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



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REFORMATIVE EXPLORATIONS

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

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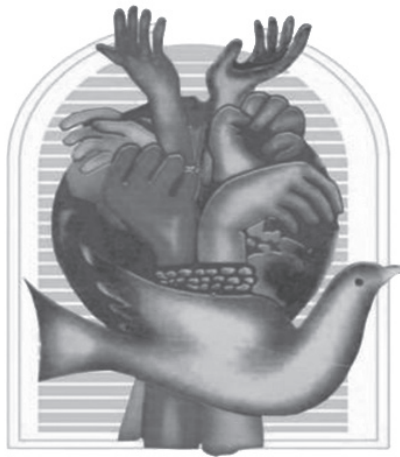
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PRISONERS' REFORMATION, REHABILITATION, REINTEGRATION AND REDEMPTION

Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

13TH PMI NATIONAL CONVENTION

Prison Ministry India will have its 13th National Convention at St Joseph Vaz Spiritual Centre, Goa from 15 to 19 November 2022. The theme is Reform to Reintegrate. We have taken this theme anchoring on Pope Francis' message to worldwide prison chaplains on November 7, 2019. Pope Francis convened an international conference of worldwide prison chaplains on Integral Human Development and Catholic Prison Pastoral Care at the Pontifical Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development chaired by His Eminence Peter Cardinal Turkson. During this conference Pope Francis urged those who take care of prisoners to change their outlook and approach in treating prisoners. He asked us to offer prisoners better opportunities for reformation, development and reintegration. For real social reintegration begins by guaranteeing opportunities for development, education, decent work, access to healthcare, as well as generating public spaces for civic participation. If they are prevented from regaining the full exercise of their dignity, they will once again be exposed to the dangers of violence, insecurity, and desperation. Those prisoners, who already served their sentences for the evil committed, should not be subjected to a new social punishment with rejection

and indifference. Such aversion exposes them to falling back on the same mistakes and coming back to prison.

Eightfold Path for Prisoners' Reformation

Through the last 41 years of service to prisoners, PMI has developed an eightfold path to reach-out, reform, reconcile, repent, release, rehabilitate, reintegrate and redeem prisoners. This reformation and redeeming methodology begins with prayer and fasting of volunteers followed by their outreach to prisons. PMI has more than 8000 volunteers who outreach the 1412 prisons in India. Prior to their visit they ask for prayer and fasting from many others and offer Holy Masses, Eucharistic adorations, recite rosaries and divine mercy chaplets for the reformation of prisoners.

Repentance and Reconciliation

The paramount task of PMI is to lead prisoners to repentance, reconciliation and reformation. The fundamental teaching of Jesus was to repent. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Mt 3, 2). "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 18, 3). As St John the Baptist preached "Bear fruit worthy of repentance" (Mt 3, 8). True repentance leads to reconciliation with God, society, family and self. Here comes the relevance of Jesus' teaching: "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift" (Mt 5, 23-24). Repentance and reconciliation are acts of grace and a spiritual warfare and therefore, we need prayer and fasting for the fruitfulness of the PMI reformative ventures. "For nothing will be impossible with God" (Lk 1, 37).

Rehabilitation and Reintegration

PMI has many homes to rehabilitate the released prisoners, both for men, women, children and juveniles. PMI also has many homes for prisoners' children both for boys and girls in different states and are always ready to welcome more children in need. PMI also assists the released prisoners with their reintegration. We facilitate them with job, marriage, family settlements, and even assisting them in constructing their houses. Like Mathew Albin thousands of released prisoners have been reintegrated into the main stream of society.

Prisoners' Redemption

Reformation and reintegration reach its summit with redemption. The ultimate goal of PMI is the redemption of the lost. Jesus came not merely to seek and liberate prisoners from their bondages and dungeons but also to save them. The story of the good thief illustrates this very well. The moment the good thief, Saint Dismas said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom". Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Lk 23, 42-43). The fundamental goal of our life is to return to God, return to paradise. Prison ministry is the best and surest way to realize this goal. "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'" (Mt 25, 34-40). PMI volunteers believe strongly that no one is beyond transformation, and our Redeemer has taught us that no one is beyond redemption as he assured Paradise to the 'Good Thief'. God also chooses the filthiest of places, stinking places, for his work of redemption. Behind the walls of maximum-security prisons, hard-core criminals are being transformed into messengers of hope. "Those who

are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mk 2:17). The purpose of Jesus coming to this world was to call sinners and to redeem the lost. Jesus who cried out from the Cross, “I thirst” (Jn 19:28) continues to thirst for the souls behind the dark cells of prisons.

