we give a message. This was the secret of the success of Jesus Christ and of M. K. Gandhi, Father of India. It was due to the simple and spiritual lifestyle of the Jesus Fraternity in its initial years that it developed with the blessings of bishops and seminary authorities.

Spirituality of being is nothing but the spirituality of love. Love, love of God and neighbour, is the sum and

substance of the whole teaching of Jesus Christ. This is also the sum total of the whole theology and spirituality of the Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India. St Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians writes:

Though I command languages both human and angelic - if I speak without love, I am no more than a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. And though I have the power of prophecy, to penetrate all mysteries and knowledge, and though I have all the faith necessary to move mountain - if I am without love, I am nothing. Though I should give away to the poor all that I possess, and even give up my body to be burned - if I am without love, it will do me no good whatever (1 Cor 13, 1-3).

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

All the spiritual rays of Jesus Fraternity and prison ministry both the Jesus centred and the people oriented aspects can be summarised in unconditional love. More than anything else, it is the warmth of the unconditional love that becomes the most powerful symbol of spirituality. This is neither an erotic nor a filial love but divine love which climaxes in agape. This divine love of God is expressed in the creation of the universe and especially in the creation of man. Because it is in the image of God he created man (Gen 1-2). Divine love is manifested further by divine forgiveness and by the sacrifice of God's own Son for the remission of human sins. Jesus expressed this concept through the images of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10, 25-37) and the Good Shepherd (Jn 10,1-18). The New Testament makes love the most important commandment (Cf. Mt 22,34-40; Mk 12,28-34; Lk 10,25-28): loving God and man. For Jesus, the summary of the law and the prophets was love of God and love of neighbour⁵⁵.

Pope John Paul the Great in his first encyclical reminds us: “Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it. (*Redemptor Hominis*, 10.1)

M. R. McGeady writes in her book, *God's Lost Children*:

If there's one message you get from this book, I'm praying it is this one. That love truly can save these kids. With enough love - with enough help from good people like you - these kids can be saved. If we just give these kids a foundation of love to build on, they can truly stand up and rise above their hurt and pain, like a phoenix who rises from the ashes⁵⁶.

During a personal discussion with Ronald Nikkel, the current president of Prison Fellowship International, about the renewal of prisoners, he affirmed that unconditional love is the only way. Father Alexander Kureekkattil, the former director of the *Jesus Fraternity*, affirms from his years of experience in the renewal of prisoners that it is possible to renew hardened criminals if we love with the love of Jesus and if we forgive as Jesus forgives us⁵⁷.

In order for this divine love to spring forth from us and from our fraternities we must experience ourselves unconditional love and forgiveness. We must make use of occasions to encounter personalities of high affective, intellectual, moral, religious and Christian virtues and values. We must profit from opportunities to experience unfathomable affection, compassion, concern, caring, forgiveness and faith experiences as did the prodigal son from his loving father (Lk 15,20-24).

CONCLUSION

We have been discussing the theological and spiritual colours of the Jesus Fraternity and of Prison Ministry India. The theological and spiritual foundations of the Jesus Fraternity have two significant colours: it is *Jesus centred* and it is *people oriented*. The first part, *Jesus centred* spirituality consists of seven different aspects: 1) overwhelmed by Father God's love, 2) redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus 3) led by the Holy Spirit, 4) empowered by the Word of God, 5) nourished by the sacraments 6) enlightened by spiritual exercises, and 7) fortified by ascetical practices.

Secondly, the Prison Ministry spirituality is people oriented and it has seven spiritual rays such as 1) divine gift and call, 2) the lost, last and the least, 3) search, serve and save, 4) adorned by virtues of faith, hope and charity, 5) enriched by fraternity, 6) strengthened by unity, and 7) engulfed by being spirituality. All these characteristics of the Jesus Fraternity can be summarised in the unconditional love of God and neighbour.

The Jesus Fraternity rainbow cannot be said to be completely formed by the fourteen colours explained above. After all, it is God's work in process. We must never think that there can be no chance for further spiritual development. On the contrary it shows that from these present colours there can emerge in time many more spiritual rays through the intermediation of other spiritual personalities.

ENDNOTES

- 1 See FRANCIS KODIYAN, *Saga of Divine Providence. The History of Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2000; VEEKKE, *Star of Hope in Dark Cells*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2000; JOSE PULICKAL, *Jesus the Dynamic Way. Towards the Ministry for the Least, the Lost, and the Last*, Claritian Publications, Bangalore 1999.
- 2 See C.A. BERNARD, *Teologia spirituale*, Edizioni San Paolo, Torino 1987, 112.
- 3 See FRANCIS KODIYAN, "Spirituality of the Jesus Fraternity", *Reformative Explorations*, 2/3 (2004) 270-272.
- 4 TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, *The Phenomenon of Man*, tr. B. Wall, Harper and Row Publishers, New York 1959.
- 5 AGRICOLA, "Divine Providence in Prison Apostolate", in *Prisoners Our Own Brethren*, ed., Varghese Karippery-Latika, PMI Publication, Bangalore 1998, 94-97.
- 6 For further experiences of divine providence in the history of Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India, see FRANCIS KODIYAN, *Saga of Divine Providence. The History of Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2000.
- 7 JOSE PULICKAL, "The Biblical Perspectives of the Dynamic Charism of Prison Ministry India", in Varghese Karippery-Latika, *Prisoners Our Own Brethren*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 1998, 34.
- 8 See Sebastian Kochupura, "Isosahodaryam Thyagojalamayoru Jivithasaily", in *Thadavarayiloru Kaithiri*, ed., Joseph Mackolil, OIRSI, Kottayam 1996, 28-30.
- 9 This was very clear to me on 8th January 1989 at my First Mass celebration at Chendamangalam, in Kerala, India. During the public meeting after the Holy Mass many congratulated me. I was thinking hard what to say as a response to the parishioners. When I stood up for the speech, my mind was empty. All of a sudden an new thought came to me. "God has a beautiful song about me. I don't know its lyrics, and its rhythms. The lyrics I knew I sang well, the next lines, and its rhythms and tune I know not know and it's my task to find it out and sing it well".
- 10 For further information on Love-festival see, FRANCIS KODIYAN, *Saga of Divine Providence. The History of Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2000, 113-116.

- 11 Charles de Foucauld did discernment of the spirit by answering the following questions, “who, what, when, where, why, by which means, how”. See FRANCIS KODIYAN, *Conversion Trajectory of Charles de Foucauld*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 1998, 183. St Ignatius of Loyola, the most authentic person in discernment, in his *Spiritual Exercises* writes about the classical rules of discernment, which would be highly beneficial to the members of Jesus Fraternity. See IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius*, tr. A Mottola, Image Books, New York 1964.
- 12 For more on conversion heights see, FRANCIS KODIYAN, *Religious Conversion Trajectory*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 1998.
- 13 For studies on transformed prisoners read, JEMMA GEORGE, *Let Prison Walls Fall*, The Institute of Social Service, New Delhi 2000; LATIKA PAZHUKARAN, *Jewels in Dustbin*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2001; Philip Neri, “Gigi’s Secret of Reformation”, *Reformative Explorations*, 1/1 (2003) 53-58; FRANCIS KODIYAN, “Linda Watson: Former Prostitute – An Angel of Hope”, *Reformative Explorations*, 2/3 (2004) 320-325.
- 14 See E. HOSLETTER, “PF Recidivism Study Continues-Research Team Analyses Data for Program Impact”, *Developments*, January (1996) 1-2.
- 15 See D.A. PHILLIPY, “Hearing and Doing the Word. An Integrated Approach to Bible Study in a Maximum Security Prison”, *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 37 (1983) 13-21.
- 16 Sanctifying grace is an inner transformation of the being of man, a true divinisation entailing a new and supernatural mode of being. It is also a conforming of one’s being to Christ, a Christianization of man’s existence (Cf. Rom 5,15-6,11).
- 17 See C. WILLIAMS, “The Theology of Conversion”, in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, London 1967, IV, 288.
- 18 See M. SZENTMÁRTONI, “Vita spirituale e salute mentale”, *Rassengna di Teologia*, 34 (1993) 293-294. See also N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, tr. CJ De Catanzaro, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, New York 1974, 113-148.
- 19 VARGHESE KARIPPERY - LATIKA, *Prisoners Our Own Brethren*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 1998, 11.
- 20 SEBASTIAN KOCHUPURA, “Prison Ministry India, A Heroic Life Style”, in Varghese Karipperry - Latika, *Prisoners Our Own Brethren*, 38.

- 21 VARGHESE KARIPPERY, *Prisoners Our Own Brethren*, 12. See also Sebastian Kochupura, "Prison Ministry India, A Heroic Life Style", 39.
- 22 For a study on the impact of Prison Ministry India on the formation of seminarians and religious see JOSEPH MACKOLIL, "The Impact of Prison Ministry India on the Formation of Seminarians and Religious", in Varghese Karipperiy-Latika, *Prisoners Our Own Brethren*, 50-57.
- 23 See K. CASEY, *Children of Eve*, Covenant House, New York 1991, 29.
- 24 See FRANCIS KODIYAN, *Saga of Divine Providence*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2000, 135-136.
- 25 GIANNI VALENTE, "Children of a Lesser God?", *30 Days*, 6/7 (2000) 41.
- 26 See IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, tr. A. Mottola, Image Books, New York 1964.
- 27 See R. FARICY, *Seeking Jesus in Contemplation and Discernment*, Christian Classics, Maryland 1987, 26-29.
- 28 See W. JOHNSTON, *Being in Love. The Practice of Christian Prayer*, Collins, London 1988, 56-62, 161.
- 29 According to Buddhist teachings, meditation is the most general term for the domestication of the human mind. It integrates the calming of the mind with focusing of this calmed mind in order to see reality more clearly. See W. CENKNER, "Eastern (Asian) Spirituality", ed., M Downey, *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, Liturgical Press, Minnesota 1993, 311. V. Mathaji writes: "Change will come from a changed being. The effective way to change will come from contemplation - not action". V. MATHAJI, "Spiritual Formation in Ashrams in Contemporary India", *Studies in Formative Spirituality*, 11 (1990) 365.
- 30 See FRANCIS KODIYAN, *Religious Conversion Trajectory*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 1998, 192. On Indian meditation and contemplation see V.F. VINEETH, *Yoga of Spirituality. Christian Initiation into Indian Spiritual Traditions*, Vidya Vanam Publications, Bangalore 1995.
- 31 See E. ROCHE, "Pénitence et conversion dans l'Evangile et la vie chrétienne", *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 79 (1957) 123.
- 32 See H. ALPHONSO, *The Personal Vocation. Transformation in Depth through the Spiritual Exercises*, Gujarath Sahitya Prakash, Anand 1992, 72-91.

- See also IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 48-54.
- 33 See L.M. SAVARY, "The Particular Examine of 'Thanksgiving'", *Review for Religious*, 39 (1980) 238-246.
 - 34 BERNHARD LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1994, 106.
 - 35 On God experience see, ANSELM GRÜN, *Wenn du Gott erfahren willst, Öffne deine Sinne*, Vier-Türme-Verlag, Münsterschwarzach 2000.
 - 36 See M Simpson, "Elements of Religious Experience", *The Way*, 17 (1977) 255.
 - 37 JOHN PAUL II, *Reconciliation and Penance*, Office of Publishing and Promotion Services United States Catholic Conference, Washington, Dc 1984, 10-11. The term asceticism comes from the Greek word *Askesis* which means *practice* and it was used in the athletical sense. It is in this sense that St Paul used the phrase, "Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath but we an imperishable" (1 Cor 9,25).
 - 38 PAUL VI, "Paenitemini", *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 58 (1966) 177-198. See also B. HÄRING, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, St Paul Publication, Slough 1978, I, 414-415.
 - 39 See G.S. WAKEFIELD, ed., *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, SCM Press Ltd, London 1996, 128.
 - 40 Fr Sebastian Kochupura writes about the sacrifices that the pioneer members underwent during the initial years of the Jesus Fraternity. See SEBASTIAN KOCHUPURA, "Isosahodaryam Thyagojualamayoru Jivithasaily", in *Thadavarayiloru Kaithiri*, ed., Joseph Mackolil, OIRSI, Kottayam 1996, 24-26.
 - 41 Francis Kodiyan, "The Spirituality of Jesus Fraternity", *Reformative Explorations*, 2/3 (2004) 266-267.
 - 42 See FRANCIS KODIYAN, "Spirituality of the Jesus Fraternity", *Reformative Explorations*, 2/3 (2004) 265-283.
 - 43 Jesus' preaching in the synagogue of Nazareth (Lk 4, 18-19) underlines his option for the outcasts and prisoners. See also Lk 5, 29-30; 6, 20-26; 10, 25-36; Mt 5, 1 ff.; 9, 15-16. For a detailed study on Jesus' attitude towards the sinners and outcasts of the society see JOSE PULICKAL, "The Biblical Perspectives of the Dynamic Charism of Prison Ministry India", in VARGHESE KARIPPERY, *Prisoners Our Own Brethren*, 22-36.

- 44 JOSE PULICKAL, "New Biblical Perspectives of the Dynamic Charism of Prison Ministry India", 32.
- 45 FIDELIS, "Jeevodaya Ashram", in VARGHESE KARIPPERY - LATIKA, *Prisoners are Our Own Brethren*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 1998, 130.
- 46 See W. BEVERIDGE, *The Theological Works of William Beveridge*, John Henry Parker, Oxford 1844, IV, 37ff.
- 47 See, SEBASTIAN KOCHUPURA, "Isosahodaryam Thyagojalamayoru Jivithasaily", in *Thadavarayiloru Kaithiri*, ed., Joseph Mackolil, OIRSI, Kottayam 1996, 27-28.
- 48 See C.A. BERNARD, *Teologia spirituale*, 165. On the stages and the healing power of Christian hope, see D.L. GELPI, *Committed Worship. A Sacramental Theology for Converting Christians*, I. *Adult Conversion and Initiation*, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota 1993, 83-89. N. Cabasilas mentions the beatitudes and so many other Christian virtues as sources of Christian perfection. See N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, tr. C.J. De Catanzaro, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Lanham, MD 1985, 159-224.
- 49 D.L. GELPI, *Committed Worship. A Sacramental Theology for Converting Christians*, I. *Adult Conversion and Initiation*, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota 1993, 102-103.
- 50 On spiritual dimensions of the Jesus Fraternity, see FRANCIS KODIYAN, "Interiority of Prison Ministry India", in *Prisoners Our Own Brethren*, ed., VARGHESE KARIPPERY- LATIKA, PMI Publications, Bangalore 1998, 16-21.
- 51 On Foucauldian Fraternity Spirituality see, FRANCIS KODIYAN, *Conversion Trajectory of Charles de Foucauld*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 1998, 177-182.
- 52 See J. NAVONE, "Heroes, Saints and Leaders", *Studies in Formative Spirituality*, 11 (1990) 30. See also A. GOODIER, *Saints for Sinners*, Sheed & Ward, London 1943.
- 53 It was while attending a class on Biblical spirituality at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome that I understood the deeper meaning of the renewal of sinners. There while listening the lecture of Professor Costacurta I came to know that the term 'sinners' means the whole Church, the whole universe. For, in a sense all members of the Church are sinners. Thus I understood that to work for the renewal of sinners means to work for the renewal of the Church.

- 54 JF Six, *Spiritual Autobiography of Charles de Foucauld*, tr. H. Smith, PJ Kenedy And Sons, New York 1964, 111.
- 55 For a brief study on unconditional love, see J. FUELLENBACH, *Proclaiming His Kingdom*, Divine Word Publications, Manila 1992, 22-23. See also E. McDONAGH, "Love", in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. J.A. Komonchak et al., Michael Glazier, Delaware 1987, 602-616.
- 56 M.R. McGEADY, *God's Lost Children*, Covenant House, New York 1991, 4.
- 57 See A. KUREEKKATTIL, "Participation in the Struggles", in *The Echo, Prison Ministry India*, Jesus Fraternity, Bangalore 1995, 25.

Chapter Three

Reformative Spirituality

INTRODUCTION

Christianity has begotten numerous and diverse schools of spirituality. Each one plays a particular role in the Mystical Body and in the history of mankind. At the basis of each form of Christian spirituality there is a fundamental phenomenon – perversion, repentance, reformation and reclamation. The sum and substance of all forms of Christian spirituality can be summarised in this radical return towards God that culminates in ultimate Trinitarian communion and a commitment towards mankind. The spirituality of reformation, an entirely new theme, is based on Jesus' call to conversion and man's response to this unceasing call. "Repent, and believe in the good news" (Mk 1, 15). "No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and spirit" (Jn 3,5).

In this chapter, we will treat of a way of life attuned to prisoners' reformation, reconciliation, rehabilitation and reintegration, which will benefit both those who undergo trial and punishment in prisons, those who undergo reformation in rehabilitation centres, and those who undergo reintegration process as well as for those engaged in prison ministry. We will begin with reformative spirituality, will proceed to the phenomenon of personal religious conversion, and then finally will discuss the reformative trajectory.

REFORMATIVE SPIRITUALITY

Since 1980 Adrian van Kaam's formative spirituality has influenced the psycho-spiritual world. He endeavoured to lay the foundations for a formation science based on spirituality and psychology. Formative spirituality with its swift development made an exceptional contribution in the field of religious discipline. Within in a short span it became a significant subject in seminaries and religious formation institutes¹.

The word 'reformation' derives from the Latin verb 'formare', means to form, to shape, and to fashion. Therefore, the term 'reformation' means the process of reforming, reshaping, refashioning, and redefining. Formation itself is considered to be the process of facilitating the integral development of the human person by the activity of the Holy Spirit.² Reformation also is basically a response to the Divine promptings. It is a process of an individual's growth toward the Divine, toward one's ultimate life goal and toward the realisation of one's divine blueprint³.

As the Jesus fraternity is concerned with the reformation of the lost, it has been pondering, for decades, over a methodology for the reformation of those whose moral training was with insufficient or lacking during their formative years. In the history of mankind so far no significant school of thought has a theory of reformation for those who have deviated from the right path. Hence Prison Ministry India out of its firm conviction and utter necessity decided to develop a reformatory spirituality in view of reforming, rehabilitating and reclaiming those who are lost, namely, prisoners, prostitutes, hired killers, and the like.

After three decades of experience with prisoners' reformation, rehabilitation and reclamation, Prison Ministry India would like to proudly announce to the world that prisoners/prostitutes/hired killers and the like can be reformed when suitable methodology used. If Jesus can reform and reclaim the good thief on the cross at the last moment (Lk 23, 39-43), certainly, everybody who believes in Him can transform a prisoner even at one's old age. Man, being the crown of creation, with the assistance of divine grace, has an immense potential to reform himself /herself at any moment. In other words, human beings are always in a process of formation, deformation and reformation and vice versa.

Reformative spirituality is nothing more than the spirituality of Jesus Christ who went in search of the lost (Lk 15), and who emphatically declared that He came to call not the upright but sinners (Mk 2, 17). Jesus reforms the Samaritan woman (Jn 4), Zacchaeus, the tax collector (Lk 19) in an extraordinary way. If Jesus can reform and reclaim the good thief on the cross at the last moment (Lk 23, 39-43), certainly, anyone who believes in Him can transform a prisoner even at one's old age. It is the spirituality of the Father of the prodigal son and the mother of St Augustine, St Monica, who prayerfully and patiently waited for the conversion of her son.

There are many voluntary agencies and initiatives working to reform prisoners while they are in prisons. Though this is good and to be encouraged, we should not stop with reformatory efforts inside the prison. The reformation process begun in prison is to be continued until the prisoners involved are rehabilitated, reintegrated into family, society and finally returned to God, thereby completing the track of reformation.

Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India proposes a spirituality that is applicable to the whole life of prisoners, i.e., while they are in prison, when they are released, when they undergo the period of reformation, when they are rehabilitated, and when they are reintegrated in society. This is a lifelong process that ends only at one's death. Hence the most prominent source of reformatory spirituality is Jesus Christ Himself and the most effective means of reformation is a radical personal religious conversion, which will be our point of discussion in the coming pages.

