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A PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL AND CRIMINO-SOCIAL QUARTERLY ON REFORMATION AND REHABILITATION



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REFORMATIVE EXPLORATIONS

A PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL AND CRIMINO-SOCIAL QUARTERLY
ON REFORMATION AND REHABILITATION

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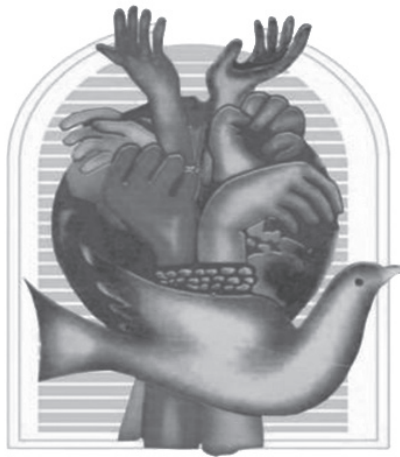
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PRISONERS' REINTEGRATION TRAJECTORY

Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

POPE FRANCIS

On 7-8 November 2019 the Vatican's Dicastery for Integral Human Development convened an intercontinental conference on the Catholic Church's Pastoral Care of Prisoners. As the national coordinator of Prison Ministry India, I was blessed and privileged to attend this meeting and present a paper on the Contributions and Challenges of Prison Ministry India. In his intervention Pope Francis noted that places of detention often fail to promote reintegration into society because they lack sufficient resources and also because of frequent overcrowding which turns prisons into real places of what he called, "depersonalization". On the contrary, real social reintegration, he said, starts by guaranteeing opportunities for development, education, decent work, access to healthcare, as well as generating public spaces for civic participation. The Pope urged today's society to overcome the stigmatization of someone who has made a mistake because, he said, "instead of offering help and adequate resources to live a dignified life, we are accustomed to discarding the person rather than making efforts for him or her to return to the love of God in his or her life." Often a person leaving prison faces an alien world that does not recognize him or her as trustworthy, denying him or her the possibility of working for a dignified livelihood. With these people prevented from regaining the full exercise of their dignity, the Pope warned, they are once

again exposed to the dangers of the lack of development opportunities, in the midst of violence and insecurity.

Concept of Trajectory

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 the term as a path, a progression or a line of development. By the term trajectory we mean the various stages of a progressive path, which has a beginning, a middle and an end. According to our understanding prisoner reintegration is a process having many phases, i.e., an initiation, a growth and a climax. The reintegration trajectory of a prisoner may begin with an initial momentum of conversion by a special grace such as reading the Holy Bible, participation in a retreat, an encounter with an enlightened person, or a particular life crisis. He/she gradually commences turning away from his/her past sinful and immoral life. Through the continued forces of unconditional love and acceptance from relatives, friends and voluntary agencies, he/she begins to keep the commandments and develops virtues. In the course of time, he/she becomes deeply aware of life goals, life vision and mission. Thus, prisoners' reintegration trajectory is the transformation and transcendence track of brethren behind bars. This is a progressive process of self-awareness, self-transformation, self-actualisation, self-transcendence, deification and socio-political consciousness.

Prisoners' Reintegration

Reintegration of prisoners is tough, challenging as well as exciting and deeply rewarding. Two-thirds of released prisoners will be arrested again within three years. *Get out and Stay Out: A Reentry Guide* prepared by Prison Fellowship International illustrates the trajectory of prisoners' reintegration. How can returning citizens get out of prison - and stay out? While many returning citizens are anxious to establish themselves, the field work experience indicates that it takes about three

years for former prisoners to re-establish themselves. This guide walks through a former prisoner's first three hours, days, months, and years of freedom, and offers a plan to help make the most of this second chance.

The First Three Hours: Face Your Fears

A Solid Plan for Your First Day Out Will Help Keep You on Course. Jill Colon was an accountant when she went to work for a fraudulent gold company. Her boss got federal time; she got state time in Florida. Ready to make a change, she found two female prison volunteers to mentor her. Still, she grew anxious as her release date approached. She wondered how she would find a place to live and a way to pay the bills. With freedom comes great pressure. As much as you might be looking forward to it, the thought of being released can also provoke a lot of fear and insecurity. Jill tackled her fears by working with her mentors to make specific, concrete plans. She applied for special transitional housing. She knew how she would get money for food and the medications she took. The day she was released, she had supportive people waiting to give her a ride to her new home. Despite her anxiety - an emotion you might share - Jill was ready to succeed. She started preparing as early as possible. She sought accountability and good advice. And with a solid plan for her first 24 hours, she managed not to let her fears take her off course. What will your first three hours of freedom look like? Like Jill, you might need a mentor who can guide you. If a mentor is unavailable, a friend who can be a positive influence or pastor and church may be able to step in.

The First Three Days: Find Your Footing

When you walk from a dark room into sunlight, it takes your eyes a few minutes to adjust. The first days out of prison can feel the same: intense, disorienting, and maybe frightening. You'll have a lot of decisions to make. The world may seem like it's moving too fast, and if you've been down a long

time, new technologies might be unfamiliar. This is where a supportive mentor or community can make all the difference. Having the right support in place was a big help to Reggie Holmes. Reggie was a young kid when he fell in with a bad crowd and spent a short time in prison. As he prepared for his release, he was nervous about meeting with his parole officer. But his mentor, Stephan, took him to Goodwill and helped him find a set of professional clothes. Since his state allowed it, Stephan came along to Reggie's first meeting with the parole officer. Stephan didn't do anything for Reggie that Reggie could do for himself, but he gave him daily encouragement and accountability as he got his identification, hunted for jobs, and established a new routine. You might not think you'll need the extra support like Reggie did, but having someone on speed dial will help you manage unexpected setbacks when they come. When your tenth application for employment gets rejected, or when a drug-using friend from the past returns, you'll be glad to have someone you can turn to.

The First Three Months: Form Positive Relationships

John Krause sat in prison after a decades-long spiral of drugs, despair, and broken relationships. He hadn't just wrecked his own life; his three children were under three separate roofs. So, he made a promise: he would become the father his children needed, and when he got home with God's help, he would get his family back together. John worked hard to fulfill his promise. When he got out, he remained clean and sober. He found a church, and he used his new connections to raise funds for a successful coffee-roasting business. The business has helped him build more positive community around him - and support his family. His children are now back under his roof, and he and his wife are expecting a new child. In the first three months, as the newness of freedom wears off, loneliness will be your enemy. The isolation you feel will tempt you to form relationships with people who don't share your values -

and that can signal trouble. The best thing you can do is focus on repairing broken relationships and forming positive new ones, like John did.

The First Three Years: Give Back

Diane Reyes was a two-time loser. Her second time around, she joined a long-term Prison Fellowship program for women preparing to return to society. Three years after her release, she has graduated from community college, has a steady job, and plans to start her own business. She also goes back to prison to help other women like her. Bill Loyd, a Prison Fellowship staff member, says, “People like her that come from backgrounds where they should have been dead, all the way now to caring and giving back and working with other women after sending time in prison - they’re my heroes.” If, like Diane, you reach the three-year mark without another arrest, you are likely to remain out for good. At that point, you will probably have reached a place of stability and growth in your career and your relationships. Look around and see what you have to contribute. Remember: the goal isn’t just to stay out; it’s to stay out so that you build a restored life of purpose and hope.

PMI Visualisation of Reintegration

Prison Ministry India is in preparation for its golden jubilee celebrations (1981-2031). As part of the golden jubilee celebrations, PMI envisages the reintegration of prisoners taking into consideration of the concepts of Pope Francis and Prison Fellowship International and propose the following dream project to its volunteers to be implemented in the coming years.

Incessant Intercessory Invocation for the Incarcerated

To sanctify prisoners worldwide and to do reparations for the sins and crimes committed by prisoners worldwide,

PMI launched the Incessant Intercessory Invocation for the Incarcerated. Thereby we extended our ministry to the whole world by interceding 24 hours of the day, 7 days of the week and 365 days of the year for the reformation, rehabilitation, reintegration and redemption of prisoners worldwide. With prayer everything is possible. Nothing even the reformation and reintegration of hardcore criminals are not impossible.

PMI Volunteers

PMI has about 8000 volunteers all over India who regularly visit the 1319 prisons in India. In the coming years PMI will promote 5000 more volunteers especially from those states from where we have fewer volunteers.

Special Task Forces

In 2019 PMI established Special Task Forces to specially pray for the reformation and reintegration of those hardcore criminals whom we cannot meet during our routine visits as they are kept in high security prison cells. For instance, we formed a special task force called Terrorists Saving Squad (TSS) to pray for the transformation of terrorists. We have Death Row Commandos (DRC) to pray for those who strangled in death rows under capital punishment. PMI shall establish 50 special Task Forces and each STF will have 50 prayer warriors and will have a 50 days program with 50 Holy Masses, 50 hours of Eucharistic adoration and so on.

Prisoners' Release

PMI has a special task force known as Prisoners' Releasing Squad. PRS has released thousands of prisoners with legal and financial assistance. We shall strive hard to release more than 500 prisoners with legal and financial assistance in the coming years.

PMI Legal Clinics

PMI shall introduce legal clinics in almost all states and dioceses. These legal clinics will provide free legal aid to prisoners' release.

PMI Rehabilitation Centers

In 1991 PMI established its first rehabilitation centre for released men prisoners in Thrissur. In 1992 PMI launched its second rehabilitation centre for released women prisoners in Trivandrum. PMI decided to launch 10 more rehabilitation centers for released men and women prisoners where they can come immediately after their release for their recuperation, skill training, and spiritual, mental and physical regaining of strength. When they find a job or establish a business and settle with marriage they go to their own families.

Jobs for Released Prisoners

As part of the Golden Jubilee Celebration, PMI has introduced an employment scheme for released and reformed prisoners. PMI will provide Rs 3 lakhs each for a small-scale industry or to purchase an autorickshaw etc.

Houses for Released Prisoners

As part of PMI Golden Jubilee, we shall construct 50 houses for the released and reformed prisoners. We offer Rs 5 lakhs to a family and the rest have to be raised by them from other sources.

Homes for Prisoners' Children

Being inspired by PMI patron St Maximillian Kolbe PMI launched in 1994 the first home for prisoners' children. PMI has many such homes in different Indian states. In the coming years we shall launch 10 more homes for prisoners' children like Kolbe Home, Bangalore.

Scholarships for Prisoners' Children

Since a decade PMI has been assisting prisoners' children with educational scholarships. We shall extend distant these educational scholarships to 5000 children of prisoners in the coming years.

Homes for the Human Trafficked

PMI shall launch 10 more homes for the human trafficked girls and boys.

Provision for Prisoners' Families

PMI shall provide provisions for 5000 prisoners' families.

Medical Care for Prisoners' Families

PMI shall provide medical care for 5000 prisoners' families.

Conclusion

Prisoners' Reintegration Trajectory can fruitfully be accomplished with the close collaboration of released prisoner, prison staff, voluntary agencies like PMI, family members and society. This is a lifelong and strenuous process in which the wholehearted cooperation of all agencies is very significant. The above-mentioned recommendations and proposals are carved out of the four decades of prison ministry experiences both of the Prison Fellowship International and Prison Ministry India. We are sure that these recommendations would be able to radically transform many released prisoners and they would be able to reach their greatest goal of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration. PMI and PFI can be proud of their thousands of reformed, reintegrated and redeemed prisoners which provides great hope and foundation for the reintegration of thousands of others in the future. Let the dawning ray of hope see the end of the gloom cast on the faces of majority of prisoners and let a new awakening percolate every prison wall



Everyone Can Fall; Jesus Wants to Save Each One

Nobility of Heart

Pope Francis celebrated the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper at the juvenile detention facility in Rome where he had celebrated the Mass in 2013. He told the young inmates that Jesus is not afraid of anything anyone has done; Jesus paid the price for our sins and wants to save us. Jesus never abandons anyone; he has come to save, serve and accompany everyone, Pope Francis told young inmates. "If we listened to these (lessons) from Jesus, life would be so wonderful because we would rush to help one another instead of ripping off each other, taking advantage of each other like wise guys teach us," he said in his homily during Mass at Rome's Casal del Marmo prison for minors. Helping others and lending a hand are "human, universal gestures, but they come from a noble

heart. And Jesus today with this celebration wants to teach us this: nobility of the heart,” he said during the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord’s Supper April 6.

How We are to be with One Another

Less than one week after he was discharged from the hospital for a respiratory infection, Pope Francis presided over the Mass and washed the feet of 12 young people of different nationalities, ethnicities and faiths, including a Muslim and two women, who are housed at the juvenile detention facility. He entered and exited the chapel in a wheelchair and the pope’s master of liturgical ceremonies, Msgr. Diego Giovanni Ravelli, was the main celebrant at the altar. However, during the rite of the foot washing, the pope stood and moved before the 12 inmates who were seated on a raised platform, like other years, so the pope did not have to kneel or stoop to gently wash, dry and kiss each foot. The ceremony of washing another’s feet “is not something folkloric,” he said, explaining the ritual. It is a gesture that shows “how we are to be with one another.”

“I Have Come to Save you, to Serve You”

The pope talked about the worry or fear of not being worthy of such a gesture since “each of us can say, ‘But if the pope knew the things I have inside me...’. But Jesus knows about it, and he loves us as we are, and he washes the feet of each one of us.” “Jesus is never frightened by our weaknesses, he is never frightened because he has already paid (for our sins),” Pope Francis said. “He only wants to accompany us, he wants to take us by the hand so that life will not be so hard for us.” It is hard to see so many people in the world taking advantage of others, to see how many people are trapped in a situation with

no way out, to see so many injustices and broken families, he said. If anyone has avoided serious hardship, it is not because they are better than others, he said, “it’s because of God’s grace!” “Every one of us can slip, each one of us. And this awareness, this certainty that each one of us can slip is what gives us the ‘dignity’ -- listen to this word -- the ‘dignity’ of being sinners,” the pope told the inmates. “And Jesus wants us that way and that’s why he wanted to wash our feet and say, ‘I have come to save you, to serve you.’” Held in the prison’s small chapel, the Mass was the second of two Holy Thursday liturgies over which the pope presided, the first being a morning chrisom Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica.

Casal del Marmo Juvenile Detention Centre

The Casal del Marmo prison for minors was the same facility the pope visited 10 years ago, just 15 days after his election, when he broke with a papal Holy Week tradition of celebrating the evening Mass at a Rome Basilica. The prison holds inmates who are between the ages of 15 and 25, although all were minors at the time of their sentencing. Since becoming pope, he has chosen other prisons and different places for the ritual, like a rehabilitation center for people with severe physical disabilities and a center for migrants and refugees. After the Mass, the pope blessed a plaque for the chapel that was dedicated to Blessed Pino Puglisi, an outspoken anti-Mafia priest in Palermo, Sicily, who was assassinated in 1993. The pope greeted a number of young inmates who also gave him several gifts made in the prison: a wooden cross, cookies and pasta. The pope also distributed rosaries and chocolate eggs to some of the nearly 100 people at the Mass, including inmates, corrections officers and prison staff.

Christian Response to Crime and Criminals

Dr Alexander Jacob IPS

What is Crime

A crime may be defined as the violation of laws existing in a country. Thus, what is considered a crime in a country may not be a crime in another. This then brings up the question of law.

What is Law

The universally accepted definition among four main definitions of law is that it is an enactment made in a country by the dominant majority at a particular point of time. It exists until another dominant majority comes to power and changes it. The dominant majority, when overtaken so, will be stripped of their authority. In a democracy, this could happen by the majority losing the support of the people in an election or by being over-run by the military or an autocratic power that makes its own law. Law is not based on universal or moral principles, nor is it based on human rights. Thus, in any country, perfectly good human beings by all counts as well as those who are advocates of certain lofty ideals could end up being regarded as criminals, because they could be defying the existing laws of that country. The martyrs of the early Christian Church were exemplary persons, but they were put to death because they were seen as violators of the established law of the Roman Empire. 'Law' merely means that those in power uphold the enactment.

Criminal Laws in Bible and Other Societies

Modern studies and archaeological excavations have given us a clear understanding of the laws practiced in the ancient world. As a case in point, we know more of the Egyptian Law now, from the studies conducted in the pyramids of Egypt. The Hammurabi law codes have been unearthed in 1824 at Babylon. Compared to other legal systems in the world, Christianity offers a unique approach to crime. Nevertheless, there is a good disparity, between the Old Testament and the New Testament treatment of Crime. Various Christian sects are also divided along these lines. In the Old Testament, we see the practice of 'retributive' justice whereby Criminals were ruthlessly punished. The Mosaic Law that includes the Ten Commandments had the claim that it came from God Himself. Nevertheless, various sources have been identified for these laws. Moses was born in Egypt and brought up as a prince in the Egyptian palace where he was acquainted with the laws of the land. During their Babylonian captivity, the Jews borrowed many customs and laws of the country. For instance, the Jews accepted and perfected the Sabooth (Sabbath), which was in fact a Babylonian holiday. It is also obvious, that the Old Testament law was much influenced by the law codes of Hammurabi, a prominent Amorite king. A link between the Amorites' system of law and the Hindu or Indian system is thought to have existed. When Jesus Christ quotes 'eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth', we see it directly encoded in Hammurabi's law codes.

Response to Crime in Various Societies

In the Babylonian law, response to crime was based on the adon itself. If you throw a stone, which hits a person on the mouth wrecking down few of his teeth, the law will knock off your teeth. If in action of a person has blinded another

person, the state implemented the law by inserting needles into the offender's eyes. The Egyptian law was ruthless and punishment was grossly disproportionate to the crime. An offender would be beheaded for blinding another person. Ancient India had the Manu's law that would be considered too severe in modern times. For the crime of abortion, a woman would be burnt to death. The Chinese law had its own devious ways of inflicting serious torture as punishment. We are still unable to understand many of their laws.

Response to Crime in the Old Testament

In some of the stipulated laws found in Deuteronomy or Leviticus, the punishment seems to be too harsh. For a crime like 'blasphemy', the offender was stoned to death. In the Old Testament, in response for violation of law, God's punishment is merciless. For instance, once the Ark of God... as being transported in a procession; It was unlawful for anyone except the priests to touch the Ark, which was very holy. While being carried on a new cart Uzzah, who was not a priest, put his hand on the Ark of God to keep it safe in its place, for the axon had stumbled. Uzzah instantly fell down dead though he touched the Ark with such a good intention. To quote another example, the Jews thought that they were the exclusive chosen people of God. All others were degraded and desecrated. Therefore, when the Jews captured a city in a war, the whole population was decimated, as in the case of Jericho. All and others. Such things happened quite often, as recorded, especially in the book of Exodus. The law was ruthless and the response to crime was ruthless. The Mosaic Law contains such judgments, which in our modern times, cannot be appreciated. All of these undergo a vision in the New Testament, where the word 'Christian' comes; the touch of Christ in changing the response to crime – away from the severe approaches in the Old Testament and ancient cultures.

The Christian Response to Crime

In our police training, we are taught ‘Criminology’ in which one section was ‘Christian criminology’. The Christian Approach to crime can be gleaned from various incidences from the life of Jesus Christ and can be summed up under eight headings.

First Response - Abolish Crime by Reforming the Criminal

The first response is drawn from the judgments given by Jesus Christ, in connection with the prostitute who was brought before Him. According to the Jewish law of the time, she deserved death by stoning. It is very interesting to watch what Jesus does. He neither does censure the Old Testament law, nor does quote the law of the land. Knowing that they wanted to trap him in His words, Jesus intelligently says. All right, according to the Mosaic Law she shall be stoned. Now if there is anyone here who has not sinned, let him cast the first stone. Others could join, but the person who had not sinned, that is to say, a saint, shall cast the first stone. Meanwhile, Jesus was not at all looking at the crowd. He was writing with his thumbnail in the ground. We do not know for sure what Jesus wrote, though Barclay, a theologian, suggests that Jesus was writing the sins of the persons who were present there. Anyhow, it is written that the accusers left, ‘one by one’, until there was no one left, except the woman, and Jesus. He told her, “Look woman, I too also am not judging you. But do not sin hereafter. It is one of the most incredible judgments in world history and the very first in Christian criminology, which stands in contrast to the Old Testament law.

Prostitution is undoubtedly a crime and it was never legalized by any civilization except in Babylon, where every female

devotee of Ashtoreth was supposed to have sex with a man other than her husband. Within ten years of her marriage, a woman is supposed to visit the Ashtoreth temple. As she comes out after the rites anyone has a right to throw a lemon at her. And the first person that hits her has the right to have sex with her. This was a compulsory, or legalized form of prostitution.