Conclusion

What shall we do for the reintegration and redemption of prisoners? You can do this by volunteering in three ways: firstly, by prayer and fasting. The origin of Prison Ministry India is from the Blessed Sacrament. Before each visit, members spend time in prayer. They recite the rosary, make intercessory prayers and fast. Secondly, you can visit prisons and PMI rehabilitation centers and homes for prisoners’ children. Thirdly, you can financially support PMI for prisoners’ rehabilitation and reintegration. Prisoners are our brothers and sisters and PMI is ready to provide them a second chance if they are ready to repent, reconcile, reform, and reintegrate themselves. PMI stands for the integral human development of prisoners and we are ready to do whatever is possible for their reformation and reintegration.

Abolition of the Death Penalty Pope Francis' September Prayer Intention

In his prayer intention for September, Pope Francis calls on all people of good will “to mobilize for the abolition of the death penalty throughout the world.” “Each day, there is a growing ‘NO’ to the death penalty around the world,” says Pope Francis in the video released on Wednesday announcing his prayer intention for September. “For the Church, this is a sign of hope.”

In The Pope Video, produced by the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network, the Holy Father maintains that the death penalty is not necessary “from a legal point of view.”

He argues that “society can effectively repress crime without definitively depriving offenders of the possibility of redeeming themselves.” He adds that there must be “a window of hope” in every legal sentence. Capital punishment, he says, “offers no justice to victims, but rather encourages revenge. And it prevents any possibility of undoing a possible miscarriage of justice.”

Always Possible to Repent

Pope Francis goes on to say that the death penalty is “morally inadmissible” because it destroys life, and insists that “up to the very last moment, a person can convert and change.” The Pope argues further that “in the light of the Gospel, the death penalty is unacceptable, because the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ refers to both the innocent and the guilty.” Pope Francis concludes his message with an appeal for all people of goodwill to mobilize for the abolition of the death penalty throughout the world.”

“Let us pray that the death penalty, which attacks the dignity of the human person, may be legally abolished in every country.”

Prison Ministry Sunday
14 August 2022
Integral Human Development and
Pastoral Care for Prisoners

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

What would we do if our mother/father/sister/brother/daughter or son, whether guilty or innocent, were thrown behind bars? Would we let the shock, doubt, trauma and fear paralyse us? Would we restrict ourselves to praying in the comfort of our homes? Or would we get into action – visit the prison, secure legal aid, petition for better living conditions in overcrowded jails, do whatever it takes to secure their release, and when finally released, ensure their rehabilitation and reintegration?

According to the World Prison Population List published in December 2021, there are 11.5 million prisoners worldwide. In India, according to the National Crime Records Bureau, there are 4,88,511 prisoners in 1306 different prisons. There are 413 death-row prisoners, 20,046 women prisoners and 1427 children living with their mothers. As we celebrate Prison Ministry Sunday, let us remember all these incarcerated members of our human family who are living in utter misery, pray for them in a special way and rededicate ourselves to seek, serve and save them.

To God, Through Our Brethren Behind Bars

We often hear that prison is not a safe place as it is the living space of criminals. But for us Christians, it is the living space of human beings created in the image and likeness of God. The hearts of some of our brethren are filled with revenge and hatred. They need someone to guide them in their desperate moments. As Moses was entrusted to lead and guide the Israelites, we too are called to accompany them on their journey to receive God's mercy and grace.

As Saint Therese of the Child Jesus called Pranzini, a triple murderer, "my first child", the broken ones behind bars are our precious children. God gifted us Jesus, who asserted, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18). This only begotten precious child of God was imprisoned, tortured and broken on the Cross. His pain and brokenness manifested the love and mercy of God and granted us our salvation. God today gifts us the prisoners. When we stoop down through prison gates, we open ourselves to the brokenness and wounded-ness of the incarcerated, and thereby encounter our living God. Through this encounter, let us tirelessly reach out, release, renew, rehabilitate, reintegrate and redeem our brethren behind bars by committing ourselves for their integral human development.

Integral Human Development of Prisoners

The lost and rejected are God's precious children whom he relentlessly seeks out. Jesus respected and embraced the ones whom society rejected – the lepers, the tax collectors, the woman caught in adultery, the thief crucified next to him.