PERSONAL RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

In its ordinary sense, the noun conversion has as its meaning the transforming of something to something else or into something else. In itself, the term need not mean conversion to God. It may not even be a conversion to something good. Instead, it can be a conversion to evil, to atheism⁴, to rationalism or to Marxism. It may be a conversion to Catholicism, to the Orthodox Church, to Protestantism, to Judaism or to other religions outside the Judeo-Christian tradition⁵. R. Ireland, a sociologist of religion, defines conversion as «a precise turning to a clearly defined set of beliefs and/or practices and/or commitments to a new group of fellow devotees»⁶.

According to W.E. Conn, in its very ordinary sense, conversion can mean the social fact of someone joining a traditional Christian Church. It can also mean the loving dedication of one's life to one's neighbour as called for in the gospels⁷. He defines the change that happens in conversion as the change in the *master story* one adopts: «Conversion is commonly understood as a change in the content of a person's faith or fundamental orientation. Thus, for example, a person in becoming a Christian adopts the Christian story as an orientation

to life or drops it for another master story in converting from Christianity to something else»⁸. In the same way, when a person converts to the Catholic Church, the Catholic Church demands from him a free, total and irrevocable acceptance of its dogmas and precepts. The best example of this may be the conversion of J.H. Newman to the Catholic Church⁹. H.P. Boullaye writes: «A total change should touch the intelligence by which one definitively accepts a rule of thoughts (beliefs or dogmas) and the will through the acceptance of a rule of behaviour (moral obligations, cult practices, ascetical observances)»¹⁰.

Hence, conversion from the popular point of view is a change of belief from one system of religious doctrines to another which is generally regarded as brought about by divine intervention¹¹. Thus in the course of time, the term conversion in the ordinary sense began to be known as a change of religious affiliation. Conversion, in this sense, is not the subject matter of the present study.

SELF-TRANSFORMATION

When we dive deeply into the concept of conversion, we find that neither the mere tentative and provisory change nor the casual change of beliefs or religions can be called conversion in its strict sense. If we think that with the momentary change of religion, like conversion to Christian denominations by means of baptism, conversion in its perfect sense occurs, we are mistaken. It would be just like thinking that one reaches the summit of religious perfection by the mere fact of religious profession¹². Religious conversion, in order to be real, should be a total, radical and life-long personal transformation. It is a change in or redirection of the whole life or personality. This necessitates a change in past ideas, attitudes, values and

behaviour. It is a radical alteration of an individual's character and conduct¹³.

Conversion is self-transformation. It is an integral change of the whole person - of the subject and his world - a transformation of consciousness where changes occur in one's psychological, intellectual, moral and spiritual horizons¹⁴. M. Miller underlines this fact while defining conversion as the profound transformation of mind, will and heart toward God¹⁵. P. Robb explains further the 'what' and the 'how' of self-transformation. According to him, conversion is a transformation of the self and this «transformation of self begins with a confrontation of myself in sinfulness. As self-confrontation deepens, I come to true self-knowledge, to compassion and community with others, to knowing that Jesus of Nazareth is Lord»¹⁶. This radical transformation reaches down into the roots of individual's affections, images, dreams and choices¹⁷.

D.A. Snow and R. Machalek argue that the change involved in conversion is more fundamental than that of beliefs and identities. It is a change in one's sense of ultimate grounding or root reality, a change in one's universe of discourse. Viewed in this light, conversion concerns not only a change in values, beliefs, and identities, but more fundamentally, it entails the displacement of one's universe of discourse by another. It is the ascendance of a formerly peripheral universe of discourse to the status of a primary authority¹⁸. It is exactly what William James (1842-1910), an American psychologist and philosopher wrote in his *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, that a man is converted means that religious ideas previously peripheral in his consciousness, now take a central place, and that religious aims form the habitual centre of his energy¹⁹.

Bernard Lonergan (1904-1985), the famous Canadian Catholic theologian, makes conversion a central theme in his writings²⁰. He understands conversion as an existential, intensely personal and utterly intimate experience in which a profound transformation of oneself and of one's world takes place. As a consequence one has a new understanding and a new orientation in life. According to him, conversion is a change of direction for the better, a transformation of the subject and her/his world. It is a reorientation of life²¹. In *Method in Theology*, he states:

By conversion is understood a transformation of the subject and his world. Normally it is a prolonged process though its explicit acknowledgement may be concentrated in a few momentous judgements and decisions. Still, it is not just a development or even a series of developments. Rather it is a resultant change of course and direction. It is as if one's eyes were opened and one's former world faded and fell away. There emerges something new that fructifies in inter-locking, cumulative sequences of developments of human living²².

B. Lonergan's disciple D. Tracy described self-transformation as the actual transformation of the subject, his orientations and operations and therefore, his worlds²³. Conversion as self-transformation is further developed by C.L. Staples and A.L. Mauss. They hold the view of the change in self-consciousness. Conversion involves a radical change in a person's experience. Whether fast or slow, complete or partial, a radical change is assumed to underlie the experience of conversion. It is a change in self-consciousness and self-concept. That is, a change in the way a person thinks and feels about his or her self²⁴.

B. Kilbourne and J.T. Richardson conceptualise conversion in terms of old and new paradigms. The old paradigm is viewed

in passivist and deterministic terms, the prototype of which is the conversion of Paul²⁵. The new paradigm is explained from the standpoint of active agency, personal choice, meaning and negotiation. The prototype of the new paradigm is the seeker who actively makes plans, choices and decisions²⁶. They also conceptualise conversion at either the intra-individual or inter-individual level of analysis. The intra-individual level explains conversion as resulting from factors within the individual. The inter-individual level explains conversion as resulting from factors occurring among individuals or between individuals and the social environment²⁷.

SELF-ACTUALISATION

We have seen that conversion is self-transformation. Now we go a step further and arrive at the concept of conversion as self-actualisation. It is Kurt Goldstein (1878-1965), a German born American psychologist, who introduced this term originally in order to realise all of one's potentialities²⁸. Abraham H. Maslow (1908-1970), probably the most prominent humanistic psychologist and an expert in the field of self-actualisation, argues that there exists a hierarchy of personal development needs common to all human beings. Self-actualisation is at its pinnacle. Basic needs - such as food, shelter, safety and warmth - are ranked according to priority; once these are satisfied, individual seeks to fulfil the social needs of love, affection and social contacts. When the social needs are being satisfied, the individual desires the needs of self-worth and self-esteem. When all these needs have been fulfilled, the individual turns to the need of self-actualisation. According to A. Maslow, people are motivated to experience conversion in order to fulfil their personal potential. He calls this drive self-actualisation. Thus conversion, by a change of thought and behaviour, leads one to be all that one can be²⁹.

A. Maslow explicates the twelve traits that are exhibited by people at this last stage of personal development as follows: 1) heightened acceptance of self, others and nature, 2) increased spontaneity, 3) increased problem solving abilities, 4) increased autonomy and resistance to cultural pressures for conformity, 5) increased detachment from social pressures and heightened desire for privacy, 6) greater appreciation for and richer emotional expressions, 7) higher frequency of peak experiences, 8) heightened identification with mankind, 9) improved interpersonal relations, 10) more democratic character structure, 11) greatly increased expressions of creativity and finally 12) changes and refinements in a personal value or belief system³⁰.

Every human being, created in the likeness and image of God (Gen 1,26) is biologically, psychologically and spiritually unique and is called to contribute something uniquely proper which pertains to his unique personality³¹. At the same time, each one is created by God with a unique personalised function in the Body of Christ. God has a great project or a master plan for each one. It is each one's duty to discover this special place and role in the Body of Christ. It is a discovery of the unique personal vocation. It is the result of Christ's choice for us, a choice made by the infinite wisdom, love and power. So it cannot go wrong. It is to fulfil this function that we are given the special and different gifts and charisms³².

In the same way, J.M. Fuster, who considers self-actualisation as a life-long process of self-improvement, affirms that the self-actualised person has a clear idea of his ultimate goal. According to him, the self-actualised person has the capacity to channel all his energies towards the achievement of this goal. He realises that God has a plan for every human

being and it is the duty of every person to know more and more of God's plan for him and to respond generously to the lights he receives from the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the self-actualised people are those who give themselves fully to the fulfilment of God's plan which of course is for the betterment of neighbour³³.

In agreement with J.M. Fuster, M. Szentmártoni affirms that everyone is created for a personal life-task. Self-actualisation can be obtained only through dedicating oneself to a task outside one's self. To make use of more technical language, one might say that the believer has a transcendental identity. He should avail himself of God's ultimate plan about him³⁴. This means that the less we are preoccupied with ourselves and the more we surrender ourselves to a cause outside ourselves, the more rapid will be our self-actualisation.

Conversion becomes self-actualisation when an individual returns from his deplorable and degraded situation and turns towards his original and fundamental dignity and when this converted person concentrates all his potentialities for the actualisation of his God-given master-plan and life-mission. This is the fundamental duty and goal of man, who is the masterpiece of God and the crown of the whole of creation.

SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

The concept of religious conversion in its deeper sense goes beyond the idea of self-transformation, self-actualisation and reaches the concept of radical self-transcendence. Psychologically, the idea of self-transcendence, is closely related to Victor E. Frankl (b.1905), a German-born American psychiatrist. He argued that human existence will have meaning only in self-transcendence. This is a capacity to go beyond

oneself to an encounter; or to offer and dedicate oneself to someone or something. This signifies being fundamentally oriented towards a scope, towards a significance to be individuated and towards certain values to be realised. In this sense, for man to live is to give meaning to one's life. To be a man, according to V. Frankl, means to turn to somebody or something distinct from oneself. Only in this transcendence can man realise himself. The thrust towards self-transcendence becomes a concrete modality of living-over, that is a living that goes beyond the factuality of events and gives a global space to an existence in the world, and also to an existence for the world, elaborating thus an evolutive dynamic that consists of the certainties of the present engagement and of its signification for future projects³⁵.

In the conversional point of view, man's search for meaning, self-transcendence, his capacity to dedicate himself by going beyond himself occurs when he returns to God and discovers his own unique God-assigned blueprint and dedicates himself totally to this master plan. Thus according to our understanding, self-transcendence and the self-actualisation converges in conversion³⁶.

Many modern theologians hold the same opinion, that the call to conversion is a call to self-transcendence. Among them B. Lonergan is a leading proponent and the prophet of the transcendental method in the English speaking world³⁷. There is a basic drive towards transcendence at the core of every man, which promotes him from one level of consciousness to the other and from one level of self-transcendence to the other³⁸. For B. Lonergan, man is born to the realisation of self-transcendence in terms of intellectual, moral and religious conversion. The *Transcendental Method*³⁹ enables a person to know

and affirm himself as a being whose dynamism is toward self-transcendence in knowledge and love, as a being on the lookout for God. It demonstrates that man is a being with the capacity for self-transcendence⁴⁰. Archbishop Bathersby expresses well the characteristics of Lonergan's convert: «the fully converted subject is a fully self-transcendent being whose life is regulated by the transcendental precepts: be attentive, be intelligent, be responsible, and be in love»⁴¹. B. Lonergan asserts that self-transcendence has to begin with the purification of human desire. Purification of human desire happens by being in love with God. This is the achievement of conscious intentionality, that is, the awareness of experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding. Self-transcendence brings a joy and peace that frees us to love ourselves, others, and God⁴².

Religious conversion springs from self-transcendence. The ability to transcend the self, writes M. Baird, is the crucial element in the experience of moral, cognitive, affective and religious conversion⁴³. The potential for self-transcendence lies at the root of the conversion process. S. Happel and J.J. Walter state: «It shifts from self love or love of any finite object to the love of the Absolute Other [...] Grasped by the Other, we recognise that our desire for God turns into joy that we have been with God before we knew it. Eventually, we learn to love the Other in and for the sake of the Other»⁴⁴.

This aspect of self-transcendence can be seen further in the sense that every conversion is a spiritual - ascetical and mystical - revolution in the life of an individual. The old forces of sin, self-centredness and evil tendencies are overthrown from their place of power and new gospel values, habits and virtues assume eminence. Old concepts of God, world, man and self are replaced by new concepts based on biblical, theological,

ecclesial and spiritual principles. Old worldly experiences are replaced by new spiritual and celestial experiences which are rooted in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a transcendence from the OT morality to the NT morality based on selfless love (Mt 5-7); a transcendence from the life style of the pagans to the life style of the children of God (Mt 20,25-28); a transcendence from the works of the flesh to the fruits of the spirit (Gal 5,16-24)⁴⁵.

DEIFICATION

Christian conversion in the oriental theological perspective is deification or divinisation. This is a process of transformation by grace, by the descent of God whereby the human person is raised in union with Christ to live the life of God⁴⁶. It is an intimate union with God and a near identification with his eternal way of existence. This is not a process of actually becoming God; instead it is a process of becoming God-like⁴⁷.

W. Teasdale when interpreting deification according Pseudo-Dionysius describes it as: «The soul has become like unto the Divine or is deified insofar as the intellect and the will are so totally one with God that the soul shares the impulse of God's eternal inner life. One is, thus, deified through direct participation in what God is in Himself, that which is always hidden from creation»⁴⁸.

In oriental spirituality, the term deification represents the summit of Christian perfection. In order to arrive at this summit Byzantine mysticism proposes a triadic way. The first stage consists of the three facets of purification (*katharsis*), illumination (*ellampsis*) and vision (*theoria*). The second step

consists in unification (*henosis*) and the third step in deification (*theosis*). For the Byzantine spiritual trajectory deification is:

The omnipotent and sanctifying divine Triadic activity which, because of the indwelling of the Trinity and grace and because of the inborn and natural capacity of the creature for transfiguration, induces a process of assimilation to God the Father of the whole human person, of humankind, and of the visible and invisible universe in its totality, through the mediation of the incarnate Logos, Christ the Pantocrator, and in the Holy Spirit⁴⁹.

According to R. Valantasis, deification is the process by which the human person becomes more and more similar to God in thoughts, will, love, deeds and perception of beauty. This is not simply an ascent to God, but an infusion of the divine into the normal life of the Christian. To be divinised means to appropriate personally the benefits which Christ has made possible for the perfection of the human being. This perfecting activity of the human being constitutes an ascent into the divine realm of the cosmic ladder. Here there is the descent of the divine into the human soul and a consequent ascent of the human soul to God⁵⁰.

Deification articulates the goal of conversion. The purpose of conversion should not be merely to live an ordinary Christian life but to reach the stage of divinisation. To be divinised is to ascend, yet remain in the body; to be human yet to have the divine fully resident within; to be individuated yet to be a part of God; to be separated and yet united to God. Unification of God and man is the primary means for instituting the reign of God on earth and at the end, humans who attain divinisation will reign with God⁵¹. As Cabasilas writes: «In the world to come we shall be gods with God,

fellow heirs with Him of the same riches, reigning with Him in the same kingdom»⁵². It is to this end that all spiritual and psychological means of religious conversion are to be oriented.

Deification is a means of participation in the life of Christ. Just as the Word participated in human flesh, so human flesh participates in God. It is the process of the divinisation of man like the humanisation of God. Divinisation is a way of union with God in Christ. «Union with Christ, then, belongs to those who have undergone all that the Saviour has undergone and have experienced and become all that He has»⁵³. That is, a participation in the mysteries of the incarnation, transfiguration, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, the son of God. He descended in order that we might ascend. It was His task to descend, and it is ours to ascend by the same path⁵⁴.

The doctrine of divinisation is rooted in Scripture (Acts 17,28). It is developed in the writings of the early Church and in the Eastern Church's theological and spiritual tradition. The letters of Paul reflect the fundamental truth of divinisation. According to him, the Christian life consists in sharing in the life of Christ (Gal 2, 19-20). Peter speaks of believers as sharers of the divine nature (II Pt 1,4). John writes: «Beloved, we are God's children now, what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is» (1Jn 3,2).

The Patristic writers developed these Scriptural ideas in terms of divinisation and participation in the divine nature. To them, it was a sharing in God's life, in particular God's Trinitarian life. It was Christocentric, for it is as a member of Christ that the believer is brought to participation in the divine reality⁵⁵. This descent of God for the ascent of man was developed elaborately by both the Greek⁵⁶ and Syrian Fathers.

For instance, Clement of Alexandria writes: «The Word of God became man that you may learn from man how man may become God»⁵⁷. St. Ephrem (ca. 306-373) a fourth century Syrian theologian in his *Hymn on Virginity* writes: «Divinity flew down to draw humanity up, for the Son had made beautiful the deformities of the servant and so he has become a God, just as he desired»⁵⁸. In the *Paradise Hymns*, Ephrem gives an analogy to the process or levels of divinisation with the help of the tripartite nature of humanity: spirit, soul, and body.

Far more glorious than the body is the soul,
and more glorious still than the soul is the spirit,
but more hidden than the spirit is the Godhead.
At the end, the body will put on
the beauty of the soul,
the soul will put on that of the spirit,
while the spirit will put on
the very likeness of God's majesty⁵⁹.

Some of the contemporary theologians have come closer to this eastern language of deification in their writings. They argue that deification must acquire a specific anthropological content, that is, it must be understood as Christification. Then, man's goal and the means of realising it, will be internally illuminated and organically connected with himself, with the world and with Christ⁶⁰.

To be Christian is to undergo repeated conversions throughout one's life. The Christian must be continually ready and open to the impact of God, whether gentle or forceful, and to reflect on that meeting in order that it may become part of the evolutionary process by which each one of us grows to the full nature in Christ. It is the essence of «Be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect» (Mt 5,48) and is the process of

becoming, as St. Paul writes: «I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me» (Gal 2,20). Therefore, Christian conversion is the deep awareness of the Trinitarian presence within us, within every human being and within every creature and consequently this leads to the ultimate divinisation and glorification of people and of the cosmos⁶¹.

Sebastian Brock warns the readers that they should not misunderstand Ephrem and suppose either that he envisages a merging of humanity into the Godhead, or that divinised humanity will in any way be on a par with God. As the Doctrinal Congregation asserts, it is necessary to bear in mind that man is essentially a creature and remains such for eternity. So an absorbing of the human self into the divine self is never possible, not even in the highest states of grace. However, we can truly become sharers of Christ as «adoptive sons» who cry out with the Son⁶² in the Holy Spirit, «Abba, Father». In this sense, the Fathers are perfectly correct in speaking of the divinisation of man⁶³.

SOCIO-POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

We have discussed that conversion as a return to God involves a self-transformation-actualisation-transcendence and deification. This return to God - the vertical dimension of conversion - if it is genuine, leads consequently to a return to the neighbour - the horizontal dimension of conversion - which is a gradual development in the socio-political consciousness. A convert, reaching the stage of self-transcendence and deification but with an indifference towards his neighbour who is in need, has not yet attained the perfection of genuine Christian conversion. P.V. Robb unfolding the same truth, argues that unless the convert, who reached deification, advances beyond mere personal conversion to socio-political conversion as

a Christian he inevitably succumbs to unauthenticity in his relationship with God and neighbour. Therefore, to ensure the complete authenticity of personal conversion one needs to reach the stage of socio-political consciousness⁶⁴.

Similarly, Donald Gelpi in his article, *The Converting Jesuit*, affirms the moral insufficiency of a mere personal conversion and emphasises the need for a socio-political conversion. According to him, conversion takes on a socio-political dimension when the convert takes responsibility for influencing the motives and decisions of others, especially those who shape the large, social structures that mould our attitudes, beliefs, consciences and relationship to God. Anyone who attempts to live a personally converted life without passing to socio-political conversion must inevitably succumb to some measure of irresponsibility in interpersonal dealings⁶⁵.

For Gustavo Gutierrez, conversion not only means a radical transformation of self but also a thinking, feeling, and living as Christ - present in exploited and alienated man⁶⁶. He argues that a spirituality of liberation will centre on a conversion to the neighbour, the oppressed person, the exploited social class, the despised race and the dominated country. A genuine conversion to the Lord should imply this inevitable conversion to the neighbour. To be converted, for him, is to commit oneself to the process of liberation of the poor and oppressed⁶⁷.