Prostitution was looked upon as a crime, during Jesus' time. What was novel was Jesus' response to this particular criminal. The basic principle established here is that, killing a criminal cannot abolish crime on earth. Crime can be abolished only through the Christian way of reforming the criminal. The police, the prison, the judiciary and the aftercare departments are involved in the correctional service, and the correction offered by all these together is rooted in this judgment. To successfully abolish crime on earth, criminals should be wormed, and not killed as the Egyptian law dictated. Thus, we have a great responsibility on our shoulders to correct criminals, so that they become adjusted and law-abiding citizens. Each one of us can be part of this correctional team. It would have been interesting to know what became of that woman later. One prominent Christian Pope suggested that the woman was Mary Magdalene, but most Christian writers refute this idea. However, according to sources, the above-mentioned prostitute later became a very holy woman represented in the New Testament by a different name. A prostitute is converted into a holy woman, as the result of a dynamic judgment.

Second Response - No Gender Distinction in Crime

In Jewish law, only the woman was held responsible in prostitution. Whatever be the frequency of a man's visit to

a prostitute, he was not guilty, but the prostitute should be 'stoned to death. The irony is that, even the man who had sex with her, also joins in the stone throwing. Jesus was the first to say to the dominant males that they were also committing crime. He removed the gender distinction, whereby, man and woman are equally held responsible in crime. In Manu's law also, man was never held guilty in prostitution. The women were put to death, as in the Jewish law. At present, in India, section 3 of the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act implicates the man and section 8 the woman. This change has happened because Jesus brought response to crime all are equal, both man and woman

Third Response - Crime Starts in the Mind and not in the Act

The third response is the answer for the question, "When does crime gets committed"? In the laws discussed earlier, whether it is Hammurabi, Jewish, Egyptian, Babylonian or Chinese, the crime starts with the committed act. Jesus makes a radical shift to this approach in the famous 'sermon on the mount'. Until that, adultery was considered to have happened if someone had sex with a woman. However, Jesus issued the radical decree, "If you look at a woman with desire, you have committed adultery with her in your heart. Crime starts in the hearts of men. Jesus re-interpreted a famous law. The Tenth Commandment says, "You shall not covet another's wife". Somebody could construe it to mean that anybody who is not a wife of somebody could be coveted, say, an unmarried woman, a widow or even a nun, However, the seventh commandment condemns adultery. Jesus elevates the Tenth Commandment to the position of the Seventh Commandment when he said, "if you look at any woman with evil intention you have already committed adultery with her.

This famous judgment is known in the Roman law as ‘Mer’s Rea’, which is the intention factor in a crime. An individual’s action may kill a person but it does not become murder. Murder is finally defined as culpable homicide equivalent to murder, and culpable homicide not equivalent to murder. For example, a stone thrown by somebody to a mango tree falls on the head of another person, killing him. The accused did not want to kill a human being, but only to fell a mango. The individual will be charged under section 304 of the Indian law, for which, the punishment is less than three years. Nevertheless, if one murders a person with the intention to kill him, according to section 302 of the Indian law the culprit is eligible for 14 years of prison sentence or death penalty. The distinction between the two sections is that, homicide becomes murder only when committed intentionally.

It is said that 3% of the population are criminal minded and a chance situation may bring this trait to light depending on various developmental factors. Jesus’ admonition is to prevent crime before it is committed, that is, start our correctional program before an evil mind commits the crime and goes to jail. As the proverb goes, ‘prevention is better than cure’. However, prevention involves advising and advising is a very dangerous thing, because advices are seldom welcome. It is said that, “those who need it most like it the least.” To approach a person with a propensity to crime, and to prevent him from committing it is not a simple matter. Here is an interesting example. At the Police Training College, we decided to conduct a commissioned program on AIDS. For the course, we selected 50 of our 3000 officers. Three of them called me soon enough and said, “Sir, why did you put my name in the list? I am a decent family man. Why do you think otherwise? Do you think I am the worst person who could get AIDS at the earliest?” I had never thought of that in such an

angle. That is the way people look at things. You just cannot approach someone to say, “You may become a criminal.” Any correctional program needs creativity and intelligence. So let us work together to prevent crime.

Fourth Response - Authority and Power is a Gift of God Use it with Humility

Pontius Pilate was around 29 years of age, with considerable political influence when he was Roman governor in Judea. He belonged to the Roman civil service and his salary was 250 times the salary of a teacher! During the Jesus trial he arrogantly asks Jesus who was standing silently before him, “Don’t you know that I have the power to convict you or to release you?” Jesus answered, “If the power was not given to you from above, you would not have any power over me”. Pilate’s pride was deflated by this answer: he became a humbled and chastened man. If we carefully read the gospels, we can see that there is a genuine change in Pilate’s attitude towards Jesus, before and after this profound statement. In the criminal system, the criminal is on one side, and the correctional system (the Police, the Judiciary, and the Prison) on the other side. It is possible for the members of the correctional system to feel that they are superior to the persons on the opposite side. Nevertheless, according to the statement made by Jesus anyone at any time may find himself or herself on the other side of the fence.

Some time back, a high court judge from South Africa came Mumbai Just a week before his arrival in Mumbai, he had condemned two boys to 14 years imprisonment for the crime of prostitution. He was caught for illicit sex in India and found himself behind the bars. If someone happens to abuse my sister or my mother, I may lose my control and end up

shooting the person, with my service pistol. Immediately I would find myself on the other side of justice. The Christian response affirms that people on one side is not free from justice. I am an Inspector General of Police. Was I born as an IPS officer? Both my parents were teachers. My mother was a headmistress, and my father a headmaster. They gave me good education and I finally passed the Civil Service examination. Had I been born to other parents who were uneducated, I would not have become whatever I am now. Jesus' advice to Pilate - a judge, was, "Just because you are a judicial officer do not think you are above crime. If the power was not given to you from above, you would not have any authority over me."

Fifth Response - God Justifies the Repenting Criminal

The Christian response to the criminal is, "Whatever be your crime and you can be justified before God if there is a change in your attitude. This can be illustrated by two examples, one each from the two Testaments in the Bible. Though King David had many beautiful wives, he rapes Bethsheba and sends her husband Uriah to the warfront and gets him killed. As directed by God, Nathan, the prophet, went to him and told him the parable of the rich man who took a poor man's sheep to make a meal for his guest. King David's anger was kindled against this injustice and he gave the verdict, "The offender is worthy of death!" Nathan says, "You are that man"! David, king and judge was no more on the side the law but on the other side. Finding himself fallen from his position, he repents before God. God forgave David and one of the most beautiful Psalms came into being.

There are two versions of the story of the prodigal son, one by Buddha and the other by Jesus Christ. It is the story of a son who demanded his father of his share of the property, went

to a country far away, where he wasted his money in reckless living in his misery, he repents and comes back. In Buddha's version of the prodigal son, the father gives the penitent son 500 sovereigns of gold saying, "You are a disgrace, you will only bring further disgrace and loss. Take this money and get lost. Driven back to his miserable life, the prodigal son ever remained a prodigal. In contrast, in the New Testament, the father receives him wholeheartedly. The prodigal son is accepted and brought back to good citizenship.

In Victor Hugo's renowned novel, 'Les Miserables', Jean Val Jean, a branded criminal, is caught stealing the silver candlesticks of the bishop. The bishop saves him by telling the police that he had given it to him as a gift. Shocked at this expression of love, the convict is reformed and later becomes the city's mayor and judge. Some of you might remember Ripper Chandran, the serial killer and rapist, a very innocent looking man who had murdered and raped 58. Several years after his conviction, I visited him in jail with three other officers, two Hindus and a Muslim. Chandran said "Sir when I die on the gallows, I am very sure that I will go to heaven I can feel God and He speaks to me as I pray. I read the Bhagavad-Gita and other scriptures every day." Later the Muslim officer said, "According to my religion, he cannot go to heaven, he has to suffer in hell" and the Hindu officer said. "He can go to heaven, but only after undergoing enough births to propitiate for his sins." I said: according to Christian religion he can go to heaven. If with his mind, he has accepted God, and if his heart has changed likewise, nothing can stop him from going to heaven. Whatever be the position of the criminal, whatever the crime has been committed, still there is hope. Whether it is the King David, the prodigal son, Jean Val Jean or Ripper Chandran they were back on to the original side again.

Sixth Response - A Criminal has Right for Fair Trial and Justice

Both the Jewish and Roman authorities tried Jesus. The trial of Jesus establishes the fact that every criminal is entitled for fair trial and Justice by the denial of it in the case of Jesus. Jewish laws concerning conviction of a criminal violated in the trial of Jesus:

1. A notice of two weeks is required for the Sanhedrin to meet no advance notice was given for Jesus' trial.
2. The trial has to be conducted in the temple of hewn stones. Jesus was tried in the palace of Caiaphas
3. A trial should take place only after sunrise and it should end before sunset - Jesus was arrested at 9'o clock in the night tried by mid-night and taken to Herod by 6'o clock in the morning.
4. If a criminal does not have an advocate, one member of the Sanhedrin has to argue for him before the Sanhedrin as "Amas Curie - No member of the Sanhedrin was appointed for Jesus to argue for Him.
5. An independent witness is needed to convict a criminal
- A servant of Caiaphas strikes Jesus to which Jesus responds, "If I have said anything evil, give witness to the evil: but if I said what is true, why do you give me blows?"
6. A vote has to be taken, from the youngest to the oldest member in the Sanhedrin for a conviction - no such vote was taken.

Roman laws concerning conviction of a criminal violated in the trial of Jesus:

1. No leading and a closed question for which answer is 'yes' or 'no' can be asked to the criminal - The High Priest Caiaphas violates this by asking the question, "Are you the Son of God?".
2. If anybody claims to be the leader of the Romans, he is to be tried for treason-Pontius Plate asks Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews? Jesus' answer is, "My kingdom is not of this world." That means according to the law of Romans Jesus is not guilty. Yet, Plate subjects him to flogging.
3. The most outrageous judgment in world history is delivered when Pilate say "I do not find any crime in this man", followed by, "I give Him over to the cross".
4. Roman law stipulates that, if any man is convicted, two nights and a day must pass before the punishment is effected, and if a holiday comes in between, that day also should pass. Jesus then, could be executed only on Monday as he was convicted on Friday, and a holiday. (Saturday), falls in between.
5. The convict has to be given twenty-one days for filing an appeal to the Regional Governor-Jesus was convicted at 7'o clock in the morning and was upon the cross by 9'0 clock in the morning.

All laws were overlooked in the conviction of Jesus Christ and he was denied equal justice. It is an irony that the Human Rights dogma, Article 3 which says, "Fair trial and justice is the primal task of human rights originates from the great Christian principles of crime. Justice is the right of criminals

also, and not merely the innocents. Around the world as well as in India, the law is a person becomes a criminal only when a crime is conducted and that is proved with evidence. Everyone is innocent unless proved guilty. Our constitution inherited this concept from the Westminster model of constitution. The Westminster model of constitution is derived from the principles of the Anglican Church and the Anglican Church got it from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Seventh Response - Emphasis on the Principle of Equality

Before the Indian Penal Code was passed, the criminal procedures were based on the caste and status of the criminal. Hindus used four different yardsticks, based on caste, to convict persons for the same crime. Brahmins were being given only 25% of the punishment and they could not be handcuffed or put in lock-up. The Kshatriya underwent 50%, the Vaishya bore 75% and the Sudra endured full punishment. According to the Hindu understanding there are 32 hells and the deepest hell “Khora Kabhi Bhaga”, is for those who murder Brahmins and cats.

The Islamic law had three yardsticks. A mullah could sit in the court. An ordinary Muslim was not allowed to sit but could remain independent in the court, while a Kafir was supposed to stand in the box. Islamic theology maintains that there are seven hells. The first, exclusively for the Mullahs, the second, for ordinary Muslims the third, for Christian and Jewish priests, the fourth, for Christian and Jewish laymen, the fifth, for the priest of Kafirs, the sixth, for ordinary Kafirs, and finally the seventh and the deepest hell for those who desecrate a mosque and the prophet's name. This was the state of criminal affairs in India until 1862 when the Indian Penal and Criminal Procedure Code of equality was enacted as

law. The evidence act came into existence in 1892 which gave further impetus in bringing all under the law. The Christian law and the Anglican Church inspired these acts of equality.

Eighth Response - Attitude of a Christian Criminal in Prison

St Paul was a criminal according to the law of the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, he was a criminal with such a high dignity and behavior that even king Agrippa would listen to him. He is a personal definition of how a reformed prisoner behaves in a prison. When our response and lifestyle is constructive, others' approach will also be constructive.

Christian Responsibilities Towards Criminals

The First Responsibility: 'Prevent a Criminal Being Born'.

It is one of the great paradoxes in life, that innocent people are often convicted for crime. For illustration, a rich man commits a crime and his servant is forced to own the responsibility for a gift of 4 or 5 lakhs rupees. Similarly, in political murders, the higherups decide who should own responsibility for the crime. Then there are frame-ups, or revenge done for personal or political motives. Years back, in a theft case involving Rs. 3 lakhs in one of the medical colleges in Kerala, I was under great political pressure to arrest a person. Unyielding, I pressed on with intensive investigation and after 6 months, brought to light a plan to frame an innocent lay officer. The real culprit, a leader of the protestors against police inaction, was arrested and the whole sum was recovered from inside his pillow at his house. In jails, people are trained in crime. When an innocent person or someone who has done a minor offence, is sent to prison, he graduates in crime, under the so-called hardcore criminals with whom he is thrown together with. We have the responsibility to protect innocent people.

The Second Responsibility: Protect the Families of the Prisoner

Once inside the prison, prisoners are genuinely worried about their families. They lose their peace of mind on thinking of the innocent members of the family, who suffer for no fault of theirs, as the breadwinner of the family is in jail. The prisoners are lost in life, but they want to make it different for their children. No amount of consolation or even the Gospel itself can put their minds at peace, until they know that their families are safe. So taking care of these hapless families, and protecting them from the negative undercurrents in the society is another of our important and elevated responsibilities. As ordinary persons cannot go to a prison and give needed information for the prisoners, those involved in prison ministry can perform this great service for them. When hanging on the cross, Jesus was caring for a victim of crime, when he entrusted Mary, his mother and John, his disciple to each other's care. He says to his mother, "Lady, here is your son", and to John he says, "John, here is your mother." Tradition says that when John himself was later excommunicated to Patmos, he arranged to take care of her.

The Third Responsibility: Implement the Great Commission of Jesus Christ -the Correction of Criminals

Christ said, "Even if you gain the whole world, and still lose your soul what good it would be." He establishes that the value of God is greater than the whole world. To erase crime from this earth, criminals should be reformed. Correcting a criminal is a great work. He might have gone into the jail as a sinner, but when he comes out, because of our work he will be a new person. The virtues he will be doing will be obliterating the sins he has committed earlier.

The Fourth Responsibility: A Paradigm Shift of our Attitude to Prisoners

Excommunication is the greatest punishment of all. As an experiment, I once locked myself in a guesthouse with the help of a few officers for 24 hours. I concluded that excommunication is the greatest punishment. In a jail, people are alone: Prisoners are people who are in pain. An attitudinal change in our approach towards criminals means empathizing with them in their loneliness and providing them with whatever fellowship is possible.

No More a Sinner

There is a story about why St Maria Goretti was declared a saint. Goretti was a village girl. She was stabbed by an enraged Alexander for resisting his attempts to seduce her. As she lay dying two days later the confessor giving her the Holy Communion asked her to forgive her attacker. She replied, "Father, I have already forgiven him and when I die, I will go to heaven. However, I do not want Alexander to go to hell. I want him to repent and come to heaven." Soon, Alexander the rapist and murderer had a dream, in which Goretti appeared to him, forgave him and appealed him to repent. The hard-core criminal underwent a conversion and repented. After his imprisonment, he joined a Catholic seminary and became a priest. The rest of his life, he was visiting prisons and converting people. Now the Catholic Church is thinking of making Father Alexander a saint. A murderer and a rapist becomes a saint!! A criminal can be re-formed into a saint. Going into prisons and saving souls for God is something magnificent. Each soul you win is much valuable. The future shall then be ensured as they come out as saints like Alexander. You are involved in a tremendous mission of great significance. You can help abolish crime on earth by reforming a criminal, through your dynamic response.

FROM CHILD LABOUR TO JUVENILE HOMES AND PRISONS! **Sr Lini Sheeja MSC**

Early every morning Anuja, aged 8 (name changed) pulls a cart into town hauling water for her neighbours. When it's full, the tank weighs about 450 pounds. After doing her morning chores, the hardest part of her day begins. Instead of going to school, she goes to work in a brick factory all day long. It's a hard and tedious work, often in temperatures above 35 degrees, each family getting paid by the number of bricks they load. As Anuja's mother was getting older and weaker and the family needed financial resources, Anuja was required to carry the family burden as she has 4 siblings after her.

"I wish I could go to school, but I need to make money to buy food for my family," said 8-year-old Anuja in a desperate tone. "I'm afraid I won't be able to work enough. We owe other people lots of money. I work from 6:00 in the morning until 6:00 in the evening. But still we don't have enough food," continued Anuja. Her father had died of corona virus leaving the family with a mountain of debt. And that's how they came to the brick factory. Anuja started working one year ago and. "I don't know what to do," said Anuja's mother with tears rolling down her cheeks. "I wanted my daughter to be educated, so she doesn't have to work in the brick factory like me." Anuja's dream of becoming a teacher is an impossible dream to fulfill, as she is in no position to go to school. It's hard to believe that a girl like her has to bear so much worry on her tiny shoulders.

A child at this age is supposed to be on the shoulders of their parents, but it is a tragedy that she/he has to carry the burdens of the family on his/her shoulders. Why is there so much of misery in our society? Where should a child be? He or she should be in schools, not in workplaces. Children should be playing in playgrounds, not washing vessels. Children should be doing Maths, not working in a factory. Children should eat good food, not working in fields in the scorching sun. Child labour deprives the child of her/his childhood. Are these children paid well for their work? When will our society treat children as children?

Unspeakable Hardship, Violence and Cry

So many children are trafficked today. St. Bhakita was trafficked and went through maximum torture. She endured unspeakable hardship and violence as a trafficked girl. The same struggles, hardships and child trafficking are also linked to child labour today and it always results in child abuse. Trafficked children face all forms of abuse - physical, mental, sexual and emotional. Trafficked children are subjected to prostitution, forced into marriage or illegally adopted; they provide cheap or unpaid labour, are forced to work as house servants or beggars and may be recruited into armed gangs. Trafficking exposes children to violence, sexual abuse and HIV infection.

The Cry Continues...

Ashmita (name changed) started working in the fields from the age of 7. Both her parents were drunkards. Ashmita was happily going to school, playing and studying with her friends. But it was at this time that she was asked to stop her schooling and remain at home to cook and take care of her siblings at home. At the age of 8 she already had 3 siblings after her.

She had always witnessed her parents' fighting and yelling at home. When I met her, she was 16 years old. "I have never slept peacefully in my home. We have never eaten one meal happily. Both my parents drink every day; fight, shout, and scream and we feel miserable. My mother used to beat me after getting drunk. When I was 14, I went to work in a house and I continue to work there. Life has been so challenging and I have never experienced love from my parents. Now, I have 6 siblings and if I work, I can feed my siblings," said Ashmita.

Sad Statistics

Roughly 160 million children were subjected to child labour at the beginning of 2020, with 9 million additional children at risk due to the impact of COVID-19. This accounts for nearly 1 in 10 children worldwide. Almost half of them are in hazardous works that directly endanger their health and moral development. Across India, child labourers can be found in a variety of industries: in brick kilns, carpet weaving, garment making, domestic service, food and refreshment services (such as tea stalls), agriculture, fisheries and mining. Children are also at the risk of various other forms of exploitation including Sexual exploitation and production of Child Pornography, including online.

Domestic Work and Hazards

Children are priceless gifts from God and are the treasure of each family. The family and the community have the primal goal in shaping the personality of children. Sadly, many children are forced to work from a young age. The hazards linked to child domestic work are a matter of serious concern. Some of the most common risks children face in domestic service includes: long and tiring working days, use of toxic chemicals, carrying heavy loads, handling dangerous items such as knives, axes, and hot pans, insufficient or inadequate food and accommodation, humiliating or degrading treatment

including physical, verbal and sexual abuse. The risks are compounded when a child lives in the household where he or she works as domestic worker as well. These hazards need to be seen in association with the denial of the fundamental rights of the child.

How many children are employed in our houses? Are we not destroying them and their future? We live in a world where compassion and love are lacking! We look for our comforts, our future and employ these tiny ones in our houses as domestic workers. A child should be seen as a child, not as a servant. Many children are employed in factories where less salary is paid to them. Instead of employing a child in our house as a maid, if we have the heart to educate them we would have a better society. Can we make the world a better one for the kids? We are today providing a dangerous society for our children. When are we going to give a safe society to them?

Childhood: A Journey

Every child is a gift and God rejoices at every new birth, for we are created in His own image and likeness. Every child born on this earth is holy, because she/he is created by a Holy God and is born innocent. Childhood is a journey; a child can turn out to be a villain or a hero, empowered or suppressed. A child can be looked up to by society for his/her noble qualities or they can be looked down upon for being in Observational Homes for correctional behaviour. On the one hand due to poverty children are deprived of education and forced to work from a very young age and made to shoulder responsibilities beyond their age and capacity. On the other hand, children from the well-to-do strata of society have access to money and opportunities and live in the lap of luxury with nothing denied to them. Some children are deprived of their basic needs while others are given more than what they need.