For detainees to successfully reintegrate to civilian life, it is important to implement various programs for their integral development such as education, employment, marriage, and family settlement. Let us recall the message of Pope Francis to participants of the International Meeting for Regional and National Responsible for Prison Pastoral Care at Sala Clementina on 8th November 2019:

“Places of detention often fail in the objective of promoting reintegration processes, no doubt because they do not have sufficient resources to address the social, psychological and family problems experienced by the detainees, and also due to frequent overpopulation of prisons that turns them into real places of depersonalisation. On the contrary, true social reintegration begins by guaranteeing opportunities for development, education, decent work, access to health, as well as generating public space for civic participation. As Christian communities we must ask ourselves a question. If these brothers and sisters have already served their sentence for the evil committed, why is a new social punishment placed on their shoulders with rejection and indifference? On many occasions, this social aversion is one more reason to expose them to fall back into the same mistakes”.

The Venerable Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan

Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan is a fine example of a prisoner who has undergone integral human development. On 30th April 1975, when Coadjutor Archbishop of Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam), he was unjustly arrested and detained in solitary confinement by the communist government for thirteen years. He was disturbed and devastated, his vision for the people and the kingdom of God shattered. One night, deep within his own heart, Thuan sensed a clear and unmistakable voice directly asking him,

“Why torment yourself? You must discern between God and the works of God!” This enlightenment radically changed his way of thinking. When the communists put him in a boat along with 1500 other prisoners, he said, “Here is my cathedral, here are the people God has given me to care for, here is my mission – to ensure the presence of God among these despairing and miserable brothers. It is God’s will that I am here. I accept his will.” This became the moment of his liberation.

After his release from solitary confinement, Thuan was kept under house arrest and not allowed to return to Ho Chi Minh City and take up his duties there. Exiled in 1991, his reintegration came about through being given a post at the International Catholic Commission for Migration the following year. He went on to become Vice President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in 1994, was appointed its President in 1998 and elevated to Cardinal in 2001.

At the conclusion of the Lenten retreat preached by Thuan to the Roman Curia in 2001, Pope John Paul II said of him, “A witness of the cross in the long years of imprisonment in Vietnam, he has frequently recounted the realities and episodes from his sufferings in prison, thus reinforcing us in the consoling certainty that when everything crumbles around us, and perhaps even within us, Christ remains our unfailing support,” while in the 2007 encyclical *Spe Salvi*, Pope Benedict XVI wrote: “During thirteen years in jail, in a situation of seemingly utter hopelessness, the fact that he could listen and speak to God became for him an increasing power of hope, which enabled him, after his release, to become for people all over the world a witness to hope – to that great hope which does not wane even in the nights of solitude.”

Cardinal Thuan's reflections in prison have been published as the books *The Road of Hope: A Gospel from Prison* and *Prayers of Hope, Words of Courage*. His beatification process began on 16th September 2007, his fifth death anniversary. Today, let us echo Thuan and say of the prisoners, "Here are the people God has given me to care for, here is my mission – to ensure the presence of God among these despairing and miserable brothers," and pray for the renewal, release, rehabilitation, reintegration and redemption of our brethren behind bars.

Prison Ministry India Rehabilitation Centres

Jesus never gave up on those with less than perfect pasts for he knew that his infinite mercy gave them the chance for a better future. He brought this about through love, compassion and sacrifice and asked us to do likewise. The volunteers of Prison Ministry India (PMI) do so by offering their time, energy and life to provide a better future to those labelled criminals by society. While the law looks back to the past with judgement, we look towards the future with mercy. When the law condemns the failed ones, we commend them to our Heavenly Father's care. When the law puts them down, we lift them up. When the world fights for justice, we cry out for restorative justice. When the world brawls for punishment, we beg for forgiveness. When the law wants to kill, we want to save. When the world closes the book of a criminal, we open a new chapter saying no one is beyond redemption.

In Biblical times, God delivered the Israelites from captivity in Egypt and gave them possession of a land flowing with milk and honey – the Promised Land. In our times, through rehabilitation and reintegration, PMI volunteers continue to resonate God's covenant as they lead the lost behind bars to PMI rehabilitation centres where these broken ones can find a land of milk and honey, where they find a new spirit. In

Prison Ministry India's rehabilitation centres, their hopes and dreams take wings, as volunteers channelize Christ's love to help the lost reintegrate with society.

The heart-breaking cries of prisoners moved the hearts of PMI volunteers, resulting in the establishment of Snehashramam, the first rehabilitation centre, on 1st October 1991. Today PMI has twenty rehabilitation centres rendering full-time service for their integrated development. Each rehabilitation centre becomes a paradise regained for inmates staying at the centre. It becomes a tower of hope to the hopeless, help to the helpless and love to the hated from prisons.