The CCC also gives much emphasis to the socio-political dimension of conversion, especially in conforming to the norms of justice (CCC 1429). For instance, the CCC states that as far as human society is concerned, an emphasis on interior conversion of heart does not eliminate but imposes

the obligation of changing institutions and conditions of life which provoke sin, so that they will conform to the norms of justice (CCC 1888). D.J. Billy points out this perception of the CCC in clearer terms:

One might say that “conversion” in the new Catechism is a very personal affair, which takes place within an ecclesial context and which has profound social implications. Emphasis is made time and time again that conversion has to do primarily with an interior change of heart and yet, when you read the Catechism as a whole, you soon discover that this change of heart makes a person reach out to others on various personal and societal levels⁶⁸.

An authentic socio-political conversion may sometimes be powerful enough to transform society, renew the Church and to reconstruct the country. In other words, behind the transformation of society, renewal of the Church and reconstruction of the country there must be persons who have undergone radical religious conversion with a concomitant socio-political consciousness. In his encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Pope John Paul II underlines this aspect in terms of structural conversion. He elaborates the concept of structural conversion by making use of the virtue of solidarity⁶⁹. According to him, the structural conversion is a solidarity with one’s own community, country and to the whole Mystical Body; a solidarity with a total commitment to the common good (SRS 38-39)⁷⁰.

Pope Paul VI in his encyclical, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, reminds the faithful that even the best structures can become inhuman, if those who live in them do not undergo a conversion of heart:

The Church considers it to be undoubtedly important to build up structures which are more human, more just, more

respectful of the rights of the person and less oppressive and less enslaving, but she is conscious that the best structure and the most idealised system soon become inhuman if the inhuman inclinations of the human heart are not made wholesome, if those who live in these structures or who rule them do not undergo a conversion of heart and outlook (EN 36).

Personal religious conversion implies the conversion of all individuals, institutions and structures. It can not be authentic, if it does not lead to a better justice, peace and development of the world. As M. Hellwig states: «Conversion of the world to justice and peace involves a thoroughly new vision of possibilities and actualities in political, economic, social, and cultural affairs»⁷¹. It is certain that a total return to God would renew the face of the earth; for, as B. Häring writes: «one cannot give himself to Christ and his kingdom and then stand indifferent to the great work of his redemption, which is valid for all creation»⁷².

Therefore, Christian religious conversion, according to our understanding, is a life long process of self-transcendence from self-centredness to God-centredness, more specifically to Christ-centredness and from Christ-centredness to other-centredness. This is a growth, a transcendence from self-love to universal-love and is a deep leap away from one's ego to the universal brotherhood, accepting God as the universal Father and considering all human beings as brothers and sisters. Not only the millions of human beings but also the millions of animals, vegetative and non-vegetative beings are members and part and parcel of one's own family. In short, Christian religious conversion is a theocentric-Christocentric self-transcendence, in which one learns to consider the whole cosmos as one's own

family and offering oneself totally to bring all to the perfection of the heavenly Father⁷³.

REFORMATION TRAJECTORY

Reformation spirituality is a lifelong trajectory that consists of different stages. The word *Traject* comes from the Latin *traiectus*, which means a passing over, a way or a passage. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* describes it as a path, a progression or a line of development⁷⁴. By the term trajectory we mean the various stages of a progressive path that has a beginning, a middle and an end. According to our understanding, prisoners' reformation is a process having different phases including an initiation, a growth and a climax.

The reformation trajectory of a prisoner who has been living an immoral life, may begin with an initial moment of conversion by some special grace such as reading of the Holy Bible, participation in a retreat, an encounter with an enlightened person, particular life crises, etc. He gradually commences to turn away from his past sinful and immoral life. Through the continued forces of unconditional love and acceptance from relatives, friends and voluntary agencies, he begins to keep the commandments and develop the human and moral virtues. Later, he deeply dives into the theological virtues and closely imitates Christ by embracing Christian values in his personal life. He becomes another Christ. Thus the reformation trajectory of a prisoner is the transformation and transcendence track of a criminal turning to Christ, which is a progressive process of deification and of socio-political consciousness⁷⁵. This lifelong reformatory process has four important stages: pre-formative, formative, per-formative and post-formative⁷⁶.

PRE-FORMATIVE STAGE

The pre-formative stage is the dark period in a prisoner's life. It refers to the paradise lost experience, the turning away from the unconditional love of God, from family members; ones circle of friends and from society. It is the decline and degradation period of one's intellectual, affective, moral and religious life⁷⁷. This can be called the process of de-conversion, the perversion or pre-conversion period. In the case of the parable of the prodigal son, the pre-formative stage began with the departure of the prodigal son from the presence of his loving father and ends with the decision to return to the father (Lk 15,11-24).

There are certain important factors to be considered in the pre-formative stage. The first among them is *past experience*. Reformation is closely associated with past sins and failures. Rectifying the past is not the sole aim of reformation. Rather, it is a process that takes notice and utilises the past in moving towards the future⁷⁸. The past is not detached from one's life like an object over which now one does not have any hold whatsoever. It is never completely eliminated but forms part of one's life and is integrated into one's personality and weighs on one's determinations. This past can include an unhealthy moral climate, a wound badly cured, or a weak point always ready for self-poisoning. Thanks to grace in the present, the past can be transformed and present behaviour can give a totally new meaning to it.

The second factor of pre-formative stage is *sin*. Reformation cannot ignore the fact of sin. Often, the pre-formative stage might be a period tortured by evil inclinations, tendencies, habits and sins. A prisoner who undergoes reformation could be a victim of inordinate attachments

to crime, sex, drugs, alcohol, food, wealth, power, position and so on. He might have a life filled with the effects of the cardinal sins; a lifespan without any consideration for the commandments of God and society. These are great obstacles not only to growth in the trajectory of reformation but also to interior freedom.

The *reasons* and situations that lead one to become a criminal and a prisoner are varied. They may be due to the frailty and weakness of human nature or concupiscence. There can be biological, psychological or socio-economical reasons. It may be due to the influence of one's peer group, literature, mass media, culture, pornography, and correctional institutions. Unemployment, discrimination, pathetic life situations and uncontrolled intellectual quests and non-directed adventurous tendencies could also lead to de-conversion. Alcohol and drug abuse as well as the breakdown of families, failure in fulfilling the basic human needs of rural societies and the phenomenon of urbanisation may also lead to perversion.

PRE-FORMATIVE SPIRITUALITY

Pre-formative spirituality refers to the spirituality applicable to the period of imprisonment. The biblical basis for this spirituality is, first of all, "I was in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25, 36). Secondly, "Remember those who are in prisons as though you were in prison with them" (Heb 13, 3). Thirdly, "We are well aware that God works with those who love him, those who have been called in accordance with his purpose, and turns everything to their good" (Rom 8, 28). This is a spirituality that voluntary agencies should keep in mind when they visit prisons and meet with prisoners.

There are many programmes meant for the reformation of prisoners, such as Alpha for Prisoners, Inner Change Freedom Initiative⁷⁹, Sycamore Tree Project, Umuvumu Tree Project⁸⁰, Vipassana⁸¹, etc. The Jesus Fraternity also has specific programmes for the reformation of prisoners. It organises prayer groups near every prison where members regularly visit prisoners and conduct different spiritual programmes such as Holy Mass, confessions, prayer meetings, counselling, etc. Besides regular prison visits, they conduct special programmes for prisoners during national and religious festivals, for example, Independence Day, Christmas. The prayer group members not only pray and fast for the renewal of prisoners but they also request prayer and fasting from many others.

The members of the Jesus Fraternity prayer groups in seminaries adopt prisoners and personally pray and fast for them. Seminarians send them letters and Christmas cards, and Christian periodicals such as *The Dawn* (Pulari), and *Prison Melody* (Thadvarayile Sangheetham). Many seminarians conduct retreats for prisoners. During summer holidays they organise prison pilgrimages visiting all the prisons in the state and conducting spiritual and cultural programmes. All these programmes are based on Bible and call for radical conversions⁸². Before, during and after the programme for prisoners, Jesus Fraternity members pray and fast for its fruitfulness.

FORMATIVE STAGE

The formative stage of prisoners' renewal is the actual process of one's return to God. This is the moment in one's life that consists of the turning away from a sinful life and the journey to God and His ultimate plan. The formative stage maybe filled with one or more of the following experiences:

awakening, enlightenment, illumination, a sense of higher control, or of the intense presence of God, a great conviction of sin, determination to renew one's life, self surrender and forgiveness. Primarily, this is an intense experience of a divine call and human response by a radical decision to be born again. As a result, the individual experiences an absence of worries, a sense of ultimate well-being, of peace and harmony. The six months' period a released prisoner spends at the renewal and rehabilitation centre of Prison Ministry India can represent the formative stage.

In the case of the prodigal son, his formative stage began with the decision to return to his father and ends with its actual realisation of the return. For St Paul, it was the God experience on the way to Damascus (Acts 9, 1-19) and for St Augustine, the *tolle legge* experience. This is the crucial moment of illumination, the spectacular bursting forth of one's mental powers which opens the doors of the mind to the Spirit and hence, quickens the spiritual life.

The formative stage has different phases consisting of different life events and intense spiritual experiences. There is first the conversion, which normally becomes very public, but formation does not end here. There is still the necessity of moral preparation, and the need for an intellectual preparation by removing prejudices and developing visions, missions and life- goals. For instance, in the case of St. Paul, his formative stage, which began with the God experience on the way to Damascus, was not the end of his reformation but only the beginning of a gradual growth journey that consisted of different encounters and experiences like that of the third heaven (2Cor 12,2-4).

One of the important factors in the formative stage is the *point of departure*. That is, the «how» of its beginning or the starting point of reformation. Always, the initiator is God and the initiative is from Him. Hence, the beginning of reformation is in God and often is a God experience. However, reformation may occur with an extraordinary event like that which happened to Paul. Or it may begin with a doubt like that which happened to Lacordaire. The starting point of reformation may also be due to other causes like misery, disgust with oneself, serious reflection on a sermon or a book, periods of sickness, crisis, experience of death, etc.

Finally, the formative stage may end with a search for the meaning of life or an attempt to find one's concrete life goal or way of life. This search for meaning and for life's goal may reach the shore of personal vocation, which is a process of finding out one's unique God-assigned life-mission, lifestyle; one's state in life and its realisation⁸³.

FORMATIVE SPIRITUALITY

There are certain significant factors related to formative spirituality. For instance, the fact of an *awareness of sin* has a great role to play in the formative stage. The appearance of guilt, self-blame and the sense of sin have been noted as essential parts of this period. Conquering deep-rooted sins and sinful habits are proper acts in the formative stage. As St. Paul states, the life of those who are experiencing reformation is an ongoing battle between the good spirit and the evil spirit (Gal 5,16-18; 24-25).

Contrition is one of the proper dispositions of formative spirituality. A genuine self-analysis leads to deep contrition. This leads to profound self-knowledge. Self-

knowledge brings forth humility, which is the humble recognition of the depth of one's abasement and sinfulness. In a fully developed religious sorrow, the sinner is shaken at his innermost being at the thought of the malice of his offence against an all-holy God (Lk 5,8). A profound awareness of one's own sinfulness hurls him into the arms of the infinitely merciful God (Jn 6,69).

Reconciliation, an effect of a genuine contrition, is a renewed embracing of God, self, family and society. Reconciliation with victims and family members is very significant in the spiritual growth of those who undergo the formative stage. Every process of reconciliation is closely related to forgiveness. Therefore, forgiveness has a significant role to play in reformatory spirituality⁸⁴. The sacrament of reconciliation is one of the best means for healing our mind, heart and spirit. It not only forgives sins but also intensifies spiritual development. The four dimensions of reconciliation are: reconciliation with God, reconciliation with man - family, society, victim, - and reconciliation with nature and self.

MENTORING

The word mentor literally means a trusted adviser. It finds its origins in ancient Greece. In the Greek epic *The Odyssey*, Mentor is the name of the trusted friend who in Ulysses' absence protects, nurtures, educates and guides his son Telemachus towards adulthood. This mythic figure is described as an old man, a shepherd of the people, and often represented by the goddess Athene⁸⁵.

In the renewal program of *Covenant House* there is a person called *mentor*, who more or less carries out the role of the spiritual director. M R McGeady, quoting a girl who

had successfully completed the program, shares that having a mentor is an important part of the program. With her mentor, this girl had the opportunity to work with someone whom she could look up to and learn from, from whom she can expect unselfish and unconditional genuine love⁸⁶.

In the charismatic movement there is a similar system called elders who assist the other members in the group in their spiritual growth⁸⁷.

In the Jesus Fraternity's renewal centres for released prisoners there is another system of mentoring. Every inmate of the renewal centre is provided with a family, who visits the released prisoner at least once a month, writes to them especially at birthdays, feast days and other important days. This family is also responsible for rehabilitation, job training and follow up programs for that inmate. Here there is the chance to experience the affection of an entire family. The programme provides the opportunity for an inmate to receive parental love - fatherly and motherly love - through the parents and brotherly and sisterly love through the children.

The traditional terminology used for mentoring is spiritual direction, which as W A Barry and W J Connolly describe, is a help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God's personal communication to him/her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship⁸⁸. Spiritual direction offers the person a situation where he/she can verbalise, that is, a situation in which one can talk of oneself and one's problems. The directee verbalises his/her condition and shares with the director his/her problems and anguishes⁸⁹.

Pope John Paul II, quoting Paul VI, writes in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* that spiritual direction is a very delicate but immensely valuable psychological means. It is an educational and psychological art calling for deep responsibility in the one who practices it. Whereas one who receives it, it is a spiritual act of humility and trust (PDV 81)⁹⁰.

The Jesus Fraternity encourages its members to personally find a mentor and also encourages those undergoing reformation and rehabilitation to have mentors.

INNER HEALING

Inner healing, one of the unique characteristics of the Charismatic Renewal, helps those who undergo the process of reformation. As a result of their criminal life prisoners may have many inner wounds to be healed. Hurt feelings not only take away peace of mind but they also develop blockages and place great obstacles that prevent growth and the journey to the further stages of spiritual life. There may also be fear and anxiety, which are symptomatic of a lack of faith. These hurts may have to do with past or future events. Sometimes even the fear of God and of hell must be tempered with the love and mercy of God. Inner healing helps to heal these wounds. The inner healing retreat offered by the Charismatic Renewal is a very effective means for healing hurt feelings.

J M Fuster states that the effective healing of memories emerges from two sources: first, understanding and implementing the Scriptures; secondly, experiencing the power of Jesus to change the lives, the mentality, the attitudes and the values of a person. It is Jesus' love that heals wounds and fills the heart with love and peace. Thus painful memories

become the steppingstones to the present blissful stage. The first step of inner healing is to forgive those who hurt us. Forgiveness helps the disappearance of negative feelings. The second step is to allow ourselves in prayer, to be changed by Jesus, by bringing the problem to Jesus. Trying to understand the feelings of the offender and to have compassion for offenders follows the model of Jesus. The third step is to reflect and realise how much good we derived from that hurtful experience⁹¹.

SELF-RENEWAL FOR WORLD RENEWAL

“To renew the world one must renew oneself” is a core principle of the Jesus Fraternity. Our conviction is that to renew the Church, to renew prisoners, first and foremost, we need to renew ourselves. This was the methodology adopted by St. Francis of Assisi in the thirteenth century. He reformed the Church by renewing himself. He lived a life of extreme poverty and depended totally on Father God. This is exactly what is called the lifestyle of poor in spirit (Mt 5,1ff).

PER-FORMATIVE STAGE

The per-formative stage of prisoners’ renewal is the development and the deepening of the reformation that occurs after the intense renewal experience and lasts until one’s death. The per-formative phase, an organic and logical outgrowth from the formative stage, is the perfection of the already begun formative process and therefore, is a deepening of one’s interiority and an expansion of the horizon of one’s vision and mission. This stage represents the period after training at the rehabilitation centre, the span they engage in employment and settle in family.

The per-formative stage continues after the formation at the renewal and rehabilitation centre. Those who completing the six months of formation at the Jesus Fraternity renewal centre proceed to the second stage of rehabilitation. During this stage, they are presented with opportunities to grow in the spiritual life and to seek job training and practice.

The per-formative stage refers to the period after the stay at the rehabilitation centres. This is a time when released prisoners after job training and apprenticeship are permanently employed. They live by themselves either in their own families or in separate houses. During this stage the Jesus Fraternity offers follow-up programmes for them. Every year twice they are invited to the centre. Their children are also invited to the centre as part of the effort to intensify the follow-up programmes.

PER-FORMATIVE SPIRITUALITY

Some of the significant features of the per-formative spirituality are 1) growth in virtues and values, 2) undertaking of missions, 3) endeavour to invite others for reformation, 4) purification by suffering, and 5) mystical experiences.

First of all, the perfection of reformation consists in an effort to grow in the *virtues and values* that spring forth from a deep contemplative communion with God. This demands a concomitant struggle against vices and a growth in holiness. To reach the summit of sanctity should be the ultimate goal of per-formative stage and it is so important that the holiness of the Church and of the whole world depends upon the holiness of the individual. As *Lumen Gentium* states, all are called to holiness because it is the great design of the

gospel dispensation (Cf. LG 39; Titus 2,11-14). According to St. Paul, this is a transition from a life guided by the works of flesh to a life guided by the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5, 16-24). It is a gradual growth in divine and human love that may be manifested in the form of agape or compassion. The criterion for measuring spiritual growth is the degree in which we love others, the degree in which we care for the needs of others.

Secondly, those who are in per-formative stage normally undertake a *great mission*. That is why St Paul, after his conversion, became a great missionary, Francis of Assisi became the reformer of the Church, and Francis Xavier went to India as a missionary. Therefore, reformation is growth towards a universal brotherhood and towards the undertaking of great responsibilities as apostles and missionaries.

Thirdly, the per-formative stage consists in an endeavour *to invite others to the reformation experience* which one has already undergone. Avery Dulles writes: «Those who have been themselves converted are driven by a passion to convert others, partly in order to share the riches they have found, but partly also to reinforce their own conviction»⁹².

Fourthly, the per-formative stage may be a period of *intense suffering*. Individuals in this stage may undergo severe physical, psychological and spiritual agonies. Instead of consolations, individuals may have to drink from the chalice of desolation, perhaps even without knowing the reasons behind it. It is a time both of purification and maturation; evil inclinations are purified and virtues are matured. The suffering may be due to the chiselling of character or it may be the birth-pain of new virtues, blue prints and mystical graces.

The culmination of the per-formative-stage can also be found in *mystical experiences*, which shall be considered an exceptional grace given by God to certain exceptional people.

Revival Movements

There are many spiritual revival movements flourishing in the contemporary church. Among these movements are the Charismatic Renewal⁹³, the Emmanuel Community, the Focolare⁹⁴, the Cursillo, the Emmaus community, and the Beatitude Community. Participation and even membership in such movements is good not only for growing in the spiritual life but also for social support and a sense of social acceptance and self-confidence. Such groups also provide places where one can witness the spiritual growth of other, which becomes a strength and inspiration for the growth of the self.

These revival movements make use of a variety of spiritual exercises and methods including annual retreats, monthly recollections, daily meditation, general and particular examination of conscience, Eucharistic adoration, Bible and penitential services. There are also a wide variety of retreat methods, for example, charismatic retreats, Eucharistic retreats, Ignatian retreats, the Popular Mission. Among charismatic retreats there are retreats focusing on inner healing and charism development. Among all these retreats, the most powerful method to evoke conversion experiences seems to be the charismatic and the popular mission renewal programs.

The method the Jesus Fraternity advocates for the renewal of the released prisoners is to allow the ex-prisoners to participate in different retreats according to their special needs. For instance, if an inmate is suffering from terrible interior wounds and is in need of inner healing he will be sent

to participate in the inner-healing retreat and if a person is in need of spiritual growth he will be guided to participate in growth retreats aimed at developing charisms and the gifts of the Holy Spirit⁹⁵.

POST FORMATIVE SPIRITUALITY

The post-formative stage, which is the final phase of prisoners' renewal, occurs after one's death. This stage is also the ultimate goal and orientation of every believer. Despite the fact that active effort on the part of the individual ceases with death, the effects of reformation continue to remain on the horizon spreading light to many wandering in darkness. Thus the trajectory of reformation comes to an end when one enters into paradise and enjoys forever the glorious life with the Triune God. Therefore, the post-formative stage is a self-transcendence of the human and earthly limitations of time, space and finiteness by reaching eternity to fulfil God's will in relation to other men and to all creation.