Children: Vulnerable Group

Children are not things to be moulded but human beings to be unfolded. They have lots of potential within. They are gifted and they must be helped and guided to un-wrap the package of their lives at different and opportune times. Some parents say, “Our children never listen to us; we find it hard with them.” Children will listen to us after they feel they are being listened to. How we speak to our children becomes their inner voice. Children learn more from what we are than from what we teach. Hard punishments and strict disciplining are no more beneficial to children as are too much pampering and providing all that they need. Homes, institutions and society should be balanced for children’s future, for we are dealing with a vulnerable group.

Role of Parents

“Today, there is the tendency among many parents to renounce their role in order to be merely friends to their children, refraining from warning and correcting even when this is necessary for teaching them the truth, albeit with every affection and tenderness. It therefore should be stressed that the education of children is a sacred duty and a shared task for the parents, both father and mother; it requires warmth, closeness, dialogue and example. In the home parents are called to represent the good Father in heaven, the one perfect model to inspire them,” said Pope St John Paul II on 4 June, 1999.

I remember a prisoner saying to me, “If my mother had loved me, as she loved my brother I would have not landed here. I never asked for anything from my mother; I had only asked for her love, her listening ears and time to spend with me. Since, I didn’t receive any of these, I fell into the trap of my friends and they became my world at the age of 16. Whatever

they did was right for me and today I'm behind bars. I was never taught about the physical and psychological changes that I as an adolescent was going through."

Educate a Child and Stop Child Labour

I know many families who are adopting a child to educate. We want many more, who are blessed with wealth, to come forward to adopt a child to provide education. A few months back, a mother came to me with her four daughters. She had lost her husband in the pandemic. He left them with Rs.4 lakhs debt and this mother works as a domestic worker in 2 houses, pays interest for Rs.4 lakhs. She was about to send her 2 children to work and it was at this time that this family was referred to us. All the four children are now supported by 2 families and they are continuing their education. Life is so challenging for families! So many mothers are struggling to educate and feed their children.

Conclusion

As children are physically fed, they also need to be fed emotionally, psychologically, mentally, spiritually and socially. Every child is a different kind of flower and all together they make this world a beautiful garden. Let us sacrifice our today, so that the children can have a better tomorrow. Let us stop child labour by adopting, supporting and educating these vulnerable children. Migration is one of the main causes for child labour. Let us open our eyes around our houses, convents and seminaries and reach out to these children. Let the children have a future! The World day against Child Labour is celebrated every year on 12th June. Many children are broken in our society. The brokenness is carried on as children continue to be employed. Let us break the chain of brokenness and build every child that is born.

GOOD SAMARITANS TO THE INCARCERATED

Sr Inigo SSA

Introduction

Lead me out of Prison that I may praise your name (Ps. 142:7) Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness (Lk. 4:1-2). He was on his spiritual journey to reflect on God's Will for His future Mission. The Devil appeared and tempted Jesus to break His Sadhana (focus on His upcoming Mission). The Devil tried all possible means to make Jesus deviate from the spiritual path. But Jesus was resilient and reproached the Devil with verses from the Word of God. Jesus came out of the desert with a clear Vision Statement: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ... he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor ... He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives" (Lk. 4:18-19). According to this statement, His primary ministry appears to be to work for the liberation of those who are in bondage in different ways and also those who are languishing behind bars. As His true followers and disciples, we are given a clear mandate to continue this sacred mission of Jesus. If there is one theme that Jesus repeatedly preached, time and again, it is about loving the neighbour. "If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples" (Jn. 13:35). Love includes comforting, consoling, forgiving, sacrificing, instructing, healing, giving hope in times of hopelessness and especially in the lives of the much-loathed prisoners.

Life Experience of a Teacher

Recently, as I finished my talk about the Prison Ministry, in

a school in New Delhi, a teacher came up to me and shared a very poignant experience. She was a regular visitor to the Shrine in that area. She used to go there in her car; and, for a month, she regularly noticed a particular sight in front of the shrine. A shabbily dressed young boy, about 12 years old, used to approach her every time she was leaving the shrine, with garlands in hand and pester her to buy one. But she loathed his sight and deliberately avoided him. She considered him a drifter and a petty thief. During the summer vacation, she had to go out of station for a month. After the holidays, she resumed her routine of visiting the shrine. But the boy was nowhere to be seen. Curious, she started to look for him, but could not spot him anywhere near the shrine.

A few days later, she saw that boy sitting under a tree near the Church. He had a few garlands with him but seemed apathetic in selling them. She asked him, "Why do you look so upset and forlorn? Earlier, you used to regularly pester me to buy a garland. What happened? Why are you looking so miserable?" With tears welling up in his eyes, the boy said: "I was then desperately in need of money. My sister, the one younger to me, was diagnosed with Blood cancer; and I was frenetically trying to raise money for her treatment." "Don't you need money now?" she quipped. Unable to control himself, the boy broke down. In a faltering voice he continued: "Now that she is no more, what is the use of having money?" Saying this, he moved away. "I was mortified to stand before him" said the teacher with tears rolling down. "I could never imagine that the children on the streets could be with such wretched backgrounds. And so, I deliberately avoided those children. It never occurred to me to reach out to them. But now I feel I should do something to mitigate their misery. How can I get involved in this noble ministry?" Aren't these children, angry with society and they later on indulge in all sorts of crimes and turn out to be dacoits, murderers, gang leaders and terrorists? Criminals are not born; they are made by society.

They are humans like any of us, craving for love, affection and kindness. Their cry is just this: “Hamae Pyar dijiye, hum aapko acha samaj banayenge” (Give us love and we, in turn, will assist you to create a beautiful society).

Who is a Prisoner?

A prisoner is a human being without a voice. He has no space of his own. He is confined in a limited and over-crowded space. He is being disciplined in every possible way. His movements are curtailed / restricted. He is confined in a 40 square feet space for 18 hours a day. It is a traumatizing experience. He is kept under close watch. No doors, no privacy and no dignity. No provision to safely keep his personal belongings. The nature of discipline for the innocent and under-trials is the same as that of hard-core criminals. It is said variety is the spice of life. But, in prison life, there is no room for variety. Same faces, same time-table, same menu and, more than anything else, same treatment. The way the food is tossed at them is most debasing. It is very tough to pass time in jails. There are high walls and several gates, with numerous locks. The design of the buildings, the cells and walls are such that even a sane person will soon become insane and mentally deranged. They are like fish accidentally caught in the net; and have no chance of escaping. Hence they edgily await a liberator, who could speak for them and release them from that hell. Some are summarily rejected by their family and have no visitors for years together. They have no contact whatsoever with the outside world. This causes tremendous mental agony and gradually leads them into deep depression. The place earmarked for the family members to meet the inmates is segregated with a thick glass wall between them and they can't even touch or wipe away each other's tears. It is an emotionally draining moment and a traumatizing experience. Sometimes, the visitors come from far off places travelling long hours, just for a 20 minutes visit. It is most agonizing and depressing.

The One Caught is the Thief!

Some are from broken families and have neither self-discipline nor scruples. There was no one to discipline them. Parents, family and society have distanced them. They have no clue as to what is right and wrong. These constitute 5–10% of those in the jail. Another set of prisoners are incarcerated due to illiteracy, poverty, unemployment and peer group pressure. All may not be criminals. There is yet another set of prisoners who are wrongly confined, though innocent. They are subjected to the rigours of prison life due to miscarriage of justice. Obviously, such prisoners find it difficult to adjust to the exactitudes of the prison. They find life inside the prison most appalling and intimidating. Many are arrested and imprisoned under suspicion or false charges. A few of them are placed behind bars due to the apathy and negligence of the law enforcing officers. Some don't even know the reason for their detention and confinement. A large percentage of violent criminals are youth, in the age group of 18–35, who are lured or exploited by dealers and brokers for their own gains. There are a sizable number of detainees, who hail from decent and respectable families and backgrounds. They conduct themselves very well. They indulged in crime just for thrill or out of momentary impulsiveness (temptation to snatch a mobile), situational circumstances (not able to deal with anger under momentary madness), property matters, provocation or drug or alcoholic addiction.

During my visits to the hospital ward in the prison, I happened to see someone lying in bed with a sad face and tearful eyes. I sat next to him and engaged him in conversation. He requested me to get him some poison. I asked him, “How much do you need? Will one KG be enough?” “Give me enough to die!” he said. “Well, you have decided to die; but what about me? Don't you know that I must languish in prison for helping you? Is that OK with you?” I queried. After a brief pause, he started sharing his story.

He told me that he was a doctor by profession and that he was having his practice in a city. One day, he got the news that his family was having some dispute regarding their ancestral property with the neighbouring family. Hence, he rushed to his village and found both the groups sparring. In a fit of rage, he took a stick and struck a man, just once. The man collapsed and died. The Doctor's entire family was brought to the police station and locked up. The victim's family burnt part of his family property. He wished to die because he was certain that the Court would definitely find him guilty and convict him, the next time he was presented in the Court. He also got wind of the news that if he ever succeeds to get out on bail; his victim's family was plotting to kill him.

What is a Prison?

Prisons have been in existence throughout history. In the olden days, a house was converted into a prison to hold the captives in custody and also as a place of punishment. Today, it is viewed as a correctional center and a rehabilitation home. Convicts are sent to prison not for punishment but for rehabilitation. This new perception on prisoners is due to the belief that criminals are not born; rather they are created by society and circumstances. And so it is said that people should hate the crime, not the criminal; should hate the sin and not the sinner.

Consequences of Imprisonment

Imprisonment affects the image of the person behind bars. He is labelled a criminal even before the court hands out its verdict. This invariably affects his family reputation, his employment, his social status and his future. Imprisonment disrupts relationships. When a member of a family is imprisoned, relationships become its foremost victim. Relationships between spouses, parents and children get strained and fractured. Imprisonment affects the prisoners as well as their

families, often driving them to a life of penury. When the sole bread-winner of a family is imprisoned, the entire family suffers and is forced to adjust to the sudden loss of income. The family has to suffer unexpected and recurring financial loss. They are pressured to engage a lawyer; arrange food for the prisoner; spend on transportation every time they visit the prisoner, miss out on their daily income etc. Although under-trial prisoners should be presumed innocent, until proven guilty by a court of law, and treated as such, their condition is often far worse than that of the convicted prisoners. First-timers and minor offenders are housed in the same cells, along with hardened criminals, due to space constraints in prisons. So, the possibility and likely opportunity for the hardened criminals to influence these first-timers and minor criminals is very much there. There is a well-known jail parlance about minors entering the jail as under-graduates and leaving as post graduates. It is a common knowledge that prisons in India are overcrowded, lack proper ventilation, sanitary facilities, nutritious food, etc. Prisons have serious health implications. A prisoner can easily contract serious illnesses, when he is forced to live in close proximity to patients with contagious and life-threatening sicknesses or due to malnutrition.

Why should Anyone Help the Prisoners?

Very often people ask why they should help prisoners. After all, they are criminals. They are in prison because of their wrongdoings; and so they deserve to be punished. However, when we take a closer look at the last moments of Jesus' life here on earth, we do realize that He was kept in prison along with hard core criminals, despite being innocent. When the adulterous woman was brought before Jesus to be stoned to death, Jesus not only challenged the people who condemned her, but He refused to condemn her. He promised the good thief a place in His Kingdom. Many Popes have shown much concern for the prisoners. When Saint Pope John XXIII visited the prison in Rome, he began his talk this way: I, John,

your brother...I have come to see you because you cannot come to see me.” Even hard-core criminals were driven to tears.

Holy Father Francis has been repeatedly expressing his concern for the prisoners. And where and when he goes on his pastoral visits, he makes it a point to visit the prisons to comfort the prisoners. He even surprised the world by washing the feet of the inmates in an Italian Jail, on a Maundy Thursday. “Life means getting our feet dirty,” he said when he visited the inmates at Philadelphia. Whenever he visits the prisons, he appeals to the authorities to take practical measures, which are urgently needed, to improve the living conditions inside the prisons. He has expressed his inner most concern for those who are detained and still awaiting trial. He has urged the authorities to consider favourably, the rehabilitation of the prisoners in the mainstream society, after their release. He is pleading with Governments to abolish the death penalty, wherever it is still in force, and to reconsider the possibility of an amnesty.

Saint Cardinal Newman once said to the prisoners: “We both are the same; but you are caught and we are yet to be caught.” We all make mistakes; we are given reprieve; but they are not. Why did Jesus choose the hardest place to be born, in a filthy stable and on a cold winter night? May be to forewarn us of the cold, shame and difficulties the world would place our way, when we choose to serve God! We should be prepared to experience the pain of the dark world, of those who are dead in many ways, while still languishing in prisons. Even though the prisoners try their best to turn their lives for good, the opportunities are denied even to the first-time offenders. I was touched by what an inmate once said, “Speak to God about us; before you speak about God to us, prisoners!” Though this has been the ministry of Jesus from the beginning of His public life, it was not given due importance in our Church, until the end of the last century.

Jesus was for the sinners, the oppressed and the downtrodden. But, instead of trying to bring them back into mainstream society through our ministries, we keep them away from our society. We should never forget that many of them are often victims of circumstances. The only difference is that “they are inside and we are outside.” It is God’s providence that we are out there in the open. The greatest suffering to our brothers and sisters in prisons is loneliness. Families, friends and others mostly abandon them. Some of the inmates have not been visited by anyone for years together. They are in fact forgotten by all. Rejection by dear ones lands them in deep depression and drives them to choose wrong friends, while still inside the prison. One day during my visit to the prison, I passed by Shekar’s cell. When I stopped near his door, he said, “I have no one in this world. Don’t dare to come anywhere near me.” I responded saying, “You are my brother and I have come to visit you.” He wept bitterly and gradually opened up to me.

The real purpose of sending criminals to prison is to reform them; to transform them into honest and law-abiding citizens by inculcating in them aversion for crime and criminality. It is for this reason that the modern approach lays greater emphasis on their reformation and rehabilitation; and to prepare them for a normal life in the society. But is there anyone who truly cares for them? Is there anyone who is actually responsible for their welfare? What is the milieu of their lives? What about their family, their kith and kin? What is their future? And finally, who can help them and how? The questions are numerous; but the answers, if any, no one seems to know!

CBCI and Prison Ministry India

The Church in India is strengthening its commitment and responding to this call seriously, through Prison Ministry-India (PMI), a registered voluntary organization. It was recognized by Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India, in the year 2000.

PMI works for the reform, release and rehabilitation of the prison inmates. Prison Ministry India came into existence by a divine inspiration that prompted Bro. Francis Kodiyan (Now National coordinator of PMI) and Bro. Varghese Kariperry (both are now Priests) to take up this ministry, in 1986. Within a short span, it grew exponentially and became a national organization having nearly 7000 volunteers working in 1412 prisons spread across India. Nearly five lakh people are languishing in Indian Jails without love, hope and help. The PMI has its headquarters in Bangalore. The Northern Region of PMI comprises of the following states and union territories: Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, U.P., Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Delhi and is functioning with its Regional Office at Mayur Vihar, Phase I, New Delhi.

Funds for PMI

Often this question is asked by outsiders: Who is funding the Ministry? There are no foreign funding partners. It is the policy of PMI not to receive any project funds from abroad. Whenever we are in need of funds, leaders from several Congregations come forward and contribute generously. Often, it is not just the money that is the basic requirement in this ministry, except in certain rare cases. We need money to secure bail or release for the poor inmates or to meet the expenses of celebrations in the prison. Unlike the other NGOs, the PMI has to endure lots of hardships and challenges. We primarily rely on the providence of God. Some lawyers readily come forward to provide free legal aid, whenever approached. There are others who are ever willing to generously contribute, whenever an appeal is made. We also mobilize funds by preaching in the churches during the Liturgical celebrations. We then stand outside the church with outstretched arms for contributions and gifts to meet the basic needs of prison inmates such as winter clothing, travel expenses of the family members, refreshments, etc.

St Maximilian M. Kolbe

Kolbe a Conventual Friar Minor, has been chosen by PMI as “the Patron Saint” of the prisons. He is our inspiration. He was arrested during the Second World War and was sent to the concentration camp. While there, he prepared many inmates to be reconciled with God through a good confession. He prayed with them and gave them hope. Finally, he sacrificed his own life by volunteering to take the place of another companion at the Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz, Germany. He was canonized by Saint Pope John Paul II.

The Main Problems in the Prisons

63% of the prison inmates are under-trials. Nowhere in the world, there are so many under-trials. The process of trial is very slow and cumbersome. As a rule, rather than exception, it protracts for years. There is no segregation between the different types of inmates. The first-time offenders and under-trials are allowed to rub shoulders with hard core criminals. This is very scary. If the number of under-trials is drastically reduced, then other prisoners can be provided with adequate space and facilities. Prisoners from mafia groups and prisoners, who are insane, should be kept in separate cells. It is the duty of the Government appointed lawyers to provide free legal-assistance to the economically poor inmates. Unfortunately, their services are anything but desirable. Since lawyers generally charge exorbitant fees for their services, many are unable to engage a lawyer of their own.

People with connections, influence and wealth seldom remain as inmates for long. Only the poor and the illiterate languish in jails for a long time. Some inmates are beyond 70 years of age. They have already spent 20 to 30 years in prison. Many suffer from several chronic and life-threatening diseases. Though there is a provision in law for their acquittal, they still continue to languish behind bars. When the accused are unable to

produce sureties and bail money, the judges are hesitant to grant bail. Some courts are located 40 to 50 kilometres away from the jails. When prisoners are brought for trial to court, there is no provision to provide them food. Mostly, they remain hungry the whole day. Over-crowding is one of the major challenges faced in almost all the jails. Every jail houses more convicts than the sanctioned capacity. Apart from having serious security implications, this invariably affects their health, due to insufficient food and poor sanitation facilities. Sicknesses like TB, HIV and Dengue can easily spread due to close contacts among the prison inmates, kept in congested enclosures. Those suffering from communicable diseases should be isolated from the rest and should be quarantined. Early detection will eliminate the spread of these diseases and will assist in providing appropriate treatment. Protection from mosquitoes is important in order to prevent the spread of Dengue. Prisoners will behave normally, if only they could manage to get sound sleep at night.

NGOs cannot interfere in the administration of prisons, even when they notice that something is amiss and contrary to the law. The food served to the inmates is derisory, both in quality and quantity. Though good food is available in the canteens, it is very expensive. Even if one can afford, s/he has to shell out double the price. The prisoners who are economically poor cannot afford it. In some jails, there is no canteen facility. There is scarcity of water in almost all prisons. The toilets are poorly maintained. The infrastructure is crumbling. Communication facilities are poor and inadequate. The facilities should be improved and made easily available so that the prisoners could keep in touch with their families and lawyers, without much difficulty. It is shocking to see small children running around innocently in these dilapidated and crumbling areas. A person who is well off and an economically poor person are both criminals. However, there is perceptible and substantial discrimination in the way they are treated. Women prisoners'

fundamental rights should be respected. Earlier, work was considered part of punishment. Now work is assigned to the prisoners with the aim of helping them earn their livelihood and to keep their minds engaged. Products of marketable value can be manufactured so that reasonable wages could be paid to them. The prisoner should be allowed to choose a craft based on his passion and skill; and not purely based on profits.

The Reformatory Process

A crime is perpetrated on the spur of the moment. Something must have induced the person to commit that criminal act. Often mind plays a major role in determining the behaviour of a criminal. Prison sentence should aim at refining the mind-set. The definition of a prisoner as a law breaker and a malicious element in society, who deserves to be punished, has to change. Attitudinal change in criminal behaviour can be achieved through personal interactions. Listening and counselling can be very effective in weaning them away from crime. Through skill development attitudinal change can be enhanced. The prisoners have the right to develop their skills and use them to earn their living, while still in confinement and later, after their release. Prisoners should be engaged in constructive activities. Structures and facilities should be in place to facilitate learning and honing their skills. A sense of achievement would positively enhance their self-esteem and ensure a greater satisfaction in supporting their families. Prisoners long for emotional support. They need a shoulder to cry on. But, the reality is that even their immediate family members, relatives and friends stop visiting them. And this drives them to suicidal depression and loneliness.

They should be made aware of their legal rights. The procedures to have them enforced should be prominently displayed. Living conditions of the prisoners should be standardized and frequently enhanced. The food provided

to the inmates should be nutritious. Proper and adequate sanitary facilities must be provided. If anyone shows signs of remorse, s/he should be given an opportunity to work outside the jails or in open jails. This commendable initiative has been recently introduced in some jails. Minimum privacy must be ensured. Some jails are open fish markets. The inmates should be treated with dignity and respect. What is required is the vision and passion to reform the prisons by unlocking the minds. Every prison should have a good clinic/hospital with qualified doctors and sufficiently staffed. Incentives should be given to encourage the doctors and other paramedical staff to work there. And they should be provided proper protection. Every jail should have adequate medical equipment and medicines. Lady Doctors should be appointed in jails for women.