A Mother's Testimony

Prashanthi (name changed) was only eighteen years old when she was married to Lokesh, an irresponsible alcoholic who came home drunk every day and beat her for no reason. Life was miserable for Prashanthi, who trembled with fear and hid behind the door when she would see him coming home. Even the basic needs of their little son, Anand, were not met with. One night, he started thrashing her as usual while Anand was in her arms. Lokesh dragged Prashanthi to the kitchen and battered her fiercely. In self-defence, she pulled out a log of firewood and hit him on the head. He dashed against a wall and dropped dead. Terrified, she ran to the police station while carrying her child, and admitted to the involuntary murder of her husband. She was arrested and sent to prison along with two-year-old Anand to Bangalore Central Prison. At the age of six, Anand was shifted to Kolbe Home in Carmelaram, Bangalore, a rehabilitation centre for prisoners' children run by the National Office of Prison Ministry India. With tears rolling down her cheeks, Prashanthi told Fr Francis Kodiyan,

PMI national coordinator: “If Anand had grown up with us, he would not have become the smart and intelligent boy that he is now. His talents in singing, dancing and in sports have also bloomed only because he has been under your care.”

Conclusion

Let us collaborate with Prison Ministry India to rehabilitate and reintegrate these broken, vulnerable, rejected, lonely, deprived, harmed, damaged, destroyed, hurt and injured brethren behind bars.

Dear incarcerated brethren, we love you, pray for you, and commit ourselves for your integral human development. We also pray in a special way for the families of our brethren behind bars and their victims.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, you are welcome to join the 24/7 Incessant Intercessory Invocation for the Incarcerated and thereby pray for the renewal and rehabilitation of prisoners worldwide. You are also welcome to join the Special Task Forces of PMI to reform and redeem hardcore criminals such as terrorists, mafia dons, hired and serial killers, and so on. This year Prison Ministry India convenes its quadrennial national convention from 15-18th November in Goa with the theme *Reform to Reintegrate*. Your valuable prayers for the fruitfulness of this convention will highly be appreciated. In many states we are not given permission to visit prisons, and we request your earnest prayers in this regard.

Along with my brother bishops, I express my sincere gratitude to the dioceses, major superiors and well-wishers for your generous contributions towards this ministry. I am sure Jesus who came in search of the lost will bless you abundantly.

I acknowledge and appreciate the PMI volunteers for their profound commitment in reforming and reintegrating prisoners, which all of us know, is a most challenging task. May Saint Maximilian Kolbe, the patron of Prison Ministry India, intercede for the fruitfulness of this ministry and may Mary, our blessed mother, be always there to protect you as we rededicate ourselves to the integral human development of our incarcerated brethren.



✠ **Bishop Allwyn D'Silva**

Chairperson, Prison Ministry India

IMPRISONMENT: CONFINEMENT OR EXPPELLING?

Fr Dominic Puthenpurackal MST

Introduction

Imprisonment in its root sense is to curtail one's freedom, and restrain one's will. It can be understood in the strict sense as proper imprisonment that we witness in our society. If we take it in the wider sense, imprisonment is seen in our various social realms, where people are excluded, segregated, made isolated and expelled from relationships due to various reasons. The people deprived of their rights, justice, freedom, right of a decent living, equality, proper upbringing and education are also experiencing the same. Imprisonment can be psychological and medical also. People who are in various types of addictions, bad habits, contagious and serious diseases; people who are denigrated and defamed and falsely accused and all the dissatisfied and depressed categories can be said to be in prison. Here arises the question of our discussion whether imprisonment is confinement or expelling.

Imprisonment as Expelling

In the earlier periods, we have often noticed that the notion of expelling people was the punishment. The first corporal punishment was expelling from the community and communion (with God) and society (from the unity and vibe of Paradise); God in Genesis expelled Adam and Eve

from the paradise and put guards for the Garden of Eden. In Greek mythology, Prometheus was expelled from the community of deities (expelling) and thereafter put in chains and given corporeal punishments as well. In earlier times itself, both expelling and confining were used as modes of punishment. Both these methods were adopted just to get away from the person who is problematic. Once reformation was done through repentance, the punished person was very often taken back to the community through reintegration. Capital punishments in the early times (often death through beheading, stoning or hanging) were given to people who were to be eliminated, as there was seemingly no hope for bringing them back, as they had become a threat to society and its functions or because the law (religious or political) stated so.

