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REFORMATIVE EXPLORATIONS

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

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Volume 7 01 January 2021 Number 1



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

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Editorial correspondence is to be addressed to the Editor, Reformativ Explorations, Prison Ministry India, 52 Thomas Layout, Sarjapura Road, Carmelaram, Bangalore - 560 035, Karnataka, India; Tel.: +91 9447710488; E-Mail: frandiyana@live.in; www.prisonministryindia.org

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Tel. 9447710488
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PRISON MINISTRY INDIA: RUBY JUBILEE

Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

BE A LOVE BOMB

It was 8th December 1981. Sun was at the Western hemisphere. Seminarians at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam were playing. Bro Varghese Karippery and Bro Francis Kodiyan MCBS were at the phone cabin discussing on how to become love bombs. “Be a love bomb. Let it be exploded. Not to kill but to heal the broken hearted”. The decision to become love bomb led them to the Most Holy Eucharist. The Most Holy Eucharist led them to the people in the peripheries such as prisoners, beggars, slum dwellers and so on. Their prayer group Jesus Fraternity was recognized by the Kerala Catholic Bishops Conference in 1995 and in 2000 it came to be known as Prison Ministry India under CBCI with 20 rehabilitation centers for the released prisoners and homes for prisoners’ children. Recently PMI launched its research, documentation and volunteers training center in Bengaluru.

PMI RUBY JUBILEE

On 8th December 2020 PMI entered into its Ruby Jubilee and we invite all of you to join with us to praise and thank God for the amazing deeds which the Lord has done for the lost. “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen” (Rev 7,12).

BURNING BUSH SPIRITUAL BANQUET

In preparation of the Ruby Jubilee, PMI convened an online retreat from 13-19 September 2020 to reawaken her volunteers. The theme was “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you” (Eph 5:14). As a fruit of this retreat PMI launched the Burning Bush Spiritual Banquet on every first Friday. On 2nd October 2020 Fr Varghese Karippery, PMI cofounder inaugurated it and Mar Jose Pulickal, Bishop of Kanjirappally spoke on the spiritual dimensions of Prison Ministry India followed by the Eucharistic Adoration.

INCESSANT INTERCESSORY INVOCATION FOR THE INCARCERATED

As an offshoot of the Burning Bush Spiritual Banquet and in commemoration of the Ruby Jubilee on 9th October 2020 PMI launched the Incessant Intercessory Invocation for the Incarcerated worldwide. With this PMI extended their 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 renewal and redemption of prisoners worldwide.

RUBY JUBILEE INAUGURATION

Most Rev Peter Machado, the Archbishop of Bengaluru inaugurated the PMI Ruby Jubilee on 9th December 2020 at 4PM at RRDC. His Grace blessed the newly constructed RRDC Chapel and the 3rd and 4th floors of RRDC. Most Rev Dr Allwyn D’Silva, the PMI Chairman and Fr Varghese Karippery conveyed Ruby Jubilee messages as they could not reach due to Covid19 pandemic. Mar Sebastian Adayanthrath, the Bishop of Mandya delivered the presidential address. Fr Sebastian Theckanath and Fr Josekutty Kalayil former PMI national coordinators and Sr Fidelis SCM from Jeevodaya felicitated.

RUBY JUBILEE PROJECTS

In commemoration of the Ruby Jubilee PMI launched the following projects:

4 NEW KOLBE HOMES

PMI decided to launch 4 more Kolbe Homes for prisoners' children. Already arrangements have commenced to launch Kolbe Homes in Sindhudurg, Aurangabad and Pune in Maharashtra and at Patan in Gujarat.

HOUSING PROJECT

To celebrate the PMI Ruby Jubilee, PMI thought of assisting 40 released and reformed prisoners by providing them small house plots and assisting them in constructing a house for their family settlement. Mar Sebastian Adayanthrath, Bishop of Mandya inaugurated the PMI Ruby jubilee housing project by handing over the cheque for the first house to Mrs Sashi Rekha, mother of Rangaswamy at Kolbe home.

40 SPECIAL TASK FORCES (STF)

To commemorate the PMI Ruby Jubilee PMI established the following 40 Special Task Forces (STF):

- 01 Abducting Prisoners' Reformers (APR)
- 02 Anticorruption & Bribery Warriors (ABW)
- 03 Antihuman Trafficking Brigadiers (ATB)
- 04 Antidrug Trafficking Warriors (ATW)
- 05 Blackmailing Prisoners Reformers (BPR)
- 06 Burglars Transformers (BT)
- 07 Cybercrime Prisoners Redeemers (CPR)
- 08 Dacoits Redeemers (DR)
- 09 Death Row Commandoes (DRC)

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- 10 Espionage Prisoners Reformers (EPR)
- 11 Foreign Prisoners' Expatriation (FPE)
- 12 Gangsters Reformers (GR)
- 13 Genocide Prisoners Redeemers (GPR)
- 14 Habituals Saving Squadron (HSS)
- 15 Hackers Transformers (HT)
- 16 Hired-Killers Liberating Squadron (HLS)
- 17 Hooligans Reformers (HR)
- 18 Innocent Prisoners' Redeemers (IPR)
- 19 Juvenile Delinquents Reformers (JDR)
- 20 Lynchers Reformers (LR)
- 21 Mafia Redeemers (MR)
- 22 Military Prisoners' Transformers (MPT)
- 23 Murderers Transformers (MT)
- 24 Pedophiles Reformers (PR)
- 25 Pirates Transformers (PT)
- 26 Political Prisoners Transformers (PPT)
- 27 Prisoners' Children Educators (PCE)
- 28 Prison Police Reformers (PPR)
- 29 Psychiatrist Prisoners' Comforters (PPC)
- 30 Prisoners' Releasing Squad (PRS)
- 31 Purgatory Souls Redeemers (PSR)
- 32 Serial Killers Reformers (SKR)
- 33 Sex Offenders Healers (SOH)
- 34 Sick Prisoners Healers (SPH)
- 35 Smugglers Transformers (ST)
- 36 Transgender Prisoners' Reformers (TPR)
- 37 Terrorists Saving Squad (TSS)

- 38 Undertrial Prisoners' Releasers (UPR)
- 39 Victims Redeemers (VR)
- 40 War-crime Prisoners' Reformers (WPR).

Each Special Task Force will have 40 prayer warriors. Each STF warrior will have a 40 days program with 40 Holy Masses, 40 hours of Eucharistic adoration and so on.

40 KOLBE HOME CHILDREN

To commemorate the PMI Ruby Jubilee, Kolbe Home welcomes 40 prisoners' children to undergo special training and education.

RUBY JUBILEE SCHOLARSHIP

During this year of the PMI Ruby Jubilee, PMI will extend our distant educational scholarship to 400 children. His Grace Peter Machado inaugurated the Ruby Jubilee scholarship project by handing over the scholarship to Asha from Jeevodaya.

400 RELEASED PRISONERS

To memorialize the PMI Ruby Jubilee, we will endeavor to release 400 prisoners from prisons all over India.

4000 PMI VOLUNTEERS

During this jubilee year we shall strive to have 4000 more PMI Volunteers.

4 BOOKS TO BE RELEASED

During the Ruby Jubilee PMI decided to release the following 4 books:

1. Warriors of Prison Ministry India – Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

2. Redeemed Prisoner - Sr Lini Sheeja MSC
3. Eucharistic Adorations – Sr Lini Sheeja MSC
4. PMI Prayers – Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

TWO COPPER COINS

“Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on (Lk 21, 1-4). PMI would highly appreciate your valuable collaboration in the realization of the jubilee ventures and initiatives for the lost. Like the poor widow’s offering your contribution whatever it be will highly be appreciated, would be a great encouragement for us and a prodigious rainbow for the released prisoners.

REFORMATIVE EXPLORATIONS 7/1

Reformative Explorations 7/1 begins with the article of Dr John Ponnore a postmodern Indian spiritual theologian working as a shepherd of Christ in the North Indian vineyard. He elucidates the Covid19 Indian Situation as a Reformative Tool in the Hands of God. Dr George Panthalanickal, a Claretian Missionary and professor at Sanyasa - Institute of Consecrated Life, demonstrates the Biblical Inspirations for our Social Mission: Gospel Mandate to be Agents of Life. Santhosh Ebroo, a negotiation and relationships coach and an advocate of the art of forgiveness writes on Bro Marcel Van: From Abuse, Trauma and Vocational Hiccups to Everyday Holiness and Death in Prison. Sr Amala DC, the new PMI national secretary delineates Sr Adele Korah’s Ministry of Bearing the light of Christ to people who live in darkness. Advocate Fr Jijo Thomas Placheril illustrates the procedures of Arrest and the Rights of the Arrested in India according to the Indian penal code. Sr Lini Sheeja MSC transcribes on Prisoners’ Mental

Health: Prevention and Cure and the Role of Prison Ministry India and exemplifies the reformation story of Rajendran.

Sr Adele SCCG, one of the warriors of Prison Ministry India illuminates how PMI volunteers release prisoners from various Indian prisons. Miss Anandita Dulloo and Mr Alex Romer two young promised buds in the prison ministry research briefly explicates the history of prisons. Fr Antony Sebastian O.Prem who is the Chairperson of Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR) reveals his own home ECHO: A Special Home for Children in Conflict with Law. The documentation section furnishes with the Prison Ministry India Report for the Year 2019-2020 and The Reawakening: PMI Retreat Report. There are three book reviews: Sr Lini Sheeja MSC analyses the book of *Sr Helen Prejean CSJ, Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States*, Ms Eunice Fernandes reviews on Shaka Senghor, *Writing My Wrongs*: and Fr Rajendran reviews on Sunetra Choudhury, *Behind Bars: Prison Tales of India's Most Famous*.

COVID19 SITUATION: A REFORMATIVE TOOL IN THE HANDS OF GOD

Dr John Ponnore

INTRODUCTION

The year 2020, with the outbreak of corona virus, has brought in unimaginable and hitherto unforeseen misery and suffering to humanity. Now that the year 2020 is gone by, even though the clouds of fear and uncertainty about Covid19 are still around the corner, some sparkle of light seems to be visible at the end of a long winding dark tunnel. It is in this context, that this paper is being presented to look into the Covid19 situation from the perspective of Christian faith. The clarion call of the Second Vatican Council was to read the signs of the time. Following this call by the Vatican II, we strive to see the finger prints of God in this dark and painful situation of Covid19. This paper is intended to discern and decipher the divine message involved in the present situation.

The present paper is written from the Indian context of Covid19, and the paper is generally outlined in two parts. The first part deals with the response of the PMI to the Covid19 lock down situation and how it has impacted the spiritual life and the Christian faith in general. The second part strives to spell out how Covid19 situation is a divine reformatory tool for introspection and conversion for both individuals as well as communities.

PART ONE: COVID19 SITUATION AND OUR RESPONSE**COVID19 SITUATION**

The global outbreak of Coronavirus brought down both the powerful and the powerless; the rich and the poor, influential and the weak to their knees! The world that was once so very busy, having no time at all for listening, caring and loving suddenly came to a grinding halt making plenty of time available to be with one's own, to be very much down to earth and touching down the ground zero of one's life. The forced global lockdown in fact made many wonders as to how to creatively and constructively utilize the suddenly available time. The Human being, pre-Covid19, was so pathologically addicted to work that in his / her mad modern race to reach the top, had become so comfortable with the abnormal. In fact, the abnormal had become the normal. But under the terrorizing regime of the Covid19, coming to a slow-down that gave space and time to sit back and introspect, almost threatened humankind with some kind of profound loneliness and utter helplessness. While some stood up courageously to be altruistic in their behavior and action, some others found it excruciating to spend time with oneself and one's own. Covid19 brought out both the worst fears of human beings as well as the best that human beings are capable of. On the one hand, anxiety, unemployment and poverty went up unbridled, while on the other hand many turned out to be more generous, kind hearted and considerate towards others.

The Indian situation was perhaps one of the worst hit from the view point of the poor and the marginalized, especially in the wake of an unsystematic and unorganized lock down with uncertainty looming large on the mental horizon of millions of the poor work force that year after year were forced to

migrate internally within the country. Utter thoughtlessness and cruel negligence of the poor labourers from various States of the Nation by the politically powerful gave witness to both man-made human misery as well as abundant blossoming of generosity, kindness and other-centeredness of tens of thousands. On the one hand, millions of migrant workers walking or cycling back home hundreds of kilometers for want of food, wages or arrangements of public transportation became a dark blot on the modern-day history of India, while on the other hand, many volunteers came forward unsolicited to help out the hapless labourers of this exodus in whatever way it was possible for them.¹

LOCI OF SPIRITUALITY

B. Fraling has indicated that Christian Spirituality has two basic *loci* where it is experienced, nurtured, nourished and blossomed.² One of the *loci* is the Church as she “is the privileged place where the Spirit of Christ is present and active.”³ The second privileged *locus* is the prevailing historical socio-cultural and politico-economic context. According to C. Garner, to understand spiritual life as a mere ‘interior life’ is too limiting and it may encourage a certain double life: one of private

¹ “During the lockdown, unable to get assistance and despairing of any free travel home, migrants started the long and painful march back often avoiding highways, travelling through forests and side roads to avoid the police,” says Brinda Karat a political leader of CPI(M). A survey of over 11,000 migrant workers undertaken by an NGO, named Stranded Workers Action Network, found that almost 8 out of 10 migrant labourers had not been paid at all during the lockdown as reported by Deccan Herald.: <https://www.deccanherald.com/state/most-migrant-workers-in-misery-says-pre-covid-19-study-856317.html>

² See B. Fraling, “Überlegungen zum Begriff der Spiritualität”, in *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 92/2 (1970), 195-196.

³ John Ponnore, *Spirituality of the Diocesan Priest*, (Raipur: 2016), 22.

interior or spiritual life and another of a public life without any harmonious relationship with the interior life.⁴ Hence,

The natural consequence of this concrete historical situation being taken as the locus of Christian spirituality is the essential social dimension of Christian spirituality. Therefore, the social concerns of Christian spirituality are, in fact, its genuine signs. They originate from the Christian doctrines of the goodness of God's creation and incarnation of the Word.⁵

Christian spirituality is the habituated way of living a total religious existence guided and influenced by the Spirit of Christ and manifested by the same Spirit in the concrete historical conditions of the time.⁶ Therefore,

No Christian spirituality can afford to ignore the concrete historical life situation. A Christian applies the Gospel in his life not in the abstract, but in his concrete life situation. Christian spirituality is one's response to God in one's given socio-cultural context. Consequently, the socio-cultural context becomes one of (sic) the loci through which one's Christian spirituality finds its expression.⁷

The history of Christian Spirituality is full of evidences of such response by persons inspired and guided by the Spirit of Christ to the then existing particular socio-historico-cultural-economic situations of the time. St. Francis of Assisi,

⁴ See C. Garner, "What on Earth is Spirituality?", 5.

⁵ John Ponnore, *Spirituality of the Diocesan Priest*, 22.

⁶ "Die christliche Spiritualität ist die geistgewirkte Weise ganzheitlich gläubiger Existenz, in der sich das Leben des Geistes Christi in uns in geschichtlich bedingter Konkretion ausprägt": B. Frailing, "Überlegungen zum Begriff der Spiritualität", 189.

⁷ John Ponnore, *Spirituality of the Diocesan Priest*, 23.

St. Theresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Vincent de Paul and many more such spiritual stalwarts are only the tip of the iceberg. Spirituality without affecting the concrete human reality can degenerate into a “noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor 13:1) and empty nothingness. This is the reason why Michael de Certeau in his study of culture and spiritual experience writes:

The essential element in any spiritual experience is not some “otherness”, quite outside the language of the time. This very language is what the spiritual man takes seriously; it is in this very cultural situation that his yearnings and his predicament “take flesh”; it is through this medium that he finds God yet ever seeks him; he expresses his faith that he carries on simultaneous experiments in colloquy with God and with his actual brothers.⁸

In this sense, Covid19 situation has presented us not only a *locus* where genuine Christian spirituality is manifested and witnessed, but also it can be seen as a reformative tool for whole humanity in the hands of the Divine as it has helped many people to become more generous, kind hearted and sensitive to others.

It is noteworthy that Pope Francis in his Angelus Message of 20th September 2020, stated that the Church should imitate God who continually goes out in search of us:

Our communities are also called to go out to the various types of “boundaries” that there might be, to offer

⁸ Michael de Certeau, “Culture and Spiritual Experience” in *Concilium* 9/2 (1966), 5. Here, his mention of ‘Culture’ must be understood in its all-encompassing aspect which include the historical, social, and economic situation.

everyone the word of salvation that Jesus came to bring. It means being open to horizons in life that offer hope to those stationed on the existential peripheries, who have not yet experienced, or have lost, the strength and the light that comes with meeting Christ. The Church needs to be like God: always going out; and when the Church does not go out, she becomes sick with the many evils we have in the Church. And why are these illnesses in the Church? Because she does not go out. It is true that when someone goes out there is the danger of getting into an accident. But better a Church that gets into accidents because she goes out to proclaim the Gospel, than a Church that is sick because she stays in. God always goes out because he is a Father, because he loves. The Church must do the same: always go out.⁹

In a situation where the Christian communities have been very much satisfied with a kind of “campus mission”¹⁰ hesitant to go out into the world, Covid19 situation presented a greater challenge and more compelling task to go out into the peripheries to be with the weak, the needy, the poor and the sick. Many did accept this challenge with more of faith, hope and generosity. Coming into direct contact with the weak, the needy, the poor and the sick in fact, drew one into a deeper reflection that may have led one to corrective and reformative mode.

⁹ Pope Francis, Angelus Message of 20.09.2020. www.vatican.va.

¹⁰ Looking after indeed very faithfully the interests of one's own community, its garden, its fields, its institution, and its campus – beautifying and modifying them all with utmost care have apparently inclined the Church more an inward looking and self-gratifying community without a profound sense of mission *ad gentes*. Hence it appears that we are interested to plant and maintain our own little kingdoms, which can easily be termed as our pet “campus mission”.

COVID19 IN INDIA AND RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH IN INDIA

As per the NDTV India statistics of 31st December 2020 at 4:22 PM, Covid19 in India's tally has surged to 1,02,66,674; with 1.48,738 deaths. While NDTV reported on the same date and time a tally of 21,822 New Covid Cases in India, it also reported recovery of 98.60 lakh people from Covid since the first case was reported on January 30, 2020. As per the latest statistics (31st Dec. 2020, at 4:22 PM), the national recovery rate now stands at 96.04 per cent and there are 2,57,656 active coronavirus infections in the country.

During this Covid Year (2020), the Church in India responded to the Covid situation at various levels and through various agencies of the Church like different Dioceses, different parishes and different religious congregations, many of which are in fact unreported and at varying degrees and quantum. But Prison Ministry India, which has a pan India presence, especially caring for the most vulnerable group in the society, namely the prisoners and their kith and kin, came up with a multi-pronged approach and an integrated strategy to respond to the prevailing situation of Covid19. Prison Ministry India came up with Spiritual assistance, Medical assistance, Psychological assistance, Family assistance, Education assistance and Rehabilitation assistance.¹¹ Kodiyan has, in his article, elaborated how these various assistances were coordinated and given to the prisoners and their family members. At the spiritual level, PMI organized a chain prayer and fasting campaign by a large network of Prison Ministry volunteers all over India for the prisoners following the model

¹¹ See Francis Kodiyan MCBS, "Covid-19 Pandemic Challenges and PMI Responses", in *Prison Voice* (August 2020), 15. I gratefully acknowledge that whatever has been cited in this paper as done by PMI has been taken from the same article.

of St Therese of Lisieux, which she had utilized for the conversion of the notorious murderer Pranzini of her time in France. PMI volunteers also distributed sanitizers, masks, oxymeters, thermometers, face shields and hand gloves all over the Indian prisons, while they also took care to organize hospitalization of the sick released prisoners and their urgent surgeries.

The volunteers from the PMI also gave time for counseling the prisoners and their families. Some volunteers also started writing letters to the prisoners to console them since they could not visit the prisons during the lock down. Some released prisoners who needed mental health care were also provided with the care they needed. At the level of family, the PMI volunteers also concentrated on their visits to the families of the prisoners not just to provide them rations but also to help them settle some of their family issues and helping them to forgive and reconcile with one another. The children of the prisoners were also attended to especially during the Covid19 Pandemic as they were provided mobile phones and TVs for their online educational purpose.

Kolbe Home founded and administered by the PMI also welcomed many of the prisoners' children who did not have any close relatives to take care of them. PMI volunteers have also been working in collaboration with lawyers to get the release of prisoners with minor offences. PMI has also been lending their helping hands to assist the released prisoners reach their home destinations during the lock down.

Van Thuan Home also welcomed released prisoners who did not have their home besides offering job opportunities to the released prisoners. What the PMI did during the Covid19 Pandemic is what the king in the parable of Jesus in the Gospel

according to Mathew declared to those who helped the poor, the hungry, the prisoners, the sick, “Truly I say to you: whenever you did this to one of the least of my brothers, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). In this way the PMI put into practice the golden rule of the Second Vatican Council enunciated in the *Gaudium et Spes*: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.” (GS 1). The PMI has then been proactive with its spirituality making it a dynamic spirituality in the present Covid19 situation. The PMI responded to the Covid19 situation under the inspiration and guidance of the Spirit of Christ so that we can state that the spirituality of PMI is not fossilized or museum spirituality. It is a genuine spirituality that is very vibrant with the life of the Spirit striving constantly to respond to the everyday life situation that is presented before it.

PART TWO: COVID19 SITUATION AS A DIVINE REFORMATIVE TOOL

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE OF COVID19

The Holy Bible is a book of the manifestation of God’s love, sin of the ungrateful man, reformative action of God, repentance of man, mercy of God and redemption. This cycle of the divine love, sin, punitive action, repentance of man, intervention of the Merciful God and redemption begins in the first page of the Bible (Book of Genesis) and continues till the last book of the Old Testament, which finally reaches the climax of the divine and definitive redemption in the saving act of Jesus the Divine Son, his self-emptying sacrifice on the cross, as we see in the New Testament.

Even though, the Holy Bible is full of the history of God's love, ungrateful man's sin, reformative action by God, repentance of man and the redemptive mercy of God, it is good to notice concretely some of those pertinent events in the Bible so that we are convinced of the Biblical principle.

The record of the very first sin committed by man (Adam and Eve) merited God's punishment and eventually the first parents were ousted from the paradise as a divine punitive action. But the merciful God did not abandon man to what he naturally merited or deserved. Instead, God promised an eventual salvation of man from this bondage of evil, when He said to the serpent: "I will make you enemies, you and the woman, your offspring and her offspring. He will crush your head and you will strike at his heel" (Gen 3:15).

In the Book of Numbers, chapter 21, we read the passage where Israelites complain against God and Moses in the wilderness. For this sin of murmur against God and Moses, God sent fiery serpents against the people. Many who were bitten by the serpents died and the people realized their sin and came to Moses and said: "We have sinned, speaking against Lord and against you. Plead with the Lord to take the serpents away" (Num 21:7). After Moses pleaded with God on behalf of the people, God gave the solution of raising up a serpent made of bronze on a standard and those bitten by the serpents, if they looked at the bronze serpent on the standard they would be saved.

King David committed the sin of counting the number of Israelites to find out the number of able-bodied men fit for war. In spite of the resistance of Joab the military chief of David, the census was carried out because of the insistence of king David. However, once the census was complete, King

David realized that he had done what was evil in the eyes of God. When it was God who was going out with the army of David to win battles for him, what was the need for him to have taken the census of the battle worthy men? The sin of David amounted to questioning or challenging the victories God had won for David and he appeared to take the credit of the victories to himself instead of God. As David realized his sin, he said to the Lord: “I have sinned greatly in what I have done, but now, O Lord, I ask you to forgive my sin for I have acted foolishly” (2 Sam 24:10). David was given three options of punitive action by God: three years of famine in the land; three months of fleeing before the enemies or three days of pestilence in the land. He rather chose the last option of accepting the three days of pestilence as the divine punitive action, because he felt safer to fall into the hands of the merciful God. On the very first day of the pestilence, seventy thousand men died. God was merciful and held back the angel who had stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem. The Lord said to the angel causing destruction: “It is enough, hold back your hand” (2 Sam 24:16).

The Babylonian exile was another telling consequence of the collective sin of Israel. King after king continued the policy of remaining unfaithful to Yahweh who had made a covenant with the people of Israel. Infidelity to the covenant and its stipulations, especially to the first commandment of worshipping Yahweh alone made Him angry with the Israelites. Their going farther away from the Creator and Savior God and worshipping Baal, Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moabites and Milcom the god of the Ammonites was displeasing to God (cfr. 1 Kings 11:33). The Babylonian exile was therefore the result of the cumulative sin of Israel so that they repented of their sins and returned to

Yahweh who had created them, and had brought them out of Egyptian slavery.

In short, what Bible teaches us is that sin is a serious matter, which cannot / should not be taken lightly because every sin – however small or huge – will have its consequence¹². No doubt, it is true that God is full of compassion and mercy as the Psalmist says: “Compassionate and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger and abounding in love. The Lord is merciful to everyone; his love is for all his creation” (Ps 145:8-9). But it is also true that the Word of God says to us: “Do not say, ‘His compassion is great; he will forgive the vast number of my sins.’ For with him are mercy and anger, and his fury will be poured out on sinners. For do not delay your return to the Lord, do not put it off from day to day. For suddenly the anger of the Lord will blaze forth, and you will perish on the day of reckoning” (Sirach 5:6-7; Emphasis is mine). God’s love, according to the Bible, is unconditional; but His unconditional love includes rebukes and corrections. This is why the book of Sirach says: “Man’s mercy is for his neighbor, but the compassion of the Lord reaches all people; he rebukes, corrects, teaches, and brings back his flock like a shepherd” (Sirach 18:13. Emphasis is mine).

LOCK DOWN: A CALL FOR INTROSPECTION AND CONVERSION

In the event of the outbreak of Covid19, the lock down was necessitated in various countries and at varying degrees and duration. In India too, the government declared a complete national lock down from 25th March to 14th April 2020 for 21

¹² “Escape from sin as you would from a snake; if you go near, it will bite you. Its teeth are like those of a lion, and can destroy human lives. All evil is like a double-edged sword; there is no healing for its wound.” Sirach 21:2-3. And see also 1 Jn 5:17 says: “Every kind of wrongdoing is sin, but not all sin leads to death.”

days, which was further extended in the second phase to 3rd May for another 19 days and eventually it was extended in some parts of the country up to 31st May with relaxations wherever it was possible. The initial response to the lock down was one of silence and acceptance; but very soon people began to realize that the lock down was not properly and strategically planned as they began to see the visuals of the human tragedy and misery being unfurled on the roads and pathways of the country.