According to our understanding, the post-formative stage has four important characteristics. First of all, it is during this eschatological stage that the prisoner, if he dies in God's grace, enters either immediately or through a purification into heaven, the ultimate end and fulfilment of the deepest human longings, to enjoy *the supreme divine union with the Most Holy Trinity*, the Virgin Mary, the angels and the blessed (Cf. CCC 1021-1029).

Secondly, in the post-formative phase some of the reformed may become **servant of God, blessed, and saint** through the canonisation process of the Catholic Church (CCC 828; see also LG 40, 48-51).

Thirdly, during the post-formative stage one becomes a model for others and the *lifestyle, life-principles and the life-mission of the prisoner continue* through the lives of many others. The individual becomes an inspiration and model to many; becomes an icon or an image. Many begin to imitate his lifestyle and principles. This is a gradual rippling forth from a single person to a community of persons. The ideas and the maxims of one become the ideas and maxims of many communities and generations. One becomes the other. One becomes the generation and the world. Through these generations, the reformed person continues to live down through the centuries. Thus the reformation of an individual becomes the pivotal point of the Church and world renewal. For instance, the reformed life of Francis of Assisi still continues in the world today through his numerous disciples who try to live according to his lifestyle and principles.

Fourthly, this is the stage where the prisoner, if he is found righteous, will rise to the resurrection of life to complete his final and ultimate return to God. This will occur during the second glorious coming of Jesus Christ and by hearing the universal judgement: «Come o, blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world» (Mt 25,34). There, in the heavenly Jerusalem the righteous will reign for ever with Christ, glorified in body and soul (Cf. CCC 1038-1050). Thus, the prisoner completes the trajectory of reformation through the *ultimate return to paradise* to enjoy the eternal salvation.

CONCLUSION

Reformative spirituality underlines the fact that prisoners, criminals, sinners and the like can be reformed, rehabilitated and reclaimed. Grace can act upon the greatest

criminals and can raise up the most wretched sinners; grace penetrates the wounds of sin and crime and heals them. It was because a man fell that the Samaritan raised him up. It was because Jesus' face was dirty that Veronica dried it with her handkerchief.

Reformation is a radical conversion, which is a journey from self-transformation to self-actualisation, from self-actualisation to self-transcendence, from self-transcendence to deification, and from deification to socio-political consciousness.

Reformation spirituality of prisoners is neither static nor momentary; instead, it is dynamic and lifelong. It is a constant process that involves a series of spiritual and psychological events in a person's life. As the incarnation, hidden and public life, death, resurrection, ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit form the one saving action of Jesus⁹⁶ so it is the whole life of a prisoner: pre-formation, formation, per-formation and post-formation, that constitute the entire process of reformation. Likewise reformation spirituality is a journey from pre-formative spirituality to post-formative spirituality where one glorifies the Triune God together with Jesus, Mary, saints and angels. It is the prime duty of all those who are engaged in prisoners' reformation to lead all from the pre-formative situation to the formative, per-formative and post-formative stages so that all may have the possibility to eternally enjoy the unfathomable love of the heavenly Father.

ENDNOTES

- 1 For detailed studies on Formative Spirituality, see Adrian van Kaam, *Formative Spirituality*, Vols. 1-7, Crossroad, New York 1995.
- 2 See Sante Bisignano, "Formazione alla vita religiosa", in *Dizionario Teologico della Vita Consacrata*, ed., Tullo Goffi e Achille Palazzini, Editrice Ancora, Milano 1994, 772.
- 3 John Ponnre, "Spirituality of Reformation", *Reformative Explorations*, 1/2 (2003) 102-114.
- 4 When this is followed by a period of faith, it is called de-conversion. See H.P. BOULLAYE, «Conversion», col. 2224.
- 5 See Y. CONGAR, «La conversion. Etude théologique et psychologique», *Parole et Mission*, 3 (1960) 493.
- 6 R. IRELAND, «Reflections on Some Spiritual Conversions», *The Way*, 34 (1994) 304. But J.E. Smith does not agree fully with this notion. He argues that in its earliest usage *conversio* meant a person's turning to God. See J.E. SMITH, «The Concept of Conversion», in W.E. Conn, ed., *Conversion. Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation*, Alba House, New York 1978, 51-52. For an introductory notion of conversion see, G. DUMEIGE, «Che cosa vuol dire convertirsi», *Vita Consacrata*, 26 (1990) 657-667.
- 7 See W.E. CONN, *Christian Conversion. Developmental Interpretation of Autonomy and Surrender*, Paulist Press, New York 1986, 7-8. See also R.D. WITHERUP, *Conversion in the New Testament*, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota 1994, 4-7.
- 8 W.E. CONN, «Conversion. A Developmental Perspective», *Cross Currents*, 32 (1982) 325.
- 9 See H.P. BOULLAYE, «Conversion», *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Beauchesne, Paris 1964, II, col. 2237-2238. For another profound elucidation on the conversion to Catholicism see, G.K. CHESTERTON, *The Catholic Church and Conversion*, The Macmillan Company, New York 1926. See also M. MUGGERIDGE, *Conversion. A Spiritual Journey*, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1988.
- 10 H.P. BOULLAYE, «Conversion», col. 2225.
- 11 See H.C. WARREN, ed., *Dictionary of Psychology*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Dallas 1934, 61.
- 12 As religious profession is only the initial step of the perfection of religious spirituality so also baptism is only the threshold of

the trajectory of religious conversion. As there is a stage of hectic preparation before religious profession so there should be a period of hectic preparation before conversion; and as there is a prolonged stage of ascetical and mystical life after religious profession so there should be a period of growth for conversion to reach its culmination.

- 13 J. Astley affirms that people are converted as they shift the focus of their lives to other centres of value, images of power and master stories. See J. ASTLEY, ed., *How Faith Grows. Faith Development and Christian Education*, Church House Publishing, London 1991, 38.
- 14 See B. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1994, 130. See also B. BAYNHAM, «Transformation», in *New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 967-968. For a study on conversion as a transformation of mentality see, P. GRIEGER, «La formazione permanente negli istituti religiosi. Le priorità attuali. L'aggiornamento "assiologico" delle persone», *Vita Consacrata*, 18 (1982) 425-437.
- 15 See M. MILLER, «Conversion» in *The Harpercollins Encyclopaedia of Catholicism*, ed. R.P. McBrien, Harpercollins, New York 1995, 366.
- 16 P.V. ROBB, «Conversion as a Human Experience», *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits*, 14 (1982) 7-8. R. Struminski, sharing the view of P. Robb, states that conversion is knowing oneself in one's sinfulness and brokenness, in one's disintegration and in one's need of healing and redemption. See R. STRUMINSKI, «Conversion, Pastoral Counselling, and Spiritual Direction», *Review for Religious*, 43 (1984) 404. See also J. NAVONE, «Bipolarities in Conversion», *Review for Religious*, 40 (1981) 436-437.
- 17 St. Paul expresses it, in the form of a prayer: «May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ» (1Thess 5,23).
- 18 See D.A. SNOW - R. MACHALEK, «The Sociology of Conversion», *Annual Review of Sociology*, 10 (1984) 170.
- 19 See W. JAMES, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Mentor Books, New York 1902, 162. It was his famous Gifford lectures, presented at the University of Edinburgh in 1901-1902.
- 20 See B. LONERGAN, *Grace and Freedom. Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, ed. B.J. Patout, Daton, Longman & Todd, London 1971, 25,39,40. Conversion has been described as the

- «linchpin of Bernard Lonergan's thought, the key to human self-transcendence in his writings, and the basis for a foundational theology». J.R. PRICE, «Conversion and the Doctrine of Grace in Bernard Lonergan and John Climacus», *Anglican Theological Review*, 62 (1980) 338. B. Lonergan, born in Buckingham, Quebec, formally introduced his notion of conversion in his essay, «Theology in its New Context» of 1967. See B. LONERGAN, *A Second Collection*, ed. F.J. Ryan - B.J. Tyrrell, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1974, 65-67. See also J. BOWDEN, *Who's Who in Theology*, SCM Press, London 1990, 78. He developed his notion of conversion in his *Insight and Method in Theology*. For a scientific study on the historical thought development of Lonergan's interest in conversion, see J.E. SWIFT, *Bernard Lonergan on Conversion-Faith and Critical Theological Methodology*, Pontificia Studiorum Universitas a S. Thoma Aq. in Urbe, Rome 1988, 86-91.
- 21 See B. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, 52, 130. E.T. Clark also holds the same view. For him, conversion best signifies a turning about, a definite change of direction, a passing from one state of being to an altogether different, as a definite and specific act. See E.T. CLARK, *The Psychology of Religious Awakening*, Macmillan, New York 1929, 36. See also J.W. CONN, «Conversion in Therese of Lisieux», *Spiritual Life*, 24 (1978) 155.
- 22 B. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, 130. See also J.E. SWIFT, *Bernard Lonergan on Conversion-Faith and Critical Theological Methodology*, Pontificia Studiorum Universitas a S. Aq. In Urbe, Rome 1988, 92-94. Already in his lectures on Existentialism of July 15-19, 1957 at Boston College, Lonergan understands conversion as the act of entering into a new horizon, a new world, as a reorientation and reorganisation of mind and life. See T. NAICKAMPARAMBIL, *Through Self-Discovery to Self-Transcendence. A Study of Cognitive Self-Appropriation in B. Lonergan*, PUG, Roma 1996, 230 (Unpublished doctoral thesis).
- 23 See D. TRACY, *The Achievement of Bernard Lonergan*, Herder and Herder, New York 1970, 20.
- 24 See C.L. STAPLES - A.L. MAUSS, «Conversion or Commitment? A Reassessment of the Snow and Machalek Approach to the Study of Conversion», *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 26 (1987) 134.
- 25 B. Kilbourne and J.T. Richardson describe the characteristics of the conversion of Paul as 1) sudden and dramatic, 2) irrational or magical

- in nature, 3) involving a powerful, external and impersonal force, 4) a single event, 5) the negation of the old self and the affirmation of the new self, 6) change from one static state to another static state, 7) occurs while one is young, 8) behaviour change usually follows belief change. See B. KILBOURNE - J.T. RICHARDSON, «Paradigm Conflict, Types of Conversion, and Conversion Theories», *Sociological Analysis*, 50 (1989) 1-2.
- 26 According to B. Kilbourne and J.T. Richardson, the characteristics of such seekers are 1) volition, 2) autonomy, 3) search for meaning and purpose, 4) multiple conversions, 5) rational interpretation of experiences, 6) gradual and continuous conversions, 7) negotiation between the individual and the potential membership group, and 8) belief change follows the behaviour change. See B. KILBOURNE - J.T. RICHARDSON, «Paradigm Conflict, Types of Conversion, and Conversion Theories», *Sociological Analysis*, 50 (1989) 2.
- 27 See B. KILBOURNE - J.T. RICHARDSON, «Paradigm Conflict», 2-3.
- 28 See A.S. REBER, *Dictionary of Psychology*, Penguin Books, New York 1985, 677.
- 29 See A.H. MASLOW, *Motivation and Personality*, Harper, New York 1954. See also A.H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, D. Van Nostrand, New York 1968; «Self-Actualising People. A Study of Psychological Health», in *The Self. Explorations in Personal Growth*, ed. C.E. Moustakas, Harper and Row Publishers, New York 1956, 160-194. For Goldsmith, self-actualisation was a motive and for Maslow, it was a level of development. Both expressed the qualities of self-actualisation such as: independence, autonomy, a tendency to form few but deep friendships, a philosophical sense of humour, tendency to resist outside pressures, and a general transcendence of the environment. See A.S. REBER, *Dictionary of Psychology*, 677. See also J.J. BIGNER, *Individual and Family Development. A Life-Span Interdisciplinary Approach*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey 1994, 61-62.
- 30 See A. MASLOW, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 5 ff. See also J.J. BIGNER, *Individual and Family*, 62-63.
- 31 The Second Vatican Council declares this fundamental dignity of man in *Gaudium et Spes* (GS 13). It is Christ who restored the lost dignity of man by his death and resurrection (GS 22). The references to the Second Vatican Council are taken from *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. A. Flannery, Dominican

Publications, Dublin 1992. In *Redemptor Hominis* Pope John Paul II teaches: «In Christ and through Christ man has acquired full awareness of his dignity, of the heights to which he is raised, of the surpassing worth of his own humanity, and of the meaning of his existence» (RH 11.3). See JOHN PAUL II, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, ed. J.M. Miller, Our Sunday Visitor, Indiana 1996, 61. Jesus came to redeem man from the bondage of selfishness and self-centredness and to fill human minds and hearts with a beautiful vision of the purpose of life. Jesus invites man to co-operate with Him in this sublime plan. As a member of the Mystical Body of which Christ is the head, each Christian has been given a special gift to enable him/her to make his/her unique contribution to God's plan of salvation. The greatest personal fulfilment consists in accomplishing the purpose for which one was created. Every member of the Mystical Body has been given the chance to actuate his existence in Christ, by making a contribution proper to his unique status of life, so that Christ Himself can live and realise through him those human possibilities that He could not live in His single individual human nature. This is a call to human perfection. In this way the whole Christ, head and members, realise the ideal of human perfection. This attempt at human perfection by the members of the Mystical Body leads to the whole perfection of the mankind. See J. M. FUSTER, *Personal Counselling*, St. Paul Publications, Bombay 1980, 86-98. See also J. MOLINARI, *Saints. Their Place in the Church*, Sheed and Ward, London 1961. In *Redemptor Hominis* John Paul II affirms that every initiative serves true renewal in the Church and helps to bring the authentic light that is Christ. «We are able to produce a mature humanity in each one of us. Mature humanity means full use of the gift of freedom received from the Creator when he called to existence the man made 'in his image, after his likeness'. This gift finds its full realisation in the unreserved giving of the whole of one's human person, in a spirit of the love of a spouse, to Christ and, with Christ, to all those to whom he sends men and women» (RH 21).

- 32 See J.M. FUSTER, *Growing in Christ*, St. Paul Publications, Bombay 1982, 63-65.
- 33 See J.M. FUSTER, *Growing in Christ*, 132. See also J.M. FUSTER, *Personal Counselling*, 175.

- 34 See M. SZENTMÁRTONI, «Identità personale. Un concetto ambiguo», *Orientamenti Pedagogici*, 35 (1988) 440-450.
- 35 See V.E. FRANKL, *Uno psicologo nei lager*, Ares, Milano 1991. See also V.E. FRANKL, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1976; *Logoterapia e analisi esistenziale*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1977; *Fondamenti e applicazioni della logoterapia*, SEI, Torino 1977; U. ROMEO, «Adolescenza e logoterapia», in *Chi ha un perché nella vita*, ed. E. Fizzotti, LAS, Roma 1992, 170-171; E. FIZZOTTI, *La logoterapia di Frankl*, Rizzoli, Milano 1974.
- 36 Actually, self-transcendence is different from A. Maslow's theory of self-actualisation, which is to a great extent a motivational theory. V.E. Frankl argues that the man who aims only at self-realisation risks to lose himself in the moments of failure. But the capacity for self-transcendence remains alive in the person also in the moments of failure and actually, those moments can be helpful to him, because dedicating himself with love to something or someone, he can overcome also his own sense of failure. The realisation of oneself occupies an important place in life and it must be followed with seriousness, but it must be guided by a very high consciousness of one's self-transcendence rather than by the criterion of one's own self-satisfaction. See U. ROMEO, «Adolescenza e logoterapia», in *Chi ha un perché nella vita*, ed., E. Fizzotti, LAS, Roma 1992, 170-171. The later writings of Maslow, especially in his *Further Reaches of Human Nature*, he mentions four different meanings of self-transcendence and lists as many as thirty-four different possibilities of transcendence. See A.H. MASLOW, *Further Reaches of Human Nature*, The Viking Press, New York 1971, 270-279. See also G. THOTTUNGAL, «Self-Transcendence and Spirituality», *Vidyajyoti*, 59 (1995) 79-90, 189-200, 241-250, 449-460.
- 37 R.R. Viladesau elaborates on the theme of self-transcendence in the writings of B. Lonergan in his doctoral thesis. The first chapter discusses self-transcendence as operation, as knowledge and as metaphysics. See R.R. VILADESAU, *Man's Capacity for Grace and Conversion in the Writings of Bernard Lonergan*, PUG., Roma 1975, 8. For an interpretive investigation on the thought development of Bernard Lonergan's notion of conversion see M.L. RENDE, *Lonergan on Conversion. The Development of a Notion*, University Press of America, Maryland 1991.

- 38 See T. NAICKAMPARAMBIL, *Through Self-Discovery*, 133. See also see J.E. SWIFT, *Bernard Lonergan on Conversion-Faith*, 94-95.
- 39 The term transcendental has both the scholastic and the Kantian meaning for Lonergan. It is scholastic in so far as the normative pattern is not specified by any particular field or subject matter nor is it confined to any particular category but is the common core of all particular methods. It is Kantian in the sense that this pattern is the very condition for the possibility of any cognitive achievement. See T. NAICKAMPARAMBIL, *Through Self-Discovery*, 256.
- 40 See W.A. BARRY - W.J. CONNOLLY, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, Harper Collins, New York 1978, 20-21.
- 41 J. BATHERSBY, «Bernard Lonergan and Spirituality», in *Australian Lonergan Workshop*, ed. W.J. Danaher, University Press of America, Boston 1993, 93. Many authors suggest that a deep self-knowledge can lead both to self-transformation, self-actualisation and self-transcendence. See P.V. ROBB, «Conversion as Human Experience», 16-31. See also J.S. MADDUX, «When you Pray... Self-knowledge and Prayer», *The Way*, 17 (1977) 229-338.
- 42 See B. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, 35, 104-105, 237-44. See also R.M. DORAN, «Jungian Psychology and Christian Spirituality», *Review for Religious*, 38 (1979) 497-510, 742-522, 857-86; R.M. DORAN, «Psychic Conversion», *The Thomist*, 41 (1977) 200-236; *Subject and Psyche. Ricoeur, Jung and the Search for Foundations*, University Press of America, Washington, DC 1977; B.O. MCDERMOTT, *What are They Saying about the Grace of Christ*, Paulist Press, New York 1984, 21-34; A. CALLAHAN, «Conversion in Daily Life», *Studies in Formative Spirituality*, 12 (1991) 336; L.M. RULLA, «The Discernment of Spirits and Christian Anthropology», *Gregorianum*, 59 (1978) 537-569; L.M. RULLA, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, I, Gregorian University Press, Rome 1986.
- 43 See M. BAIRD, «Self Transcendence and Narrative Practice. A Preliminary Study of the Antecedents of Conversion Experiences», *Studies in Formative Spirituality*, 13 (1992) 333.
- 44 S. HAPPEL - J.J. WALTER, *Conversion and Discipleship. A Christian Foundation for Ethics and Doctrine*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1986, 22.
- 45 As the ancient Indian Upanishadic prayer reveals, it is transcendence from unreality to reality, from darkness to light, from death to

- immortality. See *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 1:3:28. See P. OLIVELLE, *Upanishads*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1996, 12-13.
- 46 It is not to be taken in a pantheistic sense nor as an actual deification, whereby created human reality transforms substantially into the Godhead. See P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ. Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person*, tr. N. Russell, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York 1987, 121-135. See also D.F. WINSLOW, *The Dynamics of Salvation. A Study in Gregory of Nazianzus*, The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, Massachusetts 1979; H. WESER, *S. maximi confessoris. Praecepta de incarnatione dei et deificatione hominis exponuntur et examinantur*, Berolini 1869, 23-40; R. VALANTASIS, «The Eastern Church's Theme of Deification in Nicolas Cabasilas' "The Life in Christ"», *Studies in Formative Spirituality*, 11 (1990) 89-101.
- 47 See A. SOLIGNAE, «Le mot et l'histoire », in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Beauchesne, Paris 1964, XIV, col. 1142-1160. See also M. DUPUY, «La notion de spiritualité», in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Beauchesne, Paris 1964, XIV, col. 1160-1173.
- 48 W. TEASDALE, «The Religious Experience of Pseudo-Dionysius», *Jeevadhara*, 47 (1978) 390-391.
- 49 P.B.T. BILANIUK, «Eastern Christian Spirituality», in *New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 328.
- 50 See R. VALANTASIS, «The Eastern Church's Theme of Deification in Nicolas Cabasilas' "The Life in Christ"», *Studies in Formative Spirituality*, 11 (1990) 93. It is related to the Involution-Evolution theory of Sri Aurobindo. According to him, the entire process of evolution is constituted of two moments: the descent (involution) and the ascent (evolution). Involution is the descent of the Infinite into the world. Evolution is the ascent of the Spirit from matter back to its original nature. See A. SUSAI, *The Neo-Hindu Concept of Man in the Light of Sri Aurobindo's Evolutionary Vision*, Intercultural Publications, New Delhi 1993, 49.
- 51 See R. VALANTASIS, «The Eastern Church's Theme of Deification», 95.
- 52 N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, tr. C.J. De Catanzaro, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York, 1974, 63.
- 53 N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 65.
- 54 See N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, 66.