From history we know that the people who were having leprosy were expelled from society to a secluded living, as for instance we remember the life and works of Fr Damien of Molokai. People involved in serious crimes also were expelled from the living area. It was explicit in the laws of Jews that we read in Leviticus. Expelling was practiced in our land also. People who were stoned to death as punishment, died outside the city. Crucifixion during the time of the Romans in Israel was conducted outside the city. The punishment of death was preceded by an exclusion and expulsion. It was true in the case of Jesus himself. He was imprisoned in Jerusalem and later crucified outside the city (expelling). The kingdom of Israel and Judah underwent community exile from their land, as a punishment for their sins (in religious sense) and failures (in political and military actions).

Imprisonment as Confinement

The first example of confinement in the Bible we see in the history of Joseph of the Old Testament. As we have seen, serious punishments were very often preceded by seclusion or rejection and imprisonment. Imprisonment very often (in many instances of the Bible like that of Joseph, Daniel, the Mother and seven sons, John the Baptist, Jesus, James, Peter, Paul etc.) was unjust. In art and literature, lawyers and court people, have been portrayed as hard-hearted people who stood for injustice (cf. Shakespeare). All the seclusions from simple imprisonment to solitary confinement actually are punishments before/after the verdict. The accused becomes the criminal in the eyes of the common man, and many innocent souls became prey for 'their inability to prove otherwise'. Daniel was a portrayal of justice in the Old Testament. He was the one who secured justice in the case of Susanna (Daniel 9). But he was put in prison just because of jealousy. Very often Jealousy becomes a cause for belittling and eliminating others in the Bible and the same is true in our present context too.

Expelling and Confinement as Saving

Sometimes, expelling and confinement can become a saving activity. Expelling because of leprosy was a saving activity (for both the community and for the affected one; earlier there were eliminations of people who were affected (with contagious diseases). Sometimes arrests and confinement of a person (people) will be helpful to protect the accused from mob violence and retaliations. Lot of Old Testament is an example. His expulsion from Sodom and Gomorrah saved his life; Jonah's expulsion from his own land and from the ship saved the whole of Nineveh. Spiritually speaking the death of Jesus gave salvation to all mankind. Even now martyrs of

the Church give life to the Church. Vicarious suffering, of course, is a way for the salvation of many. “Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” (Rom 5:3-5)

Prisoners outside the Prison

There are prisoners outside the prison. It includes the large number of people who committed crimes and were unnoticed, not reported or settled out of court, perpetual criminals, unreformed prisoners released from prison, people who are in search of vengeance and hard core unrecognized potential criminals, people who give no regard for laws and all the people who live a life in an unworthy manner can be called Prisoners outside prisons. People who indulge their lives in consuming or in the business of narcotic items and substance abuse, and addiction to alcohol are coming under this category. Jesus who never went to a prison to preach his Good News might have aimed at this category of people while he was proclaiming: “The Spirit of the Lord is up on me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent to 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 Lord’s favor” (Lk 4:18-19). It is here that we need to set our first preference to be to eradicate potential criminals in society.

Imprisonment in Psychological Understanding

Imprisonment can be virtual, unseen and unnoticed. There are so many people stuck in their lives due to many and various reasons and *sitz im leben*. The need of inner healing is necessary

in today's world. The people who are excommunicated from their families, people who face problems psychologically, people deprived of friends, people who are affected with broken relationships, mafia, addictions, black mass, etc. need a systematic and scientific help from professionals.

Conclusion

There are people even now undergoing both inner confinement and social exclusion. Sometimes these innocent people need help in order to tackle these problems. Those who suffer injustice are on the way to their criminal life. I suggest here some of the points which can be adopted by the volunteers of PMI. 1) Begin or empower the counselling team in school and college level with learned and efficient psychologists. It's praiseworthy to remember that PMI has a psychologist as its head. 2) PMI has a clinical centre for psychological counselling and therapy at its National Office, Bangalore. Give all the possible support to it by suggesting, recruiting and sending students and elders to it. Begin a centre at your place for prisoners and their children, and the prisoners confined in their own self-made prisons. 3) Have a culture of sharing things with one who can be trusted. 4) Bring transparency in your life. If you have nothing to hide, you reduce your tensions. 5) The volunteers of PMI can obtain minimum tips of psychological counselling, that they can handle a situation in an emergency. 6) Increase the habit of reading in your family. Give good books as gifts to your friends. And make books as your friends. 7) Spend sufficient time for games, prayer and talk with family members.