Leaving aside the material dimension of the lock down to other analytical and scientific studies, we shall strive to see the spiritual or mystical side of the lock down. The once busy people were locked down in their own homes. The lock down time had both a negative dimension as well as a positive dimension. Some found it extremely difficult to spend time all by themselves while others found it a time for introspection and internal journey into oneself. Leaving aside all practical difficulties, the lock down brought in plenty of positive benefits. We shall note down the positive outcome that the lock down brought to humanity at large:

1. The environment got an energizer from it as air pollution level came down drastically. Because of lesser use of motor vehicles by people, oxygen level in the air improved drastically while it also gave a new and fresh lease of life to all living organisms.
2. It gave an opportunity for many people to realize that many of the things that they considered as essential were not really essential, but were luxuries that could also be easily given up. Some recognized that exhibitionism and vanity are additional accessories to human life. Hence return to simple nature is the need of the hour.

3. Man's greed for his own self advancement and self-gratification has no limit. As a result, sin in the contemporary world has increased in proportion to the advancement of science and technology the present contemporary world has achieved. Cyber-crimes, sexual crimes and violence, pornography, abortion, criminal greed for property and wealth, and ever-increasing quantum of pride and selfishness have multiplied the presence of sin in the world. We are reminded by what the Lord said to Noah in the Bible, "I have decided to destroy all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. This is why I will destroy them and with them the earth" (Gen 6:13).
4. Covid19 related lock down revealed the utter vulnerability of the human being and his/her essential dependence on God. Humans realized that he/she is not the master of his/her life. Man/woman can only plan things, schedules and programs; but he/she has no control over them. Even the strongest or richest person or most powerful nation in the world remained miserably helpless and totally confused before such a tiny - invisible to our human eyes - virus (Covid19), which in fact revealed man's dependence as a creature on God and other human beings.
5. The lock down situation thus gave a call and an invitation to all serious-minded people with certain profundity to journey within oneself so as to go beyond oneself. Human life is, after all, not in the absolute control of human beings. He/she needs God, and the other. Therefore, the need to introspect! Introspection is not a value in itself unless it helps us to a fundamental change of values and attitudes. In other words, the Covid19 related lock down is giving humanity a chance to introspect and to be converted to be a better and simpler human being, centered not on

oneself; but centered on altruistic motives. The model of other centered life is Jesus himself. He is the perfect ideal who lived his life for others and died.

CONCLUSION

Covid19 situation has given us humanity an opportunity to mend our ways and life styles. It can be interpreted as a divine tool for the renewal, and reformation of human life. Human life that has been too self-centered for quite some time in the history of humanity, now has an opportunity to become more other-oriented. Covid 19 and its related lock down have given enormous chance for contemporary humanity to become more kind hearted, more generous and more loving albeit plenty of human suffering and misery it has brought to the weaker and poor sections of society. The only question that does remain is how many will make use of this opportunity by making an introspection and adopt necessary changes in their life style. As we have seen in the first part of this paper, there have been many who have made use of this opportunity in making their introspection and using it as a divine reformative tool. As we have noted, many have become more generous, kind-hearted and sensitive to others. Yet, the number that has responded positively is only a miniscule in comparison to the massive sinfulness the world is experiencing today.

Finally, one last word with regard to Covid19 related lock down. The Prison is a lock down situation for a prisoner, regardless of whether the accused is guilty or not guilty of the accusation. A prisoner can experience both negative and positive effect in his / her life. One's life comes to a stand-still when one is placed in a prison whether he is rightly accused or falsely accused. Without going into the material merits and demerits of one's stay in the prison, one can also have quality time for introspection and reform if needed. The Prison like lock down

provides a time to look into oneself, one's own life style like looking into a mirror. Prison – lock down – can also be a divine reformatory tool at least for the one who has been justly accused.

**BIBLICAL INSPIRATIONS FOR
OUR SOCIAL MISSION:
GOSPEL MANDATE TO BE AGENTS OF LIFE
Dr George Panthalanickal CMF**

Suppose a Christian is asked, why Jesus came to the world or what his primary role or mission was, the immediate response could be that he came to give us salvation. But if we make a terminological survey of the term ‘salvation’ in the four gospels, one will be stunned to discover the almost complete absence of this term in the mouth of Jesus to refer to his mission. The term salvation does not appear in the mouth of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew and Mark. It is found once in a saying of Jesus in John, and once in Luke.¹³ In John, in his conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus made a statement, “salvation is of the Jews” (Jn 4:22) which is certainly not directly referring to his mission. Luke certainly employs once this term in the mouth of Jesus indirectly referring to the effect of his mission. Jesus entered the house of Zacchaeus and after Zacchaeus made a commitment to life, by way of joyfully restoring life to others which he had infringed, said to his critics, “today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham” (Lk 19:9).

The most significant statements of Jesus in the Gospel tradition referring to his role and mission do not employ the term

¹³ In Luke 1:77; 2:30 & 3:6, the term salvation appears but not from the mouth of Jesus.

salvation. The Nazareth sermon in Luke does not employ a single comprehensive term to refer to the entire mission of Jesus, rather gives a description of his various saving ministries of liberation (Luke 4:18-19), adopting it from Isaiah 61:1-2. In the context of the call of Levi and the subsequent conflict with the Pharisees about his (missionary strategy of) eating with sinners, the Synoptic Jesus clarifies his role and articulates his mission statement (Mark 2:17). But here too, the mission statement does not employ the term salvation, but adopts the imagery of a physician to speak about his role and mission: “those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners” (Mark 2:17). Certainly, the imagery refers to the lifesaving acts of a physician in a critical life-threatening illness. At the conclusion to the Zacchaeus story (Luke 19:1-9), his mission is identified as seeking and saving the lost; his role in the imagery refers to the shepherd’s act of saving the life of the sheep from life-threatening dangers, probably adopted from the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7). In both these imageries or metaphors associated with the saving role or mission of Jesus, the object of saving is ‘life.’

Having failed to find the term salvation in the mouth of Jesus to refer to his specific mission, the search in the Gospel tradition for a comprehensive term in the mouth of Jesus, referring to his mission, will leave us with two options, namely, his offer of the ‘kingdom of God’ and the offer of ‘life’. Many certainly consider Jesus’ offer of the ‘kingdom of God’ in the Synoptic tradition as comprehensively referring to the object of his mission in the role as the expected Messiah. But in this traditional Jewish expectation too, the supreme gift that is offered in the kingdom of God is ‘life’. The Kingdom of God in the gospel tradition refers to that ideal state of life to where

Jesus is leading all humanity to experience and celebrate life in all its fullness under the reign of God.

With a deeper theological insight, John sees that in the crucial acts of his passion, death and resurrection, Jesus mimics in his own body what his mission has to achieve. John is linking Jesus' saving mission to the context of God initiating the salvation history in the book of Genesis. The first eleven chapters of Genesis presents the biblical account of the creation of the world (Gen 1-2) and the subsequent sin of men (Gen 3-11), which necessitated the initiation of the salvation history with the call of Abraham (Gen 12). Genesis presents the effect of the sin of the first parents as death. God's warning to them reflects this: "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die" (Gen 3:3). But the deceiver serpent disapproves that the effect of sin is death: "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:4-5). In fact, the prologue or the pre-history in Genesis (chs.1-11) portrays sin as causing death to self (Gen 3:1-24), others (Gen 4:1-16) and nature (Gen 7:1-24). John will effectively display the effect of sin as 'death' and the effect of the saving mission of Jesus as offering 'life.'

Referring to the role of the Son in the creation or coming into being of life, the prologue to the Gospel of John says, "What has come into being in him was life, and the life was light of the world" (John 1:4-5). Here John equates the entire act of creation, namely the creation of human beings, animal world and nature as 'coming into being of life' (John 1:4). John consistently presents the effect of the mission of Jesus as the new creation or rebirth of life.¹⁴ Thus, John finds in the concept

¹⁴ Beasley-Murray, John, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002), 11.

of 'life' the most comprehensive theological term that can interpret the role and mission of Jesus and also can hint at a missionary code for the disciples.

This article deals with the concept of mission and ministry which Jesus exercised and passed on to his followers in the gospels, analyzing representative passages from the length and breadth of the gospels. Initially, the article discusses the concept of mission in the synoptics and the gospel of John separately but converging it on the comprehensive theological theme of life. In the third and concluding section deals with the concrete ways of living the missionary mandate of the gospels – to be agents of life.

1. THE SYNOPTIC CONCEPT OF MISSION: LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Though the first three Gospels use the word “life” less frequently than the Fourth gospel, their authors knew perfectly well what it meant. Mark records some strong words of Jesus about taking radical action to ensure that one aims at the life that God alone can bestow. “If your hand causes your downfall, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life, maimed than to keep both hands and go hell (Mk 9:43-48). A further instructive example of the association of the term “life” in the synoptic record is seen in the Markan account of the Rich young Ruler’s encounter with Jesus (Mk 10:17-31). The young man runs to Jesus and asks him what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus tells him to keep the commandments. He declares that he always has, so Jesus points to the one thing he lacks: he should give away his possessions to the poor and so gain “treasure in heaven”. Jesus then invites him to join his company of disciples. This he is unwilling to do, which causes him to turn away and depart. Matthew also adopts these uses of Mark in his gospel. In Luke, when the prodigal son returns home,

the God represented by the father figure in the parable is filled with joy and orders a feast because his son was dead and “has come to life” (Lk 15:32). To further understand the synoptic view of the mission of Jesus and his disciples as the offer of life in the kingdom of God, we analyse the four most significant synoptic passages that can be read as a programmatic trajectory of Christian mission: 1) mission unveiled; 2) mission marked; 3) mission rehearsed; and 4) mission commissioned.

1.1. MISSION UNVEILED – VOCATION OF JESUS (LORD SAVES) AS SAVIOUR OF LIFE (LK 4:16-19)

Luke 2:21 speaks of the name and the naming of Jesus as ‘the name given by angels before he was conceived in the womb.’ Vocation, for the Semites, was contained in the name, because the name defined the person called and indicated the mission. To Joseph the angel said, “Mary will bear a son. You shall call him Jesus (= the Lord saves) because he will save his people” (Mt 1:21). Only God knows the real name of each one and calls from the maternal womb. The name God calls each is the vocation of persons whether individual (e.g., Jesus) or collective (e.g., disciple or apostle). The Nazareth sermon at the very beginning of the public ministry of Jesus in the gospel of Luke unveils the mission or vocation of Jesus. For Luke, the Nazareth sermon has a programmatic overture, the synthesis of all the mission activity of Jesus (Lk 7:21-22).¹⁵ The context of the sermon is a sabbath gathering when Jewish people go to the synagogue to pray and to hear the reading and explanation of God’s Word. On that particular day, Jesus was chosen or volunteered to read and interpret the word of God. The chosen text is taken from the prophet Isaiah: ”The Spirit of the Lord

¹⁵ J. Nolland, Luke 1-9:20, WBC (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electorinic, 1989), 197.

is upon me. He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and new sight to the blind; to free the oppressed and to announce the Lord's year of mercy" (Lk 4: 17-19).

This prophetic text originally refers to a character who, about 400 years before Christ, was sent by God to comfort the children of Israel who returned from exile in Babylon, a near experience of Israel as a people. Political and religious disaster of exile originated in their failure in the covenantal commitment to God and one another and created a people who are physically and metaphorically going through a near death experience: becoming poor, prisoners, blind and oppressed. In this historical context, Isaiah speaks of a man invested by the Spirit of the Lord and sent to proclaim new life; the "year of grace," "jubilee," the time when all debts are forgiven, diseases healed, all forms of slavery ended and justice is re-established.

Jesus picks up the same words of the prophet and begins to proclaim the new life in the kingdom of God stating that – *'these prophetic words have come true'* (v. 21). His choice of the text is self-evident in the fact that Jesus in his life encounters the same historical, social, religious and cultural setting of physical and metaphorical death: a culture of grabbing and exploitation; the rich exploiting the poor, the strong dominating the weak (cf. Is 56:10–57:2). In the ministry of Jesus especially in his liberating words and healing and forgiving acts, we see these prophetic words coming true. Gospels present the ministry of Jesus as a comprehensive offer of life: both material and spiritual. His acts of visible physical healings are portrayed in the gospel as signs of the offer of invisible spiritual healings and life. Each of the ministry Jesus exercised, namely, healing the possessed, paralytic, blind, lepers, feeding the hungry, calming the sea etc., involved two levels of meanings: physical

and metaphorical. For example, while presenting the two physical healings of the blind (Mk 8:22-26; 10:46-52) that frame the discipleship section (Mk 8:22-10:52), Mark metaphorically reveals the blindness of the disciples which is being healed to know the person, teachings and mystery of Jesus, especially the mystery of his suffering.

The Gospel portrayal of the healings of the paralytic metaphorically reveals the deeper spiritual reality of healings from being shut or locked inside and the inability to move towards God and one another. It is the reality of selfishness and ego that make one shut inside himself and make him unable to make the movement towards God and fellow people. It is because of this; Jesus forgives the sins of the paralytic before he heals the physical paralysis. Similar wholistic offer of life is meditated upon by the evangelist in the presentation of healings from leprosy and possessions. In this sense neither leprosy nor possessions are the problems of a few. All carry the spiritual uncleanness and all are possessed in different levels by inhibiting emotions like anger, hatred, revenge, jealousy etc. The word of Jesus begins to free not only from diseases - which are a sign of a decrease in life - but from all the psychological and moral barriers that shrink, do not allow to go forward and grow or inhibit impulses of love. The possession of uncontrolled passions that cause people to fall back on themselves in the pursuit of self-interest, the thirst for possessions, the frenzy of power and success are chains. These strains today begin to be crushed. The irresistible force that breaks them is that of the Holy Spirit (Lk 4: 14) who is at work in Jesus not only when he performs miraculous healings, but also when, with his powerful word, he breaks the bonds that envelop and keep people in the state of any type of slavery (Lk 4:36). Thus, Nazareth sermon of Jesus can be understood as a programmatic unveiling of his mission as a wholistic offer

of life. The following sections of this article present the story of the disciples being marked, rehearsed and commissioned for the same mission.

1.2. MISSION MARKED: VOCATION OF DISCIPLES AS AGENTS OF LIFE (Mk 3:14-15)

The second part of the Markan purpose of discipleship as clearly marked and articulated in the institution account of the apostles is “to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons (Mk 3:14-15).” Mission involves both proclaiming the gospel and casting out demons. Used fourteen times in Mark, the term “to preach” is a technical and metaphorical term for the proclamation of the gospel effecting the kingdom of God.¹⁶ The Primary instrument of the mission of Jesus and of his disciples is God’s Word. To understand the power of the word as instrument of mission, liberation or source of life, one needs to understand the ancient understanding of the word especially the word of God. Today we mostly use and understand ‘words’ as means to describe things. But in the ancient word there was a totally different understanding of the use of words; it was believed that the soul of the man is infused into the words that he utters and it has the power to execute what is being pronounced. It is this concept that is foundational for understanding the power of the blessing and cursing by God, priests, teachers and elders, especially when their words are accompanied by gestures. In God’s word, His soul is being infused and that is the source of power of the Word of God and thus becomes the primary tool to exercise His mission. Thus, His words have become the antidote to all deadly curses and poisons affecting humanity. It is because of this, in the gospel of Mark, requirement for

¹⁶ R. A. Guelich, Mark 1:8-26, WBC (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electorinic, 1989),158.

following Jesus is not only a commitment to Jesus but also to his mission of proclaiming the gospel. There are many passages, in which Mark identifies the person of Jesus with the gospel (8:35; 10:29; 13:9-11). In 8:35, “lose his own life for Jesus’ sake and for the sake of the gospel.” In 10:29, the disciples have to leave all things “for my sake and for the sake of the gospel”.

Another comprehensive term for liberation that is used here is ‘casting out demons.’ The Markan choice of this as his first account of the healing in the Gospel, namely, healing of a possessed person and the precise context of Jesus proclaiming the word of God in the synagogue (Mk 1:21-28) are not accidental. In Mark’s intention it constitutes the synthesis of the whole work of Jesus in favor of people. The Ancient world did not understand impersonal causes and they believed that if it was caused it was caused by somebody. For example, today we speak of impersonal causes like virus that causes fever and shivering or impersonal causes that make the sea rough and agitated. The Ancient world attributed these to the activity of evil spirits. Sharing this ancient understanding, we find that the gospels portray the word of Jesus as overpowering all these possessions of evil. In this sense, possession is a comprehensive expression for the power of evil or death and thus it is not the problem of a few. All of humanity to some extent is possessed by evil inclinations like anger, hatred, jealousy, craving for power, possessions, pleasures etc. The concept of life in the kingdom of God is achieved by God’s word overpowering all these evils such as blindness, leprosy, paralysis and possessions understood both physically and metaphorically.

1.3. MISSION REHEARSED: SENT TO BE AGENTS OF LIFE (Mk 6: 7-13)

In Mk 6:7-13, Jesus dispatches the twelve, certainly to make a rehearsal but also providing with a spectrum of clear patterns

for Christian mission. The call-commissioning act of Jesus in this text which provides evergreen patterns is summarized in four expressions: 'he called'; he 'sent them'; he 'gave them authority'; and 'he charged them' with instructions.¹⁷ Jesus sends them in missionary pairs empowering them with his word. The domination over evil is in the style of the mission of Jesus by way of healing from all possessions and illness. There is also a clear identification of the mission of the disciples with that of the task of Jesus¹⁸ as unveiled in Lk 4:16-19.¹⁹ But Mark presents this as a dry run because the disciples have not yet understood the mystery of the kingdom. They will be commissioned only after the passion, when the death of Jesus has taken place and their eyes have been opened and their understanding finally enlightened, and finally their preaching will become a message of new life in the kingdom. But this dry run provides clearly articulated trajectories or patterns for Christian mission.

First among the four expressions that summarize Jesus' call-commissioning act in this passage is 'he called.' The disciples received the authority for their mission from the call of Jesus (Mk 3:15; 6:7). Jesus holds the central position in mission. He sent out the missionaries. After the mission they returned to him (Mk 6:30). The missionary association of the twelve with Jesus has nothing to do with the greatness of the disciples. The missionary success of the disciples depends upon Jesus' appointing them to be closely associated with his person. Only when this relationship has been firmly established, the missionary activities could hope to succeed. The mission charge

¹⁷ F. J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 121.

¹⁸ M. Naickanparampil, *Following Jesus: The Vision of Christian Discipleship in the Gospels*, (Bangalore: ATC Publishers, 2207), 62

¹⁹ R. A. Guelich, *Mark 1:8-26*, 324.

given in Mk 6:8-11 means that the disciples should not rely upon their own resources, whether material or other, but on the One who called them and whom they proclaim.

The second expression that summarizes the call-commissioning act of Jesus in the passage refers to Jesus sending the disciples to be agents of new life in the kingdom: 'he sent.' Jesus himself was the sent one, the supreme missionary from the Father. Jesus throughout his life identified himself with the mission. To follow Jesus as a disciple demands the same sense of mission in one's life, an abiding conviction of being sent by God to bring the Good News to others, to be God's instrument of healing, freeing, enlightening in the world today. The passage of the missionary journey of the disciples opens with the sending out of the twelve (v. 7). All are sent, without exception. This indicates that the proclamation of the gospel is not a task reserved for few members of the community. The disciple who does not feel the need to share with others the gift received, probably is not yet convinced that, in discovering Christ, he has found the most precious of treasures. The apostles are sent out two by two, not to keep each other company, but for a theological reason - Christianity cannot but be lived in community, and to build a community, there needs to be at least two. There is also another important novelty introduced by Jesus in their sending. The rabbis did not go to look for disciples. The students were the ones who came to them to learn the Torah. Jesus instructs his apostles to go and offer the gospel message to people in their homes, in the environments in which they live. Thus, this second aspect involves a sending and a home delivery.

The third expression that summarized the call-commissioning act of Jesus refers to the authority and power that is conferred on the apostles. The power that the apostles received is the

same that Jesus exercised: to give orders to “unclean spirits.” “Unclean spirits” are all forces that turn people away from God and from life, arouse bad feelings and cause oppression, violence and injustice. In comparison with these negative forces that dominate the world, the Christian community will certainly come out victorious, because the Master has invested her with an irresistible force, his own Spirit.

In the second part of the passage (Mk 6: 8-9) we have the fourth and final expression which refers to Jesus charging with instructions regarding the equipment that the messengers or agents of the Gospel can carry with them. In summary it must be very light: only one tunic, a pair of sandals, a stick and nothing else. The rest is a baggage that weighs down. The material resources must be reduced to the essentials.²⁰ In Matthew the objects prohibited to carry start with the stick. It was the weapon of the poor, therefore, in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus forbids it (Mt 10:10). The disciples of Christ are peacemakers; therefore, they repudiate all the tools that prompt the use of violence. In Mark’s text however, the apostles are allowed to have the staff as an exception for its symbolic meaning derived from the biblical typology.²¹ Moses and Aaron, in pairs (“two by two”, as Jesus also recommended) fought against the oppressive forces of the pharaoh. They brought to completion the work of liberation of their people using a cane, a sign of God’s power. With it, Moses worked wonders before Pharaoh (Ex 7:9-12). He stretched out his hand over the land of Egypt, and brought the locusts (Ex 10:13), divided the Red Sea (Ex 14:16), brought forth water from the rock (Ex 17:5-6). Even the disciples of Christ have *only a staff* in his hand to carry

²⁰ R. A. Guelich, Mark 1:8-26, 324.

²¹ U. Mauser, Christ in the Wilderness, (Illinois: Naperville, 1963), 133-34.

out the work of liberating man from “unclean spirits.” They can rely on a single force, the one delivered to them by Jesus: his word.

What they should not carry with them is indicated: no food, no bag, no money ... (vv. 8-9). These instructions metaphorically reflect the concern that, among the disciples, the leaven of this world should not infiltrate, the belief that the success of the mission depends on the amount of material means available to them. Jesus warned his disciples against the danger of being influenced by wealth. Relying on material resources they could become possessed, chained and paralyzed by ego and selfishness (Lk 4:16-18) and rather than becoming inspiration they will become counter witnesses. In this same spirit is another charge: “in whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave the place” (v. 10). In the course of time the missionaries will certainly meet people well disposed towards them and they will be offered a more comfortable home than the first one. The disciples are asked to be witness of an austere, sober life devoid of any ostentation of luxury. Otherwise, what is at stake is the credibility of the mission.

When they are cast out, they will shake the dust from their feet (v. 11). It was the gesture that every Israelite did leaving the land of the heathens, and entering the holy land. He thus expressed his belief that “the earth partakes of the character of its inhabitants” (Num 5:17) and that, to take leave of the wicked, it would be necessary also to get rid of their dust. Jesus suggests to his disciples to make this gesture, not as a sign of rejection and contempt, but “a testimony for them.” The authentic apostles are conscious of being sent to bring a proposal, not to engage in theological battles. Their job is not getting many conversions, but faithfully proclaiming the word of Christ. The adhesion or rejection, the more or less abundant

fruit do not depend on them, but on the type of soil on which they will sow the seed in abundance, but with gentleness and respect.²² The last verse (v. 12) narrates the success of the apostles as agents of life in their mission. With the power conferred by the Master, they carry out the work of salvation for which they were sent. The sign of new life offered through their mission is the defeat of all forms of evil: physical evil (diseases) and moral evil (the expulsion of demons).

1.4. MISSION COMMISSIONED: AUTHORITATIVE AGENTS OF LIFE (Mk 16:15-20)

Mk 16:15-20 refers to the commissioning of disciples for their mission before Jesus is being ascended into heaven. Best analogy for the life and ministry of Jesus and his disciples from the Old Testament is life and ministry of Elijah and Elisha. This analogy is significant to understand the profound significance of Ascension of the Lord and his commissioning of disciples for mission. As Elijah was ascending, his disciple or successor Elisha repeatedly made three times a compelling statement: ‘as surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you!’ (2 Kings 2:2, 4, 6). Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.” And Elisha responded, “Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit and become your successor” (2 Kings 2:9). Ascension and commissioning are meaningful if it is understood as disciples taking the double share of spirit to carry forward in the world the presence and mission of Jesus to become his true disciples and successors. As part of handing over his spirit Elijah leaves his mantle to Elisha (1 Kings 19:19; 2 Kings 2:13). In 2 Kings 2:13 we are told that Elisha picked up Elijah’s cloak, which had fallen when he was taken up. Mantle

²² P. B. Santram, *A Guide to St. Mark’s Gospel*, (Delhi: ISPCK, 2010), 98.

has a set of meanings – covering, responsibility, function and protection. Precisely these are the common elements and pattern in all the accounts of the ascension found in the Acts of the Apostles, the synoptic gospels and the farewell message of Jesus in John.²³ On his ascension, the disciples are commissioned to continue the mission of Jesus with a double spirit!

In the passage, the risen Christ appears to the Eleven and indicates the mission they are called upon to perform: “Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation.” It is surprising that the good news should be announced: “to every creature.” The expression certainly covers “every person,” but also contains an invitation to open the horizons and to contemplate an offer of life that extends to the whole universe. Every creature, in fact, is the subject of God’s affectionate fondness (Prov 8:22-31). Because of sin, the human being has often adopted a wrong relationship with creation. Driven by insatiable covetousness and greed, people misunderstood or betrayed God’s intentions. Instead of acting as gardeners and caretakers of the world, they became despots and predators. They did not use science and technology in line with the creator’s project but in a reckless and arbitrary way. He manipulated nature at will, bending it to his own selfish interests or crazy designs. When they did so, they reintroduced chaos. The proclamation of the gospel frees man from the conviction of being an absolute master. It makes him realize that he has no right to intervene at will on nature and cause it to establish a new relationship, not only with others but also with the environment, plants and animals (Rom 8:19-21).

²³ M. Naickanparampil, *Following Jesus: The Vision of Christian Discipleship in the Gospels*, 231.

In the second part of the passage (vv. 17-18) the mantle handed over takes the form of five signs through which the Risen Christ manifests his presence: "Those who have believed will cast out demons and speak new languages; they will pick up snakes and if they drink anything poisonous, they will be unharmed; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will be healed." The extraordinary signs listed by Mark should be read and interpreted in the light of biblical symbolisms. The prophets used these and other images to describe the messianic times and the new world. It is enough to remember the famous prophecy: "The wolf will dwell with the lamb; the leopard will rest beside the kid. By the cobra's den, the infant will play" (Is 11:6-8). Isaiah in metaphorical language announces the end of the hostilities, rivalries, aggressions, struggles and enmities that exist in the world.