- 55 See M. DODD, «Divinisation» in *New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 285. See also DES PLACES, «Pensée religieuse des Grecs», in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Beauchesne, Paris 1964, III, col. 1370-1375; I.H. DALMAIS, «Patristique Grecque», in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Beauchesne, Paris 1964, III, col. 1376-1389; G. BARDY, «Chez les pères Latins», in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Beauchesne, Paris 1964, III, col. 1389-1398; M.A. FRACHEBOUD, «Auteurs monastiques de 12e siècle», in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Beauchesne, Paris 1964, III, col. 1399-1413; H.T. CONUS, «Théologiens du 13e siècle», in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Beauchesne, Paris 1964, III, col. 1413-1431.
- 56 The concept of divinisation was already found in several fourth century Greek writers but it became prominent among the later Greek theologians such as Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor.
- 57 R.P. MCBRIEN, ed., *The Harpercollins Encyclopaedia*, 405.
- 58 ST. EPHREM, *Hymn on Virginity* (48:15-18) quoted in S. BROCK, *The Luminous Eye. The Spiritual World Vision of St. Ephrem*, Placid Lectures, Rome 1985, 127.
- 59 ST. EPHREM, *Paradise*, (9:20) quoted in S. BROCK, *The Luminous Eye*, 127.
- 60 See N. PANAYIOTIS, *Deification in Christ. The Nature of the Human Person*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York 1987. See also R.L. OECHSLIN, «Ecole Rhénane et Flamande», in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Beauchesne, Paris 1964, III, col. 1432-1445; A. RAYEZ, «Au 17e siècle», in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Beauchesne, Paris 1964, III, col. 1445-1456. V.F. VINEETH, *Yoga of Spirituality. Christian Initiation into Indian Spiritual Traditions*, Vidya Vanam Publications, Bangalore 1995, 200-206.
- 61 See P.B.T. BILANIUK, «Eastern Christian Spirituality», 323. For a comparative study on the Johannine concept of divinisation (John 1,12-13, 3,3) and the Indian Saiva-Siddhanta see, M. CORONA, «Divinisation through Grace. Understanding a Johannine Theme in the Light of Saiva Siddanta», *Jeevadhara*, 25 (1995) 161-172. The Indian Upanishadic spiritual quest led to the identification of absolute reality (Brahman) with the most subjective aspect of the self (*atman*) and was summarised in the four great axioms of the Upanishads: «That Thou Art», «I am Brahman», «The Self is Brahman», and «All is Brahman». The medieval Vedanta philosopher Sankara (9th

- cent. AD) interpreted this experience as total identity, non-duality (*Advaita*) between the self (*atman*) and the absolute reality (*Brahman*). Ramanuja (11th cent. AD) interpreted it as a qualified non-dualism in which the self is one with *Brahman* but logically distinguishable. Madhva (13th cent. AD) interpreted it as dualism in which the self, *Brahman* and the world are really distinct. See W. CENKNER, «Eastern (Asian) Spirituality», in *New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 310.
- 62 See S. BROCK, *The Luminous Eye*, 127.
- 63 See CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Christian Meditation*, Vatican 1989, No. 14-15.
- 64 See P.V. ROBB, «Conversion as a Human Experience», 4-6. In the same way, P. Grieger argues that personal conversion on the anthropological level is becoming sociocentric. By sociocentric, he means: «diventare capaci di godere della gioia di un altro, della gioia di cui si sarà occasione o oggetto per un altro, della maniera in cui si parteciperà alla gioia, al bene di un altro o degli altri, anche se la gioia di un altro è l'occasione di un dispiacere per se stessi; nel medesimo tempo, e per meglio servire gli altri, sviluppare le proprie attitudini e i talenti ricevuti, per svolgere un ruolo migliore nella comunità, migliorando la qualità del “dare” e del “ricevere”. P. GRIEGER, «La conversione personale», *Vita Consacrata*, 5 (1986) 361-362. W. Johnston expresses the thought in a slightly different way. He states that an authentic conversion should lead to an authentic compassion and in authentic compassion one suffers with the suffering. See W. JOHNSTON, *Being in Love. The Practice of Christian Prayer*, Collins, London 1988, 161.
- 65 See D.L. GELPI, «The Converting Jesuits», *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits*, 18 (1986) 6, 11, 24-33. He defines socio-political conversion as «the decision to turn from unreflective acceptance of the institutional violations of human rights to a commitment to collaborate with others in the reform of unjust social, economic and political structures». D.L. GELPI, *Committed Worship. A Sacramental Theology for Converting Christians. I. Adult Conversion and Initiation*, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota 1993, 17. Similarly, J.B. Dunning writes: «Conversion which stops with “Jesus and me” is abortive. It stops where Jesus does not stop. He calls to journey with him to the Kingdom». J.B. DUNNING, «Confronting the Demons. The Social

- Dimensions of Conversion», in *Conversion and the Catechumenate*, ed. R. Duggan, Paulist Press, New York 1984, 25.
- 66 See G. GUTIERREZ, *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 1973, 205.
- 67 See G. GUTIERREZ, «A Spirituality of Liberation», in W.E. Conn, ed., *Conversion. Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation*, Alba House, New York 1978, 309. See also I. ELLACURÍA, *Conversione della Chiesa al Regno di Dio*, Queriniana, Brescia 1992.
- 68 D.J. BILLY, «Conversion and the Catechism. Echoing the Faith for Others», *Journal of Spiritual Formation*, 15 (1994) 206-207. For a brief study on the stages and phases of apostolic or communitarian change see, D. COGHLAN - N. RASHFORD, «Progression in Apostolic Change», *Human Development*, 12\3 (1991) 39-43.
- 69 D.B. Couturier, expands the notion of structural conversion: «the theology of structural conversion shifts the focus of religious development from an exclusive concentration on personal and interpersonal change to the dynamics of systematic change». D.B. COUTURIER, «Structural Sin, Structural Conversion and Religious Formation», *Review for Religious*, 50 (1991) 410.

He makes an outline of the differences between personal-interpersonal and structural conversion as shown below in chart 1.

Chart 1: Differences between Personal-Interpersonal and Structural Conversion

Personal-Interpersonal Conversion	Structural Conversion
Victim	Cause
Mercy, charity, compassion	Justice
Attitude	Organisation
Guilt/blame	Responsibility for change
Programs	Policies
Autonomy/relationship	Interdependence
Personal sin	Social sin
Psychology/humanities	Sociology, economics, political science

- 70 Thus socio-political consciousness becomes a consciousness of the Mystical Body (1Cor 12). For Pope John Paul II, the solidarity with the Mystical Body goes beyond the traditional understanding of empathy. It is «not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortune of so many people». On the contrary, «it is a firm

and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good» (SRS 38). He continues: «Those who are more influential, because they have a greater share of goods and common services, should feel responsible for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess. While the poor, for their part are called upon to develop a solidarity with their own histories of injustices, letting go of their passive and self-destructive attitudes (SRS 39).

- 71 M. HELMWIG, «The Call of the King. Conversion to Justice and Peace», *The Way Supplement*, 52 (1985) 44.
- 72 B. HÄRING, «The Characteristics of Conversion», in W.E. Conn, ed., *Conversion. Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation*, Alba House, New York 1978, 217. J. Wallis also argues that personal conversion cannot be an end in itself, instead it is only the first step, the next step is the active solidarity with the purposes of the kingdom of God in the world. See J. WALLIS, *The Call to Conversion*, Harper, San Francisco 1982, 9.
- 73 This conversional growth towards the cosmic or Mystical Body consciousness is evident in Francis of Assisi, especially in his recognition of all the nonliving and living beings as his own brothers and sisters. It is also evident in Charles de Foucauld's consideration of himself as the universal brother and in his total commitment to the integral development of the Saharan Moslems.
- 74 See *Webster's Third International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged and Britannica World Language Dictionary*, III, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Chicago 1976, 2425.
- 75 For further studies on deification and social consciousness see FRANCIS KODIYAN, *Religious Conversion Trajectory*, PMI Publication, Bangalore-1998, 22-31.
- 76 See FRANCIS KODIYAN, *Religious Conversion Trajectory*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 1998; *Saga of Divine Providence*, PMI Publications, Bangalore-2000; «Prisoners' Reformation 'Trajectory'», *Reformative Explorations*, 1/1 (2003) 197-211.
- 77 See FRANCIS KODIYAN, *Religious Conversion Trajectory*, 93-119.
- 78 See E. ROCHE, «Pénitence et conversion dans l'Evangile et la vie chrétienne», *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 79 (1957) 123.
- 79 The Inner Change Freedom Initiative, an undertaking of the Prison Fellowship International, founded by Chuck Colson, is a programme in collaboration with the correctional institutions of three states in

- the USA such as Kansas, Iowa and Texas. This nondenominational and Bible based program may revolutionize criminal rehabilitation worldwide by providing rehabilitation and educational services to the prisoners and by teaching how to lead a life with Christ. WAYNE LAUGESEN, "Christian Prison? It's Already a Success in Texas, Kansas and Iowa", *National Catholic Register*, 76/47 (November 19-25, 2000)
2. See also JOHN THOMAS KOTTUKAPPALLY, InnerChange Freedom Initiative", *Reformative Explorations*, 2/1 (2004) 56-75
- 80 For more on reformative programmes among prisoners see, JOHN THOMAS KOTTUKAPPALLY, "Alpha for Prisoners", *Reformative Explorations*, 1/2 (2003) 133-138; "APAC", *Reformative Explorations*, 1/3 (2003) 234-245;; Sycamore Tree Project", *Reformative Explorations*, 2/2 (2004) 153-169; "Umuvumu Tree Project", *Reformative Explorations*, 2/3 (2004) 284-303.
- 81 FRANCIS KODIYAN, "Vipassana: A Metamorphosis for Prisoner Reformation", *Reformative Explorations*, 1/2 (2003) 115-132. To transform the notorious Tihar Jail into an ashram Kiran Bedi made use of a method called Vipassana, an ancient Indian art of meditation, which leads one to a deeper self-awareness. She began this meditation for 1000 prisoners at Tihar jail. After the first batch of Vipassana meditation Kiran Bedi noticed that it helps prisoners. The result of two years of Vipassana course at Tihar jail is unbelievable. When general recidivism of prisoners is 7%, those who attended the meditation were 100%. See ELISABETTA GUIDOTTI, "Il carcere possibile", *Il Consulente Re*, 9/7 (2000) 43.
- 82 For a biblical and theological basis of spirituality of reformation, see JOHN PONNORE, "Spirituality of Reformation", *Reformative Explorations*, 1/2 (2003) 102-114.
- 83 See H. ALPHONSO, The Personal Vocation. Transformation in Depth through the Spiritual Exercises, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand 1992, 23-69.
- 84 THEOPHIN, "Unconditional Forgiveness", in *Prisoners Our Own Brethren*, ed., Varghese Karippery-Latika, PMI Publication, Bangalore 1998, 78-80.
- 85 E.C. SELNER, *Mentoring. The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship*, Ave Maria Press, Indiana 1979, 24.

- 86 See M.R. McGEADY, *God's Lost Children*, Covenant House, New York 1991, 43.
- 87 B. Auer describes friendship as a model of spiritual direction. See A. AUER, "Soul-Speaking. Spiritual Friendship as a Model for Spiritual Direction", *Spiritual Life*, 42 (1996) 101-108.
- 88 See W.A. BARRY - W.J. CONNOLLY, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, Harper Collins, New York 1978, 5-8.
- 89 See M. SZENTMÁRTONI, "Vita spirituale e salute mentale", *Rassegna di Teologia*, 34 (1993) 294. For a brief history of spiritual direction, see also M. SZENTMÁRTONI, *Introduzione alla teologia pastorale*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato, 1992, 79-81. See also J. LAPLACE, *Preparing for Spiritual Direction*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1975, 26.
- 90 JOHN PAUL II, *I Will Give You Shepherds*, St. Paul Books and Media, Boston 1992, 153. D.L. Fleming points out the different models of spiritual direction: institutionalised, interpersonal, charismatic, sacramental and incarnational. See D.L. FLEMING, "Models of Spiritual Direction", *Review for Religious*, 34 (1975) 351-357. See also M. SZENTMÁRTONI, *Introduzione alla teologia pastorale*, 81-83.
- 91 See J.M. FUSTER, *Growing in Christ*, St Paul Publications, Bombay 1982, 32-41.
- 92 A. DULLES, «Revelation and Discovery», in *Theology and Discovery. Essays in Honour of Karl Rahner, S.J.*, ed. W.J. Kelly, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee 1980, 12.
- 93 Some of the typical characteristics of the Charismatic Renewal are 1) a conversion experience that establishes an affective relationship with the person of Jesus, 2) a public testimony to the action of the Spirit in one's own life, 3) an evangelising rhetoric that addresses the heart, 4) a piety focused on feeling, faith and healing and 5) a shared spontaneous prayer. On Pentecostal spirituality see S.J. LAND, "Pentecostal Spirituality. Living in the Spirit", in

Christian Spirituality. Post Reformation and Modern, ed. L. Dupre - E. Saliers, SCM Press Ltd., New York 1989, 479-499.

- 94 See J. GALLAGHER, *A Women's Work. Chiara Lubich*, Harpercollins, London 1997.
- 95 From 1994 to 2000 together with Luciana Peccoraio, the founder of *Cuore di Jesu* movement, Father Francis Kodiyan regularly visited the Rabbibia prison in Rome. At first they visited all wards so as to have an overall vision about the prison and prisoners. At the end they selected the AIDS patients' ward and visited it once in a week. Only these prisoners asked spiritual assistance from us such as confession, communion, baptism and so on. On the other hand, prisoners in other wards asked for material things such as stamps, telephone cards, shoes, woollen clothes, dresses etc. By visiting these brethren behind bars, we witnessed how people who lived an immoral life gradually return to God by radical self-renewal. People above sixty years old came forward asking baptism. Many did their first holy communion in prison after fifty years of age. Many asked us for the sacrament of confirmation and the anointment of sick. Father Vittorio, who has been Chaplain at the Regina Coeli Prison in Rome, can also narrate hundreds of similar experiences. He tells that a particular prisoner on his release became a Benedictine monk. He reports of cells where prisoners daily read the Gospel, recite the Rosary, receive baptism, Holy Communion, and Confirmation. See GIANNI VALENTE, "Peter and Paul were in Prison too", *30 Days*, 6/7 (2000) 50-53.
- 96 See E. KORTHALS, «The Gospel of Jesus, Conversion and a Spirituality for Ministry», *Review for Religious*, 46 (1987) 380.

Chapter Four

Spirituality Of The Good Shepherd

INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd who came to give life in abundance by dying on the cross manifests a spirituality and lifestyle most suitable for the Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry. “From His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace” (Jn 1, 16). This chapter discusses the salient features of the lifestyle and spirituality of the Good Shepherd, which is a great role model for those members of the prison ministry who go in search of the lost sheep to prisons, brothel houses, streets, slums and so on. Anchoring on the biblical passages such as Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34, and John 10 we attempt to illustrate the breadth, height, width, and length of the love of the good shepherd towards the lost sheep. It is important for those who engage themselves in outreach ministry to know the theology, spirituality and lifestyle of the good shepherd so as to express these traits to the lost sheep of the third millennium.

JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Jesus, the Good Shepherd (Jn 10,11), the great shepherd of the sheep (Heb 13,20) represents those who go in search of the lost, those who do outreach ministry. Those who visit prisons, rescue homes, aftercare homes, juvenile homes,

borstal schools, slums, beggars' colonies, medical colleges, orphanages, old-age homes, and the like are invited to imitate Jesus the good shepherd. The Jesus fraternity and Prison ministry volunteers in seminaries and in prayer groups nearby prisons need to meditate on this Jesus and shall be able to become like him¹.

Jesus distinctly declares that the primary purpose of his incarnation was to search, serve and save the lost sheep. "The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord" (Lk 4, 18-19). Jesus goes to the tax office of Matthew and calls him to follow and makes him His disciple (Mk 2, 17). Jesus waits at the well of Jacob and converts the woman of Samaria who became His apostle and proclaimed good news to her village (Jn 4, 1-42). Jesus on the cross forgives the good thief on the cross and tells him that he will be in paradise (Lk 23, 42). Jesus was compassionate for the people, who are like sheep without shepherd, dejected and worried (Mt 9, 35-38).

Jesus the good shepherd is the way. "When he has brought out all those that are his, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice" (Jn 10, 4). He will indicate the way to go ahead, to reach good pasture, the flock, and finally to the eternal abode. Jesus the good shepherd is the truth. He knows us thoroughly. He knows our true self, nature and person. Jesus the good shepherd is the life. He emphatically asserted, "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep" (Jn 10,10-11).

TARGET GROUPS

Jesus the Good Shepherd has definite target groups. He opts for the lost, the least and the last; he dedicates his life for sinners, the most deprived, dejected, neglected, wounded, and rejected. He said, "It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick; I came to call not the upright, but sinners" (Mk 2, 17). Similarly, Jesus Fraternity has certain target groups such as 1) prisoners, 2) prostitutes, 3) hired killers, 4) terrorists, 5) head-load workers, 6) drivers, 7) slum dwellers, 8) alcoholics, 9) drug Addicts, 10) HIV/AIDS victims, and so on. Prison Ministry India volunteers endeavour to bring the lost, the most deprived, dejected, neglected and rejected before the Eucharistic Jesus that they may enjoy His love, compassion, and redemption. They engage in their reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration and give them the insight in dignity of labour, self-esteem, awareness of children of God as all are created in the image and likeness of God. Jesus Fraternity provides them a decent way of life with job, family, and assist the lost sheep enjoy the eternal bliss together with the Triune God. It facilitates reconciliation with themselves, family, victims, society and God and provides opportunities to heal them spiritually, psychologically and physically.

SHEEP

If Jesus is our good shepherd, of course, we are his sheep. But is not it true that often we feel, aspire and assume the role of shepherds, good shepherds, the great shepherd. In fact, what are we? Shepherd or sheep? In reality often we resemble sheep. Like sheep sometimes we feel that we are lost, lost like the prodigal son and some other times we feel that we are found, found by Jesus, the good shepherd. Sometimes

we experience that we are being carried by him or as if we are sitting on his shoulders. Before coming to God experience, perhaps we might have felt, as if sheep without shepherd (Mk 6,35). We might have undergone the experiences of sheep amidst wolves (Mt 7,15). Sometimes we might have tempted to be wolves in sheepskin or tempted to be influenced by the false shepherds. As sheep, once, we all will be standing in front of the heavenly Father, for the last judgement (Mt 25,32-34). As sheep, we feel that it is our responsibility, to hear the voice of our shepherd and to respond to his voice and to follow him. As the self-actualisation of the sheep consists in being sacrifice, victim, clothing, milk and meat products of humanity so our self-realisation consists in service, self-sacrifice and in laying down our lives for others.