INDIAN PRISON REFORMS

Edmund Frank

Categories of Prison Inmates

Imprisonment as we understand is the end all of criminal justice system in India and for that matter in any country of the world. An imprisoned person is deprived of personal liberty as a result of the conviction for an offense committed by him. But the basic dignity of persons lodged in prisons needs to be protected. This is because we are not only talking of persons whose cases are decided in a court of law resulting in their conviction, but also the majority of prisoners who are languishing in jails as under trials whose cases are being heard in the same courts of law. In addition to these convicts and under trials, I have also seen over the years in the Mangaluru jail are also housed innocent infants and children in the age groups of less than a year to 7 years, in case either or both of their parents are inmates and there is no person willing to look after them. These children are kept in prison with their parents. The same must be the case in most other prisons too.

Dignified Treatment of Prisoners

Protection of such basic dignity of prisoners is mentioned in the universal declaration of human rights as well as under article 21 of the Indian Constitution. Besides, dignified treatment of prisoners as fellow human beings is also emphasized by the International Law. But unless the enforcing agencies

abide by the rules, these directives remain consigned to the book only. There is no better example than Fr Stan Swamy who was deprived of all personal liberty and human dignity when he contracted the deadly Parkinson's disease and had to be hospitalized and the court had to intervene on his behalf. Thousands of others await a similar fate. The provisions of the security of prisoners mentioned in jail manuals must be strictly followed and trained prison staff should be appointed to look after the safety parameters. Regular and timely inspection from judicial officers must be conducted. All the organs of the police and jail administration must work in unison to make possible the effective and social rehabilitation of inmates after securing their release.

Three Types of Jails

Sub jails at the taluk level, district jails at the district level and central jails at the national level. Then there are open prisons in some states which have come up during the recent years. The prison system in India as it is administrated today, is a legacy of the British rule. Prisons were opened not only for criminals and antisocial elements, but also to jail Indian freedom fighters who opposed British rule. Central Prisons were constructed all over India during 1835 to 1840 and still continue their 180 years legacy. Prisons were referred to as 'Houses of Captives' for deterrence and retribution. The intension was to punish prisoners and deny them even the basic fundamental rights and human dignity. The Prison Discipline committee set up in 1838 in its report recommended rigorous treatment of inmates rejecting humanitarian needs and reforms. We should see this in the context of an imperialistic monarchy remote controlled by Britain.

Segregation of Prison Inmates

After independence, despite the liberalization of prison rule manuals and some prison reforms, regretfully, not much has been done by prison administrative boards or committees either at the national or state levels. Apart from segregation of men and women inmates, segregation also has to be done of: a) young child offenders and adult inmates and of b) convicts and under trials and c) those held under civil laws and criminal laws. International Law mandates that persons imprisoned in any of these forms have a right to be treated in a humane manner with respect to the inherent dignity of the human person.

Major Problems in Indian Prisons

The Constitution of India guarantees every Indian citizen the right to live. The right to live includes the right to live with human dignity. A prisoner does not cease to be a human being because he is lodged in jail. He continues to enjoy his fundamental rights including the right to live with dignity. This calls for prison reforms in their true spirit which are too long in coming. Just a change in nomenclature from 'Prison' to 'Correctional Center' means nothing. The major problems in Indian prisons vary from overcrowding, staff shortage, inadequate training to the staff relating to the rights of prisoners and human dignity, discrimination and unequal treatment towards the inmates, inadequate training and orientation programs for the jail inmates to prepare them for their rehabilitation after their release, poor budgetary allocations for health care to inadequate legal support to the prisoners and prolonged detention of under trial prisoners.

History of Prison Reforms

This is a much-debated subject matter which is studied by several commissions and committees appointed by the government of India from time to time. All India Committee on jail reforms constituted by the government of India under the chairmanship of Justice Anand Narain Mulla in 1983 suggested: 1) Setting up of National Prison Commission as a body to bring about modernization of prisons in India. 2) To set up an all-India cadre for prison staff. 3) Bringing prisons under the concurrent list and 4) recommended alternatives to imprisonment such as community service, etc. Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer Committee on women prisoners in 1987 recommended separate institutions with women employees alone for women offenders.

The Draft national policy on Prison Reforms and Correctional Administration 2007, in its report recommended: 1) Amending of the constitution to include principles of prison management and treatment of under trials. 2) Including prisons in the concurrent list. 3) Enactment of uniform and comprehensive law on matters related to prisoners. The Supreme Court appointed panel under Justice Amaitava Roy on prison reforms in its report on February 2020 recommended: 1) Fast track courts to be set up to deal with petty crimes. 2) Lawyers-prisoners ratio to be at least one lawyer for every 30 prisoners. 3) To start recruiting staff against vacancies in order to make good under staffing. 4) Use of video conferencing for court trials. 5) Every new prisoner to be allowed one phone call to his family members to see him through his first week in jail. 6) To explore alternate punishments. Yet, despite all the reports and positive suggestions of these committees, the ground level situation with respect to prison reforms remains gloomy and stagnant.