First among the five signs, namely, casting out demons represent all the forces of death found in the human. They cause him to make choices opposed to the gospel: pride, greed of money, hatred and selfish impulses. These demons are not won with the use of exorcism rites, but with the power of the word of Christ and the Spirit he gave us. It is the proclamation of the gospel that drives them away. The Second sign refers to a whole new language which humanity is badly in need of because insult, curses, arrogance and violence have already been heard too much. Now people want to hear of blessings, love, forgiveness, free and unconditional service, and the disciples of Christ must be able to speak them (Mt 5:44).

The Third and fourth signs together refer to the power of the vaccine or antivenom over poisonous snakes and substances. The poisonous snakes and substances are often referred to in the Bible as symbols of the enemies of human life. It is an

apocalyptic language for being protected against evil.²⁴ The just one is invited not to fear the snakes (Ps 91:13) and the disciples too must not be afraid. The strength they received from Christ, in fact, makes them invulnerable, “You see, I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the Enemy, so that nothing will harm you” (Lk 10:19). The Fifth and final one, the healings from diseases are the signs that Jesus himself has manifested in his public ministry. If the word of the gospel will do inexplicable and miraculous recoveries to life it will be apparent to all that the Christian community is the bearer of a divine power capable of recreating the world.

RESUME

With a scan of significant mission texts, the synoptic understanding of the mission of Jesus and his disciples ‘as offer of life in the kingdom of God’ has been brought out. The mission of Jesus in the synoptic gospel could be summarized as his constant availability ‘to be at the service of the new life in the kingdom of God.’ New life is symbolically portrayed in the signs that will accompany with the disciples of Jesus. Those signs have to be interpreted not literally but making use of biblical symbolism. The principal tool for the transformation is the proclamation of the word of God. The irresistible force that breaks the powers of evil is that of the Holy Spirit (v. 14) who is at work in Jesus not only when he performs miraculous healings, but also when, with his powerful word, he breaks the bonds that keep people in the state of slavery (Lk 4:36).

²⁴ M. Fallon, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Bangalore: ATC Publishers, 2002), 278.

2. JOHANNINE MISSION: TO BE AGENTS OF LIFE (Jn 10:10)

At the heart of the gospel of John, Jesus makes this defining statement referring to his mission: “I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly (Jn 10:10).” The mission of Jesus in the gospel of John was to become the source of life to the world. The Mission of disciples was also to be agents of life in a world threatened by death. Continuing the reflection on the mission of Jesus, this section of the article is intended to understand the concept of life in the gospel of John and to show how Jesus becomes the source of life to the world. In John, there are three different Greek words *Bios*, *Psyche* and *Zoe* used to convey three different aspects of life. While the first two terms refer to the material resource and self-consciousness of man, the third term denotes life as a gift of God. The third term, namely, *Zoe*, referring to life as a gift of God occurs in John 36 times, and is often modified with the adjective “eternal.” It is this word that refers to life as a gift of God which is our focus of attention in our analysis of the gospel texts concerning the mission of Jesus in John.

2.1. BREAD AND WATER: TWO POWERFUL METAPHORS OF LIFE

Bread and water are the two powerful metaphors of life in John, with which Jesus has identified himself. Both are objects to be consumed, probably metaphorically hinting at the way Jesus is going to become the source of life to the world. They also metaphorically represent his passion, death and resurrection, the concrete way of his commitment to life.

The core of John 6 is the sermon on the bread of life. In 6:33-35, 48 we have an exposition of Jesus as the bread of life. “For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life.

Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” In 6:48 once again Jesus says, “I am the bread of life”. Jesus is the bread of life who gives life to the world by his death, through his spirit and words (Jn 6:51, 63, 68). Eucharistic overtones of these texts are undisputable. The gift of the Eucharist is life-giving to the believer, just as his relationship with the Father is life-giving to Jesus (Jn 6:53-57).

The other powerful symbol of life in John is ‘water.’ In his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus said, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit” (3:5). In his encounter with the Samaritan woman, Jesus said, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life” (Jn 4:13-14). In chapter 7, which narrates the teaching of Jesus on the occasion of the feast, we have the following exposition about water: “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water’” (Jn 7:37-38). Finally, at his death, Jesus is portrayed as the source of living water in a metaphorical scene: “one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out” (Jn 19:34).

2.2. THE SOURCES OF LIFE IN JOHN

John presents the role of Jesus and the whole purpose of the Gospel in terms of imparting life (Jn 20:30-31). In creation, natural life is given when God breathes His spirit or breath into the dust of the earth (Gen 2:7); so also, eternal life is given when Jesus breathes forth God’s Holy Spirit upon his

disciples (Jn 20:22).²⁵ D. H. Johnson would summarize the role of Jesus in the Gospel of John in the following words: "He is the mediator between heaven and earth, the realm above and below. He brings Spirit to flesh, love to the world, God to earth."²⁶ The characteristic "I am" sayings in John, which are used with seven different predicates, portray how Jesus becomes the source of life to the world. These seven predicates are: the bread of life (6:35, 51); the light of the world (8:12; 9:5); the gate (10:7, 9); the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14); the resurrection and the life (11:25); the way, the truth and the life (14:6) and the true vine (15:1, 5).²⁷ Though they are formulated to echo the tone of the self-revelation²⁸ of Yahweh to Moses (Exod 3:14), Brown would say that in all these sayings, "the predicate is not an essential definition or description of Jesus in himself; it is more a description of what he is in relation to man."²⁹ Rather than the identity, they communicate through a lively analogy the role and the concrete ways, in which Jesus becomes source of life to the world. In these sayings, Jesus' own role and the life he offers through his mission are brought together. The ascending order of identification of Jesus with the metaphorical predicates ends in 11:25 and 14:6, identifying him as life: "I am.... and life" (only the identification with true vine occurs in chapter 15). In general, all these seven types of predicates portray the concrete ways revealed by the Johannine Gospel, by which a believer can take possession of the life.

²⁵ R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 507.

²⁶ D. H. Johnson, "Life," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, T.D. Alexander & B. S. Rosner (eds.), (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 643; M. M. Thompson, "Eternal Life in the Gospel of John," 41.

²⁷ M. M. Thompson, "Eternal Life in the Gospel of John," 35.

²⁸ M. M. Thompson, "Eternal Life in the Gospel of John," 35.

²⁹ R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 534.

2.2.1. THE WORD OF JESUS AS SOURCE OF LIFE

The prologue of the Gospel of John is a complete exposition of the Word of God as source of life. In the Gospel of John, we don't find a direct statement of Jesus saying "I am the Word of God." But the prologue 1:1-14 gives this revelation and effectively substitutes the absence of an "I am" saying with 'Word of God' as the predicate. The Prologue categorically states that Jesus is the Word made flesh. In fact, the first five verses of John's Gospel reveal quite a lot about the identity, role and mission of Jesus.

Jesus, the Son (the Word) was the active agent of life in the creation of all (Jn 1:3, 4a). The first chapter of Genesis gives prominence to the role of the Word in creation. One of the most used phrases in the Genesis account of creation is, "And God said..." When God spoke, it became so.³⁰ In biblical tradition God operates through his Word.³¹ The creative force or 'Word' that acted to bring all things into existence was not impersonal, but rather a living being. He is called 'the Word' and He is eternal, He is with God and He is God. In Genesis 2:7, the most important term associated with life is 'breath.' It is the breath of God that makes the dust live. Breath is that which goes forth out of God's mouth. Breath, Spirit, and Word are translations of the same Hebrew term *ruach*, which even has a breathy sound. God brought forth life in man by speaking the word of life (which John has already identified with Jesus Christ) in such a way that the Spirit of life (which is his Holy Spirit) passes into man and causes him to breathe.³² Other than

³⁰ D. H. Johnson, "Life", 641.

³¹ L. Venceslaus, *On Earth as in Heaven* (Chennai: Claretian Arts and Media, 2014), 145-46.

³² J. M. Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary*, 40.

in John, there are several other New Testament passages which speak of the Son's role in creation – e.g. Eph 3:9-11; Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:2.

Word is identified in John as the light that dispels darkness, which is the symbol of death. A virtual “I am” statement of Jesus as the light of the world, which Jesus will later pronounce literally in John 8:12, is already present in the Prologue (Jn 1:4-5). Jesus, the Life, became the Light of Men (Jn 1:4b-5). The phrase “and the life was the light of men” is in the Imperfect tense in Greek. This means that ‘the life’ began to be ‘the light of men’ in the past and continues to be so in the present time. The Word of God is the source and essence of life itself. When lost in darkness and death due to sin, the best place to look for redemption is the Word of God (Jesus, the Son), the source of all life.

In John, Jesus as bread is a very rich image with intimate connections with God's Word. We are not to “live on bread alone but on every Word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Deut 8:3). The idea of the Torah as bread was common in Jewish thinking. At times, it is combined with the Wisdom motif, as when Wisdom says, “Those who eat me will hunger for more, and those who drink me will thirst for more” (Sir 24:21). Jesus makes this claim in an improvised form in Jn 6:35 and later makes the point more explicit: “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life” (6:63).

2.2.2. OBEDIENCE TO JESUS AS SOURCE OF LIFE

Obedience to the Word is life and disobedience to the Word is death. After the identification of Jesus with the Word, the active agent in life coming into being in the World (John 1:4), it is linked with the biblical account of the origin of sin and death (Gen 3). Dependence on the Word gave life and seeking

independence resulted in death: “God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die’” (Gen 3:3). Much in the same pattern Johannine Jesus will say, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God’s wrath” (John 3:36). Johannine synonyms for death are reminiscent of the story of the fall in Genesis 3 and 4: judgment, wrath, condemnation, hunger and thirst, darkness, lies, slavery, and violence.³³ This is reflected in the fifth and sixth chapters of John. The same idea is reflected in the sayings of Jesus: “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life” (John 5:24); “You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (Jn 5:39-40).

Death started with sin, which is characterized as disobedience to the Word (Gen 3:3). So, the process of life starts with obedience to the Word. In the salvation history, God’s interventions in favour of the people begin with a summons to obedience (Exod 19:5). The covenantal life for the people of Israel begins with a summons to obedience, which is the only condition Yahweh laid down before them. In his final pronouncement to Israel, Jesus asserts that God’s commandment is eternal life. In 12: 49-50, we read: “for I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me.” (Jn 12:49-50). In much the same way, at the end of the Torah and in

³³ P. S. Minear, “The Promise of Life in the Gospel of John,” 489.

reference to it Moses says, “this is not an idle word for you; it is your life” (Deut 32:47). The idea is more or less the same in Deut 30:19-20, where Moses says:

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you, life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore, choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.

These words of the Deuteronomist are echoed in John 6:63 and 5:24. Identifying God’s word with the words of Jesus, John 6:63 reiterates that the words which Jesus has spoken are life (6:63). In 5:24, Jesus says, “Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and he does not come into judgment but has passed out of death into eternal life” (5:24).

Obedience in the Gospel of John is also understood as dependence on God. In obedience, the believer acknowledges dependence upon God who is the source of all life.³⁴ And in being faithful to that living God, the believer may be said to ‘have life.’ The believer does not have life ‘in himself,’ as does the Son. The Son’s life is unmediated. Therefore, the derived missionary code from the Gospel of John would be to ‘be agents of life’ rather than ‘be life as your Lord is life.’ The

³⁴ C. Brand & Co. (eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Reference, 2003), 1036; E. E. Ellis, “Life,” in *New Bible Dictionary*, I. H. Marshall, A.R. Milliard, J. I. Packer & D.J. Wiseman (eds.), (Hyderabad: Authentic Books, 1997), 689.

believer has life in a continuing and dynamic relationship with God, through the mediation of the Son. Thus, those who have life have it only and insofar as they depend upon the source of all life. In fact, the reality known as ‘eternal life’ is equivalent to that total dependence and reliance upon God, the true source of life. It is in contrast to the first parents’ attempt to become independent of God, which resulted in death (Gen 3:5).

2.2.3. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN JESUS AS SOURCE OF LIFE

This is a theme common to both the Johannine and the Synoptic tradition. It is often said that the Gospel of Mark is structured to incite an answer from the reader to the question: who is Jesus for the reader? This is the reason why literally at the heart of the Gospel of Mark we have the question of Jesus to the disciples at Caesarea Philippi regarding his identity. Mark portrays the failure of the disciples to understand the mystery of his person and Jesus’ attempts to correct their knowledge by revealing the mysteries of his identity through three passion predictions (Mk 8:31; 9:30-2; 10:32-34). All the Synoptics follow Mark and emphasize the need of having the true knowledge of Jesus.

It is commonly accepted that the ‘I am’ sayings of Jesus echoes the self-revelation of Yahweh to Moses in Exodus (Exod 3:14).³⁵ John articulates the need of knowing God and Jesus as a necessary means for life. The definition of eternal life in John is summed up in Jesus’ final prayer: “this is eternal life, that they might know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (17:3). To have life, one should attain true knowledge of God and Jesus. Here, life is related to the knowledge. This knowledge is not merely intellectual, but is based on a living faith relationship, by which the believer shares

³⁵ R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 534.

in the love of the Father and the Son. So, true life consists in knowing Jesus.

2.2.4. FAITH IN JESUS AS SOURCE OF LIFE

The New Testament emphasis on faith in Jesus is rooted in the Old Testament theme of loyalty and commitment to God. In the covenant relationship of Israel with Yahweh, God's promises are linked with Israel's obligation to be loyal to God (Exod 19:5). In this regard John joins the Synoptic emphasis on the need of faith in Jesus as an essential condition for entering eternal life.³⁶ It is the faith in Jesus that saves by forgiveness of sins and physical healings in the Synoptic tradition. It is faith that moves Jesus to offer life through His acts of compassion.

Directly linking faith in Jesus and eternal life, Johannine Jesus will say "for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:14-16). In 20:31 the purpose of John's Gospel is stated thus: "these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God and that through this belief you may have life in his name." In John 11:25 Jesus says, "Whoever believes in me, even though he dies, will come to life." In the sermon on the bread of life, Jesus focused the attention on the importance of believing in the one sent by God (Jn 6:29). Understanding faith as loyalty, John draws attention to the loyalty expected of Israel to Moses, as the one sent from God (Jn 5:45; 9:28-29). Now Jesus is the one, who is sent by the Father, to whom people have to show loyalty in order to receive the covenantal promise of life (Jn 6:27).

³⁶ J. F. Brown, "Faith as Commitment in the Gospel of St. John," *Worship*, 38.5 (1999): 260-67.

2.2.5. UNION WITH JESUS ESPECIALLY THROUGH HIS BODY AND BLOOD AS SOURCE OF LIFE

As a gift of God, life is not something one can gain apart from the giver of life. In John, this theme of union with God and Jesus as the source of life gets its initial focus in the sermon on the bread of life. Bread and meal already come with their own rich symbolism of oneness and unity in the Hebrew Scriptures. Bread coupled with water provides life's basic source for existence (Isa 3:1). It was symbolically linked to the manna of the Exodus. In comparison and contrast with the manna given by God through Moses (Jn 6:49), Jesus offers through the bread of life, a life that is superior to natural existence, which ends in death. We discover that eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking his blood is a means to enter into union with God, which in turn is the means by which life is transmitted from the Son to the believer (Jn 6:54-57).

Eucharistic communion with Jesus becomes the source of life in John. Brown would say that "eternal life given to men by the life-giving Spirit is nourished by the body and blood of Jesus in the Eucharist (7:51-58)."³⁷ In John 6:53, 54, Jesus says, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day" (John 6:53, 54). And in 6:57 he says, "Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me." The relation to Christ of the believer, who so 'eats' the living Bread, is analogous to the relation of the Son to the Father: as the Son lives 'through the Father' (i.e., has his life from and is sustained by the Father), so the believer has his or her life from and is sustained by the Son.

³⁷ R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 507.

Along with Eucharistic communion with Jesus, the Gospel of John further develops the theme of reaching union with God without the mention of Eucharist. For example, in Lazarus story Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6). In 5:26 Jesus reveals his own source of life by saying that, “just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.” The most touching and vivid imagery of the believer’s union with God and Jesus as the source of his/her life is the account of the Vine and the Branches (Jn 15:1-11). Through this analogy, Jesus explains that just as he is sustained in his life by the Father, so too the disciples will be sustained by their union with Jesus.

2.2.6. CROSS, DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS AS SOURCES OF LIFE

John gives prominence to the crucial saving actions of Jesus namely, passion, death and resurrection in imparting life to the world. Brown would say:

The spirit is the life-giving force (6:63) and the Spirit can only be given after Jesus has conquered death (7:39). The communication of this gift of the Spirit to future generations is associated with living waters of Baptism which beget a man anew (3:5; 4:10, 14; 7:37-39) and which have their headwaters in the water that flowed from the side of the crucified Jesus (19:34).³⁸

With a vivid Old Testament imagery, John introduces this theme: “And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (Jn 3:14-15). This is the first among the three ‘lifted up’ sayings of John that will also

³⁸ R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 507.

emphasize this same theme (John 8:28; 12:32).³⁹ Eternal life is made available for all humanity through the death and resurrection of the Son of God (cf. Jn 3:16).

As the source of life, it would seem antithetical for ‘life’ itself to die, making the death of Jesus difficult to explain. John’s Gospel addresses this issue by showing that Jesus is still in control and willingly lays down his life and has the power to take it up again (John 10:18). John’s Gospel describes Jesus’s crucifixion not as his humiliation but as his exaltation and glorification. He exhales to breathe into our nostrils new life.⁴⁰ In John 11:25-26, Jesus categorically declares, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” In John 11:25, the predicates to the “I am” saying are “the resurrection and the life,” designed to provide the basis for the promises.⁴¹ The resurrection represents the ultimate triumph over death in all its meanings. Jesus remains the source of life and truly has the power to take up life again. Passing through the realities of the cross, death and resurrection Jesus mirrors the followers’ hope of new life. The first man became a living being by accepting the breath of God. Man, lives by the breath of God, but he does so only by inhaling. It is what God exhales which becomes breath for man (Gen 2:7). When Christ exhales on the cross, it became the breath of new life in the nostrils of the people. Thus, the new life of man and Jesus’ death on the cross are meaningfully linked (Jn 19:31-37).⁴²

³⁹ The three lifting up sayings (John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32) correspond to the three predictions of passion in the latter part of the synoptic tradition. J. T. Forestell, *The Word of the Cross: Salvation as Revelation in the Fourth Gospel* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1974), 61.

⁴⁰ J. M. Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expositional Commentary*, 39.

⁴¹ P. S. Minear, “The Promise of Life in the Gospel of John,” *Theology Today*, 486.

⁴² J. M. Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expositional Commentary*, 40.

3. CONCLUSION: LIVING THE MISSIONARY MANDATE OF THE GOSPELS

In synoptic tradition the expression that refers to his mission in the mouth of Jesus is his offer of new life the kingdom of God. But the synoptic expression of the kingdom of God is also linked to the Johannine offer of life, because in Jewish tradition which is the backdrop of the teachings of Jesus, the supreme gift in the kingdom of God is life. So, ultimately the mission of Jesus and the mode of achieving it, inherited by his disciples both in the synoptic gospels as well as John is to be agents of life like Jesus.

In John, 'life' is the comprehensive theological concept referring to salvation: it contains everything that the God-sent Saviour of the world brings to man. Because of this, according to Johannine understanding, there are no blessings of salvation which are given to the believer in addition to this saving gift of 'life.' Hence the Johannine Christ can proclaim that he has come "that they may have life, and have it in fullness." (Jn 10:10). This allows us to formulate a missionary mandate, summing up the identity, role and mission of the disciples, deriving from those of Jesus, in a caption: 'Be agents of life as your Lord is Life.'

The Mission code of a disciple demands commitment to life in three interrelated spheres: 1) One's own life; 2) Life of others; and 3) Life of nature.⁴³ First of all, the mission code invites the disciples to know the reality of life, experience it in their own lives and live a life fully alive. Irenaeus of Lyon would say "God's glory is man fully alive" (Against Heresies, 4.20.7). One has to enjoy it and celebrate it as a gift of God. To know the

⁴³ This is in contrast to the portrayal of sin as causing death to self (Gen 3:1-24), others (Gen 4:1-16) and nature (Gen 7:1-24).

reality of 'life' and experience it is Jesus' offer to his disciples: finding Jesus to be the bread of life that satisfies all our hunger and the water of life that quenches our deepest thirst.⁴⁴

To proclaim this reality of 'life' to the world is the mandate and the special privilege the disciples enjoy. The more profoundly they know it, and the more fully they experience it, the more effectively they are able to witness the source of life to the world. Encounter between John the Baptist and Jesus ended up with John giving witness to Jesus, the source of life, who also takes away sins, which is the source of death and evil in the world (Jn 1:29). In John's Gospel, all the personal encounters with Jesus by Nicodemus (John 3:1-21), the Samaritan woman (4:1-42), the woman caught in adultery (8:1-12), the blind man (9:1-12) etc. are portrayed as opportunities to know Jesus, the source of life. An account of these events is part of the Good News, because they continue to remain as the source of life. All these encounter accounts end up with their giving witness to Jesus, the source of life, even in the midst of a hostile atmosphere. They are successful witnesses of life in the Gospel of John, because they all have a history of personal experience of life in their encounter with Jesus.

Secondly, a disciple's commitment to life has to take the form of bringing life to others. As noted earlier, the nature of the two powerful symbols of life in John, namely bread and water, portrays how Jesus is going to be life to the world. It is by allowing himself to be consumed by the world that he will become the source of life to the world. The Gospel demands from the followers of Jesus to seek and know God in one another, as they are created in His image and likeness. The statement "For God so loved the world that he gave his only

⁴⁴ J. M. Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expositional Commentary*, 40.

Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (Jn 3:16), paradoxically links life and love with an act of selfless giving.⁴⁵ The best way to give witness to Jesus, the source of life is this mutual love: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:34-35).

There is a strong social dimension to the concept of ‘life’ in John.⁴⁶ John gives so much importance to love and the experience of fellowship among the believers (John 13:34-35). According to M. M. Thompson, “Love is not merely the human response to each other or to God; love comes from the same source as life, and these are not two entirely differentiated entities.”⁴⁷ T.W. Manson states it in this way: “The divine life is a self-giving life. The vitality of God overflows into the world: it is creative life and what it creates is a fellowship of love.”⁴⁸ Love is life giving; and life produces love as its fruit. God’s gift is not merely given to individual believers, but to a community, the people of God. P. S. Minear cautions us against the temptation of self-service: “Those who follow Jesus in sacrificing themselves for others already ‘have eternal life’; only so can they be promised resurrection. Other idioms in John protect this promise from encouraging self-serving rather than self-giving.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Jo-Ann A. Brant, “A Sure Thing: Death and eternal life in the Gospel of John”, *Vision* (Spring 2004), 61-65, 61.

⁴⁶ W. H. Rigg, *The Fourth Gospel and its Message for Today* (London: Lutterworth, 1952) 86; D. Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 44.

⁴⁷ M. M. Thompson, “Eternal Life in the Gospel of John,” 47.

⁴⁸ T. W. Manson, *On Paul and John* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 113.

⁴⁹ P. S. Minear, “The Promise of Life in the Gospel of John,” 492.

At many instances, the offer of life takes the shape of God's compassion and goodness, manifested both in the spiritual and physical realm. Both in the Synoptic tradition and Johannine tradition, the offer of life takes the form of acts of compassion. In the spiritual level, Jesus forgave the sins of people out of compassion. Luke read compassion as the primary emotion of Jesus to re-formulate the holiness code as "be compassionate as your heavenly Father is compassionate." To follow Jesus as a disciple demands the same sense of mission in one's life, an abiding conviction of being chosen by God to become agents of life to the world, to be God's instrument of healing, freeing and enlightening in the world today.

The mission of the disciples also has to take the form of compassion as it is accounted in the last judgment scene. Some concrete ways, in which one can become bread of life to the world, is told in the last judgment scene in Matthew: "For 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" (Matt 25:35-36). Thus, becoming bread, drink, comforter, consoler, healer etc. to others will also ensure one's own eternal life.

Finally, a disciple of Jesus has to become an agent of life to nature. The Johannine account of the role of Jesus in creation looks forward to this mission (Jn 1:1-4). Our destructive models of development have brought havoc upon the very systems that support life on the planet. The planet which is a manifestation of God is a sacred reality that has to be protected and cared for as our common home. Pope Francis recalls the vision of St. Francis and says:

He was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his open-heartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.⁵⁰

Today more than anything else, nature is facing the forces of death. So, the mission of the followers of Jesus is to contribute to the life of nature by opposing today all that adds to the culture of death in nature. Thus now, more than any time in the past, the emphasis is on eco-spirituality.

After having arrived at the concrete ways of living the missionary mandate of the gospels, this reflection is concluded with a simple principle for discerning the true mission of the followers of Jesus. There is a story about the strategy adopted by St Helena, the mother of Constantine, to discover the true cross on which Jesus died. Her task was to identify the true holy cross from among the crosses from the time of Jesus that were available to them. According to one tradition, she kept a sick woman on the crosses and the one which gave healing was venerated as the holy cross. What is of significance is the strategy: the cross which gave life is the holy cross. In the same way, the missionary code in the Gospel of life is self-evident. Jesus is life and therefore whatever contributes to our commitment to true life in oneself, others and in nature is part of the true living of his missionary mandate: "Be agents of life, as your Lord is life."

⁵⁰ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, Encyclical Letter (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), n. 10.

PRISONERS' MENTAL HEALTH: PREVENTION AND CURE AND THE ROLE OF PRISON MINISTRY INDIA

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

INTRODUCTION

According to World Health Organization's study, an estimated 450 million people worldwide suffer from mental disorders. These ailments are especially prevalent in prison inmates. Prisons are bad for mental health: There are factors in many prisons that have negative effects on mental health, including: overcrowding, various forms of violence, enforced solitude or conversely, lack of privacy, lack of meaningful activity, isolation from social networks, insecurity about future prospects, and inadequate health services, especially mental health services, in prisons. For many of our brethren behind the bars, mental disorders may also develop during imprisonment itself as a consequence of prevailing conditions and also possibly due to torture or other human rights violations. This article runs through the *Prisoners' Mental Health: Prevention, Cure and the Role of Prison Ministry India*.

UNNOTICED, UNDIAGNOSED AND UNTREATED

The increased risk of suicide in prisons (often related to depression) is, unfortunately, one common manifestation of the cumulative effects of the above said factors. Prisons are

sometimes used as dumping grounds for people with mental disorders: In some countries, people with severe mental disorders are inappropriately locked up in prisons simply because of the lack of mental health services. People with substance abuse disorders or people who, at least in part due to a mental disorder, have committed minor offences are often sent to prison rather than treated for their disorder. These disorders therefore continue to go unnoticed, undiagnosed and untreated. People with mental disorders are exposed to stigma and discrimination: Within most societies, people with mental disorders face marginalization, stigma and discrimination in the social, economic and health spheres, due to widespread misconceptions related to mental disorders. This stigma and discrimination usually persist in prison, with the person often facing still further marginalization and isolation due to imprisonment. Even the normal human being becomes mentally ill being behind the bars.