Only in the rarest of rare cases women should be arrested. When mothers are incarcerated, the children suffer physically and psychologically. Consequently, their physical and mental health is massively affected. Women prisoners should be kept in open jails; so that their children can play in the open and experience an atmosphere of freedom. Scholarships should be given to the children of prisoners for their education. Jail staff resorting to cruelties like dragging or beating the prisoners should be strongly reproached and, if need be, summarily dismissed from service, to warn others of the consequences for unmindfully violating the rules prescribed in the prison manuals and noncompliance of guidelines issued by the judiciary. Arrangements should be made for the accused, the under-trials and women to stay at home, but closely monitored. They should be engaged in community service as reformatory punishment. No under-trial should languish in jail beyond a reasonable period. They should be set free if their guilt is not proven within a specified period of time. Proper training should be given to the jail staff. There must be effective grievance redressal mechanism in place. Our

prisons should become reform houses. A person in prison is not a non-person. There is no reason to further aggravate their pain since they are already in extreme agony. A prisoner is sent to jail not to be punished but to be reformed. S/he has all the rights except liberty. The Supreme Court has laid down the principle that a prisoner doesn't cease to be a human being and that s/he is entitled to all human rights.

Our laws, made by the British in 1894, are obsolete. There is no human sensitivity in them. It is high time that the old laws are either repealed or revised. Unless the prison manual is changed and replaced, prison reforms will only be a myth and a fantasy. The prisoners have the right to have access to justice and to develop their skills. We are talking about the basic needs of the prisoners and not luxuries. When the State fails to take responsibility for the prisoner, it invariably returns him back to the same situation. Minimum comforts have to be provided to the prisoner because the State has taken him into custody. A jail can never be a comfortable and respectable place for prisoners whatever may be the facilities provided. Freedom is a very basic requirement of any human being. There should be leniency for the first-time offenders, petty offenders and to those who show signs of repentance. Hard core and habitual criminals deserve to be treated harshly. But to treat the innocent people or those who make simple mistakes in the same way is not fair. Prison authorities should strive to transform them, rather than punish them. Reformative mechanisms aimed at refinement of prisoners have to be put in place. Refinement of the prisoner and reconciliation with the victim's family should be ensured before the prisoner is returned to mainstream society. Every prisoner should be provided with a copy of the prison manual, so that they are aware of their rights. A mechanism easily accessible to redress their grievances must be in place, so that the prisoners can complain and challenge if their rights are infringed.

Sufficient CCTVs at strategic locations should be installed in order to ensure the safety and security of the inmates. Despite the surveillance cameras and numerous physical checks, how drugs, currency notes, mobiles and weapons get inside the high security prisons remains a mystery. Pregnant women and women with babies should not be arrested; because the child has not done any mistake to endure sufferings in prison. A prisoner should have a regular schedule so that they could be fully engaged throughout the day and be optimally productive. The Judiciary should fast track the cases of under-trials and dispose of them quickly. The Government should fill the vacancies of Judges without much delay in order to clear the backlog of cases and to speed up the justice delivery process. Speedy trials are also a fundamental right of the prisoners. Due to man-power shortage in prison administration, one staff is forced to do 2 or 3 jobs. They should be trained to deal with the inmates professionally. There is an urgent need to fill the vacancies and impart not only basic training but also professional and special training. Youth are not keen to join prison services. This is never their first and even their last choice. When they are left with no other choice, they join the prison service. This trend should change. The staff should be carefully selected and well trained and paid justly. They are dealing with human beings and not with machines. Everyone may not fit into this service; some may be suitable to join the defense and para-military forces but not the prison service.

Inspiration behind my Ministry in Tihar

Bearing in mind the Vision Statement of Jesus, “He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the Captives” (Lk. 4:18), I resolved to proclaim through this ministry, the profound dignity of the human person, who might have committed some crime in a moment of weakness or through undesirable influence. Jesus

also promises a share in His New Society to those who visit the inmates in prison. “I was in prison and you visited me” (Mt. 25:34-36). I was inspired by the Vision of our Foundress Mother Gnanamma. She was a simple peasant woman with lofty ideals. The courage and commitment of a few of my Sisters from the South who were involved in this Ministry. I was a great admirer of Ms. Kiran Bedi, the then DGP of Tihar Jail. She introduced several reforms there. So I decided to move to Delhi to carry out the prison ministry. Mother Theresa remains my constant inspiration. I firmly believe in what she said, “It is a beautiful gift of God to take care of the people, men and women, in jail. It is something beautiful for God and is a real gift.” I am grateful to God for having given me this call and mission. Freedom is important for a human being (Gal. 5:1, 13). Yes, the Church is called to respond to the suffering humanity behind the bars.

At the End of my Leadership Term

I was at the helm of my Congregation (St. Anne’s Congregation, Chennai) for two terms. After completing my term, I was desirous of reaching out to the unwanted, uncared and unloved brothers and sisters, who were languishing in prisons. I left for Delhi immediately, though language, culture, climate and circumstances – almost everything was alien to me.

I formed a small community, with three of my Sisters. We lived in a flat in an apartment building, Sanghamitra at Dwarka, New Delhi. Within a month of my arrival, I was fortunate to secure a Pass to enter Tihar Jail. And I started my mission there, in collaboration with Prison Ministry India – which is a registered voluntary organization recognized by the CBCI.

Tihar Jail in New Delhi

Tihar Jail in New Delhi is one of the largest prison complexes in South Asia. It was opened in 1958. It is named after the village Tihar where it is located. Spread across 250 acres, it

houses a total of around 20,000 inmates, in 16 jails – 9 jails at Tihar complex, one at Rohini and 6 at Mandoli; but all under a single administration. There are about 700 women prisoners, and about 50 children below six years, who are dependent on their mothers. Nearly 900 young boys, in the age group of 18–20, are housed in jail No: 5. High-profile personalities, both convicts and under-trials are lodged in Tihar Jail. Almost 63% of the prisoners are under-trials and first-time offenders. A majority of them are languishing here for long periods, without any trial.

According to HR Commission, 60% of the under-trials in the prisons are innocent. They should never be, in the first place, kept in jail, let alone for long periods. Only 5 to 10% are habitual offenders and hard-core criminals and they are lodged in high-risk wards. Daily 1200 to 1500 prisoners are taken to different courts for trial. The convicts are lodged in two jails, where they are trained to involve themselves in various crafts, like furniture making, pen manufacturing, book binding, screen printing, tailoring, making jute-bags, shoe-making, painting, preparing food items, soaps etc. The work provides monetary gains to the prisoners. The products are sold whole-sale and retail through several outlets. Recently, open-jails and semi-open jails have been started in Tihar and some of the inmates are sent outside the Jail to work.

Our Activities in the Prison

The very first question many ask the volunteers is: What is the work you actually do in prison? Our culture places great importance on what we do, rather than, who we are. However, it is not what we do that is important. The inmates need our presence and our very being. Our very presence brings to those in prison lots of healing; fills them with hope; and results in conversion of hearts. They go through deleterious mood swings: acute loneliness, mental agony and hopelessness. Our hope-filled presence and our compassionate, creative,

contemplative healing helps them to experience the divine presence. Prison ministry is primarily a Ministry of Presence. A surprise visit, a spontaneous smile, a kind word, a sweet greeting, a graceful nod, a concerned look, willingness to listen etc., help the inmates to be aware of our presence. When we spend quality time with them and listen to their wretched stories, they experience peace and joy in those brief encounters. With despondency, they will be eagerly looking towards the gate waiting for our arrival. Our mere presence changes their mood of helplessness. Our presence makes them feel that they have still somebody to care for them and that they are, after all, not forgotten. Even Prison Officials admit: “Your language of forgiveness and mercy to the inmates is different from our harsh and crude language. They crave to listen to your soothing voice. Only you can do it.”

My Spiritual Accompaniment

Prison Ministry is a team work of many volunteers. The Prison Ministry co-coordinators, Bishops, Priests, Sisters, Brothers and Lay people play a supportive role in all our projects. I often involve in this ministry along with my own community Sisters and friends from the apartment complex. They share my responsibilities by making phone calls to the families on behalf of the inmates, replying to their enquiries, providing medical aid etc. I make arrangements to fulfil the prison inmates’ spiritual needs: like Eucharistic celebration, Sacrament of Reconciliation and prayer services and Bible-study groups. Their knowledge of Scriptures and their faith in the Word of God is something estimable and admirable! It has questioned my own Biblical knowledge and has strengthened my hope and faith experience. Celebrations are an essential and integral part of every organization. Our celebrations are usually with prison inmates, making them all the more special. We make every effort to mark these special days unforgettable in the life of the inmates so that they leave lasting impressions in the beleaguered lives of the inmates.

Every year, on July 26th, we celebrate the feast of St. Anne, our Patron, inside Tihar jail. The Archbishop of Delhi leads these celebrations and sometimes more than 10 priests concelebrate with him. Archbishop Anil Couto of Delhi, Emeritus Archbishop Vincent and Archbishop Kuriakose Bharanikulankara of Faridabad take keen interest in this ministry and during their visits they motivate and inspire the inmates. The clergy and the religious from Delhi positively respond to our invitation and joyfully participate in all the Liturgical celebrations held inside the prisons. For centuries, the washing of the feet has been observed on Maundy Thursdays as a visible sign of the invisible reality. Jesus triggered confusion among His disciples with something He did – He washed their feet. Holy Father Francis, a Pope of Hope and a Pope of Humility, in a world of vanity, has chosen Prisons to observe the age-old practice, by washing the feet of 12 inmates, to demonstrate his willingness and eagerness to serve. The Pope urged them to pray that he, too, might be cleansed of his ‘filth’.

With the permission of Tihar authorities, we, the members of Prison Ministry India, have been organizing the Maundy Thursday event at Tihar Prisons for the past seven years. It has been a very moving and emotional experience for both the inmates as well as the visitors. It has turned out to be a conversion experience for our inmates. They have been deeply stirred by this humble, yet profound, observance and have been moved to tears. A Superintendent, who was overwhelmed by this event said, “I have not come across in our traditions, a Guru washing the feet of the servants. It is an incredible and extraordinary experience for me.” At the conclusion of the event, I heard someone commenting: “How can we call this a mere observance of a ritual here; this is so real and meaningful. I now understand what Jesus meant by washing the feet.”

The prison authorities permit us; in fact, they encourage

us, to conduct prayer services, Bible reflection sessions and celebration of festivals. These activities help the inmates to momentarily forget that they are leading a fettered life. They often ask for our prayers. They believe that the Lord of history can change their destiny. They have lost everything. But, they say, they can't afford to lose God. Our assurance of prayers for these unfortunate brothers and sisters will go a long way in removing their feelings of guilt and helplessness and to bring hope in their hopeless lives. I was touched by the words of one inmate by name Antony: "Outsiders think that we are lost. No, we have found ourselves here. Rather, Jesus found us." Their in-depth knowledge of Bible is very much contextualized. It becomes active and alive in their day-to-day life. The way they quote the Word of God and put it into practice is laudable and worthy of emulation. There have been times when their faith in the Word of God has put me to shame and challenged my familiarity with the Word. In fact, they taught me how to contextualize the Word. That, in turn, has opened my eyes to discover in the Word answers for every problem. Through the faith sharing encounters and prayer sessions, my faith has been strengthened and my knowledge and wisdom have been deepened.

In order to assist in cleansing and disciplining the mind, yoga and meditation classes were started in a big way in some prisons, with the help of various voluntary organizations. In 1994, Tihar Jail created history by organizing a Vipassana Meditation camp for more than one thousand prisoners, with the kind permission of Ms. Kiran Bedi, the then DGP. Since then a permanent Vipassana center is in operation, in Tihar Jail No.4, where two courses of ten days duration are organized regularly. Meditation groups impart moral education and techniques of meditation to the prisoners. Rahul, an inmate, has this to say about the transformation the spiritual exercises have brought in his life: "The Vipassana and spiritual courses have reawakened my conscience. It does not allow me to tell

lies any more. If I still persist, it drains my energy. Yes, I have kidnapped and asked for ransom. And I did this when I was enveloped with the darkness of my ignorance. Now that I am brought to light, I realize that I deserve this punishment. Soon I will be a free man. You know, how much I long for that freedom?” We encourage our inmates to attend the meditation courses to gain self-awareness and conversion. With Government funding and the participation of the NGOs like us, we promote education among the inmates. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) have opened study centers at Tihar. Computer training centers too have been launched. I taught the young inmates of Tihar, mostly under-trials, for 3 years. They have been inside the prison for a few years by then. I encouraged them to spend their time in studies, instead of simply whiling away their time. I urged them to write the exams and obtain a certificate of Pass through NIOS. I was delighted to see that some inmates picked up good spoken English. Some of them were even planning to switch over to English medium and appear for the 12th Standard Exam. Education still continues to be an important ministry in India.

The Concern of the Church Towards the Marginalized

The statement of the 27th general body meeting of CBCI, 2006 on the theme “Catholic Education and the Church’s concern to the Marginalized” insists: “Keeping in mind the words of Jesus that he has come to give life and life in abundance (Jn. 10:10), we need to focus on educating the “marginalized.” By marginalized, they specifically mean the weaker sections of society such as prisoners, migrants, displaced etc. Prisoners are invariably displaced from the mainstream of the society. Therefore, empowering them, through formal and non-formal education, is considered as the most avowed vocation. Let us not forget the wise saying of Victor Hugo: “When a school door is opened, a prison

door is closed.” Another area of our service is counselling. We provide psychological assistance in order to obviate the deep seated outrage, feelings of revenge, frustration and even suicidal and homicidal tendencies. We employ all our skills to bring about transformation in the lives of the inmates, so that they can effortlessly adjust with mainstream society, once they are released from the prison.

Prisoners, apart from being beneficiaries, are our benefactors as well. They give meaning to our life, vocation and mission. Of course, we listen to them attentively and compassionately. But they unreservedly share their pain, miseries and struggles with us and thus provide raw-material and content to our prayers and contemplation. It is true that we can learn many lessons from the lives of the poor, than we can ever learn from books. Their lives are like open books. They contain pristine and powerful truths of life. They will teach us the value of hope, endurance, patient waiting, resilience, sense of gratitude, etc., and above all an unassailable deep faith in God, if only we are willing to learn. I would confidently assert that our primary purpose of visiting the prisons is to learn these human values from the inmates and to strengthen our own spiritual life than reach out to them in service.

The Response of Tihar Inmates

Many ask me how I am able to sit with the criminals and interact with them one to one, without any iron grills separating us. Often they express their concern for my safety and advise me to be careful in my dealings with them. But the truth is, I should be more careful in all my dealings with others than with the prisoners. The prisoners are less perfidious. The inmates consider me as someone very loving and friendly to them. In fact, they look up to me as their own. They feel relieved and assured when I listen to them in a non-judgmental way. I firmly believe that true transformation comes not by corrections and punishments but from the moment they are aware that someone, unconditionally and unreservedly, loves them

and cares for them. Imperceptibly the conversion happens. Right from that moment they begin to be different and their life takes a turn for good. A few even openly acknowledge: “I only wish I had met you before. I wouldn’t certainly be where I am now.” Their need for understanding, acceptance and affection is immense and yet very basic and simple. One should be capable and willing to provide them these.

I have learnt so many truths, about life in general and people in particular, through my interactions with the inmates. Some of them have been very bitter and some very profound. Almost all my experiences have been very deep and intense. It is well-nigh impossible for me to express them in words. Prison is regarded as a “Human garbage slum.” It is considered as a school for criminals, who enter there as undergraduates in crime and return as post-graduates. Through the sincere efforts and hard work of NGOs and other generous volunteers, there is a marked improvement in the life of the inmates. By dedicating our lives and devoting time, energy and money, we express our solidarity with and our concern for the inmates and their family members. No wonder, then, the inmates and their families consider us as angels, who bring hope to their dreary and dreadful lives.

In fact, we try and avoid the use of the words “prisoner” and “criminal” in Tihar jails. “Inmates” is the word we use when we speak of them. Many of them are only under-trials and their guilt is yet to be proven. Let the courts decide whether they are guilty or not; criminals or not. Who are we to sit in judgment and label them? No one has ever abused me nor misbehaved with me, violently or sadistically, even once. In fact, I would like to admit, in all honesty, that I have more friends inside the prison than outside.

My Observation

The greatest suffering our ‘in-house’ brothers and sisters have to endure is loneliness. Families, friends and others

mostly abandon them. Rejection by dear ones causes them unbearable misery and forces them, while still in prison, to choose wrong friends. But let us remember that the prodigal son experienced conversion only when he was tested by the miseries of life. Anyone can be touched by God's grace, if only we decide to be the instruments of God's love to them.

My Recommendation

Interacting with our brothers and sisters inside the prison has been an overwhelming spiritual experience for me. To love them and to participate in their human agony has been a remarkable God—experience. A majority of them are under-trials, who have been wrongly implicated and unlawfully confined for long periods, without trial; this should never be. It is not only unethical but contrary to law. All the more, when HR Commission admits that 40% of these under-trials, languishing in prisons, are innocent. To my knowledge, they are victims of circumstances. Whatever may be the facilities, a jail is a jail. Nothing can compensate for the lost freedom. My sincere suggestion is that either the courts should dispose of the cases speedily or the under-trials should be released on bail at the earliest. The same applies to the first-time offenders too. Only 5 to 6% are habitual offenders. All of them are in need of counselling, consolation, accompaniment and love. Many more volunteers should come forward to carry out this Biblical and humanitarian ministry, as a sign of their dedicated life.

How can Others be Involved in this Ministry?

First of all, we need to pray for them and ask the Lord to grant the inmates courage and strength to face their ordeal. Whenever we have an opportunity, we should visit the prisons and the rehabilitation centres, to assure the inmates of our support and solidarity with them. Our interactions and activities should convey to the inmates and their respective families that

they are in fact our brothers and sisters and that we are deeply concerned about their lives and well-being. When they feel respected and loved, a subtle change takes place in their mindset and outlook and their lives are transformed for good. A meal can be sponsored for the inmates. We can also generously contribute for the maintenance of the rehabilitation centers that care for them. We can also organize free medical camps inside the prisons and provide free medicines, spectacles etc. We can share with them our material goods like dress, winter clothes, writing and reading materials. Using our position or influence, we can help the inmates to get jobs, after their release. Even from our meagre resources, we should still contribute generously for the welfare of the inmates and their families, just like the widow in the Bible, who shared all her possessions with others. There are many inmates who languish in the cells, expectantly waiting for their freedom. We can ensure their return to the main stream society, if we work for their speedy release through our lawyer friends or by paying the lawyer's fees.

We can support the education of the inmates' children. Better still, we could get their children admitted in our schools and boarding homes, so that they are assured of their future. Every school should come forward to admit certain percentage of prisoners' children. We can be bridge builders between the inmates and their families. We are called to be the ministers of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:18-19) in their life. We must prepare the families to accept and embrace the inmates upon their release from prison. It may not be possible for everyone to get a pass to enter the prisons. Some of us can indirectly participate in this mission by starting homes for prisoners' children or visiting their families. We can create awareness among the students by arranging prison visits. We can also organize cultural programmes and other competitions on various aspects of prison life. Apart from changing their perspective about prisons, these efforts would bring about

a welcome change in their lives and wean them away from crime.

We must ensure, through available channels, that the Superintendents of the prisons hold talks with the inmates at regular intervals, to ascertain the state of affairs in the prisons. The inmates should be allowed to talk freely. We can also purchase goods from Tihar shops and outlets and thus contribute to the welfare of the inmates and their families. Since the year 2000, the Church in India celebrates every year, the Prison Ministry Sunday. In 2004, the PMI received the approval from the CBCI to celebrate the Sunday before August 15th as Prison Ministry Sunday. This day is set apart to pray for the Prison Ministry volunteers; to create wider awareness among the Parishioners about this ministry through liturgy, homily and circulation of leaflets. As we rely only on local contributions, these efforts will help us to mobilize funds and to enlist some additional volunteers to share this ministry. Jails have always been incubators of diseases due to congestion and lack of proper hygienic facilities. Therefore, it is essential to decongest them. But before letting them out on release or bail, a set of protocols must be put in place. The prisoner who is set free or on bail must be tested for COVID-19. The jail authorities must take the consent of the prisoner and inform their family before letting them on release or bail. A basic subsistence allowance or money earned in jail with some ration should be given, and if the prisoner has nowhere to go, then the authorities must make provision to place them in shelter homes, in areas that are under lockdown. Otherwise, those released face double jeopardy of being convicts and likely carriers of COVID virus, leaving them homeless and indigent.