LAMB OF GOD

The vocation to prison ministry is a call to become a suffering servant in Isaiah 53. "We had all gone astray like sheep, each taking one's own way, and Yahweh brought the acts of rebellion of all of us to bear on him. Ill-treated and afflicted, he never opened his mouth, like a lamb led to the slaughter-house, like a sheep dumb before its shearers he never opened his mouth" (Is 53, 6-8).

It is a call to become the lamb of God². To become a good shepherd we need first of all be a lamb³. Jesus became good shepherd by becoming lamb of God. John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the people, "This is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (Jn 1, 36). Like the goat in the book of Leviticus carries all the guilt of the Israelites, all their acts of rebellion and all their sins, Jesus carried the guilt and sins of mankind.

“Once expiation for the sanctuary, the Tent of Meeting and the altar is complete, he will bring the goat which is still alive. Aaron will then lay both his hands on its head and over it confess all the guilt of the Israelites, all their acts of rebellion and all their sins. Having thus laid them on the goat’s head, he will send it out into the desert under the charge of a man waiting ready, and the goat will bear all their guilt away into some desolate place” (Lev 16, 20-22).

It is the responsibility of the lamb to hear the voice of the shepherd, to follow him and to follow him only (Jn 10, 3). They do not follow others or strangers. “They will not follow a stranger, they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers” (Jn 10, 5). Good sheep listen the shepherd and follows him wherever he goes. It knows the shepherd well and recognises the voice of the shepherd.

JESUS THE DOOR

It is the duty of the sheep to enter through the door. Shepherd also enters through the door, a thief cannot enter through the door. “I am the gate; anyone who enters through me will be safe such a one will go in and out and will find pasture” (Jn 10, 9). Gate reminds us of the gate of the ancient cities, which gives the meaning of life or death. One who enters through the gate will have protection and will be well defended and guarded.

Jesus is the door of the sheep and the way to the Father. To be the door of the sheep means that Jesus is the mediator who will provide what the sheep need for life. Jesus is the door means that it is through him the access to good pasture is made available. Those who enter through him are saved. Those who go out through this door find good pasture. Jesus the door offers both salvation and pasture and provides the sheep with

abundant life. It is through him that others have life⁴. “Through him, then, we both in the one Spirit have free access to the father” (Eph 2,18).

The vocation to prison ministry compels us to develop the qualities of a shepherd. In aspiration, we are shepherds. In order that our aspiration becomes an actualisation we need to observe and imitate well the characteristics of the good shepherd - Jesus Christ. It is a surprising fact that Jesus became good shepherd by becoming a good sheep. As a lamb Jesus listened and responded always to the voice of His Father. As the paschal lamb he sacrificed himself on the cross for the remission of the sins of the world. The same methodology and lifestyle are to be followed by the prison ministry volunteers.

ADVENTUROUS

A good shepherd is adventurous. For instance, consider David the shepherd in the book of first Samuel. Once one of the servants of Saul reported to the king, “I have seen one of the sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite: he is a skilled, player, a brave man, and a fighter, well spoken, good looking, and Yahweh is with him” (1 Sam 16,18). When David volunteered to fight Goliath, the Philistine, Saul dissuaded him. David then spoke of his courage and the experiences he had fighting lions and bears, “Your servant has killed both lion and bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine will end up like one of them for having challenged the armies of the living God” (1 Sam 17,33)⁵. Similarly, prison ministry volunteers need to have an adventurous nature and the habit of hard working.

As an adventurous, courageous and responsible person prison ministry member shall strengthen the weak (Ezk 34,

4), heal the sick and bind the injured (Ezk 34, 4). He carries home the injured and the ill. Like the good shepherd, he shall take care of the marginalised, collect the victims, wipe away their tears, take them in his hands, and bring them back to the flock.

Abraham A Antony comments that the shepherd is a caring companion along the journey, who adapts himself thoroughly to his sheep's needs. He belongs to the sheep. His life binds up with theirs. He makes their time his time, their risks his risks, and their hunger, thirst, pains and sufferings, all his own. For the sheep, the shepherd is their saviour. He knows what is best for them. He ensures their security and decides their destiny. He is life for them⁶.

The shepherd keeps a watchful eye on pregnant ewes lest they fall and be unable to rise or in some ways suffer miscarriage. He has to ensure that little lambs are prevented from being trampled on, or from wandering away and getting lost. To find fresh green pastures, a shepherd in those days might have to scout the land for long. Once he found the pastureland, he might have to clear it of noxious weeds, dangerous thorns and even scorpions and poisonous snakes. He has to be on the lookout for wolves, hyenas, or other animals on prowl. He has to lead them to secure shelter in inclement weather. At the end of the day he has to check each sheep for any bruises it may have sustained and if necessary he has to apply some medicinal oil to heal the wounds⁷.

A good shepherd out of his unfathomable love and care comforts the sheep. "Your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Ps 23, 4). He protects the sheep from all type of dangers. "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me" (Ps 23, 4). "The hired hand, who is not the

shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away – and the wolf snatches them and scatters them” (Jn 10, 12).

DYNAMIC

The good shepherd is dynamic. He is ever moving and never static. Like Jesus who went from city to city and village to village to preach the good news of the kingdom of God, shepherd moves from pasture to pasture. One who is filled with the Holy Spirit shall always be dynamic. Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and was dynamic. Mary was filled with the Holy Spirit and was dynamic. Likewise, prison ministry volunteers must be filled with the Holy Spirit and shall be dynamic.

LOVE

The most significant characteristic of prison ministry and of the good shepherd is love. Love of God and love of neighbour. “God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him” (1 Jn 4, 16). His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI highlighted this in his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*⁸. God is love so the prison ministry volunteers shall be overwhelmed with love (Is 43, 1-7; Is 44,1-8). As St Theresa of Lisieux said, “God is my father and I am His daughter. Therefore, whatever God has is mine”. Prison ministry volunteers’ love shall reach the summit of agape, self-giving love, so as to dedicate their lives for the cause of prisoners.

TO KNOW THE SHEEP

The good shepherd knows the sheep thoroughly. He calls each one by name (Jn 10, 3). “I know my own and my

own know me” (Jn 10, 14). He knows their true self, true stuff and accepts them as they are. The verb ‘to know’ stands for a deep experiential knowledge. It means that he knows their life, mission, goal, and style with its entirety and concreteness. He manifests great concern, attention and care to each and every sheep.

TO FEED THE SHEEP

One of the significant responsibilities of a shepherd is that he himself shall not steal, kill, and destroy the sheep (Jn 10, 10). He shall not be a false or wicked shepherd as mentioned by prophet Ezekiel. “Are not shepherds meant to feed a flock? Yet you have fed on milk, you have dressed yourselves in wool, you have sacrificed the fattest sheep, but failed to feed the flock. You have failed to make weak sheep strong, or to care for the sick ones, bandage the injured ones. You have failed to bring back strays or look for the lost” (Ezk 34, 2-4).

The primary duty of a shepherd is to feed the sheep (Ezk 34, 3). He needs to feed them with delicious food, justice, eternal life and to feed them with salvation (Ezk 34, 16). Good shepherd leads the sheep to the green pastures to water them. “He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters... he leads me in right paths” (Ps 23, 2-3; Jn 10, 3-4).

LOVE FOR THE LOST

It is natural that what has been lost should become the object of inordinate attention, and when it is found, the object of particular joy. This underlines the fact that God takes special delight in the restoration and regaining of the

sinner. As the good shepherd loves the lost sheep so prison ministry volunteers love in a special way those who are lost, stray, marginalised, victimised, oppressed, rejected and dejected. This love for the lost was particularly manifested by Jesus in his public life. St Luke dedicates a whole chapter to explain the agony of losing a sheep and the great joy in regaining the lost sheep.

Which one of you with a hundred sheep, if he lost one, would fail to leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the missing one till he found it? And when he found it, would he not joyfully take it on his shoulders, and then, when he got home, call together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, I have found my sheep that was lost". In the same way, I tell you, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner repenting than over ninety-nine upright people who have no need of repentance (Lk 15, 4-7; Mt 18, 12-14).

In searching, serving, and saving the lost sheep we need to follow the footprints of Jesus the good shepherd. What is the reason behind the incarnation? What is the reason behind Jesus' death and resurrection? The answer is Jesus' love for the lost and his commitment to save them. "For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3, 16).

SITUATION OF THE LOST

The condition of the lost is always complicated and delicate. To understand them better, we need to analyse their experiences, sentiments, anxieties, worries, problems, tensions and feelings. They are far away from the house, far way from the shepherd, wounded, tired, not sure of finding the

shepherd again. They may be frightened of wolves and other wild animals, and not confident of themselves. They may also fear what the shepherd will think about them. Whether the shepherd will find fault with them; whether he will punish them for the irresponsible behaviour. They live in a wretched situation. They may be in the desert without water and hope. They are frightened as they no more hear the voice of the shepherd.

The lost sheep is not only a distracted and often misled, but also in a danger of losing soul. The sheep inside the tent is secure where life and salvation are easily attainable. To be away from the flock and shepherd means that the sheep may easily become prey of ferocious animals. The same is true for man who moves away from the house of the Father. He is lost for he does not experience friendship with God, source of salvation and eternal joy.

The parable of the prodigal son explains well the tragic condition of the lost sheep.

A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery. When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch; so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled himself with the husks the pigs were eating but no one would let him have them (Lk 15, 13-17).

Lost sheep are often in the state of death and in need of life. Hence Jesus says that he has come to give life in abundance. The shepherd is not expected to loose the entrusted sheep but to gain, acquire and earn more. Instead

of losing the entrusted released prisoners the prison ministry volunteers need to gain more sheep, earn more souls for the Lord.

Each lost sheep is a very precious person to the shepherd. He/she is dear to the heart of God. He gives him/her great value to the lost sheep. This preciousness and worthiness is expressed in the possessive usage, "I have found my sheep" (Lk 15, 6). The lost sheep is the object of divine love and solicitude. He/she becomes the sole object of his attention and action. The moment he looses the sheep, the shepherd forgets the other ninety-nine and the lost sheep becomes the centre of his interest and life. "The love of the shepherd is like God's love for his people: it is stronger than the love of a father for his child, tenderer than that of a mother" (Is 49, 15; 54, 4-8).

TO FIND THE LOST

Another great mission of the shepherd is to find the lost sheep, to bring back the strayed (Ezk 34, 4). Leaving behind the ninety-nine in the desert, he searches out the stray. He does not neglect the ninety-nine, but for the moment he is absorbed in the recovery of the lost. Cyril of Alexandria and Ambrose are of the opinion that the ninety-nine represents the angels and the one represents the human race.

The greatest joy of the shepherd is at the recovery of the lost. To rescue the sheep from all the places where they have been scattered (Ezk 34, 12). The Calistus catacomb in Rome has an inspiring statue of the good shepherd carrying a sheep on his shoulder. This shepherd emanates a joy of victory, a victory of finding the lost sheep, a victorious joy that comes out of preparing the sheep for self-sacrifice.

The shepherd's decision to search what is lost is vital. It is a courageous decision and action. It shows that for God no one is negligible and He is ready to go out of His way to recover even the one that strays. There is no cessation of the seeking until the lost is found. Searching led him to find. Finding gave him great joy which he expressed through celebration with his friends and relatives.

Luke's parable of the lost sheep expresses the attitude of Jesus towards the sinner, criminal, prisoner, the lost, the sick, who need the attention and care of the shepherd. He thoughtfully goes in search of the lost sheep, becomes his friend and overwhelms him with love and brings him back to the pastures.

ENCOUNTER WITH THE LOST

The shepherd searches the lost sheep all throughout the night in the desert, wilderness, mountain, forest, cities and villages. After days and hours of searching the shepherd finds the sheep. The moment of their encounter is significant. It was a love-bomb explosion, an explosion of affection, concern, compassion and joy. It proves how precious the lost sheep is for the shepherd. He considers the lost as his only unique sheep.

The shepherd neither blames, nor condemns, nor beats the sheep, nor uses bad words against the sheep. He does not judge the sheep and does not get angry. There is no upbraiding of the wandering sheep, no murmuring at the trouble and no preaching. He is full of love and joy. True love leads to forgiveness and to forgetting the mistakes made by others. Hence he takes the sheep with affection and puts it on his shoulders like a loving mother. The sheep experiences

the warmth of motherly love through the shepherd. Through these gestures of deep love the sheep felt fraternal correction, prayer, and forgiveness. Shepherd's love transforms the whole life of the sheep. This develops in the sheep a positive outlook towards the shepherd, which cultivates in the sheep a firm trust, confidence, and which gives him encouragement and hope. Shepherd is not the one who accompanies them, and shares life with them. He is with them in their trials and tribulations, joy and sorrows, failures and victories.

The apocryphal gospel of Thomas gives another version of the same story: The shepherd left the ninety-nine and sought for the lost sheep until he found it. When he had thus exerted himself, he said to that sheep, "I love you more than the ninety-nine". His joy is so great not to be enjoyed alone and hence he calls others to join him. Thus the recovered one becomes the focus of joy and not an object of contempt and mockery. Likewise, it is the task of the Jesus Fraternity members to liberate the released prisoners from derision and disdain and to adorn them with respect, dignity, self-esteem and better self-image.

TAKE ON ONE'S SHOULDERS

With the expression, 'lifting the sheep on one's shoulders and carrying it home', Luke evokes both the Hellenistic pastoral tradition and the biblical imagery of the shepherd who cares for the sheep. Taking the sheep on one's shoulders is a courageous, loving, caring, and consoling action. The joy he feels in carefully placing it on his shoulders clearly expresses the tender love of the shepherd for his sheep. Though the shepherd does not tell the joy directly to the sheep, he has great joy in finding the sheep. The attention, the love and thoughtfulness of Jesus for the lost sheep has

only one purpose: to invite the sheep to return to the flock, to invite him/her for conversion. Conversion means to return to God to enjoy full and perfect friendship with the Lord.

What the sheep might have felt while being on the shoulders of the shepherd? Safety, protection, liberation from fear and tiredness, relaxation, hope, faith, and happiness! She/he is happy because the shepherd without scolding just simply welcomed him/her. To find the sheep is the most important thing for the shepherd. He did not rationalise how the sheep was left alone in the desert? He did not care whether the sheep eloped, or escaped from the group. He is happy because he found the sheep⁹.

TO SAVE THE SHEEP

The ultimate task of the shepherd is to save the sheep. “He restores my soul” (Ps 23,3). He gives them life abundantly. “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (Jn 10, 10-11). Life in abundance means life here today, now, which culminates in the eternal life. By constantly knowing, loving and serving the sheep, the shepherd becomes like a sheep, a lamb of God. Book of *Revelation* speaks of Jesus as a victorious lamb sits on a throne. Salvation is with him. It is a salvation he attained through his blood. “Then I saw, in the middle of the throne with its four living creatures and the circle of the elders, a lamb standing that seemed to have been sacrificed” (Rev 5,6).

The good shepherd has a mission, a mission which the Father has entrusted him. We are in the prison ministry not merely out of our own interests but because Father called us and sent us with a mission. The mission of the good shepherd is to save the lost, the least and the last. Ultimate goal of

prison ministry is to save the prisoners. This saving can take place only through the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

SELF-IMMOLATION

The summit of the spirituality of the good shepherd can be found in his readiness to offer his life for the sheep - self-immolation, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn 10, 11, 15-18). The self-actualisation of the good shepherd consists in self-sacrifice and in laying down his life for the sheep; may be, to protect the sheep from wild beasts, bandits and inclement weather. It is when we lay down our lives for others like that of the paschal lamb, like that of Bishop Benjamine de Jesus in Philipines¹⁰, like that of Sr. Rani Maria in India¹¹, like that of Maxmillian Colbe in Auschwitz¹², like that of Oscar Romero in El Salvador¹³ and like that of the White Fathers in Algeria that we become good shepherds.

It is the self-sacrifice, the fidelity to commitment unto death that is the hallmark of prison ministry. Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends (Jn 15, 13). The more we have this self-offering mentality of the shepherd, the more we become the Good Shepherd - Jesus Christ. It is in this way that Jesus became the high priest. Jesus was high priest not by being the member of the Levite tribe but by his self-sacrifice at Calvary, by making himself a paschal lamb. It is in this total self-sacrifice that the self-actualisation of the sheep and the self-actualisation of the shepherd become the same. It is in this total self-sacrifice that we find the passage and growth from the identity of a sheep to the identity of the shepherd. This is all the more evident in the institution of the Eucharist, where Jesus states: "This is my body broken for you; this is my blood of the new covenant shed for many" (Lk 22, 19-20; Mt 26, 26-28).

As the paschal lamb Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross for the remission of the sins of the world. "Because all this happened to fulfill the words of the scripture: 'Not one bone of his will be broken' (Jn 19, 36). "After this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed and, so that the scripture should be completely fulfilled, he said, 'I am thirsty'... After Jesus had taken the wine he said, 'it is fulfilled'; and bowing his head he gave up his spirit (Jn 19, 28-30).

CONCLUSION

Jesus the good shepherd has set us an excellent example of serving those men and women in and outside prisons. The figure good shepherd is the role model for those who go in search of the lost sheep, those who visit prisons, rescue homes, slums and other areas where the marginalised, oppressed, depressed and rejected people live. As the good shepherd the Jesus Fraternity and prison ministry volunteers are expected to go in search of the lost sheep, know them, love them, carry them on their shoulders, and shall even be ready to die for them so as to give them life in abundance. I conclude this chapter with the words of St Peter, the first grand shepherd of the people of God, who admonishes us to care for the flock entrusted to us with gladness and commitment.

Give a shepherd's care to the flock of God that is entrusted to you; watch over it, not simply as a duty but gladly, as God wants; not for sordid money, but because you are eager to do it. Do not lord it over the group which is in your charge, but be an example for the flock. When the chief shepherd appears, you will be given the unfading crown of glory (1 Pt 5, 2-4).

ENDNOTES

- 1 For a study on what seminarians and prayer groups do when they visit prisons, see FRANCIS KODIYAN, *Saga of Divine Providence. The History of Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2000.
- 2 FRANCIS KODIYAN, “Deivathinte Kujnadu” in *Thadavarayiloru Kaithiri*, ed., JOSEPH MACKOLIL, OIRSI, Kottayam 1996, 71-86.
- 3 FRANCIS KODIYAN, “Deivathinte Kunjnad”, in Joseph Mackolil, *Thadavarayiloru Kaithiri*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1996, 71-86.
- 4 FRANCIS J. MOLONEY, *The Gospel of John in Sacra Pagina*, ed., Daniel J. Harrington, Vol. 4, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota 1989, 303.
- 5 SHAJI JOSEPH PUYKUNNEL, “From Shepherd-Boy to Shepherd-King”, in Paul Vadakumpadan – Jose Varickasseril (eds), *Shepherding. Essays in Honour of Pope John Paul II*, Vendrame Institute & DBCIC Publications, Shillong 2005, 37-49.
- 6 ABRAHAM M ANTONY, “God the Shepherd in the Book of Psalms”, in Paul Vadakumpadan – Jose Varickasseril (eds), *Shepherding. Essays in Honour of Pope John Paul II*, Vendrame Institute & DBCIC Publications, Shillong 2005, 54, 50-107.
- 7 ABRAHAM M ANTONY, “God the Shepherd in the Book of Psalms”, in Paul Vadakumpadan – Jose Varickasseril (eds), *Shepherding. Essays in Honour of Pope John Paul II*, Vendrame Institute & DBCIC Publications, Shillong 2005, 66-67, 50-107.
- 8 BENEDICT XVI, *God is Love*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican 2005.
- 9 In Midrash there is a story that Moses, while tending Jethro’s flocks, went after a lamb which had gone astray. As he thought that it must be weary, he carried it back, on his shoulders. Then God said, that, because he had shown pity to the sheep of a man, He would give him His own sheep, Israel, to feed. See S.R. DRIVER – A. PLUMMER – C.A. BRIGGS, eds., *The International Critical Commentary*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1989, 370.
- 10 Bishop Benjamin de Jesus, Bishop of Jolo in Philippines was killed in front of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in 1997.
- 11 Sr Rani Maria of Franciscan Clarist Congregation also known as ‘Indore Rani’ was brutally murdered on Feb. 25, 1995 in broad daylight.