PREVENTION

Addressing mental health needs will improve the health and quality of life of both prisoners with mental disorders and of the prison population as a whole. By promoting a greater understanding of the problems faced by those with mental disorders, stigma and discrimination can be reduced. Ultimately, addressing the needs of people with mental disorders improves the probability that upon leaving prison they will be able to adjust to community life, which may, in turn, reduce the likelihood that they will return to prison. Addressing the mental health needs of prisoners can decrease incidents of re-offending, reduce the number of people who return to prison, help divert people with mental disorders away from prison into treatment and rehabilitation and ultimately reduce the high costs of prisons.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Divert people with mental disorders towards the mental health system: Prisons are the wrong place for many people in need of mental health treatment, since the criminal justice system emphasizes deterrence and punishment rather than treatment and care. Legislation can be introduced which allows for the transfer of prisoners to general hospital psychiatric facilities at all stages of the criminal proceedings (arrest, prosecution, trial, imprisonment). For people with mental disorders who have been charged with committing minor offences, the introduction of mechanisms to divert them towards mental health services before they reach prison will help to ensure that they receive the treatment they need and also contribute to reducing the prison population. The imprisonment of people with mental disorders due to lack of public mental health service alternatives should be strictly prohibited by law. Primary health care providers in prisons should be provided with basic training in the recognition and basic management of common mental health disorders. Provide access to acute mental health care in psychiatric wards of general hospitals: When prisoners require acute care, they should be temporarily transferred to psychiatric wards of general hospitals with appropriate security levels.

SPECIAL STAFF TRAINING

Training on mental health issues should be provided to all people involved in prisons including prison administrators, prison guards and health care workers. Training should enhance staff understanding of mental disorders, raise awareness on human rights, challenge stigmatizing attitudes and encourage mental health promotion for both staff and prisoners. An important element of training for all levels of prison staff should be the recognition and prevention of suicides. In

addition, prison health workers need to have more specialized skills in identifying and managing mental disorders.

PRISONERS' EDUCATION

Provide education to prisoners and their families on mental health issues: Prisoners and their families should receive information and education on the nature of mental disorders, with a view to reducing stigma and discrimination, preventing mental disorders and promoting mental health. Information can help prisoners and their families better understand their emotional responses to imprisonment and provide practical strategies on how to minimize the negative effects on their mental health and inform them as to when and how to seek help for a mental disorder.

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH POLICIES AND PLANS

National mental health policies and plans should encompass the mental health needs of the prison population. Where policies and plans fail to do so, it may be necessary to advocate for their inclusion. Whenever a mental health policy or plan is being developed, prisons (staff and prisoners) should be included as stakeholders in the development process.

PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

All prisoners, including those with mental disorders, have the right to be treated humanely and with respect for their inherent dignity as human beings. Furthermore, conditions of confinement in prisons must conform to International Human Rights Standards. Mental health legislation can be a powerful tool to protect the rights of people with a mental disorder, including prisoners, yet in many countries mental health laws are outdated and fail to address the mental health needs of the

prison population. The development of legal provisions that address these needs can help to promote the rights of prisoners, including the right to quality treatment and care, to refuse treatment, to appeal decisions of involuntary treatment, to confidentiality, to protection from discrimination and violence, and to protection from torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment including abusive use of seclusion, restraints and medication, and non-consensual scientific or medical experimentation, among others.

PRISON MINISTRY INDIA

Prison Ministry India is a national voluntary organization under the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), under Justice, Peace and Development Commission working for the integral human development of prisoners. It runs under the able leadership of Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva, PMI chairman and Rev Dr Francis Kodian MCBS, PMI national coordinator. The PMI volunteers reach out to the prisons not with gun and lathi, but rather with love, care and compassion. We approach them the way Jesus our Master approached them and we live the words of Jesus, "When I was in prison you visited me" (Mt 25:39). Love, care and compassion are the most important qualities in developing mental health among prisoners from family members, friends, authorities and PMI volunteers.

INCESSANT INTERNATIONAL INTERCESSORY INVOCATION FOR THE INCARCERATED

Glorifying Jesus who came to proclaim liberty to captives Prison Ministry India launched *Incessant International Intercessory Invocation for the Incarcerated (I⁵)* online at the newly constructed RRDC chapel, Bengaluru. PMI volunteers throughout the country and from the various parts of the world pray online half an hour each for 24 hours and 365 days for the renewal, reintegration

of prisoners, their families and the victims all over the world. We pray this either by celebrating Holy Mass, praying the Word of God, Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, Way of the Cross, 1000 Thank You Jesus Rosary, etc.

PSYCHIATRIST PRISONERS' COMFORTERS (PPC)

Duc in Altum is a phrase used by Jesus in Luke 5:4 where Jesus instructs Simon Peter to “launch into the deep” or “put out into deep water”. The conception of Prison Ministry India (PMI) took place on 8th December 1981 at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam, India. In commemoration of PMI Ruby Jubilee, we launched 40 PMI Special Task Forces and *Psychiatrist Prisoners' Comforters (PPC)* is one among them in which large number of volunteers joins hands together for the well-being of *Psychiatrist Prisoners* in the prisons and their families outside. On 22 December 2019, Sr Adele Korah, Sr Rose Alexander, Sr Lini Sheeja MSC and Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS went to Aradhanankunj at Carmelaram, Bengaluru, a contemplative community who have perpetual Eucharistic adoration. After spending many hours in Eucharistic contemplation and adoration, they launched the PMI Special Task Force Ministry being inspired by the words of St Paul: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens” (Phil 4:13).

BEARING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST TO PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN DARKNESS

THE MINISTRY OF SR ADELE SCCG

Sr Amala DC

CHILDHOOD

From her childhood days, Sr Adele had a longing in her heart to serve the least and the lost. She was the third one among thirteen children and was brought up in a devout Catholic family. Her parents regularly attended holy Mass along with all their children. As Sr Adele grew up, she felt every Eucharistic celebration as a heavenly experience, not just a routine. She 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. When she dwelt deeply on the love of Jesus, she felt that when Jesus breathed his last, she was breathing into her telling her, “Now it is your turn, Adele, to live as I lived carrying my love to others, especially to the sinners who have not known my love for them so that they too may be saved.” She took it as a personal call for her and so she 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.”

RELIGIOUS LIFE

When she finished her High School studies, she expressed her desire to become a religious. But her father who was very fond of her told her that he desires to see her 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 her. But Jesus had a different dream for Adele. Somehow, she managed to get the permission of her parents to join the congregation of the Sisters of charity in Mangalore after her graduation. Soon after her first profession she was sent to teach in Schools and later on to take charge of a D. Ed college for training students who completed P.U.C to become teachers. As she was conscious of her call to bear the light of Christ to people who are living in sin and in darkness, she made visits to the prison in Mangalore with the help of a priest who could hear the confessions of the Catholic prisoners there and give them Holy Communion. The student teachers who went with her entertained the prisoners. She used to organize retreats for her student teachers so that all her students would have an experience of the love of God and become bearers of the Good news of God's love as teachers. Whenever she could take leave from School, she joined the evangelizing team and helped in giving retreats in various places. She felt great fulfilment in sharing God's Word and to helping people to experience God's love deeply and to assist them to come back to live in the light and love of God.

PRISON MINISTRY INDIA

After her retirement from the field of education in Mangalore and later in Nepal, she was able to join the Prison Ministry to be a bearer of the light of Christ to the rejected brethren living in prison cells. After a period of life spent in teaching, she was

able to realize the dream she had received at the age of seven to be a bearer of the light of Christ to those living in sin and to be a light to the nations. She was fortunate to attend the orientation course organized in Bangalore for those who wished to enter the Prison Ministry. Sri B. S. Abbai D.I.G. of Central prison Bangalore welcomed the participants to begin the ministry inside the prison in June 2004. For a period of few months before June, entry to prison was forbidden due to an order that was passed by the officials.

PRISON QUARTERS MINISTRY

During the first year of her fulltime ministry in the prison, she worked hand in hand with late Sr Carmelita, a veteran and experienced sister from St Ann's congregation. She felt privileged, to work with her and to learn from her. Along with her she learned to serve in the prison and both worked selflessly for the welfare of the inmates of the prison without counting the cost. In the first year of her ministry, she stayed with Sr. Carmelita in the staff Quarters which was provided by the Director General of prisons, Government of Karnataka for the religious sisters who served in the prison. That was the year when she lived in practice the principle of the Prison Ministry, namely, "Inconvenience is our convenience." There was no cooking facility and so they had to depend on the food prepared in jail for prisoners. There was no proper toilet in the room where they lived. They had to use a toilet that had a broken commode outside the room. No running water was available in the room, but they had to collect it from outside in buckets. Yet, Sr. Adele didn't mind the difficulties because of the fire the Holy Spirit had kindled within her, giving her a thirst for saving souls.

TO BE WITH THE INCARCERATED

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

She recalled once when she was coming out of the prison to have her lunch, a lady approached her and said, “Sister, my son is missing from home since a month. Could you please enquire whether he is arrested and brought inside the prison?” As she was hungry and was eager to have some food in the quarters and return later to prison, she was about to leave in a hurry. But she felt that she should understand the anxiety of a mother without minding her own need to have food. She questioned herself, “If it was my brother who was missing at home and if my mom had requested me for this favor, would I not do the needful immediately?” She felt that her service would be genuine when she considered the brethren inside as her brothers and sisters. She rushed back to prison and searched for the name of the lady’s son in the list in the record section and found out his name among those who were under trial. The lady was in need of a letter to her parish priest who had agreed to help her to bring the son out from prison if she got the fact confirmed. She gave her the letter she needed and the lady went away in peace.

People who see her going into the prison, especially the police constables, ask her, “Sister, don’t you have any other place to go? Why do you want to serve these criminals?” Her answer to them is another question, “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 trials. 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, she felt that she who follows Jesus who came to seek sinners has called her to continue his ministry in her life too as a good Shepherd and bring back the lost ones to their Savior who wants no one to be lost.

Whenever she entered the prison, she found many of them waiting for someone to listen to their woes. She met persons who were filled with guilt and remorse and who wanted to empty their burden by disclosing them to someone who would listen to them. She spent hours with those who wanted to pour out all their suppressed feelings of pain and guilt. They would speak to her as to their own mother explaining all that happened in their lives which brought them to the prison. Many of them would cry out saying, “Please give me another chance to live again”. She recalls how a person who was arrested after he had killed his wife by smashing her head with the gas cylinder recently in a moment of frustration, was unable to sleep at night because whenever he closed his eyes, he could see only blood and he kept weeping bitterly. Persons who committed heinous crimes of murder become restless but after some sessions of counseling, they regain peace.

RELEASE, REFORMATION, REHABILITATION, REINTEGRATION AND REDEMPTION

Her mission in the prison is geared towards Release, Reformation, Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Redemption of the brethren behind the bars. She has facilitated the inner release of a number of brethren 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. She turned to Jesus the healer in trustful prayer, besides praying with them and guiding them with appropriate Word of God. The Lord of love and forgiveness touched their life and set them free from their bondages gradually. "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:36). Thus, they went through a process of inner transformation gradually and came to a firm decision to turn from their crime filled life. To help such persons to return to the Good shepherd and to help them to continue living a renewed life she was inspired to start a prayer meeting in the hall allotted by the prison authorities. This initiative taken by her seventeen years ago has helped many brethren in their Reformation from a life of crime to a value-based life. As they started reading and listening to the life-giving Word of God, they started experiencing the love and the light of the Savior and were liberated from their inner bondages of hatred towards their enemies. Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes from the heart of Christ (Rom 10:17).

During her ministry in the prison, the Lord granted her the opportunity to witness the changes and transformation in the hearts of several criminals. The lost sheep who had turned away from the right path and were caught up in the thorn bush of crimes were touched by their loving God and were able to take a U turn in their life. She was convinced of the fact that

no human being can transform a hardcore criminal, but the grace of God and the touch of a living God can give them a new heart and a new spirit. Her deep faith and trust in God was rewarded as she witnessed the change in the hearts of double murderers, hired Gundas and serial killers.

SUNIL

Once a prisoner by name Sunil was brought to her for counseling because he was found sitting always alone, gloomy and never speaking to anyone. When she sat listening to him, she came to know that he was once a seminarian and had left for certain personal problems. He had come to Bangalore and worked in a firm as an assistant manager. He was a good supervisor and was well accepted by all. One day he found that without his knowledge someone had withdrawn quite a large sum from his bank account. He doubted some body in his office who knew where his cheque book was placed and concluded that he was the one who cheated him. He became furious and in a fit of anger he murdered him when all the others had left the office. He managed to burn up the dead body and thus covered up his heinous crime. But he was arrested and brought under custody. Sunil was unable to accept that he had become a murderer instead of becoming a minister of God which was his childhood dream. He lost sleep for several nights.

It was after several counseling sessions Sunil started accepting his situation and all that happened in his life. But when he was able to surrender himself to a God of forgiveness and love and started attending prayer sessions, he was able to be reconciled with God, attended Holy Mass and regained his former self. Sunil was fortunate to get a very good advocate, to plead his case in the court and he got himself acquitted. Sr

Adele sent him to Snehajyothi rehabilitation center where he continued his studies and secured his master's degree in computer science. He responded well in the reformation which was continued in the Rehabilitation center run by the Congregation of Passionists. He completed his post-graduation in Computer Science with the help of the Director of Snehajyothi and was able to find employment abroad later and is now reintegrated in the society.

Persons who accepted themselves and came to understand what led them to criminal activities at the counseling sessions in the prisons, showed drastic changes in their conduct. A few of them became catalysts within the prison and were turned into powerful agents who found out others requiring to be brought for counseling and prayer. I found many persons who were filled with hatred towards persons who made their life miserable. But their hearts turned towards them all in forgiveness when they listened to God's word from Ephesians 4; 24-32 One of the inmates confessed after the prayer saying, "Until now I was contacting people who could help me to set the houses of my enemies on fire. But now I know that I should forgive them and ask God to bless them because, I realize that it was good that I came into the prison or else I would have continued to live a life of crime".

FAMILY VISITS

When Sr Adele meets certain inmates in the prison who are very sad and lonely because of rejection from their own parents and dear ones, she visited their families to bring reconciliation between those inside the prison and their families outside. When a prisoner by name Mohith told her that he had not received a single letter from his parents or dear ones, she contacted his parents requesting them to write a letter to him. Since they did

not write or contact him even after 6 years of imprisonment, she took him to his house on parole with the assistance of Rev. Fr. Pascal Cutinha C.P. When they entered the house of the prisoner, the parents showed no sign of acceptance to their son. But when the priest and Sr. Adele started praying for the family the son fell at the feet of his parents asking forgiveness for his past life. The reason for the indifference of the parents was that he was a prodigal who had disobeyed them and had run away from the house, lived as a drug addict, married a girl of his choice, became an alcoholic and the cause of his wife's death, got arrested and had become a convicted prisoner. As the prayer was conducted standing below a crucifix referring to the forgiveness taught by Jesus on the cross, the family experienced the Lord's touch. The prayer was followed by exchange of forgiveness among all the members of the family. All rejoiced in the acceptance of the prodigal in the family.

ANGEL OF RECONCILIATION

She has many similar experiences of bringing reconciliation between the brethren in the prison and their relations. When Sunitha had no visit from her husband for three years, Sr. Adele helped her to get released from prison with the help of legal aid. But when she reached her home the husband asked Sister, "Why did you bring her out? She is not wanted here." In that moment of rejection by the husband, Sister offered to take her back and to a rehabilitation center. But the two small kids of the lady called out "mummy" and were clinging to their mother. Thinking of the kids, the husband accepted her back. Though more than twelve years have passed since that day, the lady remembers Sr Adele so gratefully, sending her the photos of her family.

Sr Adele considered herself as a fulltime volunteer of the Prison Ministry chosen by Christ to assist people in need at any time

or hour of the day. Once at 8pm when she had just finished dinner, she received a call from a released prisoner who lamented that he was in trouble as he and his brother were in danger of being arrested and put in prison because his brother, an alcoholic, had quarreled with a person in the street and a group had called the police to arrest him. She contacted Rev Fr Sony C.P for help and he willingly accompanied her to the spot to assist those who phoned to her. Sr Adele pleaded with the police not to send the man to prison but to permit her to admit him in a Rehabilitation Center for his reformation rather than imprison him. The police replied to her, "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." She was greatly relieved when Rev Fr Sony accepted to take him to his rehabilitation center immediately, though it was night. Then the accused was taken to the rehabilitation center instead of the Central prison.

ASSISTANCE AFTER RELEASE

She had unique experiences when prisoners approached her after their release from prison. Wilson, a released prisoner came and knocked at the door of her convent at 8.00 P.M. one evening. She was then living in a rented house and they were only two sisters in the house. 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 into prison at night. Knowing our residence, he came seeking help. Watching his scared and fear filled face, Sr. Adele took courage to go along with her sister companion and accompanied him 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, admit him and help him to attend a three days

retreat. 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. The greatest joy she felt during her ministry was when a criminal was touched by God's forgiving love and transformed his life by giving up his life of crime and choosing to walk in the right path. She felt greater joy in her ministry on such occasions when she witnessed changes in persons, than on receiving awards from 'Namma Bengaluru' or when awarded Janaseva Award from C.R.I Bangalore, for her valuable services to the citizens of Karnataka through her service in the prison.

CELEBRATION OF SACRAMENTS

During her ministry in the prison, she came across many inmates who were baptized Christians in their childhood, but had never read the Bible nor received any other Sacraments. Some of them who had fallen into a life of crime were gradually transformed during their life in the prison, when they participated in the prayer meetings conducted in the prison chapel regularly. They received the sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation for the first time in the prison. She recalls the life of some among them who were murderers, drug addicts and alcoholics before entering the prison. When they experienced God's love and healing touch, they started responding to the call of God to walk in a new path according to the living Word of God which were broken to them in the prayer meetings. After their release they returned to the society as torch bearers of the light of God that they had received in their prison life and are well integrated in their families and living a renewed life in the society. She recalls, as stated by an inmate that before being arrested, he was walking with an iron rod in his hand as a member of a gang of thieves and was involved in criminal

activities of looting houses, shops and banks. Though he was a Christian, he had never entered the prison chapel for prayer. A Christian volunteer brought him for prayer meeting. Later he was prepared for receiving the Sacraments and was totally transformed by the touch of God during his prison life. Today he is living an exemplary life earning his living from a modest job and supporting his family. What greater joy can one desire in the life of a volunteer of Prison Ministry?

PREMATURE RELEASE

Sr Adele extends her help and support to the inmates who have repented and taken a new turn in their life, to get them released from prison, by contacting advocates, paying their fine and court fees. She supported several inmates in their medical needs while in prison. An inmate with heart problems was helped to get admitted in Narayana Hrudayalaya, with the permission of the Prison officials and to undergo open heart surgery free of cost with the help of Dr. Devi Shetty. Many inmates who were facing problems to educate their children were helped by making arrangements for meeting the expenses of their children's education. With the help of people of good will, she continues to extend support to the families of released prisoners. So far, she has spent about Rs.23 lakhs received from various sources with the support of her congregation for giving assistance to about 1000 prisoners before and after their release. Even during the locked down period several released prisoners who lost their jobs are approaching her and are receiving support.

CONCLUSION

Sr Adele says, "God never left me in want. Mother Theresa started her ministry with a five rupee note, they say, but I had not a single rupee in my pocket, when I entered the ministry.

The good Lord supplied all the needs of my ministry through generous people of good will, and with St. Paul I can say, “My Lord will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” She believes in the Principles of Prison Ministry, “God’s providence is our bank balance”. She asserts, moreover, that the Providence of God never fails one who puts her trust in an all-loving God who has chosen us to serve the last and the least behind the bars.

**FROM ABUSE, TRAUMA AND VOCATIONAL
HICCUPS TO EVERYDAY HOLINESS AND
DEATH IN PRISON: A SHORT INTRODUCTION
ON THE LIFE OF BRO MARCEL VAN,
PRISONER IN NORTH VIETNAM**

Santhosh Ebroo

JOACHIM NGUYỄN TÂN VĂN

Joachim Nguyễn Tân Văn was born on March 15th 1928, in Ngam Giao, a village in North Vietnam. From a tender age, he desired to be a saint. This desire would provoke a severe crisis at a later stage and open a remarkable journey to holiness for him in the company of, and with the help of St Therese of Lisieux – the Little Flower.

He received his First Holy Communion when he was 6, and began formal schooling at the age of 7. However, his first teacher used to beat him and the other students regularly. As a result of this, his health began to fail and he was removed from the school. Since he had expressed a desire to be a priest, his mother took him to live with a priest in a rectory so that he could begin receiving the training and formation he needed. Arrangements of this sort were common in Vietnam at that time.

However, this turned to be a time when Marcel Van experienced even more severe abuse. The next 5 years were full of trials for

the young Marcel Van. He was subjected to bad example, physical beating, deprived of food, treated as a servant, and shabbily by those he lived with. For a period, in order to escape the abuse, he lived as a beggar on the streets. At the same time, his family experienced losses in their paddy fields as a result of typhoons. His father then took to drinking and gambling, and the family became destitute. On his return home, he was even treated with scorn by his own family as they had believed in lies speaking of him as having left the rectory because of his own bad behaviour. Marcel Van eventually returned to the rectory but because his family could no longer support his education, he ended up working as a servant in the rectory. His education was stopped after he received his primary school leaving certificate. The 7 years between the age of 7 and 14 were a crucible of suffering for him. God was preparing this humble instrument to become a giant in holiness.

At the age of 13, he entered the minor seminary. Soon after that, his formation was interrupted yet again as the seminary was taken over by Japanese soldiers. He then moved to stay at a parish – dedicated to the Little Flower – with Dominican friars who had opened a minor seminary in the parish. He was subsequently expelled when he became involved in an argument with the parish priest. Finally, at the age of 16, he was admitted to the Redemptorist monastery in Hanoi. Here, he professed his vows, and lived and died as a Redemptorist brother – Bro. Marcel Van. During this time, St. Thérèse revealed to him that becoming a priest was not God’s Will for him. Instead, he was called to become a “hidden apostle of Love” and a “heart for priests” – as a professed brother.

It was during his time in the parish that he had discovered St. Thérèse of Lisieux’s autobiography – *The Story of a Soul*. Marcel Van was convinced he had no capacity for strenuous

penances and mortification. And yet, he desired to become a saint. This is how he expressed it: “In spite of my great desire to attain holiness, I was certain that I would never achieve it, because to be a saint, you have to fast, lash yourself with a whip, wear a rock around your neck and little chains covered with spikes, a coarse horsehair shirt, endure the cold, the scabies, etc. My God, if it is like this, I give up..All that is way too much for me.” Marcel Van also experienced diabolical temptations that it was presumptuous for him to want to be a saint. Today, we see clearly that none of these penances are necessary for holiness. In October, Pope Francis beatified 15-year-old Carlo Acutis who never engaged in any of these practices. However, in the 1940s, the Universal Calling to Holiness was not preached from every pulpit, nor was it part of the consciousness of most ordinary people. By the grace of God, Vatican II helped the Church rediscover this teaching that had been a cornerstone of Apostolic preaching but which had gradually become obscured from view. By the grace of God, too, today, the Church proclaims with greater and renewed vigour, intensity, insistence, and clarity that you and I are called to be saints in the ordinary, commonplace, and humdrum activities and events of each day – which St. Thérèse’s Little Way - is all about.

Discovering St. Thérèse of Lisieux made Marcel Van weep tears of joy as he had found a person whose pilgrimage to holiness was something he could imitate. He expressed it in this way: “I understood then that God is Love... Like St Thérèse, I can sanctify myself through all my little acts... A smile, a word or a look, provided that everything is done in love. What happiness! From now on, sanctity will no longer frighten me....my tears were flowing like an inexhaustible spring.”

“I had received therefore, that afternoon, a source of grace and happiness. “The Story of a Soul” had become my dearest

friend, and followed me everywhere and I did not cease reading or rereading it, without ever getting weary of it. There was nothing in this volume which did not conform to my thoughts, and what pleased me even more in the course of my reading was to see clearly the spiritual life of Thérèse was identical to mine. Her thoughts, even her yes or no were in harmony with my own thoughts, and the little events of my life. Truly, never in my life have I met a book which was so well adapted to my thinking and feelings as is “The Story of a Soul”. I can confess that the story of Thérèse’s soul is the story of my soul....”

Bro. Marcel Van was sent by his Superiors from Hanoi to Saigon – which would become part of South Vietnam. In July 1954, North Vietnam was handed over to the Communists. Some members of the Redemptorist monastery stayed behind to look after the Catholics who had stayed back in Hanoi instead of fleeing to South Vietnam. Marcel Van requested and was given permission to go and join them. He wrote that he was going to Hanoi for this reason: “I am going there so that there might be someone who loves God in the midst of the Communists.”

Not long after his arrival in Hanoi, on May 7th 1955, Bro. Marcel Van was arrested. He was jailed for a year and subjected to all sorts of psychological torture. A year later, he was produced in court and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment in a “re-education” camp. Both in jail and in the various re-education camps he was sent to, he was a source of love, kindness, consolation, and comfort for his fellow prisoners. No amount of suffering could make him renounce his vocation to love. In PMI terms, he had become a “love bomb”. To his sister, he wrote, “Nothing can take the weapon of love from me. No affliction is capable of removing the kind smile that I let appear on my thin face. And who is the caress of my smile for, if not for Jesus, the Beloved?... I am the victim of Love and Love is

all my happiness, an indestructible happiness.”. At another time he wrote, “I am very busy, like a little parish priest. Apart from the hours of forced labor, I must constantly welcome the people who come one after the other looking for comfort from me... God Himself has made known to me I am doing His will here. Many times, I have asked of Him the favor of dying in this camp, but every time, He has answered me: ”I am ready to follow your will as you always follow Mine, but there are souls that still need you...”

In 1957, he attempted to escape to find Consecrated Hosts to meet the needs of his fellow prisoners. He was caught, beaten, and locked up. He lived in solitary confinement for much of the rest of his life. On July 10th 1959, sick, exhausted, and without any human comfort, Bro. Marcel Van died. His Via Crucis had come to an end. God had welcomed this little soul back to Himself. He was only 31.