Conclusion

“A nation is known, not by how it treats its highest citizen but how it treats the prisoners. You will never know a nation

unless you are in prison. If we want to measure the civilization of a country, visit a prison,” observed Nelson Mandela. We need not be afraid of death but we need to be afraid of dying without living our life to the full and in a worthy manner. Isn’t it? Prison Ministry is not about doing miraculous works among the inmates or securing their release from the prisons. It is about our presence and availability. A kind word, a listening heart, a gentle touch and the like do wonders. Our ministry is to assure the inmates that the world is not a bad place and that there are good people who still care for them. We, the so-called respectable people of this world, need to appreciate the fact that these brothers and sisters of ours have fallen “with our silent knowledge, our indifference to their cry, our faulty educational system and the selfishness of Society.” Therefore, putting people away for life may satisfy public anger. But it is equally a case of failure to realize that correction and rehabilitation is not possible and therefore it is safer to let them rot and die in prison. No one explains why it is not possible! But insiders know!

No matter what the rest of the world thinks or how it treats the prison inmates, the prison ministry volunteers strive, to the best of their abilities, to bring a ray of hope, peace, love and transformation to the lives of these marginalized brothers and sisters. In conclusion, it is apt to quote the words of Pope Francis: “I have a special relationship with people in prison, deprived of their freedom. I have always been attached to them, precisely because of my awareness of being a sinner. Every time I go through the gates into a prison to celebrate Mass or for a visit, I always think: “Why them, and not me? I should be here; I deserve to be here. Their fall could have been mine.” Let us come together to make a difference and bring about a change in the life of these least, lost and last of our society. Then Jesus, our Master, will say on the day of the Last Judgment: “I was in prison and you visited me” (Mt. 25:36). I do aspire to inspire them before I expire!

BE A BEARER OF THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

Sr Adele Korah SCCG

After my meditation on the transfiguration of Christ, I prayed for a new infilling of the Holy Spirit and His light in my heart and mind. The brilliant LIGHT OF CHRIST awakened in my heart and mind the sweet memory of the call I received in my childhood to become an instrument in the hands of my God to carry His Light to the brethren living in the dark cells of prisons. A light bearer is passionate about becoming illumined by the Light of Christ first and go forth to assist people in breaking free from bondages and lift, heal and liberate people living in bondage to get ultimate freedom in the Holy Spirit.

What Led me to Prison Ministry?

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

My Personal Vocation

When I dwelt deeply on the love of Jesus in my prayer, I felt that when Jesus breathed his last, He was breathing into me telling me, “Now it is your turn Adele to live as I lived, carrying my love and light to others, especially to the sinners who have not known my love for them so that they too may be saved.” I considered it as a personal call for me from the Lord and so I

prayed daily after Holy Communion, “Jesus, help me to carry your light to all those who are living in the darkness of sin and ignorance.”

Future Prospects Surrendered to Accept the Call of God

When I finished my High School studies, I expressed my desire to become a religious. But my father who was very fond of me told me that he desires to see me as a doctor. He said, “I will send you to study medicine and after you become a doctor, I will give you in marriage to a doctor and build a clinic for you both.” That was his dream for me. But Jesus had a different dream for me. Somehow, I managed to get the permission of my parents to join the congregation of Sisters of charity. Though I desired to be a missionary in the North and go to remote villages and share the good news of Jesus to bring many to God’s Kingdom, my request was not accepted by my parents. Hence I joined the Congregation of Sisters of Charity in Mangalore, where my aunt and elder sister (Cleta) had joined. I was allowed to join soon after my graduation. Later I was delighted that my younger sister (Loredana) also joined us. All the three of us had the desire to be missionaries far away from our home town. With that desire all of us had learned cycling at home, but that was not in God’s plan.

Obedience Becomes a Blessing

I was sent to teach in a Kannada medium School soon after my profession. I had to teach Elective Science in High School classes and later Psychology, Principles of Teaching and Administration in D.Ed College for the teacher trainees. When I approached my Provincial superior and explained to her about my difficulty to teach in a language which I did not know. I was told to learn Kannada, language. My Provincial motivated me saying, “An obedient person will speak of victories”. Wisdom of God is better than human knowledge. So you learn Kannada. I had to start learning the Alphabet first. God blessed my obedience and after my initial struggle,

with the help of God I started teaching in Kannada all the subjects. My knowledge of Kannada turned to be a blessing when I entered service in prison and in retreat ministry.

Though I was happy to be a teacher in the D. Ed College of Education, I was not satisfied by just teaching secular subjects. Lord inspired me to organize retreats for my student teachers so that all my students will have an experience of the love of God and become bearers of Good news of God's love as teachers. My longing to share the unconditional love of Christ to people and to save people who are living in the darkness of sin was surging in my heart.

I made visits to the prison in Mangalore during the season of Lent and Advent and met criminals who never repented of their crime. I was fortunate to get the help of priests who were ready to come along with me to the prison and hear the confessions of the Catholic prisoners there and to give them Holy Communion. The student teachers who came with me gave entertainment to the prisoners and gave joy and relaxation to the brethren in prison. My Provincial permitted me to make use of the paid leave available for the Ministry of Evangelization, after completing 33 years of service in the apostolate of Education. God gave me an opportunity to start a new mission and serve in Nepal for five years.

Bearing God's Light through Evangelization

With the permission of my Provincial, I joined the evangelizing team and helped in retreats in various places including the island of Andaman's Nicobar. I felt great fulfilment in sharing God's WORD and to help people to experience God's love deeply and to live in the light and love of God. In one of those retreats in North India, where thousands had gathered under a Chamiana in the open-air listening to the message of salvation, a mob came to the ground, threatening to set fire and to disburse the crowd. But the sight of thousands of the Sikhs and Parsees praying silently in surrender to a living

God whose presence and power could be felt by everyone, some persons in the mob felt the power of God in their hearts too and told the others, “Let’s not disturb the praying group. When we people gather in such numbers in our meetings, we need police to discipline them. But look, here we see that there is the divine power ruling over and they are praying in such silence peacefully surrendering themselves to God with their hands joined and their heads bowed to the great God.” But the leaders who brought the goondas were adamant to cause a riot. Hence, the whole group got split in their opinion and started quarrelling among themselves. Our volunteers informed the police and the group which was disturbing peace was taken under custody by the Constables. Where the Almighty rules the evil is subdued. “O how abundance is your goodness that you have laid up for those who fear you and accomplished for those who take refuge in you in the sight of everyone. In the shelter of your presence, you hide them from human plots; you hold them safe under your shelter from contentious tongues.” (Psalm 32: 19,20)

Prison Ministry my Dream Mission

After my return from Nepal, I was able to join the Prison Ministry in 2004 knowing well that it is a Biblical Ministry to which Jesus has invited us. Sr. Irene Jane, then Provincial Superior blessed me and sent me saying, “Train yourself and train many more sisters”. She also asked me to give an orientation on Prison Ministry to several groups in the Provincial House, including the Provincial Council, Superiors, H.M’s and even Junior Sisters. After that I was sent to Bangalore to start the ministry in the Central Prison, Bangalore.

In the beginning of my ministry in prison, I had to live in the Government quarters of police constables along with a sister of another congregation. The room had no toilet nor running water for our needs. There was an Indian toilet outside with a broken commode. On cleaning it I discovered that it was

brown due to the thick coat of dirt on it. I scrubbed it hard with a granite piece as we had no liquid cleaner for the toilets. I said a prayer in my heart to accept my sacrifice for the transformation of the prisoners who are living in sin. We had to share the same food prepared for the 5000 prisoners as we had no cooking facilities in the Police Quarters. We had to collect water from outside in buckets. Yet, I didn't mind the difficulties and adjusted myself to live with inconveniences because of my desire to serve the rejected brethren living in prison cells in Bangalore. Sr. Irene Jane during one of her visits to the room I stayed was kind enough to give me sister to join in the ministry and a rented house to stay and continue the ministry.

I was welcomed to enter the prison without any restriction and was free to visit the inmates of both men and women section. Whenever I met the brethren behind to bars, I felt it was Jesus whom I was meeting, because Jesus said, "When I was in prison you visited me". Jesus reminded me to see him and serve him in every brother or sister in the prison. I considered all the inmates of the prison as my brothers and sisters who are in pain and are in need of love, acceptance and understanding. That was a helpful thought to continue meeting their needs whether it was convenient or not for me to reach out to them.

People who see me going in to the prison, specially the Police Constables, used to ask me, "Sister, don't you have any other place to go? Why do you want to serve these criminals?" In answer I asked them, "Who made them criminals?" None of them was born as a criminal. First of all, those within the prison are not all criminals. Majority of them are under trial. They were brought inside the prison walls, but have not been declared by the court as guilty of the crime they have been accused of. Several of them do not know why they were brought in, because they were arrested on the way back home after their work. Even if many of them had a sinful past, I

felt that as a follower of Jesus who came to seek sinners, I am called to continue the ministry of a good Shepherd and bring back the lost ones to their Savior who wants no one to be lost. Many of them would cry out saying, “Please give me another chance to live again”.

I recall how a person who was arrested after he had killed his wife by smashing her head with the gas cylinder in a moment of anger and frustration, was unable to sleep at night because whenever he closed his eyes, he could see only his blood-stained hands and he was weeping bitterly. Persons who have committed heinous crimes of murder become restless. But after listening to them patiently without any judgment and after some sessions of counseling, they gradually accept their failings and regain peace. I have heard some saying, “If I had this understanding earlier, I would not have reached this state.”

My mission in the prison is geared towards Release, Reformation, Reconciliation, Rehabilitation, Redemption and Reintegration of the brethren behind the bars. I had the opportunity to help several of them to experience an inner release from the fetters of guilt, sinfulness, anger, lack of forgiveness, hatred and from the desire to take vengeance on those who were the cause of their imprisonment. I used to spend time listening to their woes, besides praying with them and guiding them with appropriate Word of God. I took this initiative to have group prayer, believing that prayer is the foundation of the ministry for the Least and the Lost. It has helped many brethren to begin leading a value-based life by turning away from a life of crime. The Lord of love and forgiveness touched the life of many and set them free from their bondages gradually. “If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:36). Those who are open to accept themselves and open themselves to the healing touch of God go through a process of inner transformation gradually and take a firm decision to turn from their crime filled life and to begin a new life in the light of God.

Challenges in Prison Mission

In my ministry there were times when I had to go through trials and tests. Some years back a prisoner belonging to the RSS group blamed the volunteers of our NGO for converting prisoners. When I heard about it I went to meet the Chief Superintendent of the prison to clarify the issue. I told the officer that I wish to meet the prisoners whose name I heard from others. Since the Superintendent knew well and had appreciation of the services of our volunteers, he took interest in finding the guys who were the cause. He found them out and called the two men to his room. When they saw me having tea with the officer, they got scared and asked for a few minutes to go out and come. Meanwhile I sat their praying intensely, surrendering the problem I was facing. I went to meet the higher official in the next room a prisoner came in and said that a cobra came in to the room where I sat and prayed. They killed it and brought it on a stick. No one could explain how it could appear in a room in the first floor. It was clear that God's power triumphs over evil. "When they call out to me I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honor them" (Psalm 91:15)

Accusers Turned Friends

I called the guys brothers and explained to them, why we render service in the midst of criminals. Our focus is on conversion of their hearts from their criminal tendencies to become creative people who can have positive impact on the society. We give counseling to help them to take a new turn in their lives and to become persons with love, kindness and forgiveness but not to change their religion. I challenged them asking the officials to ask the guys to go and bring a single person who is an inmate in the prison, who says that we have called any one to come and pray with us. They got an understanding that we are not the group that was to be blamed. Those persons who came to accuse us returned as

friends and accepted sweets from my hands. “Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will act, He will make your vindication shine like the light, and the justice of your cause like the noon day.” (Psalm 37:5, 6)

Transformation of self is possible only by the grace of God. I am convinced of the fact that no human being can transform a hard-core criminal, but all things are possible for the Almighty who laid down His life to save us. He needs you and me to be a bearer of His Light to those who are living in darkness by becoming Gospel in action by our life. “I shall give you a new heart and a new spirit, put a new spirit within you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead.” (Ezekiel 36:26) As the brethren start reading and listening to the life- giving WORD of God, they start experiencing the love and the light of the Savior and are gradually liberated from their inner bondages of hatred towards their enemies.

Ministry Extended to Released Prisoners

I realized that a committed volunteer needs to serve without counting the cost. Once at 8 pm when we had just finished dinner in our convent, I received a call from a released prisoner that he was in trouble as he and his brother are in danger of being arrested and sent to prison because his brother an alcoholic has quarreled with a person in the street and a group has called police to arrest him. I contacted Rev. Fr. Sony C.P from Snehayothi for help and he willingly accompanied me to the spot to assist the persons in need. When I saw that the police was trying to arrest him and take him under custody, I pleaded with the police not to send the man to the prison but to permit me to admit him in a Rehabilitation Center for his reformation rather than imprisoning him. The Police replied to me, “If you plead like a mother begging help for her son, how can I refuse you. Please take him and do what you think

is best.” I was greatly relieved when Rev. Fr. Sony accepted to take him to the Center immediately, though it was in the night. So the accused was taken for Rehabilitation, instead of sending to the Central prison. With the assistance of the Director of the Center, that person returned, renewed and reformed.

I had another unique experience when a prisoner approached our Convent, after his release from the prison. Wilson a released prisoner came and knocked at the door of our convent late in the evening. We were just two sisters then living in a rented house close to the prison. Wilson was very much scared of being caught by the police on the road as he had heard from his friends of several cases when constables catch them accusing them of another crime and put them back in to prison at night. The jailors look at them suspiciously and Wilson was scared. Knowing our residence he came seeking help. Watching his scared and fear filled face, I took courage to go along with my sister companion to the Renewal Retreat Center which was not very far. The Director of the Center was so very helpful to accept him in the same night. Thus he got the opportunity to attend three days retreat at the Center. After attending a fruitful retreat of three days, Wilson returned to meet us sisters with a grateful heart. He returned to his home town with renewed spirit to begin a new life.

We are called to do good to our neighbor and have to be prepared to do everything possible, to suffer everything and to even shed our blood for the good of our neighbor in imitation of the consuming love of our Redeemer in dying for us, let us become aware of the need to reach out to the areas where people stand in dire need of our services, especially those who are rejected by the society and even by their dear ones. Harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers in to the harvest. (Luke 10:2)

DRUG ADDICTION: A DEATH SENTENCE

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

“One of the most common questions I hear is; how hard was it to get through prison? It was not very hard; but the hardest thing for me was being homeless. When all your friends are gone, your families are not around and all you have is drug addiction - a needle that goes into your arm, drugs that take away your feeling that you’ve been running for years - that was very hard. Feeling hopeless was hard; full of guilt, full of shame, depressed to the point of committing suicide was hard”, said Tony Hoffman, who journeyed from Prison to Olympics, from drug-addict to a professional speaker. Ricky, a resident of Punjab, India, died of a drug overdose. He was only 25. According to his mother, Lakshmi Devi, Ricky started substance abuse when he was in school. He was hooked on cough syrups and substance injections initially and later turned to heroin. He wanted to quit and asked his mother for help for his drug abuse, but it was already too late and he succumbed.

Sad Statistics

As for the World Drug Report 2019, 35 million people worldwide suffer from drug use disorders while only 1 in 7 people receive treatment. Globally, 11 million people injected drugs in 2017, of whom 1.4 million live with HIV and 5.6 million with hepatitis C. The national survey of 2019 also showed that about 2.8% of Indians aged 10-75 years (3.1

crore individuals) were using cannabis such as: bhang, ganja and charas. In India, cannabis, heroin and opium are the most commonly used drugs but there is an increasing prevalence of methamphetamine too. The number of users who inject drugs has also gone up substantially. There are one million heroin users registered in India according to a UN report, but unofficial estimates suggest 5 million, which is a truer figure.

Statistics on Drug Abuse and Suicides

But what is alarming is that the number of suicides due to drug abuse and alcohol addiction has more than doubled in the last decade in India. In the year 2010, 3,343 cases of suicides were reported, and the number increased to 7,860 suicides in 2019.

Lack of Parental Guidance

Can lack of parental guidance lead to drug addiction? I came across a family a few months back, where the second son was a drug addict. They were three boys at home and parents were involved in their business and focused on more and more money making. Munish (name changed) got addicted to drugs at the age of 13 and parents were completely unaware of it. It was on a fateful day; Munish had come and asked for Rs. 1000/-from his father who denied to give the amount to him. Munish in bad temper, lost his control, took a knife and threatened his father. He started screaming and yelling demanding money. The whole family shook with fear at this turn of events. It was only at that moment they found out that this son of theirs was addicted to something and things were beyond their control. As parents, are you busy in making money and building houses? Let us not forget the fact that our responsibility is not to build houses, but to build our children and our families. So many children are going astray in

our families as they lack guidance. All that the children require from their parents is love, care and guidance.

What Happened Next?

Drugs damage us and our families. Drugs damage our brains. It damages our surroundings. Munish was taken to a rehabilitation centre and was treated. After a few months when he was discharged, he went to his relatives' house and said that he was in need of some financial assistance as his mother had met with an accident and needed to be treated immediately. He was unaware of the fact that his relatives were well aware of his ways. Munish was again taken to the rehabilitation centre and treated. There are many a Munish around us who need to be identified and helped. It was complete peer influence that had made Munish what he is today. Later, I came to know that there were almost 10 children from Munish' class who were addicted to drugs. It's right time for institutions, families and society to open their eyes and put an end to this virus. Drug addiction is worse than the Coronavirus as it spreads rapidly among children and youth.

Drug Addiction and Physical Effects

Chronic substance use is a risk factor for the following illnesses: disorders that affect decision-making, heart disease including high blood pressure, Psychosis, reduced immune function, stomach issues, respiratory problems, liver damage kidney disease, rapid heart rate, sweating and weight gain or loss.

Drug Addiction and Psychological Effects

The mental illnesses strongly associated with drug addiction are: depression, anxiety, shame and guilt. They undergo mood swings, excessive worrying, restlessness and agitation, tension,

situations of hopelessness, loss of interest, sleep disturbances, irritability and suicidal tendencies.

Drug Addiction and Damages to the Loved Ones

A few months back, a friend of mine from UK called me and started to cry. She said that her only son was addicted to drugs and things had gone beyond control. She had two daughters and he was the only son. A few days back she thought of ending her life but thinking of her two daughters she could not proceed with it. She lost her husband a few years ago and had placed her hopes on her only son but matters had turned out to be the worst. People who struggle with addiction are not the only ones who feel the impact. The effects of active addiction stretch out far beyond the person using substances. Immediate family members are much affected when their loved one has a drug or alcohol problem. Whether it's a child, parent, or spouse, addiction alters the lives of anyone who loves the person. Drug addiction not only affects the substance abuser but also affects families. The family members have to face social consequences, mental stress and are put under a huge financial burden. This affects the entire family and often members end up helpless or depressed. One can imagine the plight of families if the breadwinner is a drug addict! Will the family be able to come up in life? Will not the society look down on the family? How will the children be treated in their neighbourhood?

Drug Addiction: A Death Sentence

How many families are broken today? How many mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, wives and husbands are in tears? Brokenness is carried on as the increase of drug addiction is growing daily. These drug addicts can become violent at any time and can become a threat to oneself, family and society. A

few months, a woman called me and asked me to pray for her son. She said with tears rolling down, “I sent my son to study in a college in Bangalore. I gave all that he asked for. I wanted him to become the best. Each time he asked for money, I sent it, thinking my only son should not starve. But, little was I aware that all the money that I transferred to his account was being spent on drugs. Today, my only son is injecting drugs into his body. I’m going through hell of a time”. Addiction is the cage that one lives in and recovery is a battle. It’s a daily battle and one needs to keep fighting. Addiction is a kind of death sentence one can give to oneself. Death sentence is not only given to oneself by his/her addiction, but also given to the families and one’s close circle. Addiction is a war that one is battling with.

Teachings of the Church

The Catechism of the Catholic Church advocates the virtue of temperance which “disposes us to avoid every kind of excess: the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco, or medicine,” (CCC, 2290). It also says: “The use of drugs inflicts very grave damage on human health and life. Their use, except on strictly therapeutic grounds, is a grave offence. Clandestine production of and trafficking in drugs are scandalous practices. They constitute direct co-operation in evil, since they encourage people to practices gravely contrary to the moral law” (CCC, 2291).

Reach-out in Service

When I was working in Child-line, I came across hundreds of street children who were addicted to drugs. Sometimes when we were speaking to them, they would show the drugs and would say to us, “Sister, we are in heaven. The drugs give us an experience beyond our imagination. It helps us to forget

everything”. BOSCO in Bangalore has many rehabilitation centres wherein these boys do come from the streets and stay. We Christians need to reach out to these vulnerable ones who need our guidance and the way forward. We can make them new beings and make them dreamers like Tony Hoffman and they will be great witnesses in our broken world.

In the Footsteps of Our Master

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:7). These children of God, these children, men/women who are addicted to drugs need a physician. Jesus was a great physician to those rejected and abandoned by society. Jesus came down to take away our wounds and heal them. Today, so many of our sisters and brothers are wounded in our society. It’s the right time to give heed to their cry and bend down to them in service. How many children are wounded as they are born to parents who are drug addicts? The children who are born to these parents are vulnerable to sexual abuse too. Who should take the blame for this?