- 12 St Maximilian Kolbe born in Poland, on 8 January 8 1894 was a member of Conventual Franciscan Order. In 1941, the Nazis imprisoned Father Maximilian in the Auschwitz death camp. There he offered his life for another prisoner and was condemned to slow death in a starvation bunker. On August 14, 1941, his impatient captors ended his life with a fatal injection. Pope John Paul II canonized Maximilian as a “martyr of charity” in 1982.
- 13 Archbishop Oscar Romero, the bishop of Poor in El Salvador, assassinated in 1980, promised history that life, not death, would have the last word. “I do not believe in death without resurrection”, he said. “If they kill me, I will be resurrected in the Salvadoran people”.

Chapter Five

Spirituality of the Father of the Prodigal Son

INTRODUCTION

The parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15, 11-32), unique to Luke's gospel, is the third parable in chapter fifteen, known as the gospel in the gospel. The parable of the lost sheep (Lk 15, 4-7) and the parable of the lost coin (Lk 15, 8-10) illustrate the Divine initiative in personal religious conversion. The parable of the prodigal son, the greatest short story in the world, emphasises the human role in the process of reformation, that is, the rise and growth of repentance in the heart of the sinner. This parable represents those who work in the reformation and rehabilitation centres for released prisoners. The director and staff of the rehabilitation centres shall imitate the father of the prodigal son to regain the released prisoners for the Lord. This chapter explicates the theology, spirituality and lifestyle of the father of the prodigal son, which is significant for those who are engaged in the reformative and rehabilitative ministry of the Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India.

THE PRODIGAL SON

The younger son, who was lost and is found (11-24) resembles the publicans and sinners, and the elder son, who

murmurs at the welcome given to the lost (25-32) resembles the Pharisees. In the wider application of the parable the younger son represents the gentiles, and the elder the Jews¹. “The younger son said to his father, ‘father, let me have the share of the estate that will come to me’. So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery” (Lk 15, 12-13). From a distance, the ‘distant country’ can be very appealing. Young people leave home for fast living. Spouses move out to form liaisons with exciting new partners. However, the glow that surrounds the far country is a mirage.

THE FATHER OF THE PRODIGAL SON

The father of the prodigal son demonstrates and represents the unconditional and intense love of Father God especially towards the lost. The parable very distinctly manifests the great joy of the Father when a lost son/daughter returns. As father God, the father of the prodigal son has open hands, open arms and an open heart. This can be the best role model for the directors of prisoners’ reformation and rehabilitation centres. When the son asks for his share, the father does not argue. He knows that if the son is ever to learn he must learn the hard way; and he grants his request.

HOME COMING

The prodigal son voluntarily returns to his home so released prisoners voluntarily come to the rehabilitation centres². The famine, the poverty, the crisis in life led the young man who went away from his home to come to a new appreciation of the situation he had left behind. He assumes that he has burned his bridges with his father and no longer

has any future in the family, but even the day labourers at home have things much better than he does now. In his desperation he plans to return to his father and the father welcomes him unconditionally. In the ministry of Jesus, prodigals find the free and generous love of the Father.

There should be a homely atmosphere in prisoners' rehabilitation centres. The atmosphere of rehabilitation centres should be just the opposite of a prison. If the prison is wretched and full of misery rehabilitation centres should overflow the compassion and forgiving love of God the father. Prisoners' rehabilitation centres must always echo the voice of father God, "You are my beloved son". Since it is the Father's house there exists no reason for fear. No fear of rejection, dismissal, sending out, and watching. Instead there should have radical trust, faith, and confidence. In prisoners' rehabilitation centres of Prison Ministry India, there are no locks, watch dogs, guards, compound walls, gates and alarms. Even doors are not locked. Mutual relationship is built up in total inner freedom, love, trust, respect and acceptance. Rehabilitation centres shall be a meeting place of repentance and forgiveness, momentary and eternity, death and life, human and divine, fragile and powerful, sick and healthy.

WARM WELCOME

The spirituality of the father of the prodigal son who wholeheartedly welcomes and arranges a great banquet at the return of his son is like the spirituality of St Monica (333-387), the mother of St Augustine of Hippo (354-430), who prayerfully and patiently waited for the conversion of her son. "While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity" (Lk 15, 20). In spite of his changed and beggarly appearance, his father recognises him even from a

distance. "He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him" (Lk 15, 20). Just as the father of the prodigal son welcomed the lost son with a tenderly kiss, the director should welcome the sons and daughters with an embrace. This embracing and warm welcoming should come from such a deep divine love that it should produce great ripples of reconciliation, forgiveness and inner healing within the individual. The director of prisoners' rehabilitation centres should welcome the newcomers like the Father of the prodigal son, with warmth and compassion.

COMPASSIONATE LOVE

Father of the prodigal son manifests a love which is very compassionate. In spite of the infidelities of his son he accepts him, welcomes him and gives him a royal treatment. This reveals the compassionate love of father God and His great joy in receiving a sinner coming home. On 20 January 1999 His Holiness Pope John Paul II during the general audience spoke on the same love, "Intense, constant and compassionate love, in spite of the infidelities of the people"³. God's love overwhelms us with compassion. The authority of the director of the rehabilitation centre is the authority of true compassion. It is not a sort of human love that is expected from the director but the divine love and mercy which has the power to transform desperation into hope and death into life. "Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited, it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not take offence or store up grievances. Love does not rejoice at wrong doing, but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes" (1 Cor 13, 4-7).

With deep genuine love even the hard hearted criminals can be transformed as true lambs.

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

We find the immense and unconditional love of Jesus in the figure of the father of the prodigal son. When the lost son returns he organises a wonderful feast. "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we will celebrate by having a feast, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found. And they began to celebrate" (Lk 15, 22-24). Those who work in prisoners' rehabilitation centres shall be men and women of unconditional love and commitment. "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (Jn 13, 1). They shall be ready to lay their own lives for the reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners. "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15, 13).

Prisoners' rehabilitation centres should be the source of infinite compassion, unconditional love, and everlasting forgiveness. The director/directress has called to become the Father: a father who can welcome his children home without asking them any questions and without wanting anything from them in return. In prisons they might be fed up with the insincere love of the friends and relatives. What they need in rehabilitation centres is the love of a true father, a father who can claim for himself the authority of true compassion.

FORGIVING LOVE

Father of the prodigal son welcomes his children home without asking them any questions and without wanting

anything from them in return. He says nothing to his son but provides more than what he needs such as the robe, ring, sandals, food, shelter, etc. More than material things what the father gives is forgiveness, honour and acceptance. He continues to let his conduct speak for him and thereby shows his spirituality of silence, life witness, and the spirituality of being. This also proves that each sinner is precious that God and His ministers regard no efforts too great to reclaim such. Like the Father of the prodigal son, the director of prisoners' rehabilitation centre shall be one full of forgiving love.

On the cross Jesus prayed for those who persecuted him. He taught to pray for enemies.

On the cross he forgave his enemies and prayed, "Father forgive them; they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23, 34). Sons and daughters of rehabilitation centres shall be well trained to forgive everybody. They need to learn the art of reconciliation; reconciliation with one's own family and victims⁴.

HENRI J M NOUWEN

Henri J M Nouwen (1932-1996) in his book *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, makes a meditation on Rembrandt's painting on the return of the prodigal son. He shares his views on the unconditional love of the Father of the Prodigal Son, which I feel also can be applied to those who serve in prisoners' rehabilitation centres. The sons and daughters of rehabilitation centres may discover within the director a compassionate mother and father. Not human love that is expected from the father but the divine love and mercy which has the power to transform death into life. He/she should move with pity as the Father of the prodigal son.

The inner eye of the director/directress of the rehabilitation centre should be powerful enough to see the inner hearts of the inmates, to see things of eternity, to see their interior sufferings, anguish and agony. He/she should have the heart which burns with an immense desire to renew and rehabilitate his children. He/she should have the fatherly love who gives all the freedom to his children to leave home and to do everything. He/she should have the heart to love as the father of the prodigal son also the heart to see deceitful tongues, disloyal hearts, and pure heart. His/her authority is the authority of compassion. He/she never possess the bad qualities and habits of the inmate. His/her hands which radiates inner light, seeks only to heal, always stretch out to bless and to pray. In them mercy becomes flesh; upon them forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing come together, and, through them, not only the tired son/daughter, but also the worn-out family find their rest.

One hand of the Father of the prodigal son gives the warmth of mother's love while the other hand gives the welcoming and affection of Father. The hands of the Father, one is of male and the other is female, to express the motherly and the fatherly love of God. The director/directress of prisoners' rehabilitation centres should be a mother as well as a father to the inmates. He / she should manifest masculinity and femininity; manhood and womanhood; fatherhood and motherhood. He/she has no desire to punish them because they have already been punished. His/her arms seek always to gather them in his hands, holding them against his breast. His/her mouth always says that you are my beloved, on you my favour rests. He/she is ever ready to wait. Within the six months of the formation in the renewal centre the sons and daughters have to grow to the status and maturity of the

father/mother. The final vocation is to become like the father and to live out his divine compassion in daily life. The return to the father is ultimately the challenge to become the father⁵.

There are three ways to become the father, which are grief, forgiveness and generosity. To become like the father, we need to shed countless tears and thus prepare our hearts to receive anyone, whatever their journey has been. We should forgive them from our heart. It is through constant forgiveness that we become like the father.

Prayer is a process to enter into the inner sanctuary of our own being where God has chosen to dwell, where I am held safe in the embrace of an all-loving Father who calls me by name and says: "You are my beloved son, on you my favour rests, a place where I can taste the joy and the peace that are not of this world". It is the source of grace; the supermarket from where I can buy peace, harmony, patience and forgiveness.

The fundamental principle is that Father God in his infinite mercy wants the lost sheep to be saved. He wants them to be loved and dreams their return to him. If we co-operate with him as Sr. Jemma and Sr. Mariam write: "We see miracles happening each day in their lives. And we thank God for His great mercy and love. He has done great things for our inmates. He showered His Spirit upon many"⁶.

COSMIC LOVE

The love we find in the father of the prodigal son is multifaceted. Though the elder son did not appreciate the feast organised in connection with the return of the prodigal son, father accepts and loves him too. None is excluded from

God's grace. It would be beneficial for the director/directress of prisoners' rehabilitation centres to study this in detail. One of the characteristics of God's love is that it is not selective and selfish but all embracing and universal. Prince Siddhartha before his enthronement as king was taken to be demonstrated the frontiers of his country. After seeing all boundaries, he said, "I do not see any boundaries. I see only mountains, seas, deserts and rivers". God's love is like the cosmic love of St Francis of Assisi. All living and nonliving beings were his brothers and sisters.

FRATERNAL LOVE

The elder son did not like the return of the prodigal son. "Calling one of his servants he asked what it was all about. The servant told him, 'your brother has come, and your father has killed the calf we had been fattening because he has got him back safe and sound'. He was angry and refused to go in" (Lk 15, 26-28). Director/directress and inmates in prisoners' rehabilitation centres shall be friends. What is the sign of friendship? Jesus called his disciples friends because he revealed everything to them. "You are my friends, if you do what I have command you. I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father" (Jn 15, 14-15). The atmosphere in the rehabilitation centre shall be conducive to sharing one's inner life with its problems, failures, victories, ventures, etc. Like the prodigal son when returned home confessed, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son" (Lk 15, 21), the sons and daughters of rehabilitation centres shall feel freedom to confess their inner life.

SUPREME LOVE

The father of the prodigal son manifests a love which is very supreme. The vocation to prison ministry is a call to self-giving love. This is possible only when we experience the breadth and length, height and depth of Christ's love. "In the abundance of his glory may he, through his Spirit, enable you to grow firm in power with regard to your inner self, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, with all God's holy people you will have the strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth, so that knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond knowledge, you may be filled with the utter fullness of God" (Eph 3, 16-19).

When we are overwhelmed by the love of Christ (2 Cor 5, 14), we will be able to totally dedicate ourselves for the cause of prisoners' reformation and rehabilitation.

Can anything cut us off from the love of Christ – can hardships or distress, or persecution, or lack of food and clothing, or threats or violence, as scripture says, 'For your sake we are being massacred all day long, treated as sheep to be slaughtered?' No; we come through all these things triumphantly victorious, by the power of him who loved us. For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nothing already in existence, and nothing still to come, nor any power, nor the heights, nor the depths, nor any created thing whatever, will be able to come between us and the love of God, known to us in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8, 35-39).

GREAT DREAMS

Director/directress of prisoners' reformation centres shall have great dreams, plans, visions about their sons and

daughters. “Yes, I know what plans I have in mind for you, Yahweh declares, plans for peace, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope (Jer 29, 11). This should be developed according to the talents and abilities of the inmate and according to the divine blueprint. Though the person himself, or his family members or society may not have great plans about them, the directors of rehabilitation centres shall have great dreams about their sons and daughters. These dreams shall be concrete, practical, for the good of the humanity and for the greater glory of the Lord.

Jesus was quite clear about his life mission. This he proclaimed at the Nazareth synagogue (Lk 4, 16-21). He was a person who was able to grasp and do the will of God always. His food was *to do his Father's will and to complete his work* (Jn 4, 34). Jesus was always in contact with his Father through prayer. Sometimes at night, sometimes in early mornings, sometimes on mountains, he prayed to the Father, discussed things with his Father. It was like a dialogue or a personal conversation, or a consultation with his Father. We see a similar style in the life of David the king which we will discuss in the next chapter as one of the prayer methods of Jesus Fraternity (1 Sam 22-24). At his death on the cross as an expression of satisfaction and fulfilment Jesus could say, “Everything is fulfilled” (Jn 19, 30).

MOTHERLY LOVE

The director/directress of prisoners' rehabilitation centre shall have a heart of a mother. “He is like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering lambs in his arms, holding them against his breast and leading to their rest the mother ewes” (Is 40, 11). John Paul states that the divine Fatherhood was expressed with motherly gestures, such as tenderness, goodness, etc. God the Father welcomes us with open

hands and embraces us warmly. To give us the experience of motherly tender touch, he holds us close to his heart. Out of his inexhaustible motherly love, he caresses and consoles. He continues, “God not only is Father but also is Mother”⁷. “Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you” (Is 49, 15).

PUNITIVE LOVE

The director/directress shall express his/her genuine love not only through motherly love but also through healthy punishments.

My son, do not scorn correction from the Lord, do not resent his training, for the Lord trains those he loves, and chastises every son he accepts. Perseverance is part of your training; God is treating you as his sons. Has there ever been any son whose father did not train him? If you were not getting this training, as all of you are, then you would be not sons but bastards. Besides, we have all had our human fathers who punished us, and we respected them for it; all the more readily ought we to submit to the Father of Spirits, and so earn life” (Heb 12, 5-9).

True sons and daughters are expected to be pruned in order to bear more fruits (Jn 15, 1-17). The condition to punish is that this shall be done overwhelming with love. The punished shall feel that this is done to them out of love and for their betterment.

CARING LOVE

Prisoners’ rehabilitation centres shall provide ample opportunities for the sons and daughters to experience the caring love from its staff and inmates. John Paul II during the

general audience of 24 March 1999 spoke of the caring love, “The witness of Scripture is unanimous that the solicitude of divine providence is concrete and immediate; God cares for all, from the least things to the great events of the world and its history”. With the background of this caring love of God the Father, how can we understand the suffering either personal or natural? Pope said: “The problem of pain is an enigma before which human reason is lost. Divine Revelation helps us to understand that it is not willed by God, but that it entered the world because of people’s sin. God allows it for the salvation of the person, by drawing good from evil”⁸.

PROTECTIVE LOVE

As Yahweh led the Israelites through the desert miraculously providing Manna, water from rock, so directors of prisoners’ rehabilitation centres shall assist the sons and daughters trusting fully on the divine providence. In the book of Daniel we see that the three youngsters in the fire were well protected from the fire through the assistance of an angel (Daniel 3). Similarly, directors of prisoners’ reformation centres shall protect the sons and daughters from the harassment of police, cruelties of victims, and abandonment by their families.

SONS/DAUGHTERS

On 25th January 1998 while adoring the Blessed Sacrament, there echoed in my heart a powerful message; a message to be a son. I reflected upon it again and gradually it revealed to me like this:

God the Father has been asking me: be my son
Mary, My Mother has been asking me: be my son

My own mother asks me: be my son
My congregation MCBS asks me: be my son
My Prayer group, Jesus Fraternity tells me, be my son
My Roman prayer group, Lumen Christi requests me, be my son
The office where I work, PCPCU tells me, be my son
My country, India appeals me, be my son
My big family, the whole universe advises me, be my son

Who is a son? What is a son? Jesus can be considered as the only real and perfect Son, a model son to all of us. We are called to grow into the status and maturity of the son/daughter, Father/Mother. Whoever returns to the father is invited to become the father/mother and shall be the source of infinite compassion, unconditional love, and everlasting forgiveness.

Jesus often used to hear from his Father “You are my beloved son” (Lk 3, 22; Lk 9, 35) which gradually developed within him a strong awareness of his sonship. Are we able to listen a similar voice during our prayer? Even when all around us fail to understand me, Jesus would be able to say, “You are my beloved son”. For this we need to fully trust in the Lord, and not in us. We need to be fully led by the Spirit. We are children of God, with the right to call Father God, Abba (Rom 8, 14-17).

The inmates of the rehabilitation centres shall be considered as sons and daughters. They are first of all sons and daughters of Father God. They shall have ample opportunities to hear from us “You are my beloved son/daughter”. They shall experience through us the warmth of motherly and fatherly love and forgiveness. Through our

love they shall be able to grow to the maturity of father and mother.

SIMPLE AND HUMBLE LIFESTYLE

The lifestyle in prisoners' rehabilitation centres shall be simple but decent and genuine. Just like Jesus born in a manger, had no place to sleep, and no place to bury, the living conditions of the rehabilitation centres shall be simple. The sons and daughters shall be humble and obedient. This would assist them to work well with any type of personalities. "Who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. And for this God raised him high, and gave him the name which is above all other names (Phil 2, 6-9).

What was Jesus' method to do the will of God? What method he adopted to fulfil his life mission and vision? He did not choose the easiest way instead the most difficult way, the way of the cross. It was a way consists in dying to give life. Jesus is the true son, a great model for us, who was sent by God the Father and who by his passion, death, and resurrection redeemed mankind.

CONCLUSION

The Father of the prodigal son, wise, loving, patient, healer and peace maker, is the light lit on the mountain for those who work in prisoners' reformation and rehabilitation centres. As the father of the prodigal son, eagerly waits, and hilariously welcomes, wholeheartedly accepts, and this

redefines the life of the prodigal son, so the directors of rehabilitation centres shall wait, welcome, accept and redefine the released prisoners. I conclude this chapter with the words of prophet Ezekiel. He speaks against the shepherds who fed themselves with the milk, meat and wool of the sheep and who failed to feed the flock, who failed to make the weak sheep strong, who failed to care for the sick ones, who failed to bandage the injured ones, and bring back the strays and the lost.

Shepherds, the Lord of Yahweh says this: Disaster is in store for the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Are not shepherds meant to feed a flock? Yet you have fed on milk, you have dressed yourselves in wool, you have sacrificed the fattest sheep, but failed to feed the flock. You have failed to make weak sheep strong, or to care for the sick ones, or bandage the injured ones. You have failed to bring back strays or look for the lost (Ezk 34, 2-4).

ENDNOTES

- 1 S.R. DRIVER – A. PLUMMER – C.A. BRIGGS, eds., *The International Critical Commentary*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1989, 370 ff.
- 2 For a study on the spirituality of the rehabilitation centres for released prisoners, see FRANCIS KODIYAN, *Saga of Divine Providence. The History of Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2000.
- 3 *Vatican Information Service*, English Edition, Jan, 20, 1999, 1.
- 4 Once Abraham Lincoln was asked how he was going to treat the rebellious southerners when they had finally been defeated and had returned to the Union of the United States. The questioner expected that Lincoln would take a dire vengeance, but he answered, 'I will treat them as if they had never been away'. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, TPI, Bangalore 1981, 205.
- 5 J.M. HENRI NOUWEN, *The Return of the Prodigal Son. A Story of*

Homecoming, Doubleday, New York 1992.