Prisons as we see them are meant to create forced detention from society, with severe discipline, provision of minimum requirements of life, strict security procedures and a monotonous daily routine. Prison life no doubt necessitates certain constraints on the freedom of inmates, but certainly not a total seizure of individual freedom because a prison houses under trials and convicts. In the modern context a prison connotes a 'correctional' facility calling for the reform of inmates. Crime is not necessarily always the result of a bad intention or criminal intent. Denying individuals their freedom of choice and economic, social, political and cultural rights could lead to more serious evils. Therefore, prison system calls for further multilevel reforms.

Indian Prison Reforms & Challenges

1) Prison is a state subject. This makes it difficult to pass common laws nationwide applicable to all states. However, the Ministry of Home Affairs provides regular guidance and advice to the States and Union Territories on various issues concerning prisons and prison inmates. 2) The Prison Act 1894 is more than a century old and does not focus on reform of prisoners and their rehabilitation. 3) It does not speak about separation between hard core criminals and under trials. Improved prison management and prison conditions are the corner stones to develop a meaningful health care system and health strategy in prisons which is also an integral part of public health and is crucial for the success of public health policies.

Undertrial Prisoners

67% of the inmates in Indian jails are under trials - those detained in prisons awaiting trial, investigation or inquiry but not convicted of any crime in a court of law. The irony

is, many of them have spent more years in prison than the actual term they would have served had they been convicted. As a matter of fundamental rights guaranteed by the Indian constitution, under trials are presumed innocent till proven guilty. But they are often subjected to psychological and physical torture during detention and exposed to sub human living conditions and prison violence. Even after their release, under trials find their employability severely jeopardized for none of their fault. It is a known fact that while the professional gangsters know how to get special privileges in jail, the socio economically disadvantaged under trials can be deprived of their basic human dignity. In the absence of structural changes and reforms to address the issues of overcrowding and understaffing, India's prisons will continue to be heaven for politically connected and hell for socio-economically disadvantaged.

THE JOURNEY OF PRISON MINISTRY INDIA, MYSORE UNIT

Dr Michael Noronha

The start of PMI Mysore Unit is a testimony to the promise: Push – Pray Until Something Happens. It was in the year 2000 that the lay members of the Order of Franciscan Secular OFS under the guidance of their late Spiritual Animator Very Rev Fr Vincent Lobo OFM Cap decided after prayer and discernment to take up a permanent service-oriented task in the city of Mysore. The members decided to set up the Prison Ministry India, Mysore Unit to ensure the Reformation, Rehabilitation, and Renewal of prisoners, which was non-existent in the Mysore Diocese. Till then the prisoners were visited by the OCD Priests and seminarians on special occasions like Christmas. The question arose how to begin. Fortunately for us, we had a seminarian who had served in the PMI Bangalore Unit Bro Thomas Manakhuzzy OFM who came forward to guide us and work with us. A meeting of all the Franciscans comprising laity of the secular order and religious sisters and brothers was called at Kripalaya, the Capuchin Theologate (now Philosophy house) and the first team of office bearers were elected and July 12, 2000 was decided to be the inaugural program in the Mysore Central Prison by having the Holy Eucharist presided by the then late Bishop Joseph Roy of Mysore Diocese. The PMI was familiar to the Prison officials of Karnataka as the volunteers were serving in the Bangalore Prison and the ADGP (Prisons) Mr Revana Siddaiah, IPS (who later started a Children's home for prisoners' children

in Mysore) was very compassionate and kind towards any NGO wanting to help the prisoners' reformation and their rehabilitation. The services of PMI volunteers such as late Sr. Carmelita, Sr. Adele and Team who resided inside the prison and visited the prisoners every day, brought in a change in the mindset of the prisoners. In Mysore Central Prison we had then the Chief Superintendent late Mr Abbay who had a frightful look with a thick twisted moustache but was very kind and concerned towards us, who gave us the green signal to enter and serve the prisoners. On 12th July 2000 we had the grand entry into the prison.