OVERCROWDED PRISONS: CASES PENDING PER JUDGE RISING: INDIA'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN 9 CHARTS

Jahnvi Sen¹

The third India Justice Report, released on Tuesday (April 4), analyses the changes – both positive and negative – in India's justice delivery system across four parameters: police, judiciary, prisons and legal aid. The report uses statistics to highlight whether states are living up standards set nationally and internationally. Staff vacancies were found to be an issue across these arms. Low budgets – or budgets that are not spent – too mean that the system is not operating at the capacity needed or planned for. Below, in nine charts, are some of the salient findings of the report – overcrowded prisons, not enough training centres for police personnel, a rising number of pending cases per judge, and more.

1. Policing Concentrated in Urban Areas

While 60% of India's population lives in rural areas, the police forces are concentrated largely in urban areas. This is true in several states (but not all) – the population covered by each thana is far higher in the rural areas. "Only 6 states/

¹ <https://m.thewire.in/article/rights/overcrowded-prisons-cases-pending-per-judge-rising-indias-criminal-justice-system-in-9-charts/ampthewire.in>

UTs—Goa (140), Tamil Nadu (137), Bihar (125), Kerala (82), Puducherry (21) and Lakshadweep (1) -meet the National Police Commission’s 1981 recommended area coverage of 150 sq km for a rural police station,” the report notes.

2. Police Training Academies are Overloaded

For 26.88 lakh police personnel, India has only 211 training schools and academies. While research from across the world suggests that training across fields – including sensitization, information on legal changes and courses for specialization – cannot be a one-off event for police personnel. However, with not enough training institutes and the ones that do exist training an average of 12,744 people every year, the scope for this is limited. In most states, a very small part of the total police budget is spent on training.

3. Prison Overcrowding is Getting Worse

“Prison populations have risen steadily from 4.81 lakh (2019) to 4.89 lakh (2020), and 5.54 lakh in 2021: while the number of people admitted to 1,319 prisons during 2021 increased by 10.8 per cent to 18.1 lakh from 16.3 lakh the year before,” the IJR notes. However, with infrastructure not keeping up, prison overcrowding – already a major problem – is only getting worse. As of December 2021, the average prison in the country has an occupancy rate of 130%. In some states this number is far worse; in Uttarakhand, for instance, in December 2021, the occupancy rate was 185% – there were 6,921 incarcerated people in prisons that were supposed to have 3,741 people. “Nationally, roughly 30 per cent (391 prisons) record occupancy rates of 150 per cent and above, and 54 per cent (709 prisons) run above 100 per cent

capacity. More than half of the prisons in 23 states/UTs are overcrowded,” the report notes.

4. Number of Undertrial Prisoners Increasing

Currently in India, 77% of the incarcerated population comprises undertrials – which means they haven’t been convicted of a crime. This number, according to the IJR, has nearly doubled since 2010 (going from 2.14 lakh in 2010 to 4.3 lakh in 2021). “Between 2017 and 2021, all states/UTs, with the exception of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Puducherry, showed an increase in undertrial population. Among the 18 large and mid-sized states, Punjab recorded the highest increase, at 3.75 percentage points, while among the seven small states, Goa showed the highest increase of 5.23 percentage points,” the report states. The period of detention of undertrials is also increasing, indicating that trials are taking longer or bail is being granted in less cases.

5. Cases Pending per Judge Rising

Cases taking a long time to come to a conclusion is not a new problem in India; much of this has also been seen as an outcome of judicial vacancies across the country. “As of December 2022, a total of 4.9 crore cases remained pending across high courts and district courts in the country. As many as 1.9 lakh cases have been pending for over 30 years and 56 lakh cases for more than 10 years. On average, 49 per cent and 29 per cent of these cases are pending for more than 5 years in the high courts and lower courts respectively. In addition, there are around 70,000 cases pending in the Supreme Court,” the IJR notes. “At high court level, Uttar Pradesh has the highest average pendency; cases remain pending for an

average of 11.34 years, and in West Bengal for 9.9 years. The lowest average high court pendency is in Tripura (1 years), Sikkim (1.9 years) and Meghalaya (2.1 years),” it continues.

6. Share of Women High Court Judges Remains Low

While the representation of women judges in the subordinate courts is rising, the same cannot be said about the high courts. Between 2020 and 2022, the high courts saw a little less than two percentage point increase in women’s representation. “Emblematic of the glass ceiling, there are more women judges at the district court level than at the high court level. Nationally, women account for 35 per cent of the total number of judges at this level. But distribution across states is uneven. Among the small states Goa, with 70 per cent, has the highest percentage, followed by Meghalaya (63 per cent) and Nagaland (63 per cent). Among 18 large and mid-sized states, Gujarat (19.5 per cent) has the least and Telangana (52.8 per cent) the largest share of women judges. In other large states like Jharkhand and Bihar, women judges accounted for 23 per cent and 24 per cent of all judges respectively,” the report notes.

7. No State/UT Fulfilled all Quotas for SC/ST/OBC Judges at District-Court Level

There is no state-wise data on caste diversity amongst high court judges. However, at the district-court level, the IKR has found that “no state/UT could fully meet all its Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes quotas”. “Nine states/UTs met their Other Backward Classes quotas. At 50 per cent, Tamil Nadu has the second highest percentage of reservation in this category, fulfilling its quota

completely. Chhattisgarh fulfilled its quotas for Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes and Telangana fully met its quota for Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. Ladakh, Manipur, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat exceeded their Scheduled Castes quota,” the report noted. “Uttarakhand, Telangana and Arunachal Pradesh filled their Scheduled Tribes quotas. Himachal Pradesh (91 per cent) is closest to fulfilling its Scheduled Tribes quota requirements, while Gujarat could only fill 2 per cent of its Scheduled Tribes quota. Eight states/UTs have less than 10 per cent Scheduled Tribe judges and 3 states/UTs have no reservations for Scheduled Tribes.”

8. Allocation to Legal Aid Increasing, but no State/UT Used its Entire Budget Allocation

Free legal aid is essential to a well-functioning criminal justice system, particularly in a country like India where access to justice is unequal and severely hindered by the lack of resources. Funding for legal aid comes from both NALSA, a central body, and state finances. “NALSA’s funds are typically for activities that include conducting Lok Adalats, mediation, training programs and honorariums to lawyers, paralegals, mediators and judges presiding over Lok Adalats, while state contributions primarily go towards infrastructure, personnel and administrative expenses,” according to the IJR. “Over the last two years, the overall allocation for legal services has increased substantially,” the IJR found. “NALSA’s disbursement to states increased by 46 per cent to 144.3 crore in 2021–22 (from Rs. 99 crore in 2020–21).²⁴ For the most part, state contributions to the legal aid budgets also increased.” “Curiously, the overall utilisation of NALSA funds reduced in 2021–22, and of the Rs. 183 crore (1.83

billion) allotted to states, Rs. 138 crore (1.38 billion) remained unutilised. Only Jharkhand and Manipur utilised 100 per cent, followed by Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram (97 per cent each), while Odisha and Andhra Pradesh could manage only 50 per cent. Goa with 49 per cent utilised the least,” the report notes.

A majority of the states utilised more than 50% of their state-sanctioned budget, but this too wasn't true everywhere.

9. Implementation of Victim Compensation Schemes Remains Subpar

One of the jobs of the legal aid system is to ensure victim compensation, through schemes meant to support those who have suffered loss or been injured due to a crime. Comprehensive guidelines exist on how these schemes should be implemented, yet their implementation “remains subpar”, according to the IJR. “Between 2016–17 and 2021–22, State Legal Aid Service Authorities altogether received 97,037 applications seeking compensation. Of these, they disposed of only 64,333 (66 per cent) applications across all states,” the report notes.

JEEVODAYA – A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Sr Fidelis HCM

Introduction

As constant change is part of human nature it has also become part and parcel of the life of the church. New ministries evolve and we see how it has helped the life of the church. As the motto of our congregation, 'Need of the time is the will of God', we the Holy Cross sisters entered into this new ministry – PMI, here in Bangalore, officially on 22nd January 1995 as a rehabilitation centre for the released women prisoners, to empower the marginalized, especially the disadvantaged and the discriminated. Since there was no separate office for the national work, National office also started functioning from the same building, Jeevodaya. "It is something beautiful, a gift of God, to take care of people, men and women in jail. It is something beautiful for God, and a real gift of God" says St Theresa of Calcutta. Yes, prison ministry is always a beautiful ministry as Jesus himself is the founder of this ministry. I being one of the pioneers of this ministry in Karnataka, know the struggles and hurdles we had to go through and overcome to convince the jail authorities to start the mission. Since prayer is the powerhouse of PMI, we – Fr Varghese Karipperry, Sr Clara and myself started kneeling down on the sand brought from the prison premises spending one hour every day in prayer for our brothers and sisters behind the bars and to get the permission. Jeevodaya Ashram came into

existence in line with the motto of our congregation, ‘Need of the time is the will of God’, with the idea of giving new life to the people who live in the shadow of sin and death, the marginalized and the excluded, as a rehabilitation centre for the released women prisoners, women from the red-light areas, and in any moral danger situation, who are eighteen and above.

God’s Care and Protection

Jeevodaya Ashram is the place where we really experienced the providential care of God, His protection, support and guidance. “If you are faithful to the vow of poverty, divine providence will walk with you step by step”. These words of our Founder Fr. Theodosius Florentini OFM, came to a reality and we started experiencing it in different ways in this ministry.

Aims and Objectives

PMI is a radical Christian movement inspired by the life and mission of Jesus, well reflected on the Gospel narratives. PMI and its rehabilitation work is built on the conviction that there are no born criminals or prostitutes but are made by the society, and all human beings are loved by God their creator. Human beings are capable of change through inner healing and genuine forgiveness which enables one to change for the better. Only love and compassion can win them and bring them back to a new life with human dignity.

We Provide

We provide our inmates medical and psychological treatment as and when needed. We arrange counselling to help them feel and behave in a more personally satisfying manner. We provide skill training according to their capacity to grasp and

learn spiritual renewal. Finally, we rehabilitate them either by reintegrating them into their own families or by settling them in marriage. Most of the women who come to Jeevodaya are deformed with grievous wounds and hurts of life and are to be reformed and confirmed and then only they can be transformed. For the actualisation of this goal, we give them timetable to follow in order to inculcate the values as they mostly come from valueless and Godless backgrounds which led them to go astray.

Home Away from Home

Jeevodaya Ashram is a ‘Home away from Home’, and we live like in a family. They participate in all the activities of the home. They are also to learn cooking, housekeeping, gardening, cleanliness, to talk and behave politely etc., as they are to be able to manage their own families later. They are also given skills like tailoring, paper bag making, candle making, greeting cards making, jewellery making etc. Those who can study better, are given opportunity and encouraged to go forward with education – like Nursing, computer, health assistant course, degree in B.Com, B.A, MBA, Visual Arts etc. which will give a better future for them. One of our inmates, who became a nurse, got married and after having two children, is now working in Dubai. Another one is running a Beauty parlour and she offers free training for any of our inmates if they want to learn. We do continue to care and support them in their difficulties and struggles. They do visit us, communicate and stay connected with us as Jeevodaya remains their mother house.

We live a very simple life managed by local contribution. For the past twenty-seven years, we have been able to follow the original charism of PMI – ‘begging –our life style, God’s Providence –our bank account and God – our security.

These are proven realities in our life here in the Ashram. So far we have had around 800 women come and gone through Jeevodaya Ashram. Eighty of them are married and settled and live in their own families. 95% of them are ok ... They do approach us whenever they need some help financially or otherwise. All the grand children of Jeevodaya are getting educated which is something commendable. One of them has joined the seminary and the family is very happy about it. The first granddaughter is working and finishing her MBA this year. God be praised.

“If Jeevodaya was not there, where would I have gone when I was released”? uttered by one released women whose whole family was in prison. Most of them are very grateful for having been through Jeevodaya. It stands as a Banian tree tree giving shelter to many broken and wounded women that they could breathe a ray of hope and see the light of truth to take a U-turn and be happy to begin anew. Let us try to hear the voice of the Lord speaking to us, “why are there people going hungry and thirsty about you, while you abound in gifts from my hand? I can reach out to these hungry and lonely, the least, lost and the Last, only through you. This is the reason I have given you so much, that you may share it with them”. May His great love flood our lives, to overflow and touch with healing and to channel His grace to every one of His children, especially the voiceless and the powerless...

KOLBE HOME, PATAN, GUJARAT

Sr Merceline SMMI

PMI Kolbe Homes

“I was in Prison and you visited me” (Mt 25:36). PMI Kolbe Homes, established in the name of St Maximillian Kolbe who died for a coprisoner are meant for the integral development of prisoners’ children under the care of Prison Ministry India (PMI). These children are either from prisons or from broken families, conditions of extreme poverty, single parent or from similar homes. They come to terms with life-realities not through scolding and punishment but by love, care and understanding, which are the best ways of formation. In our society most of us look down on prisoners’ children and those pushed to the fringes of society. Through education, spiritual and psychological training, and above all through motherly and fatherly love Kolbe Homes strive to bring them to the main stream of life, by enabling them to be reconciled with God, self, family and society.

Kolbe Home, Patan, Gujarat

Kolbe Home Patan is the Heart of the Divine Mercy Jesus shrine, Patan Parish in Gandhinagar Diocese, Gujarat. The seed of this Kolbe Home was sown in the Diocese of Gandhinagar by Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, the PMI national coordinator and cofounder on 8th of August 2019. On that day Father expressed the need of a center in Gujarat, a place for the children of prisoners in Gujarat. Archbishop Thomas Macwan with great trust entrusted this noble work

to the charge of Fr. Dominic, the Archdiocesan coordinator of PMI. After doing a detailed study by visiting the prisons in the state of Gujarat, Fr. Dominic and Sr. Fulmani found that they had an opportunity to witness to the values of Jesus Christ in Gujarat. There were 12,000 prisoners in Gujarat. It was found good to have a center for the prisoners' children, a wonderful opportunity to share the merciful love of the heart of Jesus with them.

SMMI Sisters

Archdiocese of Gandhinagar invited many congregations to take up this mission but got negative response as it was challenging, having high risk, lack of Catholics and the place being not close to the town. But the deep faith of our Shepherd, Archbishop Thomas Macwan, was remarkable that with great trust and full confidence in the Lord, he started the renovation of a building for this good cause. "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails" (Prov.19:21). This has come true in the mission of Patan when our provincial Sr. Alice Joseph paid a visit to the Archbishop of Gandhinagar on visiting her sisters in the communities of Gujarat. The power of the Holy Spirit was deeply felt and experienced by Archbishop and the Provincial superior after the meeting. While praying in the chapel, the Archbishop was inspired to ask Sr. Alice, if she would accept a new mission at Patan for Prison Ministry. She was shocked and was silent for some time and told the Bishop, "After consulting my Superior General and the provincial team I will let you know". But to her great surprise when she returned to Nagpur, the invitation letter of Archbishop Thomas Macwan was waiting for her.

After consulting her team, she informed the Superior General and sent her a copy of the invitation letter of Archbishop Thomas Macwan. The general team was very happy and

encouraged Sr Alice Joseph and her team to venture into the unknown path. They asked her to go ahead trusting in the power of the Lord, though the mission may involve risk, and be difficult. With the assurance of the generalate Sr Alice and team responded positively to the invitation of the Archbishop. Necessary preparations were made. The pioneering members Sr Vidhya and Sr Merceline were chosen and sent for initial orientation for Prison Ministry India in Bangalore for two weeks. Special prayers were offered for this new mission by the province. The dream of Kolbe Home was realized on 20th November 2021 in the presence of Archbishop Thomas Macwan, Fr Francis Kodiyan, Sr Alice Joseph and a good number of SMMI sisters and other sisters, Fathers, and prison ministry volunteers from all over Gujarat.

The Beginning

When the actual life of Prison Ministry began in Kolbe Home Patan, we were here without any activities as we were asked to stay in the place and not to go for prison visits for some time as the place and situation were not so favorable. God gave us a beautiful chance to experience a little of the taste of prison life: only two sisters, and a kind of desert place so we had a desert experience with Jesus for prison ministry. We also joined in the temptations with Jesus that one or two people who met us mostly every day tried to discourage us in every way saying, that no children would ever come to stay here; that with no help from anywhere, what we would do and how would we live and manage...etc. Our only answer to them was that the one who brought us here would provide; we will live here whatever may happen; we will do any work and we spend our time in prayer. The time was very precious to experience the Lord in prayer and in the garden. After seeing our life and work, people started accepting us that the one who came to read the electricity meter contributed Rs

200/- for the cause. The most beautiful experience was that we were not required to preach Jesus in Patan, rather, people were able to recognize Jesus when they met us. They ask us, 'Are you Christians?' People were surprised to see us Christian Sisters living in Patan and were happy to see Sisters. We found a beautiful place to witness to Christ without preaching.

Let Children Come to Me

The Archdiocese had to wait patiently for two years to open the Kolbe Home in Patan. But after opening the Kolbe Home, we the SMMI sisters had to wait patiently with prayer and sacrifice for more than seven months to get children in Kolbe Home. Fr Kamji and Fr Dominic worked hard with us to visit and to learn the condition of the families. The first family who stayed with us in Kolbe Home consisted of father, mother, two daughters and a son. That son is in prison and there is very little hope for him to be freed. His wife and child stay with her parents. When the child will become 4 years old she will be the first prisoners' child to enter Kolbe home. At present there are eleven little angels that are similar to prisoners' children. Kolbe home is alive with their joyful presence. All of them go to the nearby Govt. School which is 2 km away from Kolbe home. They are reached to school by vehicle. They are: Mehgna - class viii, Mithal – class vii, Komal - class vi, Nihita – class v. Pinky, Perky, Chandrika and Ankita are studying in class iv. Sonal - class iii, Nirma - class ii, and Amiya – class i.

Kolbe Dynamics

Kolbe Children follow the program of regular study, play, prayer, yoga etc. Fr. Dominic, the coordinator of PMI for the Archdiocese is a father to the Kolbe Home, a friend, a guide to the staff and is ever available without counting the cost,

sacrificing his time, resources and person for Kolbe Home. Two sisters and two staff live with the children and strive to give motherly love and care. They need to be helped in every way; they are responding and we pray for them to have a good future. These little ones pray daily for their benefactors and well-wishers. A few of our local people come to visit the children and celebrate their birthday with them sharing their joy and happiness.

Divine Providence

Kolbe home depends for its survival entirely on the providence of God as we have no source of income of our own. We strongly believe in the care of our Heavenly Father who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the grass of the field. The basic Principle of Prison Ministry India: Prayer is our Power House, and Inconvenience is our Convenience. God's Providence is our bank balance, and begging is our life style. Our life here in Patan is very much at ease with these principles. Our patience, faith and trust in God, keep on growing in every positive experience and friendly support that strengthens the life of Kolbe Home. "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". Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you? And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Mt 25:35-40).

WAY OF THE CROSS FOR PRISONERS

Sr Shanti Pulickal SCC

Introductory Prayer

Lord Jesus, we adore and praise you for saving us by your holy cross. Be with us as we meditate on your sufferings and death during this 'way of the cross'. You were innocent but you took upon yourself the guilt of our sins, atoned for it and restored our relationship with God. Lord, we offer this way of the cross for the suffering humanity; particularly those are behind the bars in various prisons and those living in the dark shadow of death due to war, violence and the victims of different types of crimes. Assure them Lord that you are walking with them, helping to carry their cross and making their burden light. Amen

1st Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death

We adore you O Christ and we bless you,
because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Lord Jesus, you were condemned to death even though you were innocent and everyone knew it. But you accepted the condemnation, for our redemption. Lord we pray for all who are given the death sentence and are counting the days for their death in various parts of the world. Help them to accept their sufferings in union with yours and offer it for the wellbeing of their families and the whole world. Give them the grace of repentance and surrender. We pray that the death

sentence may be changed into something more humane that brings about transformation of the person. Have mercy on us O Lord. Have mercy on us. May the souls of the faithful departed, Through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen

2nd Station: Jesus Accepts the Cross and Carries it to Calvary

We adore you O Christ...

Lord Jesus, you were weak after the scourging and your body was aching. But you accepted the cross and carried it with full trust and surrender to your Father. You say to us, "Unless you take up your cross and follow me you cannot have life in you". Lord Jesus we pray for all prisoners who are carrying the cross of loneliness, rejection from their families and society, helplessness and hopelessness. We pray for their families who struggle to make both ends meet because the bread winner of the family is in the jail. We also pray for the prisoner's children who are ridiculed by their class mates. Lord give them your protection and the assurance that you are with them, make their cross easy and their burden light.

Have mercy on us ...

May the souls...

3rd Station: Jesus Falls for the First Time under the Weight of the Cross

We adore you O Christ ...