The process of beatification of Bro. Marcel Van began in March 1997. The first Postulator of the cause, Ven. Cardinal Francis-Xavier Van Thuan, said this about Bro. Marcel Van: “God has sent us a little Vietnamese religious, who has come from the end of the earth to bring the message to the entire world: a simple way, a humble way, an evangelical way, a way of service to the Church in the community. The saints mark their times. Thérèse is a sign for her time. Van is a sign for his time.”

Cardinal Marc Ouellet, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops had this to say about Bro. Marcel Van: “What is not to conclude if it is not that a star is risen in the East which belongs to a specific constellation of the Catholic firmament, and which offers to the Magi of the East and of the West, a light which leads to the Messiah of Nations.”

For me, encountering Marcel Van was an instance of “love at first sight”. I realized that this was a very special sort of a saint, with a special vocation to help me in my interior struggle, and in my mission. I hope you will also discover a faithful friend and brother in him. To learn about him, I warmly recommend reading him. If St. Thérèse taught the Little Way exquisitely, Bro. Marcel Van teaches it to those for whom even St. Thérèse appears too big a giant of holiness. Bro. Marcel Van teaches Holiness Made Simple for Ordinary People. He makes holiness as simple and accessible as it is for children who have not yet been deceived to believe otherwise i.e., for you and for me.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF BROTHER MARCEL VAN.

“Father, infinitely good, You have given to Van the mission of ‘changing suffering into joy.’ Spurred on by the example of the saints and fortified by the maternal kindness of the Virgin Mary he gave himself over totally to your Love. O Jesus, give us the grace, in following Van’s example, to walk in your way, ‘always joyful through love,’ on this path of offering and simplicity, with an unshakeable confidence in your Love. Holy Spirit, drawn by Van’s weakness, you have inflamed him with Love. Grant that the Church, we beg you, may one day proclaim his sanctity and grant to us the grace we ask of you _____ through his intercession. Amen”

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ARREST AND THE RIGHTS OF THE ARRESTED IN INDIA CR PC SEC.41-60

Adv Fr Jijo Thomas Placheril

All have to be treated as human beings, irrespective of the fact that the person is a criminal. The one who is accused of a crime is also considered innocent till he is proven guilty by a court of law. The rights of the accused are to be protected, even though he is charged with an offence. The law doesn't permit the detention of any person without proper legal sanction. It is provided by Article 21 of the Constitution that there will be no person who shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure. On a complaint of a cognizable offence, the police have the power to arrest any person who is the accused, either on the basis of the complaint itself or on credible information received. The procedure laid down by Article 21 must be followed in a 'right, just and fair' manner and not in any arbitrary, fanciful or oppressive way. It is expected that the arrest should not only be legal but justified also. The Constitution of India recognizes the rights of arrested persons under the Fundamental Rights.

WHAT IS ARREST

A person who breaks the law is arrested and he loses some of his freedom and liberty. He is put under restraint. The Criminal Procedure Code of 1973, has not defined the term 'Arrest'. When a person is arrested, he is taken into custody of an

authority empowered by law for detaining the person. The person is asked to answer the charges against him and he is detained so that no further crime is committed. In Indian law, Criminal Procedural Code 1973-chapter V (Section 41 to 60) talks about arrest of a person but it does not define arrest anywhere.

TYPES OF ARREST

1. An arrest made in view of a warrant issued by a magistrate
2. An arrest made without such a warrant but in accordance with some legal provision permitting such an arrest

WHO CAN ARREST?

The arrest can be made by Police, Magistrate and a private person.

SECTION 41 (1) CR PC ANY POLICE OFFICER

Any police officer can arrest anyone without an order from a magistrate and without a warrant if the person has committed - a cognizable offence, against whom a reasonable complaint has been made, a reasonable suspicion exists, who is in possession of stolen property, who is proclaimed as an offender, obstructs a police officer in discharge of his duty, attempts to escape from lawful custody, declared as a deserter from any of the Armed Forces of the Union, released convict and breaches his contract of release, against whom a reasonable complaint has been made, or credible information has been received, and arrest of requisition, written or oral, has been received from another police officer

SECTION 41A NOTICE OF APPEARANCE BEFORE POLICE OFFICER

If the police has send a notice of appearance and the person ignores the notice and refuses to appear, the police can arrest the person without warrant.

SECTION 41 B PROCEDURE OF ARREST AND DUTIES OF ARRESTING OFFICER

Prepare the memorandum of arrest in which the person's name should be there, attested by at least one witness, who is a member of the family of the person arrested or a respectable member of the locality where the arrest is made. It should be countersigned by the person arrested. If the memorandum is not attested by a member of arrested persons' family, inform him that he has a right to have a relative or a friend named by him to be informed of his arrest.

SECTION 41 C CONTROL ROOM AT DISTRICTS AND STATES

The control room should display in the notice board the details of the arrested person, the name of the officer who arrested and nature of the offence.

SECTION 41D

Arrested person has the right to meet an advocate of his own choice.

SECTION 42 ARREST ON REFUSAL TO GIVE NAME AND RESIDENCE.

Section 42 authorizes a police officer to arrest a person for an offence which is non-cognizable if the person to be arrested refuses to give his name and residence.

The arrested person must be presented before the nearest magistrate within twenty-four hours.

SECTION 43 ARREST BY A PRIVATE PERSON

Section 43 gives the right to a private person to carry out arrest of a person who in his presence commits a cognizable or a non-bailable offence or who is a proclaimed offender.

SECTION 44 ARREST BY MAGISTRATE

The Magistrate has been given the power to arrest an individual who has committed an offence in his presence and also commit him to custody.

SECTION 45 PROTECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES FROM ARREST

Cr PC exempts the members of Armed forces from being arrested for anything done by them in discharge of their official duties except after obtaining the consent of the government.

SECTION 46 HOW ARREST IS MADE

Section 46 (1) the police officer or other person making the arrest shall actually touch or confine the body of the person to be arrested if there is no submission to custody by word or action. Section 46 (2) If the person resists, all means of force can be used to arrest the person. Section 46 (3) No one has the right to cause the death of the person.

SECTION 46(4) SPECIAL PROTECTION AS FEMALES

Forbids arrest of women after sunset and before sunrise, except in exceptional circumstances in which case the arrest can be done by a woman police officer after making a written report, obtaining prior permission from the concerned first class

judicial magistrate within whose local jurisdiction the offence is committed or the arrest is to be made.

SECTION 47

The police officer having authority to arrest has reason to believe that the person to be arrested has entered into a place, has authority to search the place. If the person to be arrested is hiding in closed room the police officer authorized to arrest can break the house to arrest the person.

SECTION 49 NO UNNECESSARY RESTRAINT

The person arrested shall not be subjected to more restraint than is necessary to prevent his escape.

RIGHTS OF AN ARRESTED PERSON

1 RIGHT TO KNOW THE GROUNDS OF ARREST

ARTICLE 22(1) CONSTITUTION

The arrested person must be informed of the grounds of arrest and the detention.

SECTION 50

Every police official with authority to arrest without a warrant is duty bound to inform the person getting arrested about the crime for which he is arrested and other relevant grounds for the arrest.

SECTION 50A

It is compulsory for the police official arresting a person to inform about the arrest to any of the relatives or friends of the arrested person.

2 RIGHT TO BE PRODUCED BEFORE THE MAGISTRATE WITHOUT UNNECESSARY DELAY

ARTICLE 22(2)

The police official making an arrest must produce the arrested person before the Magistrate within 24 hours of the arrest and failing to do so would make him liable for wrongful detention. The time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the court of the magistrate is excluded from 24 hours.

SECTION 55

A police official making an arrest without a warrant must produce the person arrested without any unnecessary delay before the Magistrate or before a police officer in charge of the police station.

SECTION 76

The arrested person must be produced in court of law without unnecessary delay.

3 RIGHT TO BE RELEASED ON BAIL

SECTION 50 (2)

Person arrested for a bailable offense has the right to get released on bail by making arrangement for the sureties. The police officer has to inform the arrested person that he has the right to be released on bail.

4 RIGHT TO A FAIR AND JUST TRIAL

ARTICLE 6 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Court cases must be heard in public by an independent and impartial judge, in a reasonable amount of time. Defendants

must have a real opportunity to present their case and they are innocent until proven guilty. People must have real and effective access to a court and to legal aid. A court or tribunal must give reasons for its judgment and fair balance between the opportunities given to both parties. Hearings and judgments must be made public. Hearings can be held in private if:

- it is in contrary to the interest of morals, public order or national security.
- it is in the interests of a child
- it is required for the protection of the private life of those involved
- it is strictly necessary in special circumstances when the court believes publicity would prejudice the interests of justice.

ARTICLE 14 OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

states that “*every individual is equal before the law*” which means that all the sides in a legal dispute must be treated equally.

5 RIGHT TO CONSULT A LAWYER

ARTICLE 22 (1)

Every arrested person has the right to choose and elect his own lawyer to defend him in the court of law.

SECTION 41D

It is the right of the prisoners to consult with their lawyers even during their interrogation.

SECTION 303

Convict or criminal has the right to be defended by a lawyer of his choice.

6 RIGHT TO FREE LEGAL AID

ARTICLE 39A TO PROVIDE FREE LEGAL AID TO PEOPLE IN NEED.

If the government is unable to provide free legal aid to the poor accused person, then the whole trial will stand as void. The right of a poor accused person to get free legal aid cannot be refused even if he fails to apply for it.

SECTION 304

If the accused is not represented by a pleader, the Court is to appoint him a lawyer totally free of cost at the expense of the State.

7 RIGHT TO KEEP QUIET

Police or any authority is not allowed to compel an accused person to speak anything in the court against himself.

NANDINI SATPATHY V/S P.L. DANI

“No person can force any other person to furnish any statement or compel to answer any question because the accused person has the right to keep quiet during his interrogation”.

8 RIGHT TO BE EXAMINED BY A DOCTOR

SECTION- 54 OF CRPC

If an arrested person claims that medical examination of his body would disprove the fact of commission of the crime by him, or that might lead to evidence towards commission of the crime by some other person, the court has complete discretion to order for a medical examination of an accused person at his request and the same is granted by the court when satisfied that the request is not made to delay or defeat justice.

9 ADDITIONAL RIGHTS AVAILABLE TO AN ARRESTED PERSON

SECTION- 55A HEALTH AND SAFETY OF ARRESTED PERSON

It is the duty of the person having custody of the accused to take reasonable care of the health and safety of the accused. This principle was established to protect the arrested person from cruel and inhuman treatment in the prison.

SECTION 358 COMPENSATION IF ARRESTED GROUNDLESSLY

If it appears to the magistrate that the arrest was without sufficient ground the arrested person is provided with compensation.

SECTION 41A NOTICE TO APPEAR BEFORE POLICE OFFICER

The police official must furnish notice to the person who has supposedly committed a cognizable offence to appear before him at a specified time, date and location.

SECTION 49 NO UNNECESSARY RESTRAINT

The person arrested shall not be subjected to more restraint than necessary to prevent his escape.

SECTION 41B

The Police official authorised to arrest must bear clear, visible and valid badge where the name and designation of the police official is clearly mentioned. A person may be accused of an offense, an accused may be convicted by a court of law, and still, he/she remains as a human being. The accused may be arrested and in the custody of police, but he is empowered to get his rights. If the arrested persons are aware of their rights no police can misuse and misbehave with the arrested ones.

PRISONERS' RELEASE BY PMI VOLUNTEERS

Sr Adele SCCG

INTRODUCTION

Releasing people from Prison is easier said than done! There is a giant hurdle ahead for those who would wish to release prisoners now. As per the statistics of December 2019, there were 4,78,600 inmates in 1350 prisons all over India. About 70% of them were under trial prisoners. As of 8th September 2020, 1.6 crore criminals were in prison pending judgment for more than a year across all courts of India. Obviously a very large number of prisoners are waiting to be released from prison. On 16th May 2020 Maharashtra released a large number of prisoners in the wake of Covid19 pandemic.

PRISONERS' RELEASE

As a volunteer of Prison Ministry India, in my opinion, release of a prisoner means not only helping them to be released out of the prison, but also offering them help to be free of their inner tensions. A committed volunteer should help the brethren to be released from their inner bondages before they go out of prison. Every incarcerated brother or sister suffers from several factors smothering them from within. Hence, they need to be free from their inner tensions arising from the feelings of loneliness, guilt, fear, anger, inability to forgive, hatred, sinfulness and so on. First and foremost, they are unable to accept the fact that they have been imprisoned. Hence until

they are capable of accepting their present situation, they will find it extremely hard even to fall asleep at night. Sleep evades them when they close their eyes as some of them see their bloodstained hands whenever they close their eyes. Those who are criminals suffer from their guilty conscience while those who are innocent and were falsely accused, go through inner struggles to accept their situation.

FRUSTRATION

The presence of a person who can give them a patient hearing can help them in their moment of frustration. Though it is not possible for the volunteers to be available to all the inmates of a prison, the persons who are in a difficult mental disposition can be helped from suicidal tendency, if they are given the needed attention at the proper time. When a sister companion of mine approached an inmate, on the first day of his entry to the prison, she found him in distress. She said to him kindly, "Please don't feel you are alone, I am here as your sister," The person at once burst out in tears in his pain saying, "I was sitting here and planning how to end my life, because they brought me in for no fault of mine." Our presence is the greatest help to those who are in distress. Some come to us searching for someone to share their emotional burden. By listening to them without any judgment, they will find relief and thus get release from their tensions.

LONELINESS

Many suffer from loneliness because he/she was a brother or sister, or father or a mother, or a friend of someone before entering the prison. Now they have become 'NOBODY'; some of them have been written off their family book too. They feel isolated, hated, rejected, and ignored by all because of the stigma of being a prisoner. They feel frustrated due to fear of

losing their job. Many are tortured by the police though some are innocent. In order to force them to admit the crime, they are given electric shock and even threatened of capital punishment. An experience of God's unconditional love through the presence of volunteers, the assurance of help in contacting their dear ones, along with counseling and prayer will help them in their initial disturbances.

CONSOLATION

Acceptance of their own failure in overcoming their impulsive nature and sinful tendencies, acceptance of God's forgiving love, and God's plan in their life will go a long way in regaining peace. When they are helped to reflect on the word, "For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plan for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me" (Jeremiah 29;11-13). The prisoner to whom I gave the above words preserved it on a slip in his valet and read it often to regain his lost peace. After several years the person showed me the slip and said to me how those WORDS from the Bible helped him whenever he was anxious. The Love of God reflected by us volunteers can wipe away their pain and anguish and help them to conquer their suicidal tendencies.

OUR OWN BRETHREN

When we consider the inmates languishing in prison as our own brothers and sisters, our very attitude and approach give them release from their distress. The tensions arising from their fear of rejection by the family members are reduced, when we start building bridges between the inmates of the prison and their relatives through phone calls and visits. Whenever possible

we try to trace out the children of the inmates in children homes run by the Government. I recall the occasion when a lady expressed her anxiety about her two daughters left at home when she was arrested and brought under custody. We were able to locate the whereabouts of her daughters as we visited the Government Reception Center for children. Great was the joy of the mother when we met the children and brought a letter written by them to their mom who had to continue her life in the prison.

The youth in the prison feel frustrated and go through a feeling of loss, when they feel thwarted on their way to progress in life due to the unexpected imprisonment. Once they have realized the blunder they have committed and express their desire to make amendments and to begin life anew, we can help them by giving opportunities for higher education. They qualify themselves for jobs by securing post graduate degrees while in prison. I felt truly happy when I could invite professors as guest lecturers from neighboring Colleges with the permission of Prison Officials. I recall with great joy the faces of youth in the prison who obtained more than one degree as post graduates before they were released from prison. Thus, we can create opportunities for the youth who are incarcerated, to spend their time fruitfully and to equip themselves to earn and support their families after their release. They not only spend their prison life free from the inevitable tensions but also become assets for their families.

CATHARSIS

Another way of releasing the inner turmoil of youth who are languishing in prison is Physical and Outdoor activities within the four walls of the prison. We find a large number of youths in prison who have no activities and while away their precious

time. Those who are inclined to read and have a desire to study, may attend classes and grow intellectually. But we find a large number of youths who are idling away their time and get into drug abuse and other immoral and illegal activities to avoid boredom. Outdoor activities in the prison can be of great help to give them inner release. In my experience I have found that starting of outdoor games and sports give great relief to the youth in the prison. With the permission of the Prison authorities when I started to introduce co-operative games and built-up Football teams and Cricket teams in the prison, I found the juvenile inmates blooming, developing their hidden talents in the playground. A good benefactor, Elvis Joseph from the Bangalore School of Sports came forward to give coaching to the youth in prison. The authorities willingly welcomed the program. Besides coaching, he sponsored free uniforms, shoes, socks and all the play equipments. Such activities created channels to redirect the inner energy of the youth to useful ways rather than engaging them in destructive behavior.

LISTENING

Listening attentively without judging them will be of help for any inmate who is accused of a crime and kept under custody. The presence of a volunteer who is willing to listen to their burden, will free them from their anxiety and pain. They can be given help to accept their present situation, especially if they are not guilty of the crime they are accused of. When they are enabled to understand that God has a plan in their life for their own welfare (Jeremiah 29:11-13), they start grasping and accepting the Divine plan for them. When they are helped to be open to God's plan for them even during their life in prison, they experience an inner release from their distress and disappointment. Acceptance of the present situation will release

their inner disturbance and they begin making use of the available time for their own growth.

FORGIVENESS

Release from anger and hatred. Forgiveness of all those who were the cause of their imprisonment will help them to free themselves from hatred and desire to take revenge. When we meet a prisoner, who is unable to forgive, we have to help them out in their struggle. I have met prisoners who were planning to take revenge on the families who were the cause of their imprisonment. By sharing God's powerful Word with them I have seen them giving up such evil desires and becoming people of forgiveness. After a prayer meeting in which I shared God's word on the need of forgiveness in our life, I have seen persons turning over a new leaf in their life. One of the inmates told me that he was planning to set on fire the houses of those who were the cause of his imprisonment, by contacting someone who would do it for him; thus they would be set free from the desire to take revenge. Instead, if they nurse hatred within them, it turns into poison, causing harm to their body and mind. "Let no one fail to obtain the grace of God; that no bitterness springs up to cause trouble and through it many become defiled (Hebrews 12:15).

- Inner release can be facilitated by bringing reconciliation between the inmates and the families of victims
- Through visits to families of the prisoners, greater acceptance of the inmate by the members of families can be fostered.
- The inmates of the prison can be helped to come out of laziness and waste of time by launching educational and recreational programs in the prison.

- Through annual retreats and value education programs organized in the prison many have reformed their lives and have taken a U turn in their life.

REPENTANCE

When volunteers approach the inmates of a prison with the compassionate and unconditional love of God, they become the genuine reflection of God's love. It will be a great relief for the prisoners who are rejected by their dear ones and friends. The influence of such persons will touch the hearts of criminals and they will draw closer to God and repent for their sins which took them away from God's love. Thus repentance of their sins and resolving to begin a new life bring them release from the burden in their hearts.

LEGAL AID

Legal aid can be given to the repented persons to help them obtain release on bail or acquittal from the court. During the past seventeen years and more I had the joy of rendering help to get a large number of brethren released on bail or acquittal. I have experienced the joy of witnessing criminals, especially murderers and dacoits getting transformed and redeemed during their period of incarceration, and finally being released from prison for good.

FELIX

As I write these lines, I recall the life of a double murderer who spent 13 years in prison. He had become a criminal because he joined a gang of criminals merely to get acceptance of people who appreciated him. All through his childhood he never received love and acceptance from his parents. In his family the parents cared only for his younger brother, and he

was totally neglected. Even when he was sick, he was ignored. One day he went out of his home seeking friends among the people he met on the street. As Felix grew up to be a hefty and strong man among his peer group of friends, the gang made the maximum use of him to loot banks and shops and to commit murder for the sake of looting cash. He was arrested and brought under custody, accused of murder and robbery.

It was only after entering the prison when he had an encounter with a living and loving God that his life was transformed. He experienced true acceptance and love from the sisters who were volunteers of Prison Ministry India, who gave him unconditional love without judging him or recalling his crime filled past life. Felix attended prayer meetings in the prison chapel and started reading the Word of God and dwelt deeply on the unconditional and forgiving love of Jesus who laid down his life to save him. He turned to God seeking forgiveness of his crime filled past and was set free from the inner bondages of hatred. When he realized within himself the fact that true freedom and release comes from Jesus Christ who washes away our sins by his own precious Blood, and fills his soul with his lasting joy and true inner freedom, Felix got himself acquitted and he was set free from prison. "If the Son sets you free you will be free indeed (John 8:36).

CONCLUSION

Felix is just one example of the several criminals who were transformed and experienced true inner release during their life in prison. I consider this is the true understanding of what is basically the meaning of "Release". Though it may not be possible for the volunteers of Prison ministry to see that every brother and sister whom she/he serves in the prison is released in this sense, our goal should be to aim at the total release

through the Reformation, Redemption and Reintegration of the people whom we serve. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me, to bring Good News to the poor; he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18&19).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PRISONS

Anandita Dulloo & Alex Romer

1. PRISONS AND JAILS

The concept of using a prison or a jail as a means to detain and remove personal freedoms of incarcerated people existed both in ancient and modern civilization. Prisons were often dungeons where suspected criminals were held before a sentence of death or slavery could be held. It was a holding tank and not a place of punishment. Evidence of this dates as far back as 399 BC. when Socrates was put in jail for corrupting the youth before he was put to death⁵¹. The Holy Bible too, one of the oldest texts in the world, is populated with references to prison. The mentions begin right from mentioning Egyptian prisons of Pharaoh in the book of Genesis where Joseph was imprisoned before his rise to power, through the times of imprisonment of prophets and kings alike such as Jeremiah (book of Jeremiah) and Zedekiah (Book of Kings) and continue till the time of the imprisonment of disciple of Jesus such as Paul and Silas in prison (Book of Acts). Jesus himself was imprisoned overnight before facing a sentence of death.

It is important to reiterate that historically, prisons were used as stop-gaps before further sentences could be passed, not as places of punishment or correction. (Today we would call such

⁵¹ The Greeks - Socrates. (2021). Retrieved 23 January 2021, from https://www.pbs.org/empires/thegreeks/characters/socrates_p11.html

an arrangement a jail). Historically, prisons contained a mix of people, not limited to criminals and usually kept people for a short period of time. People were imprisoned for different reasons. Debtors were held until they repaid their debt and accused criminals would be kept until they were tried in court. In the old-world, courts were held only 4 times a year so one would have to wait for over 3 months for trial. Capital Punishment was the dominant but uncommon form of punishment at that time. Therefore, till the late 18th century, prisons and jails, primarily, acted as a form of confinement for debtors, persons accused of crimes and awaiting trial, and convicts awaiting the imposition of their sentences—usually death or transportation (deportation) overseas.

Prisons as a form of punishment are quite a new development in human history that came to be only a few hundred years ago, during the American and French revolutions. They first came up in the new United States, then in England, and then in other places like Canada and France.

Prisons were a place for undertrials. Conditions were often harsh. In the 12th century, as royalty became more involved with prison administration in Europe, conditions slightly improved, even leading to the signing of the Magna Carta by King John which stated that no man could be imprisoned without trial. These developments were however confined to small parts of the industrialized world and the dominant process of using prisons as holding space before a sentence (usually of capital punishment) was passed, continued.

2. EVOLUTION OF PRISONS

As capital punishment began to decline in the late 18th century, the prison was increasingly used by courts as a place for

punishment, eventually becoming the primary means of punishing even for serious offenders. Through colonial empires, the use of imprisonment spread across the world. It even brought the concept to countries with no indigenous concept of prison such as Australia.

By the early 21st century, many countries had abolished the death penalty (in law or practice), and imprisonment, in consequence, was the most severe form of punishment that the courts could impose. It was in this context that penal reformers and political theorists began discussing alternatives to this criminal justice system and came up with the concept of judicial prisons; a new facility designed to punish convicted criminals with long term confinement. The rise of the judicial prison system was extremely controversial, especially in England and the United States. Prisons were an extremely expensive undertaking that took years to build and required a full-time staff. Apart from the expense, another popular concern was whether such an institution was humane.

People were unaware of the repercussions of long-term captivity and prison legislatures would endlessly discuss this issue. The main question was whether such a system would in actuality reduce crime. At that time, people believed that crime was caused by one's environment including the negative influence of family and friends.

Thus, the new prisons were designed to limit the individual's contact with the outside world. Wardens and prison officials also didn't want the prisoners to interact with each other. One strategy involved was forbidding prisoners from talking to one and another and whipping them if they did. Another strategy involved putting prisoners in solitary confinement. Even before prisons were opened, the main concern was about their expense,

their humanity, and their ability to reduce crime.

Prison reforms that started in the 19th century developed and continue till today to reach out to the care and rehabilitation needs of prisoners. Enforcement of this legislature continues to be a challenge in prisons around the world

3. INDIAN PRISONS

Just like the prisons in the west, Indian prisons prevailed in the Vedic period but the

concept of the prison to be a form of punishment remained absent. Imprisonment was not favored by ancient law makers. Prisons were mainly meant to act as pre-trial detentions. One of the earliest references to prisons was made during Kautilya's Arthashastra. It was during this time that the officers who were in charge of the prisons were known "Bandhanagaradhyaksha" i.e., Superintendent, "Karaka" i.e., jailor, and "Sannidhata" i.e., Chief of Prison. Punishments during the Mauryan period were in the form of penalties. These penalties were broadly classified into two categories, the *vergild*, which was a fine paid for homicide or other heinous crimes against a person and religious penance that was imposed over ritual offences.

The order in which the sutras^{*52} laid down fines for punishment of murder were on the basis of the caste system – 1000 cows for killing a Kshatriya, 100 cows for a Vaisya, and 1 cow for a Sudra or a woman belonging to any caste.

Fines also included ranges from small copper coins to the seizure of all property, depending on the severity of the crime. Ancient literature also accounts for the various prison reforms

⁵² Sutra – a rule or aphorism in the Sanskrit Literature.

that were encouraged by King Ashoka during his reign. An important measure taken by him during this period was to ensure that the authorities made visits to the prisoners at least once a day to enquire about their welfare. Great emphasis was laid over their living conditions, health and working habits. He even laid down strict rules and their functions for the officers inside the jails. Those who failed to abide by these rules were punished. These laws and systems went through great changes during the medieval periods. The caste and class system began to play a pivotal role in the determination of the gravity of the offence committed and the punishment for the same. With the Afghan invaders came a new form of administration, leaving behind very little of the old administration and culture. A sizable population was now ruled by Muslim or Quranic Laws. According to these laws, crime was categorized into 3 sections – offences against god, against the State, and against private property. Imprisonment was not encouraged even within the Mughal laws and was only used as a means for detention of persons under trial.