- 6 JEMMA - MARIAM, "Snehashramam. Hope for the dejected Women", in Varghese Karipperry - Lathika, eds., *Prisoners Our Own Brethren*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 1998, 114.
- 7 *Vatican Information Service*, 20 Jan 1999, 1.
- 8 *Vatican Information Service*, 25 March 1999, 1.

Chapter Six

Prison Ministry Prayers

INTRODUCTION

Francis de Sales in his *An Introduction to Devout Life* writes, “Prayer brings to our mind the brightness of divine light and exposes our will to the warmth of divine love. It is a blessed fountain which as it flows, revives our good desires and causes them to bring forth fruit, washes away the stains of infirmity from our soul, and calms the passions of our hearts”¹. Last four decades, the Prison Ministry India, in her efforts to outreach the prisoners and in her efforts to reform and rehabilitate them, has been making use of many prayer methods, which we would like to share with you so that they may be beneficial to many.

Prison Ministry India is basically a prayer group. Its conception, activities, growth and development, everything happened, happens and will happen only through prayer and prayer groups. It is a prayer group whose members are committed themselves to the integral spiritual renewal of the lost sheep. Thus the mission of Jesus Fraternity is same as Jesus, that is, the searching, serving and saving the least, lost and the last (Luke 4, 18-19; 5, 32). Jesus Fraternity is a ministry oriented prayer group. Its members pray, fast, go in search and work for the integral redemption of the Lost, the Least and the Last as the Good Shepherd. The Holy Eucharist, Holy Bible,

and Divine Office are their basic spiritual sources and table of nourishment. Everyday Jesus Fraternity members drink, eat and get strengthened from them. In addition to these fundamental spiritual sources there are some prayer methods which they have been practising in the past two decades and have been experiencing its wonderful results especially in their ministry towards the prisoners, prostitutes, street children and drug addicts. Besides the spiritual exercises which we mentioned in the chapter on Jesus Fraternity Spirituality, its members make use of the following prayers. They make use of these prayers especially when they are on the prison ministry mission, that is, during their journeys.

PEACE PRAYER

The Peace Prayer believed to be written by St Francis of Assisi describes well the surest way of inner peace sought by everybody. This shall be the prayer of those who visit prisons and work in prisoners' rehabilitation centres.

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
When there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.
Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood, as to understand,
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

TORPEDO PRAYER

It is a prayer which Jesus Fraternity uses to conquer over the evil habits and tendencies of individuals like Drug Addiction, Chain Smoking etc. What is very important here is the power of the Name of Jesus. The basic biblical passage behind this prayer is Acts 3: 1-10. With the Name of Jesus we can do wonders as St. Peter did with the lame at the beautiful door of the temple. The method is first of all feeling the great need of liberating a person from his bad habits. That is the great desire for his change and new life. The second thing is the firm faith that with the help of Jesus we can transform him/her. The third point is the dream. We dream that Jesus transforms him/her and he/she becomes not only liberated from his/her weaknesses but also growing in virtues and good habits. The fourth is that we thank Jesus for this person and for the would be realising transformation by reciting hundred times the prayer "Thank you Jesus". Jesus Fraternity has been applying this since 1986 for the conversion of prisoners. The school children have been doing this prayer very enthusiastically. We give the names and some details of the person to the children and they pray for them. This prayer functions as the torpedoes in war. As torpedo comes through and beneath the water and destroys the enemy ships without their knowledge the prayer kills evil tendencies without the knowledge of the person.

MISSILE PRAYER

Missile prayer is one which the Jesus Fraternity uses against the evil powers like individuals, institutions, religions and sects who work against the Jesus Fraternity movement. The principle behind is the firm faith that the Trinitarian God is the Mightiest of all. He is the all powerful. Before Him all

other powers become nothing. With this strong faith we pray hundred times “glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world with out end, Amen”. This we do seeing the individuals or institutions in mind offering them to the Triune God. The power of the Triune God subdues them. When the obstacles are being removed Jesus fraternity does the will of God for the greater glory of God. Jesus Fraternity members do this before and during they go for a mission in prisons especially when they see that some are making unreasonable obstacles for their mission.

JERICO PRAYER

It is the prayer method we find in the book of Joshua.6:1-21. The Israelites conquered the city by walking around the walls of the Jericho city with clarion singing in front of the Arc of the covenant. The same way when we want to conquer over the centres of criminals, prostitutes, drug abusers, etc. we make the Jericho prayer. We imagine that the room or house we pray is, for the moment, the house of the lost sheep. We walk around the prayer hall seven times as the Israelites did. Each round we make with a special type of prayer. For instance the first round with Eucharistic procession, the second with exorcism prayer, the third with praise and thanks giving, the other rounds may be with prayer of tongues, prayer of mercy, rosary, way of the cross, confession of sins, giving pardon to others, kissing of feet etc. Each round is added with bible readings, explanation of the Bible passages, appropriate songs, and other prayer aids according to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

JESUS PRAYER

This is the traditional Jesus prayer which Jesus Fraternity members are using with some breath regulations. By this we beg the mercy of God to come upon all the sinners of the world. Before we begin the prayer “Lord Jesus Son of Living God, have mercy on us sinners”, we keep silence for some minutes and come to the presence of God. We come to the awareness that God is present in the atmosphere around us. We imagine that when we breathe, through the breath God comes within us and as breath spreads to all parts of the body so we are being filled with the presence of God gradually as we do breathing. With this imagination of the indwelling of the God’s presence we do five times deep breathing. Now we are conscious that God’s presence is not only around us but also within us especially within our heart. With this awareness, now we recite first half of the Jesus Prayer that is “Lord Jesus Son of Living God” together with the inhaling of the breath. We recite the second half of the prayer that is “have mercy on us sinners” together with the exhaling of the breath. After doing it hundred times or unto when we feel a very personal contact with Jesus we leave Jesus prayer and immerse in personal dialogue with Jesus or in internal silence enjoying the presence of God in mystical union.

By means of Jesus Prayer prisoners enjoyed the freedom within prison barriers. Many prisoners wrote that through Jesus Prayer they could sleep well. On the prison pilgrimage the Jesus Fraternity members recited Jesus Prayer on the way and offered to those whom they are going to visit.

CHAIN PRAYER

The basic cell of Jesus Fraternity is prayer group. Each prayer group would have a minimum of seven members.

Each of these seven has to take a day to pray and fast specially for the sinners. So every day there would be at least one to pray and fast for the conversion of sinners. To remind the members that today is the day of prayer, in seminaries we use to pass a small cross among the members. When one gets the cross it means that it is his day to pray and fast. On the prayer day what one does? He/she participates in the Holy Mass receives Holy Communion and offer it to the prayer friend. After the communion he prays especially for the prayer friend and for the members of the group. During the day he spends half an hour for Bible reading and prays personally an hour either with the divine office or with meditation, praise and thanks giving, prayer with tongues, Jesus prayer etc. He makes some sacrifices by abstaining from food either a time or two according to one's age and health. Before J.F. begins a new venture like mission for the renewal of prostitutes, All India central prison visiting etc. we request prayer and fasting from many others especially from the noviciate houses and from the perpetual adoration centres.

ROSARY

As an answer to Mary's invitation to pray the rosary for the conversion of sinners all J.F. members pray rosary every day. In addition to that when we are in some trouble for instance when some officials are not allowing us to conduct the program for the prisoners even though we have all the necessary papers of permission and they have all the possibilities to grant it to us, we pray rosary outside until the lines are being cleared. While we travel we pray rosary dedicating each mystery for the renewal of the prisoners in the nearby prisons. Sometimes we pray rosary by offering each HAIL MARY for the renewal of prisoners whom we

know personally and some other times for our own members. In the renewal centres for the female prisoners the inmates recite rosary for the renewal of the universal church while they are making rosaries.

WAY OF THE CROSS

Passion and crucifixion of Christ is the answer to the sin of man. When we participate in Christ's passion and suffering we participate in His redeeming work. When Jesus Fraternity Prayer group members gather for the prayer meeting we pray the way of the cross and dedicate each station for the renewal of prisoners. Sometimes members pray personally the way of the cross for their prayer friend.

PRAYER BEFORE THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Jesus Fraternity is born out of the prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. We give much importance to the prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. During the Fasting prayer day members are encouraged to pray before the Blessed Sacrament at least an hour especially by participating in the Holy Mass. While the J.F. team are working in prisons, rescue homes etc. some of the team members would be praying before the Blessed Sacrament interceding for their friends who are at work. There are many perpetual adoration centres who offer their adoration for our intentions and many novices who fast and pray regularly for the success of our mission.

CONSTANT PRAISE AND WORSHIP

During the annual gatherings and training programs we used to have constant or day and night prayer and worship before the Blessed Sacrament. The whole participants may be divided into different groups and each group would be

praying an hour before the Blessed Sacrament interceding for the renewal of the prisoners all over the world and invoking for the coming of the Holy Spirit. In the renewal and rehabilitation centres we have the idea to have constant praise and worship for the renewal of the prisoners all over the world. Different groups in the renewal centres come before the Blessed Sacrament and sing and praise for an hour or two one after the other continuously.

PRAYER FOR PRISONERS

God our Loving Father, we praise and worship you with Jesus Christ who taught us to visit the incarcerated. We thank and glorify you for sending your only begotten Son, Jesus to proclaim liberty to the captives and saving us through His unjust imprisonment and death on the cross. Merciful Father, give us the grace to see your face in brethren behind bars, and help us to remember them as though we were in prison with them. Beloved Father, we entrust into your compassionate hands our imprisoned brethren, sanctify them by your precious blood and anoint them with your Holy Spirit. Illumine their hearts to accept the present traumatic situation, give them the grace for repentance and forgiveness. Inspire their family members and society to accept them in spite of their defects and failures. Fill us with the fruits, gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit so that we may be empowered to transmit the unconditional and forgiving love of Jesus to prisoners. Bless the prison staff that they may be kind, gentle and understanding towards those under their care; sanctify and strengthen the victims that they may reconcile with those who offended them. Mary, Mother of Jesus pray for the reformation and rehabilitation of our brethren behind bars. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

FRATERNITY PRAYER

The so-called Fraternity Prayer of the Jesus Fraternity is nothing but the prayer of *Our Father* which Jesus taught. Jesus Fraternity members conclude all their prayer sessions with the prayer of Our Father. At the end of all programmes, they recite this prayer by making a circle, holding others' hands and thereby becoming one in heart and mind.

Our Father in heaven
Holy be your name
Your kingdom come
Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our sins
As we have forgiven those who sin against us
Do not lead us into temptation
But deliver us from the evil.
For yours is the kingdom, the power and glory
For ever and ever, Amen.

THERESA PRAYER

It is the prayer method developed by St. Theresa of child Jesus of Lisieux. She applied this method for the conversion of the notorious criminal called Pransini and found that it was successful. The Jesus Fraternity members and especially the inmates of the renewal centres who were once in prison practice this method. According to this method everyone would get a prayer friend to pray and make sacrifices for his /her conversion. Among the prayers Holy Mass is the most important. Members participate in the Holy Mass and offer it for the conversion of his/her friend. Also his/her spiritual exercises like canonical hours, rosaries, Jesus prayer etc. and

the sacrifices he /she makes, offers for his/her friend. Also he/she writes letters, makes personal visits, provides the material needs and requests prayer and fasting for him/her from many others.

DAVID'S PRAYER

In the first book of Samuel there is a beautiful prayer method which David practiced in his life. It is nothing but a personal dialogue or discussion with God who dwells within oneself. As reads in 1 Sam.23: 1-2, 9-13, David consulted God before he goes for a mission or before he does an important thing. Instead of the Old Testament Ephod we have the Holy Bible, gifts of the Holy Spirit and the superiors or elders. In this consultation listening the command of God or knowing the plan of God and executing it at any cost is very important. This method of discussing, listening, discerning and acting is very helpful especially for the leaders.

OPEN TO THE SPIRIT

Jesus Fraternity believes that Holy Spirit lives and speaks through every member of the group. Behind the growth and success of Jesus Fraternity in their mission towards the prisoners we see that the listening, discerning and execution of the inspirations given by its members played an important role. The prayer group members are always attentive to hear the directions of the Holy Spirit and share it to others not only in the time of prayer but also during the missions in prisons and rescue homes. Because of this openness to the Spirit many a time we had been escaped from the traps of enemies and many other times it helped us to shower lots of graces to the lost sheep. In the planning and in the execution

J.F. members always give ear to the tender suggestions of the Holy Spirit.

THE CHAPLET OF THE DIVINE MERCY

Jesus honoured Saint Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938) with great extraordinary graces such as visions, revelations, hidden stigmata, mystical engagement and espousal, the gift of prophecy, of reading into people's souls, and others. Though so greatly enriched with graces, she wrote: "Neither graces, nor revelations, nor ecstasies, nor any gifts bestowed upon her make a soul perfect, but only the interior union of my soul with God. My sanctity and perfection are based on a more strict union of my will with God's will"².

In 1935, Saint Faustina received a vision of an angel sent by God to chastise a certain city. She began to pray for mercy, but her prayers were powerless. Suddenly she saw the Holy Trinity and felt the power of Jesus' grace within her. At the same time, she found herself pleading with God for mercy with words she heard interiorly:

Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world; for the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world³.

As she continued saying this inspired prayer, the angel became helpless and could not carry out the deserved punishment⁴. The next day, as she was entering the chapel, she again heard this interior voice, instructing her how to recite the prayer that our Lord later called "the Chaplet". From then on, she recited this form of prayer almost constantly, offering it especially for the dying. In subsequent revelations, the Lord

made it clear that the Chaplet was not just for her, but for the whole world. He also attached extraordinary promises to its recitation. The Lord told her:

Encourage souls to say the Chaplet which I have given you. Whoever will recite it will receive great mercy at the hour of death. When they say this chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just Judge but as the Merciful Savior. Priests will recommend it to sinners as their last hope of salvation. Even if there were a sinner most hardened, if he were to recite this chaplet only once, he would receive grace from my infinite mercy. I desire to grant unimaginable graces to those souls who trust in my mercy. Through the Chaplet you will obtain everything, if what you ask for is compatible with my will⁵.

Prayed on ordinary rosary beads, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy is an intercessory prayer that extends the offering of the Eucharist, so it is especially appropriate to use it after having received Holy Communion at Holy Mass. It may be said at any time, but our Lord specifically told Saint Faustina to recite it during the nine days before the Feast of Mercy (the first Sunday after Easter).

The chaplet of divine mercy is very beneficial to prisoners. Those who think that their crimes and evil acts will never be forgiven by God should try this chaplet and experience the wonderful mercy from the Lord.

REHABILITATION CENTER PRAYER

Lead us, O Lord

From the world of killing to the world of life
From the world of suffering to the world of happiness
From the world of lock to the world of locklessness
From the world of walls to the world of walllessness

From the world of stealing to the world of sharing
From the world of despair to the world of hope
From the world of revenge to the world of forgiveness
From the world of authority to the world of service
From the world of hatred to the world of love
From the world of worry to the world of providence
Lead us, O Lord⁶.

PRAYER OF ABANDONMENT

This is a prayer prepared by Blessed Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916). He developed this prayer during his meditation on “Jesus cried out in a loud voice saying, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit’. With these words he breathed his last” (Lk 23,46). This is a powerful prayer which later Sr. Magdeleine modified and came to be known as the *Prayer of Abandonment*. This reveals obviously our total submission to the will of God:

Father, I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will. Whatever you may do, I thank you; I am ready for all, I accept all, let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures. I wish no more than this, O Lord. Into your hands I commend my soul; I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands without reserve, and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father⁷.

PMI VOLUNTEERS' PRAYER

Help me, O Lord

To be the wheat fallen

To be the vine pruned

To be the reed holed

To be the wood chiselled

To be the stone rejected

To be the stone rolled

To be the body broken

To be the blood shed

To be the lamb of God

To be the lamp of the world

To be the salt of the earth

To be the ransom for many

Help me O Lord⁸

CONCLUSION

The above-mentioned prayer methods are some of the simple keys to open the door of divine intimacy. It helps the members to be in constant contact with Jesus, to hear His Voice, to see His Divine Plan and to bring the lost sheep back home. Many a member of Jesus Fraternity as well as lost sheep climbed the steps of spirituality through these simple but divine ladders. I conclude this section on prayer with the words of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of modern India:

I am neither a man of letters nor of science, but I humbly claim to be a man of prayer. It is prayer that saved my life. Without it I would have lost my reason long ago. If I did not loose my peace of soul, in the midst of my many trials,

it is because of the peace that came to me through prayer. One can live several days without food, but not without prayer. Prayer is the key to each morning, and the lock to each evening. It is a sacred alliance between God and us. Let everyone try this experience, and they will find that daily prayer will add something new to their lives, something which cannot be found elsewhere.

ENDNOTES

- 1 ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, *An Introduction to the Devout Life*, Tan Books and Publishers, Illinois 1994, 55.
- 2 Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy, *Blessed Sr. Faustina Kowalska*, Warsaw-Cracow 1993, 23.
- 3 M. FAUSTINA KOWALSKA, *Divine Mercy in my Soul. The Diary of the Servant of God Sister M. Faustina Kowalska*, Marian Press, Stockbridge 1987, 476.
- 4 M. FAUSTINA KOWALSKA, *Divine Mercy in my Soul*, 474-475.
- 5 M. FAUSTINA KOWALSKA, *Divine Mercy in my Soul*, 1731.
- 6 This prayer is carved on a pillar at Snehashramam – the first rehabilitation centre of Jesus Fraternity for male released prisoners at Vettukad, Thrissur.
- 7 P.S. MAGDELEINE, «Prayer of Abandonment», *Little Sisters of Jesus. News Notes*, 24 (1993) 60. Antoine Chatelard makes a commentary on this prayer explaining its historical background and significance. See A. CHATELARD, «La prière d'abandon de Charles de Foucauld», *BTACF*, 106 (1992) 6-11. See also A. CHATELARD, «La preghiera dell'abbandono di Charles de Foucauld», *Famiglia Carlo de Foucauld*, 55 (1994) 46-65; L.A. DE MOLA, «Revisione di vita sulla preghiera d'abbandono», *Famiglia Carlo de Foucauld*, 55 (1994) 66-77.
- 8 This is my priestly prayer which I printed on the priestly ordination memento card on 4th January 1989.

General Conclusion

Prison Ministry India is a prayer group launched at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam, Kerala, India in 1985 for the integral reformation, and rehabilitation of prisoners, prostitutes, street children, drug addicts, and the like. On 8th September 1989 this movement came under the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Conference and on 27th April 2000 it came under the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India.

Jesus Fraternity, as the name signifies, first of all, is centred on Jesus Christ who came in search of sinners for repentance and who offered Himself on the cross as a ransom for many. Secondly, it is a spirituality focussed on Jesus' favourite people such as the least, the lost and the last whom He searched, served and saved. In other words, it is a spirituality of those who are called sinners such as prisoners, prostitutes, drug addicts, street children, underworld people, and of those who dedicate their lives for these people to give life in abundance to them. The significant features of the Jesus Fraternity Spirituality can be basically divided into two such as Jesus centred and people oriented.

The Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India, a prayer group born in 1980s at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kerala, India, with its motto "search, serve and save the lost, the least, and the last" is both an answer to the problems of the people of twenty first century and the foundation for the third millennium spirituality. The spirituality of Jesus

Fraternity/Prison Ministry India is not only rooted in the early Christian spirituality, sacred Scripture and teachings of the Holy Catholic Church but also imbibed the aspirations, attitudes, aptitudes, lifestyle and mentalities of people living in our age.

The backbone of this mission of love and reconciliation are - providence of God, love, sacrifices, and prayers of hundreds of priests, religious and lay people.

Acts 3,1-7. Peter had the real wealth - Jesus. The power of the name of Jesus. When they work in the name of Jesus miracles will accompany us. The effect of Jesus Prayer.

During six months stay in Snehashramam the inmates reform their personality as result of God experience throughout. The day begins with Eucharistic celebration followed by holy hours, Scripture readings, spiritual exhortations, retreats, personal prayers, community prayers, and vocational orientation classes and other socio-cultural activities.

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