Lord Jesus, the journey was long, your body was weak, your cross was heavy and you fell under the weight of it. But you rose and continued your painful journey because it was your Father's will that by dying you would destroy death and by rising you would restore life. Lord, we pray for all who have fallen into crimes for the sake of money, power, position, or unhealthy friendships. Help them to repent and seek your

forgiveness instead of giving way to revenge or guilt feeling. Help them to believe in your mercy and forgiveness “Though your sins are as red as scarlet they shall be made as white as snow”

Have mercy on us ...

May the souls...

4th Station: Jesus Meets his Mother

We adore you O Christ ...

Lord Jesus, the meeting with your mother was painful but it was a source of comfort and consolation for you. The disciples did not stand by you; one betrayed you, another denied you and the rest ran away. Holy mother Mary, as you comforted Jesus by your presence, bring healing and comfort to the suffering humanity. We bring to your maternal care all prisoners' children especially those who stay with their mothers till the age of six. They are denied of all privileges of children- always under police protection and live in unhealthy company. It is said that prisoner's children are potential criminals. We also pray for all children who are kidnapped, maimed, used as beggars, for prostitution, for carrying drugs or for child labor.

Mother Mary, be near them and stop all violence against children.

Have mercy on us ...

May the souls ...

5th Station: Simon Helps Jesus to Carry the Cross

We adore you O Christ...

Lord Jesus, the soldiers forced Simon to carry the cross behind you but soon his heart was transformed and he began to experience the blessings of the cross. No longer did he carry it by force but cheerfully and gratefully as a disciple. His

whole family too believed in Jesus and his sons gladly gave up their lives for believing in Jesus. We thank you Lord for calling us, the PMI volunteers for alleviating the sufferings of prisoners through our services and intercessory prayers. You said, “Whatever you do for the least of my people you do it for me”. Help us to see you present in every prisoner and become your instruments in bringing about their renewal, release and rehabilitation. Lord we ask you to remove all forms of obstacles in entering the jail and carrying out our services, protect us and make our lives more and more fruitful in service.

Have mercy on us ...

6th Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

We adore you O Christ ...

Lord Jesus, we thank you for accepting the services of Veronica and rewarding her by imprinting your face on her towel. Help us Lord to wipe the tears that flow from the hearts of those who suffer and find no relief – those who have lost their dear ones due to sickness, all forms of natural calamities and those who live in war torn countries like Ukraine. Help us to support them by our prayers. Imprint your face in their hearts that they see you constantly and place their full trust in you. We pray especially for the conversion of those who cause such sufferings for others. Lord let your Kingdom of love; joy and peace fill this whole world.

Have mercy on us...

7th Station: Jesus Falls for the Second Time

We adore you O Christ ...

Lord Jesus, by the merits of your second fall have mercy on all

who are addicted to various types of crimes and bad habits- the serial killers who find pleasure in killing others, those affected by suspicion and doubt in family life, people who are addicted to alcohol, drugs, superstitions and various forms of evil practices. Lord, save those who are falling into sin and are unable to come out of it. Help us do our part through our prayers and sacrifices, guidance and counselling and by directing them to receive the sacraments, reading the Word of God and various forms of devotional practices.

Have mercy on us...

8th Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

We adore you O Christ ...

Lord Jesus, the women had an important role in your ministry and they were with you in your passion, crucifixion, death and resurrection. But Lord, women are not given their due importance in the male dominated society and the church. Bless the efforts of all who work for creating and recognizing the important role women have in the family, church and society. Lord, in your mercy put an end to all forms of abuses and violence against girl children, torture in the name of dowry and lack of acceptance of their roles in making decisions for the welfare of society. Lord let your Kingdom of justice and peace reign in this world.

Have mercy on us...

9th Station: Jesus Falls for the Third Time

We adore you O Christ ...

Lord Jesus, you fell again and again due to bodily weakness. But due to our weak, fallen human nature we fall repeatedly into various forms of temptations. You speak to us of the

need of perseverance in prayer, constant watchfulness and total union with you as the vine and the branches. Help us not to cause any scandal to others by our way of living or take the pharisaic attitude of self-justification and condemnation of others as sinners. Jesus meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like yours.

Have mercy on us...

10th Station: Jesus is Stripped of his Garments

We adore you O Christ...

Jesus you were deprived even of your human dignity when they stripped you of your garments. Have mercy on all who are deprived of their human dignity, those who lack the basic necessities of life such as food, water, clothing or shelter, those who are denied justice and those who live and work in sub human and in human conditions. Lord, touch and transform the hearts of all who amass wealth at the cost of other's sweat and tears. Help them to experience real joy and blessing in sharing their wealth with others and in restoring their human dignity.

Have mercy on us ...

11th Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

We adore you O Christ ...

Jesus, your hands and feet were nailed to the cross and you were left to die there with only a few loved ones around you. Yet you saved us and the whole world through your suffering. We pray for all who live in solitary confinements in various jails, the prisoners who have no one to visit them or care for them, those who are sick and lack medical care and attention and all the needy and neglected. We also pray for those who

are paralyzed or bedridden for years and have to depend on others for their every need. Lord, help them to sanctify their sufferings by uniting it with your sufferings on the cross. Lord, bless all the PMI volunteers who serve such prisoners. Help us to find more and more ways of caring them. Help us also to support one another through our prayers, words of appreciation and encouragement

Have mercy on us...

12th Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

We adore you O Christ ...

Lord Jesus, your death has brought us real life. You forgave all who caused you sufferings and prayed that we too do the same. You thirsted to save all, especially the last, the least and the lost. Then you surrendered your life into the hands of your Father, bowed your head and gave up your spirit. Lord, as you left your bodily presence in this world and chose each one of us to continue your work, you left with us various means by which we can draw strength from you and continue your ministry of serving the prisoners. They are: The power of your cross, the power of your 5 wounds, the power of your precious blood, the power of your Holy Spirit and the power of your Word. Help us Lord, to die to ourselves constantly and live by your power, your strength and your life.

Have mercy on us

13th Station: Jesus is Laid in the Arms of his Mother

We adore you O Christ...

Lord Jesus, your mother was your constant support especially in moments of your suffering. You gave her to us as our Mother and co redeemer. Mother Mary, be the support of all

your children. We pray for all who suffer in various prisons, visit them and comfort them. Help them to seek your maternal love and protection and intercede for them. We pray especially for all the prisoners and the sick we visit and those for whom we pray in our intercessory prayers. You alone can bring about their renewal, release and transformation. Strengthen the prisoners as you strengthened the apostles. Pray in their hearts and draw them closer to Jesus.

Have mercy on us...

14th Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

We adore you ...

Lord Jesus, you were laid in the tomb but your body was not meant for corruption in the tomb. You rose with new body, new strength and new life. Lord we pray for all prisoners. Assure them that the prison is not their home. Help them to make use of the facilities offered by the govt. and improve the quality of their life, profit from the different types of education or skill training offered and make themselves fit to serve the society and their families when they are released from the jails. Lord, protect them from all forms of laziness, discouragement and frustration.

Have mercy on us O Lord ...

Concluding Prayer

We thank you Lord for giving us the grace to participate in your sufferings through this way of the cross. Help us to unite all our sufferings with yours and offer it for our sanctification and that of the world

Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be...

Jesus crucified have mercy on us

**NO INMATE SHOULD EVER BE
DEPRIVED OF HOPE**
Pope Francis

Pope Francis issued a plea on behalf of prison inmates Wednesday, saying they should never be deprived of hope and always be given the opportunity to redeem themselves.

In remarks at his weekly public audience at the Vatican, Francis told the faithful that “we risk being imprisoned in a justice that doesn’t allow one to easily get back up again and confuses redemption with punishment.” “For this, I want to recall today in a particular way our brothers and our sisters who are in prison,” the pontiff said. “It’s right that those who have made a mistake pay for their mistake, but it’s even more right that those who have done wrong should be able to redeem oneself from their mistake. There can’t be sentences without windows of hope.”

Francis didn’t cite the prison policies or justice systems of any particular countries as problematic. Catholic teaching holds that the death penalty has no justification in modern society. During his papacy, Francis has made attention to the needs of communities on society’s margins, including prison populations, a priority. “Let’s think of our incarcerated brothers and sisters, and let’s think about the tenderness of God for them and pray for them so that they may find in that window of hope a way out toward a better life,” Francis said

in concluding his remarks Wednesday. Italy's justice minister, while briefing lawmakers in Parliament on criminal justice reform Wednesday, decried overcrowding in the country's prisons, describing it as the most serious of all the problems plaguing the penal system.

Justice Minister Marta Cartabia said Italy's prisons were 14% overcrowded. "It's a condition that aggravates the relationships among inmates and which makes the work of prison personnel, often victims of aggression, even more difficult," she said. "Overcrowding means greater difficulty in guaranteeing security and greater difficulty in proposing activities that facilitate paths to rehabilitation." Cartabia said reforms were under way to allow for sentences that provide alternatives to prison. But she noted that 69,000 persons are already serving their sentences outside prison walls, compared to some 54,000 inmates in Italy's criminal justice system. Cartabia and Italian Premier Mario Draghi promised reforms last year after they visited a prison in southern Italy where dozens of officers were under investigation for allegedly beating, kicking and punching prisoners during unrest provoked by the coronavirus pandemic. An Italian newspaper published surveillance video of the officers assaulting inmates, including a prisoner in a wheelchair who was hit on the back with a baton.

CLEMENCY FOR PRISONERS IN RUN-UP TO CHRISTMAS Pope Francis

Pope Francis writes a letter to Heads of State asking them to grant a pardon to prison inmates who are “are held to be eligible to benefit from such a provision.” Pope Francis has asked for a “gesture of clemency” for prison inmates in the run-up to Christmas. In a letter addressed to all Heads of State, he invites them to make a symbolic gesture “towards our brothers and sisters who are deprived of their liberty and who are held eligible to benefit from such a provision”. “So that this time marked by tensions, injustice and conflicts may be opened to the grace that comes from the Lord.” This is the motivation reported in a statement issued on Monday by the Director of the Vatican Press Office, Matteo Bruni.

Washing the Feet of Prisoners: “God always Forgives”

The request for clemency for prisoners has distant roots that go back to the Great Jubilee Year 2000 when St. Pope John Paul II asked the world’s rulers for a pardon for prisoners in the 11-page document for the Jubilee in Prisons. It was late June, a little over a week later, when on 9 July Pope John Paul II visited Rome’s Regina Coeli prison as part of the Jubilee of Prisoners, and in the name of Jesus who was “imprisoned, mocked, judged and condemned”, asked “the competent authorities” for a reduction of the sentence to

allow prisoners to build a new life once out of prison. This request was reiterated again on 14 November 2002 to senators and deputies he met during his visit to the Italian Parliament.

The 2016 Jubilee for Prisoners

Following in his predecessor's footsteps, Pope Francis has shown his closeness to prison inmates in the course of many of his apostolic visits and in other instances, in particular during the Holy Thursday ceremony of the washing of the feet. During the 2016 Holy Year of Mercy, on the occasion of the Jubilee of Prisoners on 6 November, during the Angelus after Mass in St. Peter's Basilica with prisoners, he urged governments to grant them "an act of clemency". On that occasion, Pope Francis issued an appeal "in favour of improving the living conditions in prisons throughout the world, that the human dignity of detainees be fully respected".

He also reflected on "the need for a criminal justice system that is not exclusively punitive, but open to hope and the prospect of reintegrating the offender into society".

"In a special way, I submit for the consideration of the competent civil authorities of every country the possibility that, in this Holy Year of Mercy, an act of clemency be carried out for those prisoners who are held to be eligible to benefit from such a provision."

PMI VOLUNTEERS TRAINING PROGRAM
SEARCH, SERVE AND SAVE THE LOST
11-24 APRIL 2023
Sr Amala DC

11 Tuesday

1000	Arrival
1100	Registration
1300	Lunch
1500	Eucharistic Adoration
1600	Tea & Games, Ice Breaking
1830	Evening Prayer
1930	Holy Mass
2000	Supper & Goodnight

12 Wednesday

0630	Morning Prayer & Meditation
0730	Holy Mass
0800	Breakfast
0900	Inaugural Session
1100	Coffee Break
1130	Biblical Foundations, Prison Ministry Mar Jose Pulickal
1200	Introduction to Prison Ministry Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

1300	Lunch
1500	Birth and Growth of Jeevodaya Sr Fidelis
1600	Tea & Games
1830	Eucharistic Adoration
1930	Supper
2015	Documentaries on Prison Ministry
2145	Goodnight

13 Thursday

0630	Morning Prayer & Meditation
0730	Holy Mass
0800	Breakfast
0900	PMI Dynamics of Central Region Fr Wilfred Fernandes
1000	3R Theory Fr Varghese Karipperry
1045	Tea
1100	Heartbeats from Tihar Sr Inigo
1230	National Convention Insights Mr David Fernandes
1300	Lunch
1500	How Vipasana Transforms Prisoners Ms Lalitha & Saraswathy
1600	Tea & Visit to - Jeevodaya
1830	Eucharistic Adoration
1930	Supper
2015	Documentaries on Prison Ministry
2145	Goodnight

14 Friday

0630	Morning Prayer & Meditation
0730	Holy Mass
0800	Breakfast
0900	Spirituality of Prison Ministry India Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS
1030	Coffee Break
1100	Ministry Inside the Prison Sr Adele SCCG PMI
1200	Ministry Outside the Prison Fr Benny Pachanal
1300	Lunch
1500	PMI North Region Fr Jose Thannippara MST
1600	Tea & Games
1830	Eucharistic Adoration
1930	Supper
2015	Movie on Prison Ministry
2145	Goodnight

15 Saturday

0630	Morning Prayer & Meditation
0730	Holy Mass
0800	Breakfast
0900	PMI Special Task Forces Fr Michael Francis
1030	Coffee Break
1100	Catholic Social Teachings Fr Anil Prasad
1200	Redeemed Prisoners Sr Lini Sheeja MSC
1300	Lunch
1500	Sharing
1600	Tea & Visit to Swanthana

1830	Eucharistic Adoration
1930	Supper
2015	Movie on Prison Ministry
2145	Goodnight

16 Sunday

0630	Morning Prayer & Meditation
0730	Holy Mass
0800	Breakfast
0900	PMI Milestones Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS
1030	Coffee Break
1100	Melvin Human Rights
1200	PMI Lifestyle and Guiding Principles Sr Amala DC
1300	Lunch
1400	Outing
1930	Supper
2015	Preparation for Souvenir
2145	Goodnight

17 Monday

0630	Morning Prayer & Meditation
0730	Holy Mass
0800	Breakfast
0900	Insights from PMI Mumbai Unit Fr Glasten
1030	Coffee Break
1100	CBCI JPD Commission Fr William MI

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1230	PMI Rehabilitation Centres Sr Clara HCM
1300	Lunch
1500	Competitions - Oral
1600	Tea & Games
1830	Eucharistic Adoration
1930	Supper
2015	Preparation for Souvenir
2145	Goodnight

18 Tuesday

0630	Morning Prayer & Meditation
0730	Holy Mass
0800	Breakfast
0900	North East Ministry Jobina UFS
0945	Insights from PMI Mysore Unit Adv Michael Noronha
1030	Coffee Break
1100	Prisoners' Rehabilitation and Reintegration - Dr Antony Sebastian
1300	Lunch
1500	Competitions - Written
1600	Tea & Games
1830	Evening Prayer
1930	Supper
2015	Preparation for Souvenir
2145	Goodnight

19 Wednesday

0630	Morning Prayer & Meditation
0730	Holy Mass
0800	Breakfast
0900	Prisoners' Reformation Trajectory Dr Fr Francis Kodiyan
1030	Coffee Break
1100	PMI State Level Ministry Fr Martin Thattil
1200	Seminary Units Dr Jose Valiamangalam MST
1300	Lunch
1400	Begging & Pilgrimage Practice
1830	Eucharistic Adoration
1930	Supper
2015	Preparation for Prison Visit
2145	Goodnight

20 Thursday

0630	Morning Prayer
0730	Holy Mass
0800	Breakfast
0900	PMI Fund Raising – BDP Sr Amala DC
1000	Homes for Prisoners' Children Sr Basil SCS
1030	Coffee Break
1100	Journey to Central Prison, Bengaluru
1200	Conference on the Rules and Regulations to be followed in Prison Visit
1400	Lunch
1600	Tea & Games

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1830	Eucharistic Adoration
1930	Supper
2015	Preparation for Prison Visit
2145	Goodnight

21 Friday

0630	Morning Prayer
0730	Holy Mass
0800	Breakfast
0900	PMI Projects Fr Antony O de M
1000	Coffee Break
1015	Visit to Open Prison Devanahalli
1600	Tea & Games
1830	Eucharistic Adoration
1930	Supper
2015	Preparation for Prison Visit
2145	Goodnight

22 Saturday

0630	Morning Prayer
0730	Holy Mass
0800	Breakfast
0900	Criminal Trial and Bail Procedures Adv Titto
1030	Coffee Break
1100	Reni George - Reformed Prisoner Witnessing
1300	Lunch
1500	Preparations for Cultural Program
1600	Tea & Competitions

1830	Eucharistic Adoration
1930	Supper
2015	Cultural Programs
2145	Goodnight

23 Sunday

0600	First Team Going for Sunday Ministry
0800	Second Team Going for Sunday Ministry
1300	Lunch
1430	Rights of prisoners Adv Ravi Sagar SJ
1600	Tea & Games
1830	Eucharistic Adoration
1930	Supper
2015	Preparation for Exam
2145	Goodnight

24 Monday

0630	Morning Prayer
0730	Holy Mass
0800	Breakfast
0900	Exam
1000	Coffee Break
1030	Valedictory
1300	Lunch & Departure

A SPARK OF PMI VOLUNTEERS' TRAINING PROGRAM

Sr Helen Moras SCB & Sr Amala DC

Introduction

One fine day Fr. Francis Kodiyan MCBS sat down and took a deep breath calming himself. He noticed a sparkle of light coming towards him. He looked around and realized that he did not have any source of light with him. It is true that his hard work for the cause of prison ministry has borne fruit and the radiance of its light has spread throughout the country. Once PMI was a dry seed, it was introduced to individuals and dioceses. It did not know when the little dry seed got germinated. The root penetrated into the soil. The shoot saw the daylight, trying to be a big plant one day. It was penetrating its root deep into the soil collecting minerals for its growth, minerals of fasting, prayer, and penance. The ministry has spread branches reaching out far and wide. And with years of struggle, it still dreams big. It is encouraging to see that PMI has spread to many dioceses, giving shelter to children, released prisoners and the needy. It has made its own history, with the aim of “redeeming and reintegrating the prisoners.” The PMI volunteers from various states gathered at RRDC, Bengaluru for the PMI volunteers training programme from 11th to 24 April 2023 to recharge themselves to search, serve and save the lost. A family bond was felt by the members meeting, sharing and connecting with each other, for the future service of PMI.

12 April 2023

Inauguration

The inaugural function of the PMI Volunteers Training Program was held at RRDC, Bangalore on 12th April 2023 at 9am. The program began with a meaningful Holy Eucharistic celebration by Most Rev Bishop Mar Jose Pulickal, PMI Chairperson, concelebrated by Fr. Francis Kodiyan, and six other priests. Sr Helen Moras SCB, PMI Shimoga coordinator anchored the inaugural program. Prayer was led by Sr Susheela SAB. Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, PMI National Coordinator welcomed the dignitaries and honoured them with shawl, garland, hat, and flowers. The Course Dynamics were explained by Sr. S. Amala DC, PMI National Secretary. Mar Jose Pulickal the PMI Chairperson delivered inaugural address. He stressed upon three Cs – Companionship, Compassion, and Commitment. Fr Wilfred Fernandes expressed words of gratitude to the outgoing Chairman of Prison Ministry India Bishop Allwyn D'Silva. Mar Jose Pulickal released the Souvenir of PMI National Convention held in Goa in November 2022. Fr Benny Pachanal wished Sr Fidelis Golden Jubilee of her first religious profession. The felicitation was done by Sr Adele Korah SCCG and Mrs Veera Pinto. Mr. Henry Fernandes introduced the rescued girl Ms Rose and her children. Vote of Thanks was proposed by Fr. Antony O de M, RRDC Director.

Birth and Growth of Jeevodaya

Sr Fidelis shared about her journey and experience of establishing the Jeevodaya – a home for released women prisoners and trafficked girls. She also shared how God's Providence helped them to go forward in spite of all the hardships.

13 April 2023

Spirituality of Prison Ministry India

Fr. Wilfred Fernandes in his talk, explained that Prison Ministry India is not merely a social work agency rather it is witnessing God's love, mercy, and compassion. He mentioned the various methods of prayers like the Holy Eucharist, Eucharistic Adoration, Divine Mercy Chaplet, Novenas, and Rosary. The main four principles were also discussed in detail; Prayer is the powerhouse, Inconvenience is our convenience, God's providence is our bank balance and begging is our lifestyle.