THE 3 MAIN PRISONS OF THE MUGHAL PERIOD WERE AT GWALIOR, RATHAMBORE AND ROHTAS.

Those condemned to death were sent to Rathambore, nobles who were condemned to perpetual imprisonment were sent to Rohtas from where, very few returned home. Those with royal blood were often sent here.⁵³ Such prisons systems and patterns continued to exist even during the Maratha period. Mutilation, death and fines were the common forms of punishments for those deemed guilty subject to the gravity of their offence. In conclusion, there were no regular prisons as we see today, during the ancient or medieval periods in India.

⁵³ A Mohanty & N. Hazary, Indian Prison System, Ashish Publishing House, 1990, P.22.

Prisons were looked at as purely for the purpose of detention for those accused and were held under trial. With the rise to power of the East India Company came the decline of the Mughal empire and it was in 1784 that the British Parliament empowered the East India Company to rule over India. It was during this time that the English criminal law was applied to Indians. The Indian Penal code and the Criminal Procedure code were enacted 1859 and 1860.⁵⁴ It was during this period that prison reforms were taking place in Great Britain thus making efforts towards a decent and humane prison administrative system. There were 143 civil jails, 75 criminal jails and 68 mixed jails under the East Indian Company Rule with an approximate population of 75,100 prisoners.⁵⁵

Report of the Indian Jails Committee, 1919-20 Government Central Press, Simla, 1920.

A report published by the Prison Discipline committee, headed by Lord Macaulay, criticized the subordinate administration and their lax behavior towards discipline and the employment of the prisoners as labor. This report marked an advancement towards the reformation of Indian prisons. Thus, the Prisons Act of 1894 came into being. The Act made major changes in the functions of the prison administration and authority. The Government of India Act of 1935 brought about severe constitutional changes that resulted in the shifting of the subject of prisons to the rule of provincial governments.

It was after independence that Jawaharlal Nehru, an experienced prisoner from the freedom struggle reiterated the necessity of bringing about prison reforms. It was through his

⁵⁴ History of prison administration in India. Retrieved 4 March 2020, from https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/191068/10/10_chapter%204.pdf

⁵⁵ Report of the Indian Jails Committee, 1919-20 Government Central Press, Simla, 1920.

autobiography that he not only expressed the depth of his anguish but also dwelled on the ultimate result of imprisonment.⁵⁶ He questioned the very essence of punishment and the objectives of such reformation.

According to him, reforms did not require great expenditure, in fact he believed that jails should be converted to centres of profit. He questioned the process of rehabilitation of prisoners within prisons, giving utmost importance to the fact that the individual who has served a sentence is left unfitting in a society that refuses to integrate him⁵⁷

⁵⁶ History of prison administration in India. Retrieved 4 March 2020, from https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/191068/10/10_chapter%204.pdf

⁵⁷ History of prison administration in India. Retrieved 4 March 2020, from https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/191068/10/10_chapter%204.pdf

**“I AM A HORRIBLE SINNER.
CAN IT BE TRUE THAT JESUS LOVES ME?”**

RAJENDRAN

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

IN SEARCH OF FORTUNE

Rajendran hails from a traditional Hindu family in Tamil Nadu. He was the eldest of 11 siblings whom the parents found hard to feed, on the meagre income from the small tea-stall that they ran. Though the eldest, Rajendran was not keen on shouldering any responsibility. Aggressive and disobedient by nature he did not relish helping out his parents in the tea-stall. In his very childhood he left home and travelled to Mumbai, the Glittering city of Dreams, in search of brighter prospects. But he was in for a disappointment. Looking for a place to stay, he finally bumped into a group of urchins who were kind enough to share food and accommodation with him. He enjoyed the company of these hooligans and with them was drawn into all sorts of vices - smoking beedis, cigarettes and hashish, drinking, gambling, robbing, looting, fighting, visiting brothels...etc. You name it he had done it. Every sin of the book he had committed. “I was the sinner of sinners, the worst!” he recollects.

THE FINAL STRAW

The last straw came when in October 1985 he, with his so-called friends, got involved in a heinous murder. He was chased, caught by the Matunga police and thrown in the Thane jail. After being tried in court he was pronounced guilty and convicted as an accomplice to murder. The sentence was a 21 year long rigorous imprisonment. Rajendran felt disappointed and dejected. The childhood dreams that had ushered him to Mumbai came crashing down! He was angry - angry with himself, and angry with society. After the verdict had been passed he was shifted to Central Jail, Nashik.

BEHIND THE PRISON WALLS

It dawned on him that he had lost his freedom. That irked him terribly. He became all the more aggressive, picking up a fight with anyone and everyone who came his way. He was almost a terror inside the prison. His notorious and arrogant nature was noticed by prison officials and inmates alike. Deep down in his heart he was a staunch Hindu, so he continued with his poojas and rituals, and went about with a big tika on his forehead.

PRISON MINISTRY INDIA

There was this group of Catholics - Prison Ministry Volunteers - comprising Sr Sabeena Pinto, Sr Julie, Sr Nirmala, Walter Kamble, Raju Salve, Ignatius Salve and others who used to regularly visit the Nashik jail to interact with the prisoners, offer prayers, organize entertainment programs, and to celebrate festivals like Christmas and Easter with the inmates. Initially Rajendran refrained from joining them, because he presumed he ought to keep away, as he belonged to an altogether different faith.

THE FIRST DART

However for one Christmas Day celebration he joined with the other 2000 odd prisoners to celebrate. Who after all can keep away from celebrations? It so happened that on that day Mr Walter Kamble and Mr Paul gave their testimony of how Jesus had worked in their lives to give them an experience of God's love. Rajendran was moved, especially when in the midst of his witnessing, Paul said, "My dear brothers, do you know that Jesus loves you, each and every one of you?" That touched a chord somewhere deep down in Rajendran's heart. He wondered to himself, "Is that true? Can Jesus truly love even a horrible sinner like me?" At the end of the program, the kind-hearted Nun, Sr Sabeena walked up to Rajendran, held his hand gently and said, "Pray to Jesus, trust in Him and you will be set free." But Rajendran responded with contempt, dismissing Sister with an almost 'Get lost!' attitude. Sister asked him for his name and then left without saying anything further. That night however, after spending months of sleepless nights, Rajendran had a sound and peaceful sleep.

THE BIBLE

In the year 1988, a new inmate was put in with Rajendran. Manohar had been charged of murder. He was a very pious person who would daily wake up early in the morning at 3 am to pray. He prayed for nearly 3 hours. He would read the Bible many times in a day. Manohar suggested to Rajendran that he too should pray and read the Bible regularly. "Rajendran Bhai, pray to Jesus, and you will be set free." Rajendran got wild with Manohar asking him to mind his own business! Yet, Rajendran pondered over what both – Sr Sabeena and Manohar had said. Both of them had made the same suggestion, and given the same promise.

Manohar studiously continued to read the Bible and to pray daily from 3 am to 6 am. Slowly, yet surely, Rajendran started getting interested in the prayers, and felt an urge to read the Bible. He vividly remembers the date on which he got his own personal Bible - 30th August 1990. In excitement he opened it at random. His eyes fell on Psalm 119:114 which read, “You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your Word.” He felt elated, to say the least! It was as though God had put the words in his mouth. He silently responded with, “Yes Lord, you are my hiding place!” He hugged the Bible to his chest and thanked God profusely. After that day he felt an almost ravenous hunger for the Word of God. He was drawn to read the Bible nonstop. In his eagerness he finished reading the entire Book in just 24 days!

IMPRISONMENT AND REDEMPTION

Meanwhile, Sr Sabeena and her team continued to visit the prison at regular intervals, to pray, to interact and to celebrate Christmas and Easter. They used to write personal letters to the prisoners. They always had a word of consolation for these distressed brethren. Gradually Rajendran developed an affinity for them. Their kind and compassionate behavior awakened the dormant, finer emotions in Rajendran, mellowing him down a great deal. Walter’s encouraging words, “Rajendran, you belong to Jesus. He loves you. Don’t worry. Just pray fervently and you will be released”, brought hope aplenty in the mind of Rajendran. He perceived a silver lining behind the dark cloud of his life. The anointed and melodious devotional songs rendered by Walter at the prayer meetings also served to melt the residual hard feelings in Rajendran’s heart. An unquenchable thirst for God welled up within him and he started praying... first for 10 minutes, then for 20 minutes, then for 30 minutes and so on until he was fervently praying for upto 3 hours at a

stretch. He could sense that he was a changed man. His rough nature was spontaneously getting replaced by a soft, pliable one. The inner freedom that he experienced despite being still locked up in prison could not be explained. It was a freedom of the soul! He felt liberated. The change in him attracted more inmates to join in the prayers and, very soon a prayer group was formed.

When the Jail Superintendent came to know that Rajendran, a Hindu by tradition, was conducting Christian prayers inside the jail, he objected. He called for Rajendran and asked him to stop the prayers. But Rajendran who by now was so attracted to God, just could not stop himself from praying, at least in private. Soon there were 40 prisoners praying with him. The group of Prison Ministry Volunteers approached the Jail Superintendent to seek his permission to pray with Rajendran and his group on Sundays. By the grace of God he gave them permission. The positive change that came about in Rajendran's behavior could have prompted the Superintendent to accede to their request.

One day the Jail Superintendent asked Rajendran to pray for his promotion. Rajendran promptly prayed over him, sincerely offering up the intention to Jesus. Lo and behold! On the third day the Superintendent got his orders for promotion to the post of D.I.G. After assuming the post of D.I.G., when one day he came to visit the Nashik Jail, he called for Rajendran and, overwhelmed with gratitude, told him to ask for any possible favor that the D.I.G. could do him. Without thinking a moment further Rajendran said, "Sir I am here in this jail to serve my 21 years term. Through the Prison Ministry India Volunteers who regularly visit us and pray for us, and by reading the Bible, I have now come to know the living Jesus who loves me dearly. I like to spend time with Him in prayer. There are

40 of us who now pray in secret. I ask nothing of you except that you permit us to pray openly without fear of being caught. That is all I want Sir. There is nothing else that you need to do for me Sir.” The D.I.G. was surprised by Rajendran’s apparently simple request. From then on every Sunday from 9 am to 11 am was a time of celebration with the group from the Infant Jesus Shrine. They could fearlessly praise and worship God with songs and prayers and by the breaking of the Word of God. Rajendran and his friends used to eagerly look forward to this time, he reminisces.

AN ENCOUNTER

In the year 1992, the D.I.G. was present for the Christmas celebration conducted by the Prison Ministry team led by Sr Sabeena. To the amazement of all, he publicly testified before the group of 500, that it was Jesus, through the prayers of Rajendran who made his promotion possible. God performed many more wondrous deeds of healing too, through the prayers of Rajendran. Once while in personal prayer Rajendran heard Jesus calling out to him by name! He heard it three times. Rajendran then asked Jesus what His expectation was. Jesus was pleased. Hunted by the various and terrible sins that Rajendran had committed earlier in life, he told Jesus, “I am a grievous sinner who has perpetrated all possible crimes. But now I repent of my shameful deeds. I promise that from now on, with your grace I will live only for you Oh my Jesus! If I live I will live for you; if I die I will die for you.” He was rewarded with the ethereal and all-encompassing love of Jesus flowing into his soul. He felt an hitherto unknown but exuberant peace pervading his mind. His desire for holiness intensified and slowly started to bear fruit.

THE UNEXPECTED MIRACLE

It happened on the 10th of December 1999. There came the Order to release Rajendran from jail! He had not yet completed his full term. He had been in jail only for 14 years of his 21 year imprisonment. His joy knew no bounds! He fully believes that it was the mighty hand of Jesus that worked this miracle for him. When he came out of the prison he was warmly received by the Prison Ministry India Volunteers. Sr Sabeena arranged for him to attend a retreat at the Divine Retreat Centre at Muringoor, Chalakudy. There, before a crowd of over 40,000 participants, Rajendran got the opportunity to share his testimony about God's loving intervention in his life. "The Bible is a book of wonders that can convert even the hardest of criminals. Read it and you will be set free! And Jesus is one who loves every sinner! No one else in this world can love you the way Jesus does", says Rajendran, this alleged once-upon-a-time criminal.

THE NEW LIFE

Today, he is a renewed man, lives in Pondicherry with his wife and two children. He got married after being released from jail. On fire with the love of Jesus, he is on his toes, has his roller skates on, running around proclaiming Jesus to all and sundry, whenever called to do so. Remaining a staunch Catholic he goes to share his powerful testimony in the Churches of all denominations, wherever he is invited. He is driven by only one burning desire - glorify God! He acknowledges that God worked in his life through the Prison Ministry India Volunteers and through his prison cellmate Manohar, and is grateful to them. His goal is bring as many to Jesus as he possibly can, and that alone is his ardent prayer too.

“Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety nine righteous persons who need no repentance”. (Luke 15:7)

ECHO

A SPECIAL HOME FOR CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH LAW

Fr Antony Sebastian O.Prem

1. INTRODUCTION:

“Special Home” refers to an institution established by a State Government or by a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) for providing rehabilitative services to children (10 -18 years) in conflict with law, (section 48), those having committed an offence and referred by an order of the Juvenile Justice Board (section 18). Section 48 states that - The State Government may establish and maintain either by itself or through voluntary or non-governmental organizations, special homes, which shall be registered as such, in the manner as may be prescribed, in every district or a group of districts, as may be required for rehabilitation of those children in conflict with law who are found to have committed an offence and who are placed there by an order of the Juvenile Justice Board made under section 18.

2. ECHO SPECIAL HOME

ECHO has started to handle the government special home for boys from the year 2011. The primary aim of ECHO Special Home is to reform and reintegrate the children in conflict with law back to the society. ECHO Special Home focuses on

holistic development of each child. It is also dedicated to achieve zero-recidivism (Recidivism means going back to previous behavior, especially criminal behavior) among the children who were in conflict with law. Here all our activities are focused on the reformation of children in conflict with law.

Since its initiation in April 2011(till date) a total number of 180 children in conflict with law (CICL) have been admitted. After their maximum stay of 3 years they usually were released at the age between 20 -21 years. Presently there are 16 inmates. The maximum capacity is 50. In terms of crimes, of the total 180 children admitted (till date) maximum were identified to have committed heinous crimes like murder, rape, attempt to murder, robbery, housebreaking and theft. The children who are released from the ECHO Special Home are admitted in the rehabilitation programs of ECHO such as, Traffic Police Assistant Program (where the Child will be trained by the Karnataka State Traffic Police Department to regulate the traffic at designated junctions in collaboration with different companies and schools.) which is known as an empowerment program and it helps them to get financially empowered. The children who have completed 10th and 12th standard are admitted in the Hotel Management program with respect to diploma and degree; the children will be trained in the different aspects of hospitality which helps them to develop the skills. The children who have successfully completed their course are conferred with the diploma and degree and placed for employment in different star hotels across the country. The output of the rehabilitation so far has been deemed a success as none of the children has shown any relapse to earlier behavior.

3. FEATURES OF THE ECHO SPECIAL HOME:

1. **Infrastructure:** Semi open spacious building located on 2.5 Acres of sprawling land with all the basic necessities to cater to the needs of the inmates.
2. **Education:** Education formal / non-formal is provided to all children according to the age and ability either inside the home or outside with special provision to write the board examinations.
3. **Vocational training:** Trained Instructors provide vocational training to the children. The skills are used as an income generator for the children. Corporate and NGO's Expertise is used to enhance the skills.
4. **Counseling:** All the children are mentored/ guided/ counseled by a trained counselor. Services of Child Guidance Center, Psychology & Psychiatric Departments are also availed of. The families of the Children are also counseled to cope up with the condition.
6. **Balanced Diet:** Utmost care has been taken to provide well balanced, but delicious food through a preplanned menu and cooked in hygienic conditions.
7. **Meditation / Yoga:** This is encouraged every morning for all children to instill a sense of inner peace/strength/ discipline.
8. **Performing Arts:** Dance & Music therapy enable the children to realize the tremendous potential in arts and music as opposed to the negativity they grew up with.
9. **Computer Class:** Equipping them with computer skills to enable them to learn an important tool which will help in rehabilitation.
10. **Recreation facilities:** All the children in the Special Home are provided with – indoor & outdoor games,

music, newspaper and gardening. The center also takes the initiative in taking the CICL for picnics/outing and conducts cultural programmes.

11. **Follow up:** Upon release, timely follow up schedule is followed to monitor the Children which lead to smooth integration with society.

4. HIGHLIGHTS

On 21st February 2016, Honorable Justice Sri Madan B Lokur of Supreme Court of India, along with Justice Dominic Antony - Chief Justice of Kerala High Court, Justice Ashok B Hinchigeri of Karnataka High Court, Mr Rajnesh Goel, Principal Secretary Govt. of Karnataka DWCD, Mrs. Narmada Anand - Project Manager ICPS, Mr Sonykutty George - Child Specialist from UNICEF and Mr. Tannistha Dutta from UNICEF visited Special Home to understand the effective rehabilitation process of Children in conflict with law and appreciated the features and the rehabilitation process. Honorable Ex- Minister Thimmanahalli Boraiah Jayachandra visited ECHO Special Home during his tenure and appreciated the work. The NIPCID team members visited ECHO special home as a part of their training. The probationary IAS officers visited ECHO Special Home for an orientation program.

5. SUCCESS STORIES

RAVI (NAME CHANGED)

Ravi is a native of Mandya, the only child of the family. His mother passed away when he was one year old and his father remarried. He was brought up by his grandmother. He discontinued his studies in the 9th Standard, started working as a helper in road-side eateries. In 2012 he was apprehended by the Police for an offence. He was kept in police custody for

a couple of days during which he was physically abused and tortured for the offence he committed. Then the police produced him in front of Juvenile Justice Board and the JJB moved him to the Observation Home for 3 months. Later the JJB decided to send him to ECHO-Special Home for 6 months. During this period, he underwent intense behavior modification programs like counseling, moral education, life-skill programs etc. After this phase he came to ECHO-Sparsha along with his grandmother and requested Fr. Antony for help for his future life. With ECHO's help he was offered a job in the Traffic Police Assistance Program. He received training from the Traffic Police Department, Bangalore and was awarded a certificate from DGP, Karnataka. At present he has successfully completed six years in the program and has also got his driving license from RTO Bangalore. Ravi says "I am proud to say that from my savings I have purchased a plot for constructing a house and I am planning to build a house for my grandmother".

SURESH (NAME CHANGED)

Suresh, 16 years old, has studied only up to the 8th Standard. His family hails from Tumkur District. His parents migrated to Bangalore with their children – Suresh and a younger sister - in order to provide them a good education. His Father is a factory worker and mother a homemaker. His younger sister studied up to 2nd PUC. Suresh was not interested in going to school but only went because of pressure from his parents. Generally, he roamed around the area most of the time and behaved arrogantly towards the family. His parents struggled hard to take care of the family. Suresh started to work in Bharath Garments as an ironing worker. During this time, he committed a crime for which he was apprehended by the police in the year 2014. He was produced before the Juvenile Justice Board

which ordered him to be sent to an Observation Home. After further proceedings, the JJB (Urban) convicted him of his crime and ordered that he be sent to a Special Home to serve a three-year term. During this time Suresh underwent regular counseling sessions which helped him to realize his mistake. Three years of strict time table, Yoga, meditation, value education classes, physical exercises, dance classes etc. at the ECHO-Special home has helped him to change his life.

After his release, he was placed in ECHO's Hotel Management Program for rehabilitation. He behaved well in the class, followed the discipline and did well in the course. He completed the course and is currently working for a Five-star Hotel Bella vista in Jigani, Bangalore and earning Rs.15,000/- per month.

6. PROPOSING TO PROVIDE HANDHOLDING SUPPORT:

With loads of experience in running the special home successfully for the past 9 years, ECHO is proposing to provide the handholding support to other states to replicate this model in their respective states. The benefits of this program are:

1. The experience sharing aims to develop a nationwide child friendly Special Home system, which will help to bring down the crime rate and will change the way the children in conflict with law are treated.
2. It also helps to bring about uniformity in the processes of delivering justice in line with juvenile justice system across India.
3. This will give the concerned authority the skill to chalk out best suited rehabilitation programs in a better way which will help to reintegrate the inmates. back to the society.

4. It aims at sensitizing the handlers of these children to treat them in a more humane manner.

5. It gives insight into the effective model of administration.

To realize these aims, ECHO is proposing a six months handholding support which includes training, site visits, webinars, presentations and expertise sharing.

7. CONCLUSION

The empowerment of children by ensuring their human rights and dignity provides an opportunity to change which is necessary for the growth and development of our country. The way we deal with our children speaks volumes for our own character and ensures laying a concrete foundation for the future generations to follow. Undermining the value of a child undermines the value of our society / nation. The program of handholding aims to bring in uniform model in juvenile justice system in handling the detention center.

PRISON MINISTRY INDIA

REPORT 2019-2020

Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

1. INTRODUCTION

Covid19 Pandemic was a blessing in disguise for Prison Ministry India. The pandemic helped us to rediscover the significance of the spiritual dimension of prison ministry and all our volunteers wholeheartedly embraced the spiritual way. Similarly, the pandemic taught us the power and possibility of online communication and pushed us into the digital world. We positively made use of both these mediums for the greater glory of God. This report on PMI activities of 2019-2020 reveals how PMI volunteers have become channels of forgiving and caring love to prisoners.

2. INDIAN PRISONS AND PRISONERS

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) as per 31st December 2019 there were 1,350 prisons and 4,78,600 prisoners in India. There were 617 sub jails, 410 district jails, 144 central jails, 86 open jails, 41 special jails, 31 women jails, 19 borstal schools and 2 other jails. There were 1,44,125 convicts, 3,30,487 undertrials, 3,223 detenues and 765 other inmates. There were 19,913 female prisoners, 1942 children, 5,608 foreign prisoners and 1,543 women prisoners with children.

2.1 PRISON CHALLENGES

Overcrowding

Large Number of Undertrials

Inadequacy of Prison Staff

Lack of Health and Hygiene

Insufficient Food and Clothing

Lack of Classification and Correctional Methods

Inefficient Vocational Training.

3. PRISON MINISTRY INDIA (PMI)

Prison Ministry India is a Catholic Spiritual Movement for the release, reformation, rehabilitation, reintegration and redemption of prisoners under the justice, peace and development commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India with its headquarters in Bangalore. PMI was born on 8th December 1981 at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam by the initiative of two brothers – Bro Varghese Karipperry and Bro Francis Kodiyan MCBS. In 1989 Kerala Catholic Bishops Conference recognised this ministry and welcomed it under its justice, peace and development commission giving an office at its headquarters at POC. On 24 August 2000, CBCI recognized PMI under its justice, peace and development commission. Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva, the auxiliary bishop of Bombay, is the PMI Chairman.

3.1 ADMINISTRATION

PMI has 8000 volunteers who visit more than 950 prisons. We have 28 state coordinators, 4 regional coordinators, 56 diocesan coordinators, 15 seminary coordinators, and 950 unit coordinators. In every state we would like to have a bishop as chairman representing the State Bishops' Conference. He in collaboration with the state coordinator in the state executive body takes the major decisions in the state. The national

coordinator under the guidance of the PMI Chairman in the national executive body takes the major decisions on national level.

3.2 NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF

CBCI Convenor for Prison Ministry Desk	Most Rev Dr Allwyn D'Silva
CBCI Secretary to Prison Ministry India	Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS
Assistant National Coordinator	Fr Benny Pachanal CSRP
National Secretary	Sr Amala DC
Interim Secretary	Fr Rajendrakumar
Treasurer	Sr Rosily Jose SCC
Kolbe Home Superior	Sr Basil SCS
Kolbe Home Assistant	Sr Joanna SCS

3.3 LIFESTYLE

Weapon - Fasting and Prayer
 Mantra – Thank You Jesus
 Action – Search & Serve the Lost
 Bank – Bank of Divine Providence
 Style – Maximum Inconvenience
 Mode - Begging and Blessing – No Foreign Fund
 Goal – Saving the Lost

3.4 METHODOLOGY

1. Reach-out
2. Release
3. Repentance
4. Reconciliation

5. Reformation
6. Rehabilitation
7. Reintegration
8. Redemption
9. Redeemer, Jesus

3.5 SPIRITUALITY

Overwhelmed by the Love of God
Redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus
Led by the Holy Spirit
Empowered by the Word of God
Nourished by the Sacraments
Enlightened by Spiritual Exercises
Fortified by Ascetical Practices
Adorned by Virtues
Enriched by Fraternity
Enthralled by Seeking and Saving the Lost.

4. NOVEMBER 2019

4.1 DICASTERY FOR THE INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

PMI was invited to participate in an international conference convened by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development on Prison Ministry held in the Vatican on 7-9 November 2019. Fr Francis Kodiyan presented a paper in this meeting on the Initiatives and Contributions of Prison Ministry India which was well appreciated by representatives from other continents.

4.2 ICCPPC

PMI is a member of the International Commission for Catholic Prison Pastoral Care (ICCPPC) and used to attend its meeting.

PMI's innovative ventures and reformatory and rehabilitative attempts are inspiration and model for other countries. On 9th November 2019 Fr Francis Kodiyan participated in the ICCPPC meeting held in Rome and took the responsibility to spread the PMI spirituality and reformation methodology to 50 Asian countries.

4.3 PMI NATIONAL OFFICE SILVER JUBILEE

PMI Celebrated the National Office Jubilee on 19th November 2019 at St Joseph's Auditorium, Bengaluru. During this celebration PMI launched a new documentary film directed and produced by Mr Lavy Pinto, relaunched the Reformatory Explorations – the psycho-spiritual and crimino-social quarterly on prisoners' reformation and rehabilitation and released books such as the Lost – An Eightfold Path for Prisoners' Reformation, and Rainbow – The Theological Foundations of Prison Ministry India. PMI awarded appreciation certificates to those who served in the ministry more than 25 years.

4.4 RRDC

On 20th Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva blessed the Silver Jubilee Memorial Institute – RRDC – Reformatory Research and Documentation Center at Carmelaram near the National office. This is a five-story building of 8000 sqft.

4.5 NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEETING

The national executive meeting held on 20 November 2019 at the PMI National office was presided over by Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva, the PMI chairman. As silver jubilee privilege almost all state coordinators and rehabilitation directors participated in this meeting. The meeting passed the audit report and proposed many new ventures for the next 10 years.

4.6 ANDHRA STATE CONFERENCE

Andhra Pradesh State gathering was held on 29th November 2019 at Jeevasudha Pastoral Centre, Kurnool under the leadership of Fr Lahastraya, the AP PMI coordinator.

5. DECEMBER 2019

5.1 CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

PMI celebrated Christmas solemnly in most of the Indian prisons and reminded the incarcerated the significance of the birth of Jesus to prisoners for Jesus was born to seek and save the lost. Lots of programs were organized inside the various types of prisons.

5.2 CHRISTMAS IN TIHAR PRISONS

Together with the PMI Delhi volunteers I celebrated Christmas in Tihar prisons with cultural programs from different schools in Delhi.

5.3 CHRISTMAS IN BENGALURU PRISONS

We celebrated Christmas in the various prisons of Bengaluru such as central prison, women prison, open jail, juvenile home, sub-jail, district jail and so on.

5.4 ODISHA CONFERENCE

The Odisha state gathering took place on 4th December 2019 at Bishop's House, Rayagada under the leadership of PMI Odisha state coordinator Fr Timothy Victor Pinto SVD.

5.5 NORTH REGIONAL MEETING

PMI national team organised the North Regional meeting at the North Regional headquarters in Delhi. The volunteers had

expressed their joy of serving prisoners especially their service in Tihar Jail, Delhi, as it is the largest prison in India. The meeting bid farewell to Br Nabin Ekka who served as the North Regional coordinator in the past 3 years and wished him all the best as he travels to Peru as a missionary. Fr David Charles MSC took charge as the new North Regional coordinator.

5.6 DELHI STATE GATHERING

On 16th December 2019 PMI Delhi had a meeting under the leadership of Fr Francis Kodiyan in which the contemporary problems were discussed and took right decisions to march ahead with enthusiasm.

5.7 SPECIAL TASK FORCES

On 22nd December 2019 PMI launched Special task forces such as Death Row commandoes, Terrorist Saving Quad, Anti-human trafficking, Anti-drug trafficking squads etc.

6. JANUARY 2020

6.1 RESEARCH SEMINARS

PMI launched research seminars in the newly constructed RRDC building. We convened seminars on human rights, anti-human trafficking, etc.

6.2 HALF MARATHON

To create awareness on the need of respecting prisoners on 13 January 2020 PMI Pune unit organised a Half-Marathon dedicated to the release, renewal and rehabilitation of our brethren behind bars. The focus of the marathon was two-fold: to sensitize the general public to the cause of prisoners and to raise funds for the construction of a fully equipped

state-of-the-art rehabilitation and skill development center for released prisoners and their families at Karjat, near Mumbai.

6.3 JEEVODAYA SILVER JUBILEE

On 30th January 2020 Jeevodaya Ashram – a home for the released female prisoners under the supervision of the Holy Cross sisters celebrated its silver jubilee.

6.4 BOOK RELEASE

In connection with the Jeevodaya silver jubilee PMI released a book written by Sr Fidelis entitled Jeevodaya – A Gift of God, which proves that we could reform, rehabilitate and reintegrate more than 500 girls through our ministry.

7. FEBRUARY 2020

7.1 FABC MEETING, CAMBODIA

PMI was invited by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) to participate in its 2020 Preparatory Workshop scheduled for 1-3 February 2020 at Mindol Metta Karuna, Phum Kasekam, Cambodia. PMI National Coordinator presented a paper on the emerging problems of the Asian continent.

7.2 CBCI PLENARY MEETING, BENGALURU

Fr Francis Kodiyan the CBCI secretary for the Prison ministry desk participated in the CBCI plenary meeting held at St John's from 12 to 19 February 2020.

7.3 VAN THUAN HOME

On 29 February 2020 PMI launched Van Thuan Home – a rehabilitation centre for released men prisoners at RRDC.

8. MARCH 2020

8.1 KOLBE HOME

This year we had 18 children at Kolbe Home. They study from 1st to 10th standard in neighboring schools. Satyaseva Catechist Sisters take care of them.

8.2 COVID19 PANDEMIC

Thousands of prisoners and prison staff were affected by Covid19 pandemic. Some prisoners died due to Covid19. Though PMI could not organize the regular prison visits and celebrations inside the prisons we could make use of this pandemic to assist prisoners all over India in the following ways:

8.3 SANITIZERS AND MASKS

PMI units all over India distributed sanitizers and masks in almost all prisons. In many prisons, we provided materials and machines to produce masks. To many prisons we provided oximeters.

9. APRIL 2020

9.1 SCHOLARSHIPS TO PRISONERS' CHILDREN

Many PMI units established scholarships for prisoners' children. Through this scheme more than 100 children do school studies and many do degree studies and one is doing PH.D.

9.2 PRISONERS' FAMILY VISITS

This year as we could not visit the prisons due to Covid19 Pandemic, we focused more on the family visit of prisoners.

9.3 PRISON QUARTERS MINISTRY

Due to Covid19 PMI stopped the Prison Quarters ministry and those Sisters now spend time in intercessory prayer for the reformation of prisoners worldwide.

10. MAY 2020

10.1 PMI DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

PMI launched its Documentation center at the ground floor of RRDC on 20 May 2020.

10.2 GROCERY DISTRIBUTION

Every month PMI national office distributes grocery to Kolbe home children, migrant families and children in slums.

11. JUNE 2020

11. 1 FULLTIMERS' COURSE

PMI convened the Full timers' Online Course with the theme Reform to Reintegrate from June 15 to 28, 2020 in which more than 60 people participated.

12. JULY 2020

12.1 NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEETING

On July 15, 2020 PMI convened the national executive online meeting in which all executive members participated. The PMI 2019-2020 annual report, the financial report for the year 2019-2020 and the budget for the year 2020-2021 were passed in this meeting.

12.2 VOLUNTEERS' TRAINING CENTRE

Most Rev Dr Allwyn D'Silva inaugurated the newly constructed Volunteers' training centre on 15th July 2020.

13. AUGUST 2020

13.1 STATE-DIOCESAN COORDINATORS TRAINING PROGRAM

PMI organised the State and diocesan coordinators' training program on 2-17 August 2020 in which more than 70 volunteers participated.

13.2 ST MAXIMILLIAN KOLBE DAY CELEBRATION

All the PMI units celebrated the novena of St Maximillian Kolbe, the patron saint of PMI and celebrated the Kolbe day meaningfully.

13.3 PRISON MINISTRY SUNDAY CELEBRATIONS

In the month of August on all Sundays PMI all over India celebrated Online Prison Ministry Sunday in different parts of India according to the convenience of each state.

13.4 TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR RELIGIOUS AND SEMINARIANS

Theoretical and practical aspects of prison ministry were taught to the novices, the young religious and seminarians.

14. SEPTEMBER 2020

14.1 PMI ONLINE RETREAT

From 13-19 September 2020 PMI convened an online retreat with the title *Il Risveglio – The Reawakening*. This really reawakened the PMI movement and brought forth unfathomable fruits.

14.2 CHHATTISGARH STATE CONFERENCE

PMI Chhattisgarh had a special meeting to appoint a new State coordinator.

15. OCTOBER 2020

15.1 BURNING BUSH SPIRITUAL BANQUET

Every First Friday of the month PMI organizes a Burning Bush spiritual banquet consisting of Eucharistic adoration and breaking of the Word of God. On 2nd October 2020 Bishop Mar Jose Pulickal spoke on the PMI spirituality and on 6th November 2020 Fr Maverick from Goa broke the Word of God.

15.2 FR STAN SWAMY SJ

On October 8 2020, NIA, a federal anti-terror combat unit, arrested Father Swamy from his residence on the outskirts of Ranchi. He is accused of sedition and having links with an outlawed Maoist group. The court of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) based in Mumbai, extended the judicial custody of Father Stan for another 21 days to Nov. 26 when the case will be heard again.

15.3 INCESSANT INTERNATIONAL INTERCESSORY INVOCATION FOR THE INCARCERATED

Covid19 Pandemic was a blessing in disguise. It provided the conviction that prison ministry is basically a spiritual movement and consists in merely visiting and providing some material assistance to prisoners. To spiritually empower and sanctify prisoners worldwide PMI launched incessant intercessory invocation for the incarcerated. For prayer especially, the Holy mass plays the most significant role in the reformation and reintegration of prisoners worldwide.

15.4 COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY COURSE 12-25 OCTOBER

In collaboration with Anugraha Counselling and Psychiatry institute in Dindigal, PMI organised a counselling course for PMI volunteers.

15.5 PMI SPECIAL TASK FORCE CONFERENCE

Every last Saturday of the month PMI organises a conference of the PMI special task forces. On 31st October Bishop Allwyn D'Silva gave the message and four special task forces such as Terrorists saving squad, Death Row Commandoes, Prisoners' Releasing squad, and Purgatory Souls Redeemers shared their experiences. Each group has 40 members and has a 40-day program for the liberation of prisoners.

16. NOVEMBER 2020

16.1 RENOVATION OF REHABILITATION CENTERS

We renovated the rehabilitation center for Released men prisoners at Thrissur. Bishop Mar Jose Pulickal will inaugurate it on 15th November 2020.

16.2 HOUSE CONSTRUCTION

PMI constructed many houses for released, rehabilitated and reintegrated prisoners in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.

16.3 RELEASE

By our constant visits, meetings and legal aid, we could release many innocent incarcerated brethren. There are many in prisons caught in petty cases and remain in prison having nobody to assist. PMI release these poor brethren by providing them financial assistance. With the assistance of PMI legal clinics,

we release many prisoners before the completion of their confinement. This is possible firstly by their good behavior, secondly by the legal assistance and thirdly by financial settlements.

17. PUBLICATIONS

17.1 PRISON VOICE

Due to Covid19 pandemic we could not print the *Prison Voice* these past months but we sent its soft copy to our members.

17.2 REFORMATIVE EXPLORATIONS

We published Reformative Explorations regularly but due to covid19 some issues were distributed only in soft copy version.

17.3 NEW BOOKS

Fr Francis Kodiyan, *Rainbow – the Theological Foundations of Prison Ministry*

Fr Francis Kodiyan, *The Lost – An Eightfold Path for Prisoners' Reformation*

Fr Francis Kodiyan, *Warriors of Prison Ministry India*

Sr Lini Sheeja, *Sound of Silence*

Sr Lini Sheeja, *Redeemed Prisoner*

Sr Fidelis, *Jeevodaya – A Gift of God*

18. CONCLUSION

We express our immense gratitude to our chairman, Most Rev Dr Allwyn D'Silva, all Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, CBCI Secretaries, Priests, Religious, and lay faithful for their blessing, guidance and cooperation. We thank wholeheartedly all the

benefactors for their big heartedness. Thanks to their generosity we could outreach our incarcerated brethren and their families. Prison Ministry does not end with visits to the prison; it goes beyond the prison walls, to their families, their children and victims. Anointed by the Holy Spirit, we serve the Lord in incarceration and thereby renew the face of the earth. Every City, Diocese, and Parish has its Lost – Prisoners, Prostitutes, Criminals – Those Who Do Not Come to the Church. Let's Join Our Hands in Sanctifying and Saving Them. "There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (Lk 15, 7).

IL RISVEGLIO - THE REAWAKENING
AWAKE AND ARISE, CHRIST WILL SHINE ON
YOU (EPH 5:14)
Walter Kamble

INTRODUCTION

Prison Ministry India national team conducted an online retreat for 90 volunteers from 13-19 September 2020. PMI is grateful to the God of the Lost as it brought blessings in abundance. The purpose of the retreat was the renewal of PMI before we could renew our brethren behind the bars. We began the retreat with a Holy Hour with Blessed Sacrament exposed. Every morning at 10.00 the retreat commenced with praise and worship followed by the Eucharistic Celebration. Fr Francis Kodyan MCBS delivered inspiring homilies which challenged the core of the retreatants. After the Eucharist, an hour of talk was preached by experienced resource persons of PMI. The retreatants were asked to remain in silence and in prayerful atmosphere throughout the retreat so as to attain the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Every evening at 1730 with Rosary we began the retreat followed by Divine Mercy Chaplet, evening talk and Holy Hour. Every day was a unique experience for the retreatants as they were drawn closer to the Lord of the Lost and strengthened them with the deeper experience to serve with deeper commitment.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, PMI national coordinator and secretary to CBCI for the PMI Desk, in his welcome address gave a brief introduction as how to derive optimum benefits from this online retreat and inspired the participants with 6 T's; introduction, invitation, introspection, investigation, insight and innovation. As Jesus was a man of prayer, He invites the PMI volunteers to plunge in the deep spiritual life and this retreat is an opportunity to enter into the depth of our hearts to know the Master and to renew our vocation to PMI. Let our attitude be of a tax collector who went into the temple to pray as he said, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner' (Lk 18:13). Fr Francis applied present scenario of COVID 19 and the chaos that has created in the mind of the people. He said that this is the time for repentance. Repent and do penance for the sins of the mankind and the methodology to follow is 5 'Be's'; be attentive, be reasonable, be intelligent, be responsible and be in love.

The Significance of the retreat is a time to purify, examine one's life, to see the divine blue print prepared by Jesus for us, to regain energy and spiritual power, to discern, to say yes to the Lord and no to the devil, to liberate oneself from evil ways and to bring forth virtues and good habits. Fr Francis quoted the words of St John XXIII that retreat is an opportunity to shake of the dust that is gathered in our lives, to; (1) renew the world and myself, family, community, church (2) experience God by regaining strength and going back to work. We are like ship's crew trapped by in a storm struggling to come out of it. Thomas Merton said "God is searching me, let me be found". Let this be our desire as mentioned in Psalm 42:1-2 "As the deer pants for water so my soul pants for you God". This retreat

is a unique opportunity and special grace to be with Jesus who came to seek the Lost and the Least.

INAUGURAL MASS

On 14 September 2020, being the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, the volunteers were asked by Fr Francis to carry their crosses along the crosses of prisoners joyfully in order to bring the blessings for whom our service is extended. The inaugural Mass was celebrated by Most Rev Dr Peter Machado, the archbishop of Bengaluru. The Holy Eucharist was celebrated for the intentions of brethren behind the bars, their families and for PMI volunteers all over India. Archbishop imprinted the deep meaning and value of carrying the cross for the sake of the lost behind the bars in the hearts of the retreatants by explaining it in depth, “Cross is a blessing as in the Old Testament Moses lifted up the serpent and the people were healed. Jesus said, ‘And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life’ (Jn 3:14-15). The cross is a sign of liberation to the humanity. Prisoners carry the cross in the closed walls of prisons. We the PMI volunteers help them to kiss the cross lovingly and convey the message of glorification after every suffering.

GOD’S LOVE

Most Rev Dr Allwyn D’Silva, PMI Chairman delivered his talk on ‘God’s Love’. His message on God’s love was quite different as he asked the volunteers to recall their personal experience of being loved by God. “One cannot understand God’s love unless one experiences it personally. Deepest need of human being is to be loved and the greatest liberation is to know and experience the divine love. God loved us before we loved Him

but we do not know how to receive that love. There were many times we had not allowed ourselves to be touched and loved, but rather we had placed conditions on God's love. One cannot demand love; rather it can only be received. We find ourselves vulnerable in accepting God's love. Deepest form of love is giving oneself completely to the one who loves us. We need to ask ourselves, 'did I allow God to love me completely?' When we experience the divine love in full, it becomes easier for the PMI volunteers to love the broken beings behind the bars.

Bishop Allwyn asked the participants to record a moment where we experienced the depth of God's love and asked to recall the grace filled feeling. Once we experience God's unconditional love in the depth of our hearts, then we feel precious, someone who is loved, someone who is wanted by the universe for we can hear God saying "You are precious to me". The moment you are convinced of divine love we will be able to love the ones who are entrusted to us; for the volunteers of PMI is the brethren behind the bars. Lost sheep is entrusted in our hands by the God of the Lost. "If you say I love God, while you hate your brother or sister, you a liar. How can you love God whom you do not see, if you do not love your brother whom you see?" (1 Jn 4:20). We received from him noble commandment: let those who love God also love their brothers. We know all answers of God's love, but how do we place in action in sharing this God's love to the prisoners.

JESUS'S LOVE

Fr Varghese Kariperry, PMI cofounder gave an inspiring note on Jesus' love based on his personal encounter with Jesus, who willingly went up to the cross for the redemption of mankind. Cross is the greatest sign of Jesus's love as He redeemed us through it. The cross which was the symbol of shame became

the symbol of love and grace by Jesus. He quoted three last words of Jesus and explained in detail; (1) “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do” (Lk 23:34). Jesus made the forgiveness possible even on the cross. Every reality can be made positive by our forgiveness. People in prison cells have revengeful attitude. We need to accompany them in their journey to encounter the crucified Christ on the Cross and make all things possible by forgiveness. (2) “You will be with me in paradise” (Lk 23:43). Jesus, even in his pain he thought of the other, even on His cross He redeemed the other. Before His death He converted a sinner and this is the ministry entrusted to us. (3) “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Lk 23:46). By receiving His spirit from the cross, we become blessing and we are called to preach the crucified Christ.

Jesus was with the people, the marginalized, the poor and the lost ones. Human methodology is 99 or 95, but the methodology of Jesus is one, the failed one, the lost one. Let our methodology be as of Jesus. Though initially we may not find results let us never give up our methodology of the failed one. “Heaven rejoices over one sinner than over 99” (Lk 15: 17). First Pope of the Catholic Church was a failure. Though Peter was with Jesus all the time, but when Jesus was in need, he was not there. But the Risen Lord made him successful. We have to work till the last. Never give up as we are called by the God of hope. The first missionary was a Samaritan woman near the well (Jn 4:1-2). First, she addresses Jesus as a Jew, then Lord and ultimately as Savior and she became the first missionary to bring people to Jesus. Jesus had different types of people around him all the time; fishermen, murderers, tax collectors, the Samaritan woman. Peter the fisherman gets converted and then he converts 3000 people in one preaching. Tax collector Matthew wrote the gospel. Jesus empowers and upholds people, the down trodden. Jesus upholds everyone

and this is the love of the Master. Jesus teaches us that without Him we are zeroes and with Him we are heroes. The volunteers of PMI are blessed; they are elected for a greater task. The work may seem simple but it has great value when we do for the sake of the One who called us.

HOLY SPIRIT

On 15 September 2020 the morning talk was delivered by Rev Fr Wilfred Fernandes, PMI central regional coordinator. In today's terminology, the Holy Spirit is like a GPS for us whose battery never goes down. He knows everything. He is the memory of God. 'Being led' means living according to Jesus teaching. He is our advocate, our counselor, helper etc. The three basic truths of the Holy Spirit are, He is all powerful, He is wise, He is everywhere. There is this story of a boy who had no shoes, no education, but today he has become a millionaire. He was asked how? He said that whenever he has to make an investment, he goes to the chapel and prays waiting for an answer from the Lord. No matter how long, days, but only when he gets an answer he goes out and invests and so he is a millionaire today. The message is "Lean on to God completely and trust him to give you the strength to do what you need to do".

Fr Wilfred quoted Luke 11:13 "If you know to give good things to your children, how much more God will give". God will give best to His children and God's gifts are best. There are 4 ways to be led by the Holy Spirit. (1) Meditate on the Word of God – "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success" (Joshua 1:8). (2) Be a doer of the Word of God –

People may doubt what you say. But they will believe what you do. (3) Put the Word of God above everything - “My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from eyes, Keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life to those who find them. And health to all their flesh” (Proverbs 4:20-22). (4) Instantly respond to your Spirit – The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord.

HOLY EUCHARIST

Mar Tony Neelankavil, the auxiliary bishop of Thrissur Archdiocese delivered a talk on the Holy Eucharist. He began by saying that whenever he sees his role in the prison ministry in his life, it has always confirmed his vocation. Whenever there was confusion in his mind he was strengthened and felt that the people are in need of him and his service. The Eucharist brings us closer to God and to prisons. The mystery of death and passion in the Holy Eucharist is close to people’s suffering. Our God shares and takes part in our suffering. Eucharist is just not a memorable event that took place 2000 years ago, but it is a reality. We are not just doing a rite of an incident that happened before, but it is again takes place in real time. In the Eucharist we feel the person and not just a rite. Through the sacrament of the Eucharist the people are brought before God.

The Eucharist takes away our sin. On the mount Calvary, the thief on the left side did not believe, no hope in life, he was beyond redemption. This is the situation we face daily. Many of them feel lost; feel that they cannot be redeemed. We need to tell them the redemptive nature of the Mass. They all are saved by the death of Jesus on the cross. People should be made aware of this (Isaiah 53:4-5) “By his stripes we are healed”. Our celebration shall instill hope and love in them. We encounter Jesus in the Holy Eucharist through which the

greatest blessing is showered upon us. Nothing is impossible for God. (John 6:52). Jesus gave his body and said eat it. The people had a doubt how can Jesus give his body to eat. What did you eat when you were in your mother's womb? The baby there is not hungry, but still it continues to receive food from the Mother. In fact, the baby is eating the mother. She is offering herself to the tiny baby and the baby begins to grow by eating this food. Jesus gives his food (John 6:54) not for physical life but for the soul and to grow in eternal life (John 6:57). We live on Jesus Christ. This we have to tell prisoners. In Jesus you are going to change your life.

PMI VIRTUES

On 16 September 2020 the morning talk was delivered by Sr Inigo SSA, the former superior general and the volunteer of PMI at Tihar Prison, Delhi. She challenged the retreatants as her every word was based on her experience with the brethren behind the bars for 14 years. She said convincingly that prisoners are our brothers and sisters. Jesus was a man of prayer. Prayer is reality; you will be pulled to suffering. Jesus prayed in two ways "mountain prayer", where he went all by himself and prayed. Then there is the "Multitude prayer" where Jesus was with the people. We are to be mystic if we want to be missionary and therefore prayer is most important aspect in prison ministry. It's not a social ministry; it is a mission, an ethical and spiritual mission. We do this with the involvement of heart and therefore we need to be renewed by the Holy Spirit. Prison ministry is born out of love. In ancient time a prison was considered as house of captives and a place of punishment. Now it is a home of correction and rehabilitation. Who is a prisoner? The definition of a prison that it is a place to be punished and be transformed. For PMI volunteers, a prisoner is a human being without voice, no space of his own, being

disciplined in every possible way and his movements are curtailed. He is confined in a 40 square feet space.

He is not a born prisoner. They are there because of the society. Prisoners need you as they are deprived of privacy and love; he is kept under close watch, he has no privacy, there is no provision to keep his things safely and no legal aid. In this lockdown situation, we have experienced the restrictions of movement; we are confined to our homes only. What do we actually do in the prison? Prison ministry is not about doing miraculous work among the inmates or securing their release from the prison, of course sometimes we do. Our primary purpose is to instill in them the value of hope. Compassion is a virtue, it cannot be explained, but it has to be experienced. Compassion means sensitivity, generosity. We need to remain non-judgmental; we need to approach them with sincere love. Our presence brings them lots of healing, hope and conversion of hearts. Prison authorities say that your presence makes a lot of difference as our language is different. The language of prison ministry volunteers should be love, compassion and tenderness. They crave to listen to your soothing voice, and only you can do it. At times we have to be patient. Their self-esteem is very low. They need to be encouraged, given hope and enable them to see the good things in themselves. Therefore, we must be ready to accept lots of inconvenience and to rely on the providence of God.

MOTHER MARY

Honorable Justice Kurian Joseph, former Supreme Court Judge presented the theme on Mother Mary. We just celebrated the feast of seven sorrows of Mother Mary. But in prison they have 70 sorrows. Prison Ministry is not a service but a ministry.

The disciples of Jesus did not do service, they did ministry and it is to be continued. The first Christian is Mary and she is the first tabernacle of Jesus. I have a special attachment to Mother Mary. When I had many ups and downs in my profession, and the storm was rough, I had recourse to Mother Mary. Mother Mary's virtue is simplicity and holiness. One cannot do this ministry unless one has simplicity and humility. Mother Mary is present in the prisons together with her Son Jesus. Without the guidance of Mary, we cannot say we love prisoners.

The meaning of compassion is to love and service. Mary's presence itself is a blessing. Can we ask a question: Is our presence accepted by the people, and especially in the prison? Without compassion and love we cannot be accepted. It has to be like Peter who stood near the golden gate. Peter's response to the beggar is a big challenge for us. What you ask I don't have, but what you need is with me. This is a great challenge for us. We have to be simple and holy having the discernment to know what they deserve and need. We cannot give what they want, but give what they need for their liberation. We should never work for self-glory. Mary was far away from this. She was positive to accept Jesus. Faith in Jesus and faithfulness to Jesus can always look up to. The other quality she had was that she was a great leader. What is the role of a leader? Mary never claimed it, but always was present. Mother Mary rekindled in the minds of the disciples as she said to the disciples, "Do whatever He tells you" (John 2:5).

PMI MISSION

On 17 September 2020 Fr Alexander Kureekattil CMF moved the hearts of the retreatants as he poured his experience with

the released prisoners in rehabilitation centers with the given topic on PMI mission. Fr Kureekkattil did great contributions to PMI in Kerala by taking the mission to advanced levels as he launched the ministry to redeem the 'hired killers'. A prisoner introduced himself to Fr Alexander saying, 'I am Killer JV', as if he had done great contributions to society. Father spent an hour with him quoting and sharing the scriptures. Killer JV had killed 8 people, repented and asked God to give him the heart to love him. He was in prison for 12 years. Fr Alexander took him to Trivandrum and for 6 years he was with Fr Kureekkattil and became a renewed person. Father followed Killer JV everywhere, met all the connected people who used to give quotations to kill people. Fr Alexander realized that Killer JV was very simple deep within. He said, "I realized that if we hold the hands of a prisoner, we will see the tears, for they had gone through hard times in their lives".

One of the most touching and scary narrations was when 4 men came with weapons to kill Fr Alexander. He retrieved back his footsteps and ran to the police station and told them that his life is under threat. The police told him that they had already warned him that criminals will always be criminals, but yet Fr Alexander was not scared of this episode, he prayed and his mission to transform the hardcore criminals continued with compassion and communion with God. This story truly gave goose-bumps to all the retreatants. Fr Alexander is truly charismatic, God's own son, daring to reach out, whom no one would like to be even involved. When you are in communion with God you will be able to touch the lives of such people. He quoted Mother Theresa 'open your eyes in front of your home', as we have opportunity to serve and care people. You need

not travel far but look around in your area nearby for which your eyes need to be opened. “Unless you have communion with God, you cannot have union with the prisoners”. Take the risks and we will see the transformation in their lives.