PMI: A Faith Based Ministry

Fr. Varghese Karippery interacted with the volunteers and spoke about the basics of Prison Ministry India. He said that it is a challenging ministry and it is based on faith which allows us to move forward removing all hurdles and saving the lost ones.

Heartbeats from Tihar

Sr. Inigo SSA took an online session where she spoke on the heartbeats of the Tihar jail. She gave a detailed explanation about her call to prison ministry and her driving force to continue in the ministry. Stressing on the ministry she said it is a Biblical, moral, ethical, spiritual, human ministry, and above all universal ministry.

PMI National Convention Insights

Mr David Fernandes, PMI Goa State Coordinator gave an overview of the National Convention held at St Joseph Vaz Spiritual Renewal Centre, Goa from 15-19 November 2022.

He shared about the planning done by various committees and how a systematic approach helped in the success of the program.

Vipassana and Prisoners Transformation

Ms. Lalitha and her mother addressed the group on the insights of Vipassana and its role in the transformation of prisoners. All were asked not to keep their minds on past or future plans for life but to dwell in the present. Vipassana is an exercise of concentrating on the breath naturally going in and out which will help to calm our mind and to will lead to the awareness of the present.

14 April 2023

General Introduction to PMI

Fr. Francis Kodiyan MCBS, PMI National Coordinator gave a general introduction to the prison ministry. He focused on the root, patrons, motto, source, and power of Prison Ministry India. He also explained the lifestyle of PMI which consists of the following: weapon, mantra, action, bank, style, mode, and goal. He illustrated an overall view of the PMI lifestyle and spirituality. Various methods also were explained in detail on how we work towards the betterment of prisoners, and an overview of the PMI, the data on prisons, and other details concerning the PMI.

Ministry Inside the Prison

Sr. Adele Korah SCCG the senior PMI warrior explained the work done inside the Prison. Prison ministry is to bear the Light of Christ to the brethren behind bars. She explained the various aspects regarding the release of the inmates, and the issues that inmates face. She also shared stories of how many

inmates have been transformed into better human beings and living better life in society.

PMI North Region

In the afternoon Fr. Jose Thannippara MST, PMI North Regional coordinator shared about his experiences in Delhi and future plans for the Delhi state and North region as he was appointed as the PMI North regional and Delhi state coordinator.

Swanthana

A visit to Swanthana a home for the mentally and physically differently abled run by Camillian Sisters was a heart-breaking and heart-touching moment. All volunteers were speechless upon seeing the precious service by sisters.

15 April 2023

PMI Fund Raising

Sr. Amala DC, PMI National secretary enumerated PMI Fund Raising methodologies. She explained in detail the five funds of PMI; namely the Prayer fund, Suffering fund, Penance fund, Self- Sanctification Fund, and material fund. Overall, when we offer ourselves for the sake of others God provides so that His mission is accomplished through his stewards. Everything is dependent upon God's Providence and he has never failed to surprise the PMI to continue their work.

Catholic Social Teachings

Fr. Anil Prasad spoke on Catholic Social Teachings related to Prison Ministry. He used three parables; the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the prodigal son to describe the people we meet in prison. Prison Ministry is a call to reach out to these people so that they are saved and receive a way to return back to society.

Redeemed Prisoners

Sr. Lini Sheeja MSC, former PMI National secretary gave a detailed view of the redemptive work done to the prisoners. She shared her experiences in reaching out, serving, releasing, rehabilitating and saving souls in prison. Jesus died for our redemption and we are called to carry out this redemptive work with our brethren behind bars.

16 April 2023

Best Practices to Enter the Prison

Sr. Amala DC highlighted the proceedings which need to be followed before, after, and inside the prison. Prayer before entering, rules and regulations while entering, and after entering to greet the officials and due respect and appreciation to them and above all to keep up silence inside the prison, etc.

PMI Golden Jubilee Projects

Fr. Antony O de M PMI RRDC director presented the PMI Golden Jubilee projects. To commemorate the Golden Jubilee PMI will continue to do 50 houses for reformed prisoners, 50 books, scholarships for 5000 prisoners' children, the release of 5000 prisoners, employment schemes for released prisoners, legal aid clinics, 10 rehabilitation centers, 5000 new PMI volunteers to PMI ministry, etc.

PMI Special Task Forces

Fr. Michael Francis explained the origin and God's intervention through Fr Francis Kodiyan to start 42 Special Task Forces, and he spoke about the above-mentioned Special Task Forces were set up to address and save the bigger catch like terrorists, mafia dons, death row prisoners, serial killers, and

habituals. These Special Task Forces are the uphill task of the STF warriors in bringing about the transformation and commitment to save our lost brethren.

17 April 2023

PMI Mumbai Units

Fr Glasten the PMI Mumbai unit coordinator gave us an elaborative discussion with detailed points on the biblical foundations, principles, values, aims, objectives, and activities along with the vision & mission of PMI Mumbai.

CBCI JPD Commission

Fr William, CBCI (Catholics Bishops Conference India) secretary for Justice, Peace and Development commission discussed various aims and objectives, future strategies and best practices on reformative action, coordination and collaboration of all churches across the nation.

PMI Rehabilitation Centers

Sr Clara explained the reformative and rehabilitative works of Jeevodaya – a home for released women prisoners and trafficked girls. Sr Fidelis and Sr Clare in their simple, humble demeanour managed a beautiful family caring, teaching, inspiring and motivating skills to the young as well as to the elder women.

18 April 2023

PMI North East Mission

Sr. Jobina UFS, PMI North East Coordinator spoke on the topic of PMI in the Northeast. She focused on the functioning of the Prison Ministry in the seven states of the Northeast. She also explained some of the challenges faced in some of the northeast provinces.

Prisoner's Rehabilitation and Reintegration

Fr. Dr. Antony Sebastian O Praem who is working for Child Rights explained the approach to dealing with children in conflict with laws. He also explained the different stages of rehabilitation of children in Echo and shared the stories of a few children who became better human beings and achieved better life and position in society.

19 April 2023

Prisoner's Reformation Trajectory

Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS started his introduction based on his books namely Religious Conversion Trajectory and Conversion Trajectory of Charles De Foucauld. He touched upon three R theories namely Release, Reform, and Rehabilitate. Then he explained the Eightfold path for prisoners' reformation and the 4 stages of a prisoner's reformation trajectory. They are the Pre-formative stage, Formative stage, Per-formative stage, and Post-formative stage.

PMI State-Level Ministry

Fr Martin Thattil, the Kerala state and regional coordinator spoke on PMI State level ministry and explained to the group the different activities that are carried on in his areas for prisons and the prisoners.

Seminary Units

Fr Jose Valiamangalam MST the PMI Seminary Unit coordinator spoke on the PMI activities done by major Seminary units. 31 major seminaries in 4 regions do prison ministry starting with recourse to powerhouse through prayer group support and other outreach activities to the prison and prisoners.

Begging

In the afternoon all went for begging to the neighbouring places which brought a wonderful experience of humiliation as well as divine providence.

20 April 2023

PMI Milestones

Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS illustrated well the history and mystery of PMI from its conception at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam. The powerful God experience and the inner voice of God's call to 'Dedicate his life for the conversion sinners' kept him aspiring for more in his spiritual journey. He systematically charted out the PMI milestones as if in a periodic journal briefing the achievements with dates & formation of prayer groups, prison pilgrimages & various other programs arranged for prisoners.

Homes for Prisoner's Children

Sr Basil SCS Kolbe Home Superior spoke about the Homes for Prisoners' Children and pointed out that only a tender gentle, caring and loving approach can help discipline the children, etc.

Visit to Central Prison, Bengaluru

Jailor Kanthapa Patil took us to the quarantined prison where the prisoners stayed for a few days for a medical checkup before transferring to the main jail. He explained the capacity of staff and all provisions like 4-star rated protein-rich food, medical aid for different kinds of ailments and compensation after doing small jobs. There is the possibility for yoga, training for electrical and beautician courses for both men & women, higher education facilities, etc.

21 April 2023

Experience Sharing

Fr Alexander Kureekkattil CMF with his heart-warming experiences of transformation stories of hard-core criminals and hired killers like Gopalan and Robin made an enormous impact in our own hearts.

Visit to Open Jail

In the open jail our volunteers presented some entertaining programs to bring a smile on their faces with Kannada songs, dances and skits. Fr Francis Kodiyan offered help with warm assurance of love, care, every support for a new life. As Easter gift he offered driving license expenses to prisoners for their good future.

22 April 2023

Criminal Trial & Bail Procedures

Adv-Titto Paul is a practicing advocate of High Court, Bangalore. He explained in simple language the criminal trial procedures which are to be followed when one comes across a case. He also cautioned us on how to write FIR, Bail Order, and Charge Sheet with proper documents. Further he explained terms such as FIR (First Information Report), bail order, E-Court, Charge sheet, etc.

Reformed Prisoner Testimony

Mr. Reni George shared his life testimony without hesitation. At the age of 27, he became a murderer and was sent to jail. After 6 years he came out on parole and he planned to do bank robbery but by the providence of God, he was taken by someone to a prayer meeting. There he was redeemed by the

precious blood of Jesus Christ. He came out as a new person in Jesus. Went back to prison he took up the ministry of Jesus and slowly he was able to conquer the hearts of many. After having been released from jail he realized and experienced the love of many people in his life. Then he joined Prison Fellowship India and launched a ministry for prisoners' children. God has taken him far and wide to reform the hearts of many.

Visit to Lalbagh

In the afternoon we visited Lalbagh and had a relaxing time with the entire group. After supper the PMI training team had an exciting cultural programme which all enjoyed.

23 April 2023

Pastoral Visits and Begging

The team was divided into 2 groups to experience the begging as our lifestyle to raise fund for prison ministry. One group had visited Norbertine Parish at Kasavanahally and another to St Joseph Parish, Bennargatta. The faithful were very generous in contributing to the prison ministry and this is the providential care we experienced all throughout.

Rights of Prisoners

Adv Fr Ravi Sagar, SJ elaborated on the rights of prisoners. Topics like criminal justice system; crime and offense in legal terms, and classification of offenses: as cognizable and non-cognizable; bail-able and nonbailable; compoundable and non-compoundable. He explained three theories of punishments - fine, imprisonment, and the death penalty, etc.

24 April 2023

Exam

Morning 9 to 10.30AM we had the examination led by Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS.

Valedictory

Sr Susheela SAB did the Valedictory anchoring. Sr Shanti FC began the program by invoking God's blessings. Fr Francis Kodiyan welcomed Rev Sr Rose Chirayil DC, Provincial Superior for South Indian Province of Daughters of Charity, the speakers, and PMI volunteers. Sr Helen did a wonderful appraisal of the course. Sr Rose Chirayil appreciated the extremely professional manner in which the Training program was imparted to the participants and awarded certificates. Srs. Fidelis HCM and Sr Therese Maschiranhas SCB did the felicitation and distributed prizes. Sr Fidelis launched the raffle tickets for Golden Jubilee. Sr Amala DC proposed a vote of thanks, and Sr Carmina RNDM proposed vote of thanks on behalf of the participants. The program came to an end with a prayer by Mrs Sumita.

Conclusion

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk in him rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving” (Col 2: 6-7). We were here for 14 days leaving behind all our responsibilities. We believe that the prison ministry is truly built on the Eucharist. All our inconveniences were turning into our possibilities. Thanks be to God for this wonderful opportunity. Thanks to Rev Fr Francis Kodiyan PMI National Coordinator and Sr Amala PMI National Secretary and Fr. Anthony RRDC director for accompanying us throughout the training programme.

DEAD MAN WALKING (1993)
Sr Helen Prejean CSJ

Dead Man Walking is a work of non-fiction by Sister Helen Prejean, a Roman Catholic nun and one of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Medaille based in New Orleans. The book is a memoir of Sr Prejean's experiences as the spiritual advisor to two condemned death row inmates at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in the 1980s. Sister Prejean tries unsuccessfully to get both men's sentences commuted to life in prison. In 1995, the book was adapted into an Academy Award-nominated motion picture starring Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn. Dead Man Walking was published in 1993.

Author

Sister Helen Prejean is known around the world for her tireless work against the death penalty. Born on April 21, 1939, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, she joined the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1957. After studies in the USA and Canada, she spent the following years teaching high school, and serving as the Religious Education Director at St. Frances Cabrini Parish in New Orleans and the Formation Director for her religious community. In 1982, she moved into the St. Thomas Housing Project in New Orleans in order to live and work with the poor. While there, Sister Helen began corresponding with Patrick Sonnier, who had been sentenced to death for the murder of two teenagers. Two years later, when Patrick Sonnier was put to death in the electric chair, Sister Helen was there to witness his execution. In the following months, she became spiritual

advisor to another death row inmate, Robert Lee Willie, who was to meet the same fate as Sonnier. Sr Helen Prejean CSJ is a writer, lecturer, and community organizer who was born in Baton Rouge and has lived and worked in Louisiana all her life. Her ground-breaking first-hand account of the death penalty, *Dead Man Walking*, has been adapted into a movie, an opera, and a play for high schools and colleges.

Background of the Name

The title of the book comes from a once-traditional phrase in American prisons to designate men who had been sentenced to death. They were held on what was known as death row and were deprived of most social contact and barred from work or participation in prison programs. Prior to the 1960s, when guards would lead a condemned man down the prison hallway, they would call out, “Dead man walking! Dead man walking here!” The origin of the phrase is unknown. It may have been to warn other staff or prisoners to let them know that they should be on their guard since a death row prisoner has nothing to lose and could be violent. It may also have been a kind of honorific declamation, to let other prisoners know that they should move out of the way, death row prisoners being seen as an elite within the prison system. Alternatively, the call may have been a stigma attached to the condemned man, to remind others within earshot not to touch him to avoid catching his bad luck. In any case, its symbolism is clear: the condemned prisoner, in the eyes of the law, was dead already.

Background of the Book

In 1982, Sister Helen Prejean begins corresponding with a death row inmate at Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, Elmo Patrick Sonnier (February 21, 1950 – April 5, 1984).

After exchanging several letters with Patrick, who has been convicted of the kidnap and murder of two teenagers, Prejean decides to become his spiritual advisor. During Sr Prejean's first visit with Patrick in Angola prison, Patrick tells her about his impoverished childhood and shares memories of his father and brother. After several months, Prejean also begins to visit Patrick's brother, Eddie, who kidnapped and murdered the two teenagers along with Patrick and is serving a life sentence. On April 5, 1984, at the permission of Warden Ross Maggio, Sr Prejean was allowed to follow Patrick Sonnier to the execution chamber. With her hand on his shoulder, she read from Isaiah Chapter 43: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you ... When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned ... Lead out the people who are blind though they have eyes, who are deaf though they have ears."

Once in the execution chamber, while the guards secured Sonnier to the chair, he caught Sr Prejean's eye and told her "I love you," to which she replied "I love you too." Then his face was covered with a veil, and the executioner pulled the switch at 12:07 A.M., sending four alternating jolts of 2,000 volts and 500 volts of electricity through his body. He was pronounced dead at 12:12 A.M. Elmo Patrick Sonnier was 33 years old. Before Patrick dies, he left Sr Helen all his belongings in his will and wrote some lines in a Bible for her. The day after his execution, he was buried in the nuns' cemetery next to Sister Isabel, a friend of Sr Helen. About thirty people, including Sr Helen and Eddie, attend the funeral. Sr Helen, greatly affected by Patrick's death, creates a training program for people who wish to become spiritual advisors for death row inmates.

Robert Lee Willie (January 2, 1958 – December 28, 1984) was an American serial killer who killed at least three people in

Louisiana from the late 1970s to 1980. He was sentenced to death for the rape and murder of 18-year-old Faith Hathaway and was executed in 1984. Sister Helen Prejean began to write to him and later served as his spiritual director. After witnessing these executions, Sister Helen realized that this lethal ritual would remain unchallenged unless its secrecy was stripped away, and so she sat down and wrote a book, *Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States*.

Message of the Book

Dead Man Walking is about religious faith and the societal issues surrounding the death penalty; the book deconstructs the issue of forgiveness as it is taught in the Old Testament, with its message of revenge, “An-eye-for-an-eye,” compared to the New Testament’s message of forgiveness. Prejean decides she will never, ever, ever be a spiritual advisor to a Death Row inmate again. Naturally, she changes her mind, and that’s the turning point that sets up the rest of the action. The main themes of the book are compassion, spirituality, redemption, justice, retribution, cruelty, and death. Helen exposes the moral ambiguity of the death penalty by showing that the inmates who are put to death are human beings with families, emotions, and a past. Although she also expresses sympathy for the victims of violent crimes and their loved ones, she conveys the idea that the death penalty does not really provide peace or resolution.

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

PRISON MINISTRY: HOPE BEHIND THE WALL

Dennis W. Pierce

“As Christians we need to remember that nobody, not even the incarcerated who have committed the most heinous crime, is excluded from God’s love. Also, our understanding of God’s grace forces us to carry out our work in a world in which God moves to liberate and reconciles all of creation. We always need to keep in perspective that by the nature of our faith, we are centered on the fact we are our brother’s keeper”, says Dennis W Pierce, the author of *Prison Ministry: Hope Behind the Wall*. Dennis W. Pierce is the former volunteer chaplain at Joliet Correctional Facility in Joliet, Illinois. He served as Program Manager for the P.A.S.S boot camp program at the Varner Correctional Unit in Varner. *Prison Ministry: Hope Behind the Wall* was published in 2006 by Haworth pastoral Press, New York.

Prison Ministry: Hope behind the Wall invites the readers with the challenging task as the author quotes, Luke 14:23 in which the master says to the servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full’, and the author presents his reflection, “Our mission is to go to the forgotten men and women, in their forgotten cells and to invite them to the banquet regardless of their crimes”. When I read these words, I recalled with joy the invitation of Pope Francis “Go to the Peripheries”. The two central and important components the author brings in this book are an extensive personal experience as a chaplain in a Juvenile Correctional Centre and a deep compassion for the incarcerated men and boys he has met during his ministry.

The book presents what the prison systems have become, what life for the incarcerated has become and the issues those in prison ministry and the Church need to address. “The Church and we as Christians are at a critical juncture in our approach to the incarcerated, as well as to the oppressed and youth of our society who are making up an ever-increasing number of our prison population” says the author. The book shows the incarcerated how to find forgiveness in unforgiving surroundings. The author says to the volunteers of prison ministry that the programs conducted in prisons must have a working blueprint for dealing with the shame, humiliation, hate, and loneliness of incarcerated.

Prison Ministry: Hope Behind the Wall provides an alternative resource on our prison system for chaplains, pastors, priests, and students working in theology, ethics, or counselling. Prison Ministry: Hope Behind the Wall examines: meeting the incarcerated, defining prison’s emotional ethos, dealing with human breakdowns, oppression in maximum-security prison, components of empowerment needed for prison ministry. Prison Ministry: Hope Behind the Wall also includes case studies of four inmates, an extensive bibliography, a glossary of prison terms, sample Bible studies, and sermon topics. Prison systems and maximum-security facilities are common all over the world and the same type of oppression exist by the very nature of the institution and this book offers a theological answer to these oppressions.

The book has eight chapters: (1) Time to meet the Incarcerated (2) Prisons Warehousing the Oppressed (3) Defining the Prison’s Emotional Ethos (4) Human Breakdown Created by Prison’s Emotional Ethos (5) A Theology to the Oppressed in a Maximum-Security Prison (6) Components of Empowerment Needed for Prison Ministry (7) Society Without Souls Transient Choices (8) A Choice for a Peaceful Heart.

Prisoners: God's Image and Likeness

We often hear that prison is not a safe place as it is the living space of criminals. But the author tries to present in this book, not to forget that it is the living space of human beings created in the image and likeness of God. The hearts of many prisoners are filled with revenge and hatred. They need someone to guide them in their desperate moments. As St Therese of Child Jesus called Pranzini, a death row prisoner, *Mon Premier Enfant* (my first child), the broken ones behind bars are our children and that's why Pope Francis invites us to learn to become mothers for these broken ones. As Moses was entrusted to lead and guide the Israelites, we too are called to guide these broken ones behind bars and lift their souls to God. We need to reach out to them in their wounded-ness and tirelessly work for their integrated development.

We are Our Brothers' Keepers

We will never judge, when we know that these brethren behind bars are under our care. They never wanted to become criminals. The situations have made them what they are today. Let us not judge our brethren behind bars, rather let us do our best to give them a bright tomorrow. Just because they are behind prison walls, let us not look down at them. They too are God's children. They too are human. Who gave us the authority to judge them as criminals? God has asked them to take care of them. God has asked us to go to these peripheries and invite them to join the banquet. When God doesn't judge us who are to judge them? Let us stoop through the prison gates, walk into the prison cells and walk into their lives to know them whom God created in His image and likeness. Every prisoner has the history to narrate. Let us lift them by our service, not pull them down by our judgments.

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

REFORMATIVE EXPLORATIONS

A Psycho-Spiritual and Crimino-Social
Quarterly on Correction and Rehabilitation

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*80% of prisoners’ children are potential
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