PMI VOCATION

Fr Sebastian Vadakumpadan, PMI former national coordinator shed the light on the retreatants on PMI vocation. Prison ministry is a call within a call. Whenever God calls someone, he asked to do something concretely. We are called to leave everything as he invited us personally to leave everything and take up our cross and follow Him. Every call is a covenant with God. Each covenant takes place inside of you and it is God who makes the covenant. The moment you are in this ministry you will be controlled – your going will be controlled, your movement will be controlled, your association will be controlled, and your enjoyment will be controlled, because you are entering into the restricted place. I congratulate all our dedicated PMI volunteers who allow themselves to be restricted for a cause. Luke 5:1, at the Sea of Galilee, He called Peter, John, James and Andrew. First miracle of catching fish and last catch of fish after the resurrection took place at this sea. There is a ‘smell of call’ beside the smell of fish. It is better to be in this sea to think about a call within a call.

God does not use and throw us. God never make the policy of ‘Use and throw’. He is interested in Peter. He speaks and interacts with Peter. God never leaves. If you give something, you will receive hundredfold is the promise of the Master who called us personally. Jesus tells Peter to cast his nets and he gets rewarded. Obey the master and don’t depend on your expertise. Peter obeyed the Master even though his field was

different from Jesus field. Your expertise has to be submitted before the Lord. It is Jesus who gives you fruit. Be ready to share from what you have received. Peter calls others to share the fishes; ready to share what he has got. No blessings are for the individuals; we are blessed to become a blessing for others. We need to look at Jesus and not the blessings as peter looked at Jesus. From the miraculous catch of fish, he looked at Jesus. He directed his sight from creature to the creator. Nobody comes to you because of your performance. It is the work of God. Your eyes should get entangled with Jesus eyes.

SIN AND REPENTANCE

On 18 September 2020 Fr Sebastian Thekkanath, PMI former national coordinator took the retreatants through the important theme of 'Sin and Repentance'. We all are rendering our service to a group of people who are branded as sinners or about whom we think they have to repent on their sins, because they all are caught in some wrong actions and accused of such actions. Sin is an attraction to the world and it gives burden. Repentance is an attraction to God and His love lightens the burden. Sin separates us from God. Christian life is a war against Sin. It is a continuous fight against sin. The greatest commandment is "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, love your neighbor as yourself" (Lk 10:27)

Prison ministry is a special ministry different from all other ministries of the church. We cannot compare any other ministry with the service inside the prison. People inside the prison are confined to the four walls of prison. They are branded people accused of some crime. General public look at them in a different way. They are wounded people, isolated people, psychologically down, depressed people with grudge,

and nobody believes them. But look at ourselves we are also sinners before God, our creator. We cannot say keeping our right hand on our chest, we are perfect: we have no stain of sin. Repentance is not an option, but it is a commandment of God. There are only two types of people in the world; sinners who are caught and put into the prison as accused and sinners those who are not yet caught and we are those people.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Sin is poison. Poison spreads. In the prisons we are meeting people who have been wounded and hence vulnerable. If PMI volunteers are not transparent/pure as crystal, the sin in them can affect the prisoners. Hence the need for PMI volunteers to take confession more seriously and more often. Confession is a mirror through which we can see our inside, see the dirt inside us and when we accept them, the lord cleanses them through his blood. How often do we need to make our confessions? Jesus said to Simon: “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:18-19). The modern-day problems are we have lost the sense of sin, we justify our sins, we find external cause for our sins, we live mediocre lives without being responsible for our lives

What is sin? Sin breaks the relationship with God, with oneself, with others and with the nature. What is my sin? How close or far away am I from my god? God is Holy and me being His child what is my destination/target? God has called us to live, not in impurity but in holiness (1 Thess 4:7). But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin

(1 John 1:7). Not only that; we feel secure in God because of Christ Jesus, our lord, through whom we have been reconciled. Jesus' call is not just oriented to an outward expression, but conversion of the heart, interior conversion. External works without interior conversion is sterile and false. Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a return to God with all our hearts is an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed. None of us exempted from the Sacrament of Confession. Feel sorry for your sins, cry out to him for forgiveness and healing. Feel His arms around you as He waits for your return as the father waited for the return of the prodigal son.

RENEWED LIFE

On 19 September 2020 Most Rev Dr Allwyn D'Silva, PMI chairman enlightened the retreatants on 'Renewed Life'. As you have listened to a number of talks during this retreat it's time to examine ourselves as we are at the end of our retreat. Talks are like chewing gum. Chew them and examine yourself. Let us ask ourselves, what treasure do I carry from these past few days. The first treasure is the realization of what we are and what we have is a gift of God. "Can a woman forget her nursing child or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget you, see I have inscribed you on the palm of my hands" (Is 49:15-16). Yahweh is telling us, you are precious. Experience that we are God's gifts. The moment we realize we are God's gifts we learn that the others too are the gifts of God.

The second treasure is we are redeemed. Having this experience of redeemed makes oneself a joyful. One needs to overcome one's fear, anger, hurts. The hurtful memories need to be healed.

Once you are healed of your negativity you will accept yourself and will love yourself. In life we have to make the choices to treasure every moment. I choose to be happy. I choose not to be offended. I choose to accept responsibility and not to blame. I choose to be lovingly silent and not react. I choose to let go and not be stubborn.

Another treasure we can hold for ourselves is change the way to look at others. Look with the eyes of Jesus as Jesus looked and the person changed. Thomas Merton says, “Anxiety is a mark of spiritual failure”. We must believe in ourselves that we are capable, many a times we are anxious. One who trusts God has no right to be anxious. Think differently that we are capable and God is with us. “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Go out and show the Kingdom of God to others. As we take tablets to increase our immunity during this Corona Virus Pandemic, the act of kindness will keep us highly immune against sin.

CALL TO BE A BLESSING TO THE BROKEN BEINGS

As concluding talk Sr Lini Sheeja MSC, former PMI national secretary invited the volunteers to be a blessing to the broken beings. “Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “this is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19). The first act of Jesus is ‘took bread’. We are taken in God’s hands. When He called us He had a purpose. Before we were born, we were in His hands. His hand is always safe; nothing would harm and there is no fear when we are in His hands. God took us, because He trusted us. There are hundreds of ministries. We are chosen by God for this unique, noble ministry by the God of the Lost for a purpose. The second act is ‘giving thanks’. After having taken

us in His hands, He looked up to heaven; He looked up to His Heavenly Father and thanked for the gift of us. We are counted and our service is counted. Jesus asks us to commit ourselves in our selfless service to Him through which we can glorify the God of the Lost together with all the heavenly angels and saints. The third act is 'broke it'. Let us cast our nests into the deep water, to know ourselves. His personal invitation to each one of us is to break ourselves. To taste the sweet coconut water, we need to break the outer and hard shells of it. Let us break ourselves from anger, break our pride, jealousy, ego, disunity and break from our own comfort zones to reach out to the broken ones behind the bars. The final act of Jesus in this passage is 'gave it to them'. Jesus has given each one of us to our vulnerable brethren and their families in humble service.

Sr Lini reminded the retreatants on begging style as she said 'feel blessed to beg'. The life in prison is unspeakably different from the life of an ordinary person outside. Our brothers and sisters behind the bars struggle with the life inside. We have four basic principles to be effective ministers in this ministry and to do wonders in the name of Jesus Christ. (1) Prayer our powerhouse (2) God's providence our bank balance (3) Inconvenience our convenience (4) Begging our lifestyle. Prison ministry is a continuous struggle for our brethren behind the bars and this struggle is expressed by our begging lifestyle. God blesses us in our struggle. Why do we follow this lifestyle? The reason is very simple as it touches the hearts our inmates in the rehabilitation centers. Very often they say, 'Our fathers and sisters are begging to feed us and help us'. This itself makes them changed persons. Go out of your life to beg to feed our brothers, sisters and their children whom God has placed in our care. Let us not be ashamed to beg, rather feel blessed to beg. Begging is grace given to each volunteer by the God of

the poor, by Jesus who had no place to be born, to place to lay His head. We beg to make them kings and queens. Let our attitude be, they are the kings and queens and we are servants.

INNER HEALING

Fr Jose Vettiyankal VC, the director of Logos Retreat Centre, Bangalore led the Inner Healing. To have inner healing we have to say the Inner Healing Prayer. Transfix your hands above your chest them in a form of a cross about half a foot away from your chest. Moses put a piece of wood in bitter water; it was changed into sweet water. Similarly, the power of the cross can change all our bitter memories and experiences into sweet ones. Imagine that white rays are radiating from the cross to your hearts, where all the bitterness is stored up. These powerful rays bring the inner healing that you need.

We have 7 stages in our growth, developments and so the inner healing should take place in all these 7 stages. We need to pray over each stage and Lord Jesus goes back to those stages and heals us of those painful memories. This will happen only if we are open to His grace and healing touch. Fr Jose asked the retreatants to cry out to the Lord when the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed. Believe that the Jesus our healer is here in our midst and all things are possible if we have faith in Him. 1) Prenatal – 9 months and nine days, 2) Infancy – 0-5 years, 3) Childhood – 6 – 12 years, 4) Adolescence (teens) – 13 – 19 years, 5) Youth – 20 – 35 years, 6) Middle ages – 36 – 60 years, 7) Senior Citizens – above 60 years, 8) RIP is the last stage there we don't need inner healing. God takes us completely to Him. In all 7 stages we need healing. Because we are not 100% perfect and all have some kind of manifestation of negative memories in one or the other stages. Only Jesus can heal. He is the physician of the mind, body and soul. The manifestation

of negative memories can be in 3 areas: body – psychosomatic disease; mind – emotional imbalance and instabilities, psychosis and neurosis, personality disorder, fear, anxiety, phobia etc. Soul – spiritual problems such as scrupulosity, faith in fatalism, criminal and sinful tendencies etc.

Some manifestations of inner wounds will prevent to achieve something good in your life. There are some manifestations of the inner wounds that will lead you towards sin. There are times; we may not receive inner healing because we have not confessed our sins. The reasons of inner wounds are unloved experiences, feeling of rejection, trauma, negative feelings, ancestral causes/parental causes, diabolical causes. The remedies to these are walk along with Jesus towards the past stages of growth, unconditional forgiveness, inner healing adoration led by a person who has the gift of inner healing, ongoing inner healing prayers, deliverance and protection prayers, infilling prayers/anointing prayers, prayer of praise, worship and adoration.

CONCLUDING RETREAT PRAYER

Jesus, you are the same yesterday, today and forever. Come into my yesterdays; into my wounded feelings and negative events to transform them for my favor and good. Jesus, I pray over all these negatives that happened in my life and feelings such as rejection, unforgiveness, sorrows, fear, loneliness and failure and so on. I pray over them all. Jesus, come into my bitter experiences and change them into sweet memories. I pray and forgive all who have offended me unjustly and bless them more than you bless me. Jesus alone will hear our prayers. “Jesus is sufficient for me” (2 Cor 2:16).

FINAL BLESSING

After the talk on healing, it was followed by exposition of the Blessed Sacrament wherein the Fr Jose invoked God's blessings and protection over the retreatants. It was a moment of grace and heavenly experience as everyone were gazing at the Eucharistic Master pleading for His healing touch. The participants started counting their blessings as the whole retreat brought blessings in abundance. Counting all the blessings during this final hour of the retreat all the retreatants thanked and praised the Holy God together with the angels and saints in heaven for the hundredfold blessings we experienced personally and the PMI family as a whole.

**SR HELEN PREJEAN CSJ, DEAD MAN
WALKING: AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE
DEATH PENALTY IN THE UNITED STATES**

1993, ISBN-13: 978-0679403586

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

Dead Man Walking (1993) is a work of non-fiction by Sister Helen Prejean, a Roman Catholic nun and one of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Medaille. An account based on her work as a spiritual adviser to two convicted murderers on Death Row, the book is set at the Louisiana State Penitentiary (Angola) in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana. It examines moral issues related to death penalty. In this most moving book called *Dead Man Walking*, Sr Helen Prejean CSJ conveys a truth to the entire world that human beings are bigger than their worst acts and she loves the hardcore criminals the way Jesus loves them. She proclaims the words of Jesus to humanity, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners" Lk 5:32.

Sr Helen Prejean is one of the world's most well-known anti-death penalty activists. As a Catholic nun, she began her prison ministry more than 37 years ago. She is the author of this best-selling book, "*Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States.*" The book has been translated into numerous languages and turned into an opera, a play and

an Academy Award-winning film starring Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn. She continues to counsel not only inmates on death row, but also the families of murder victims.

Prejean has become a leading American advocate for the abolition of the death penalty. Her campaign began in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1982, through a correspondence she maintained with two convicted murderers. The first was Elmo Patrick Sonnier, who was sentenced to death by electric chair. She visited Sonnier in prison and agreed to be his spiritual adviser in the months leading up to his death. The second was Robert Lee Willie, for whom she also served as spiritual adviser. The experience gave Prejean greater insight into the process involved in executions and the minds of convicted murderers. She became convinced that the death penalty was morally wrong and began speaking out against capital punishment. At the same time, she founded *Survive*, an organization devoted to providing counseling to the families of victims of violence.

The title of the book comes from a phrase once used in traditional American prisons, to designate a man condemned to death. 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 debated. It may have been to warn other staff or prisoners, to let them know 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 in order not to catch his bad luck. In any case, its

symbolism is clear: the condemned prisoner, in the eyes of the law, was dead already.

As death row inmate, Matthew Poncelet (Sean Penn) nears his execution date, he calls upon Sister Helen Prejean (Susan Sarandon) to help him with one last appeal, maintaining that he is innocent of the murders of a young couple. Poncelet begins to form a bond with Prejean, and she visits both his family and the relatives of the victims, hoping to learn more about the case. As things begin to look bleak for Poncelet, Prejean does all that she can to comfort and console the hardened convict. Honoring the request of a desperate man, Sister Helen Prejean writes to the condemned killer of two teenage lovers, and is wholly unprepared for the relationship that develops.

The Catholic nun's impassioned memoir of her friendship with two death-row inmates is coupled with a plea for the abolition of capital punishment. In 1982, Prejean, a member of the Sisters of St Joseph of Medaille, agrees to correspond with the convicted rapist and murderer Patrick Sonnier, awaiting execution in Louisiana's electric chair. Letters lead to visits, and Prejean becomes spiritual advisor to the condemned man. Her counsel takes hold, and Sonnier dies repentant - far more so than Prejean's second death-row friend, the arrogant Robert Lee Wilson, also a rapist and murderer. Both killers come off as repellantly fascinating, but the real interest here is in Prejean, who begins as a frail but courageous soul, utterly out of place inside a prison, and winds up as a fierce spokeswoman for the right to life - even of those who have taken the lives of others.

Her arguments against capital punishment are well known and preached with passion: The death penalty is racist, barbaric, and doesn't deter crime; innocent people get killed, etc. But

her real brief lies in the grim details of execution, both in the degradation of the long weeks of waiting and in the torture of the execution itself -which involves, says Prejean, extreme physical and mental pain. The details will turn heads and stomachs: last-minute meetings with the governor, who always has his own agenda; last meals with the prisoner (Sonnier feasts on steak and apple pie, and thanks the cook); the last seconds of life, as the condemned man's face is covered by a veil (Wilson winks at Prejean as the cloth descends). To Prejean, the whole story is a web of crimes: - the original murder; the execution; the moral hypocrisy of the judicial system; the suffering inflicted upon the families of both the killer and victim. The only moral response to this utterly outrageous scenario is love inspired by Christ, who refused to meet 'hate with hate and violence with violence.'

In the months before Sonnier's death, the Roman Catholic nun came to know a man who was as terrified as he had once been terrifying. She also came to know the families of the victims and the men whose job it was to execute - men who often harbored doubts about the rightness of what they were doing. Out of that dreadful intimacy evolves a profoundly moving spiritual journey through our system of capital punishment. Here Sr Helen confronts both the plight of the condemned as well as the rage of the bereaved; the fears of a society shattered by violence and the Christian imperative of love. On its original publication in 1993, *Dead Man Walking* emerged as an unprecedented look at the human consequences of the death penalty.

SHAKA SENGHOR

**WRITING MY WRONGS: LIFE DEATH AND
REDEMPTION IN AN AMERICAN PRISON**

CONVERGENT BOOKS 2017, 288 PAGES, 5-3/16
x 8, SBN 9781101907313

Eunice Fernandes

SHAKA SENGHOR

Shaka Senghor while writing his life story in prison confesses how he, as an 11-year-old child, dreamed of becoming a doctor attending to patients to heal them of their illnesses. However, this dream was short-lived and like his older siblings he took to the streets owing to the unrest at home that followed his parents' separation.

A BROKEN BRANCH

Back then, Detroit was a beautiful place to live in; well-manicured lawns with stately residences. But no one noticed a poor boy on the streets eating what he could find around the place and sleeping out in the open during cold nights, perhaps near a garbage heap. He did not know what the outside world was like. He was under the impression that some Good Samaritan might want to take good care of him; but he was sadly mistaken. He suffered pangs of hunger and frosty cold nights on the streets of Detroit. Often, he did think of the

warmth of his bed at home but unlike the prodigal son he continued to live on his own. He would run errands to buy himself a meal. However, not long afterwards, he was confronted by some older boys who promised him a better lifestyle with the job to sell drugs. This was about the time when Crack had just begun to wind its way through the streets of Detroit. He accepted the offer and became self-employed with a satisfied mind as he had everything he wanted; good food and clothing, a roof above his head and a better place to sleep. Finding all this, his dream to become a respectable doctor had long-faded into dark nights.

LIFE OF CRIME

At the beginning of his career as a drug peddler, his customers were the *crème* of society; teachers, lawyers, doctors, wow!! These were the class of people respected by all. They were an educated lot. Not long afterwards, he realized he had entered a trap which was not too easy to walk out of as he walked out of home. He had begun to have his little share. This he learned six months down the line; however, he did not have the strength to retrace his steps back home. Barely six months into selling drugs, he noticed his neighborhood had miserably lost the respect it had as the regular customers started to exchange a base morale for the drug, and the innocence of a child drug-peddler was lost in laced joints. Even to this day 30-40 years later he states how pathetically people are addicted to Crack.

INCARCERATION

He was so naïve that he trusted his companions and clients and then ended up getting robbed and beaten very badly and left for dead. Ever since then, he armed himself with a gun and never left the house without it. Following his first encounter with a band of hooligans he vowed to be alert and ready to be

the first to shoot if the situation called for it any time in the future. And it did happen 16 months later when he shot a prospective customer. This customer carried that night in his wallet a substantial amount of money which gave Shaka to understand that he meant immediate business. Shaka did not want to have anything to do with him 2 hours away from home and so early in the day. So Shaka turned and tried to walk away. No sooner had Shaka turned away, than he heard the door on the side of the passenger seat open and Shaka swiftly turned back and opened fire on the man who was none other than David his customer. David succumbed to the 4 shots. When Shaka realized what he had done to David, he tried to escape the site of the crime but eventually got turned in and charged with open murder, ending up pleading for 2nd degree murder and got sentenced to a total of 17 + 40 years. In solitary confinement you lived in a 6x9 room space with showers three times a week with absolutely no regard for hygiene. Prisoners were handcuffed to a dog leash.

TURNING POINT

At one time his eleven-year-old son sent him an inspired Scriptural letter which touched his heart. This was the beginning of a transformation process within his mind, soul and heart. The scripture words of the hymn, "Change my heart O Lord" came to my mind. It also fits here to say, look before you leap! He says later; "Don't blame your parents for the mess that you have got yourself in." Exactly, just as we choose to hit the streets or the bottle for that matter, we ought to pick up strings and tie them together singing, "Bind us together Lord, bind us together, with cords that cannot be broken". On reading his little boy's letter his past life unfolded before his eyes bringing to light his weaknesses. He kept asking himself, "How did I, an optimistic guy, get to be in the prison"?

MENTOR

Now, he accepts the fact that this situation of addiction of any kind and all sorts is not to be blamed on any individual. We are all to blame. You and I, as a Society or as a Community must take it upon ourselves to change not a chosen few but every beating heart. As human beings it is natural to get angry. We should try to overcome these moments of anger. One of the things he experienced as life's first-hand lesson, which he imparted to the young boys in the neighborhood and in their schools, and juvenile retention centers was that, not only can your life change in 30 seconds, you might also unknowingly or unwittingly take somebody's life within an extremely short amount of time but you will never be able to give his life back. He also advised the young saying that there are a lot of things you may do in life that you can apologize for, but you cannot bring someone's life back.

WRITING MY WRONGS

When our anger prompts us to hit back, we might do so vehemently, thus causing serious damage to the person and his family. Shaka confesses that he realized later that David may not have meant harm. But Shaka pulled the trigger to defend himself as he had vowed earlier that he would be the first one to pull the trigger in self-defense. So, later when he did pull the trigger in self-defense, it landed him in even more serious trouble. Not only did he kill David an unsuspecting Crack customer; he also left David's children orphaned; a two-month-old son and an elder daughter, fatherless. Our uncontrolled anger knows no peace. To control it is within our will-power and capacity; all that we need is only our presence of mind. Very often we also mess up with the lives of our own loved ones. Shaka recalls how his acts of uncontrolled violence and

anger messed the lives of his own son and daughter. The contents of his son's letter stirred up his emotions and he knew he had to make a change to give his children something to be proud of his father. He took upon himself a challenge to write a book. He had never written a book before but he challenged and completed His First Best Book, "Writing My Wrongs" in record time, commendable for a prisoner to write his firsthand experience in 30 days. What is more, he wrote it in solitary confinement, making use of the flimsy writing material the prison authorities could afford.

Shaka shares with us glimpses of life in prison with the pathetic fact that grown men are unable to read or write as the prisoners are not provided the means to basic education i.e, to better their reading skills; for most of them have been prisoners from early childhood and have not learned to read better than the 3rd level, and some even less. He was an exception to that rule as he was not from the streets. Six years post the death of David, he received a letter from a woman named Nancy, who said she raised David as her son and was a healthcare giver to his mother who died to cancer. She, Nancy, speaks comforting words to him quoting the word of God as in John 8:32. "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free". Her letter helped him open up his heart and let the power of forgiveness and apologizing flow through him.

SUNETRA CHOUDHURY

***BEHIND BARS: TALES OF INDIA'S MOST
FAMOUS***

ROLI BOOKS, NEW DELHI 2017

Fr Rajendran

The book, *Behind Bars*, begins with Amar Singh's experience at Tihar Jail. The book, through the stories of 13 prisoners, chronicles life inside Indian jails. It narrates the life of men, women, a transgender, and a juvenile prisoner. Through their experiences, it gives a peek into the various facets of prison – toilets full of shit, over-crowded cells, custodial torture, and the varied defence mechanisms that prisoners develop to survive incarceration. While some seek solace in prayers, others do so in writing, teaching, and spiritual internalisation.

Behind Bars has a list of celebrity case studies, from Indian politicians like Amar Singh, A. Raja and Pappu Yadav, the controversial arms dealer Abhishek Verma and his supermodel Romanian wife, Anca, to the former Star TV CEO Peter Mukherjee, who is currently an undertrial in Mumbai's Arthur Road jail for his step-daughter's murder. *Behind Bars* shares the experiences of people in Indian prisons, especially the rich VIPs who feel it as a mild impediment excluding the few humiliations, while the poor suffer in obscurity for years. From Anca's request for Mochi Wedges Sandal, Kobad Ghandy's

description of Afzal Guru, Amar Singh's displeasure towards his once friends, the rape of a Transgender in a police station to the torture of the weak by a team once led by a martyred national hero, we see the complex world inside the penitentiary.

This book gives insight into the lives of prisoners from different backgrounds, charged for different crimes and serving their different jail terms. The book consists of short stories based on the lives of the prisoners during their jail term and importantly focuses on the crime they actually committed. Some stories will make you cry; some will make you angry and you may feel wretched. This book gives us an understanding of the loopholes in the judicial system, government policies, police stations, etc. The author's shock at the intrigue and inequality in life within Indian prisons is very evident. For wealthy and influential politicians, prisons are like resorts. One can buy any favour by bribing the authorities.

A medley of custodial stories of the powerful, the poor, the marginalised, and the marginalising, each story is presented in a very dramatic manner. It makes sure that the reader is introduced to the back story of how the accused/under-trial/prisoner ended up there, going into their lives inside the prison and then the present life. It narrates the violent details of torture and the unlawfulness going on inside our country's houses of reformation. The book is an inspiring one forcing the reader to contemplate on why this is happening, even though no individual, police personnel, politician, or society at large wants this to continue.

There are three case studies where the accused are from a humble background and were subjected to mind-numbing abuse while in custody – a woman who was raped by the Ajmer police, a newly-wed Delhi woman who was wrongly accused

of being a terrorist, and a man who was arrested for perpetrating the 7/11 Mumbai train blasts (and later acquitted). The three cases detail several horrific details of gross violations during arrests, narco-analysis tests being manipulated, abuse at the hands of jail doctors, and instances of family members being stripped and beaten.

“The earlier torture was just to strip you, starve you for one day and force-feed you one another, give religious gales, deny you sleep for 9-10 days – it was the first and second degree. In third-degree, they strip you, stretch your legs at 180 degrees and tear it, so your private parts start bleeding. Sometimes, they take something called Surya Prakash oil and inject it into your anus, which creates burning. They use the chakki patta to beat you on your hands and feet and then waterboard you (put you on a see-saw, head down and then pour water, which gives you the feeling that you are drowning),” one of the subjects told the author.

The author believes that the book could have benefitted from revealing more such shocking truths. *Behind Bars* does a notable job at highlighting the differences in the incarcerated lives of the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, and the young and the old. It shows how, while the rich can continue to wear their Versace’s and stilettos in prisons, the poor have to clean mountains of stool; while the educated can file applications and claim their rights, the illiterate languish without legal support; and while the young can stand up to the jail Mafiosi, the old cower in corners, perpetually living in fear. It also has some interesting anecdotes about Charles Sobhraj and Nirbhaya’s rapists, who are not direct subjects of the book but are engaging enough to have their space justified.

A concern I have regarding this book is that a few issues which are as important and as integral to Indian prison life, get merely a passing mention, though they deserve elaboration. These include homosexual rape in prisons, lack of conjugal visits and their innovative fixes, smuggling of weapons and drugs inside prisons, custodial escapes and deaths, and the functioning of crime syndicates from inside prisons. The book is a respectable initiative towards the commencement of a dialogue on life in Indian jails, which requires urgent attention. After all, we must alter the truth voiced by one of Choudhury's politician subjects that the law is a mistress of the powerful. The author has interacted first-hand with prisoners, asked difficult questions and has managed to gain an appreciable insight into their jail stint. Through the many cases, she has successfully established how prisons are far more comfortable for the rich, that money can buy comfort in a cramped cell, and that a VIP inmate need not compromise on his/her air conditioning and butter chicken even when s/he is clapped in irons - not that they are ever clapped in irons.