Inside the prison after the Eucharistic celebration, we were in for a shock. In a prison which had nearly 800-1000 prisoners on an average there were prisoners who were imprisoned under TADA (Terrorist and Anti Disruptive Activities) Act allegedly Veerappan aides, the dreaded forest brigand, and were languishing in prison since 1993. Surprisingly there were many among them who were from respectable families who were alleged to be involved in the Palar Blast Case. These prisoners were afraid to speak to us as they were under surveillance and few mustered courage and spoke to our members who were present pleading their case and seeking help for an early release. On hearing their plight, we realised that "Divine Intervention" was the only solution to this problem as the entire nation was seething with anger against Veerappan and his aides for the Palar blast that killed many Policemen and their informers which were very gruesome. Venturing to help them would result in us being branded as "Terrorist Sympathisers". But the Psalmist reminded us: "Listen to the groans of the prisoners; by the strength of your arm, deliver those doomed to die" (Psalm 79:11). The members decided to start praying for them from day one for the following intentions:

- 1) The Courts render Justice to those who are innocent among these under-trials arrested in the Palar Blast Case 1992 under TADA and none be awarded death penalty.
- 2) To succeed in starting PMI units in the places where there are prisons in Mysore Diocese – Mandya, Nanjangud, K.R.Nagar, Kollegal, Chamarajnagar and Madikeri for the benefit of prisoners.
- 3) For abolition of death penalty from the Statute book of the country.

The Answer to our First Petition: “God Writes Straight on Crooked Lines”:

PMI Mysore Unit requested its members comprising majority of religious men and women to pray for the above intentions everyday during their adoration before the Blessed Sacrament and the laity during their family prayers/ Holy Mass. A major breakthrough to the obstacles was removed on July 30, 2000 when the entire nation was shocked to learn that the much-loved actor Dr Rajkumar was kidnapped on July 29, 2000 by the forest brigand Veerappan. His kidnap shocked every citizen of Karnataka as the actor was dear to all of us and our country and it shook the Governments of Karnataka and Tamilnadu with Mr S.M. Krishna and late Mr Karunanidhi as Chief Ministers of the respective States. This kidnap would have uprooted the Governments if any harm was inflicted by the forest brigand on the actor. Dr Rajkumar was released unharmed after 108 days in captivity. Little did we realise the ‘Little finger of God’ in the work of this kidnapping. One among the 10 demands of the forest brigand put forth to the Governments of Tamilnadu and Karnataka as per press reports were: Aug 6, 2000:” In a similar vein, he demanded the release of 205 “innocent persons” languishing in

Karnataka's jails, five prisoners in Tamil Nadu jails, and the payment of compensation to the families of nine murdered scheduled caste and tribe persons. The state governments have, however, not released the names of the five prisoners or the nine dead persons" (Source: <https://www.rediff.com/news/2000/aug/06veer.htm>). "CMs give Veerappan a positive response "Veerappan's foremost demand appeared to be the release of 'innocent' persons in Karnataka jails. The state government said the TADA charges would be dropped immediately, leading to their release." Till then none of the Governments cared to look into the allegations against these hundreds incarcerated for a crime which later the Courts found it worthy to release all except 4 of them. The Word of God reminded us: "For the Lord hears the needy and does not despise those in captivity" (Psalm 69:34)

The sequence of events that followed highlighted by various news reports and Court verdicts are narrated in a nutshell to draw the attention of the reader that "Nothing is Impossible for God" when we decide to Push. The speed with which the trial was initiated was itself the proof of "Divine Presence" guiding the whole issue in answer to the prayers of the undertrials, the PMI members, the family members of those imprisoned and all others who cried out to God for Justice to them. Out of the over 120 detained only 4 who were given life imprisonment went on an appeal to the Supreme Court for release but their sentence was enhanced to death penalty which forced us harder to pray for them to be saved from the gallows. The rest were released by the Court. Trial by the press was more harmful to these prisoners but thanks to the Judiciary which came to their rescue in rendering Justice. Many of those imprisoned had already spent 6-7 years in prison.

Here are some clippings of the press reports, court decisions, and then the joy of commutation from death penalty to life imprisonment that happened at lightning speed:

The Various Press Reports Post Kidnapping of Dr Rajkumar:

1) Aug 9, 2000: The TADA detenus who Veerappan had in mind: *M D Riti* in Bangalore: “Some of them supplied him rice, *dal* and matchboxes. Others gave shelter to him and members of his group. The rest either kept him informed about police movements or helped him escape from their clutches. These, and some others, are the grounds on which the Karnataka Special Task Force has jailed 146 men and women in Mysore under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act.”

2) Aug 12, 2000: Karnataka Tries to Prove Sincerity to Veerappan, *Fakir Chand* in Bangalore: “In response to Veerappan’s demand to release all 51 detenus in a Mysore jail under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, Krishna said the fugitive was being convinced with legal evidence, to prove the state government’s efforts during the last one week in securing bail for them from the sessions court in Mysore for setting them free. In pursuit of the government’s response to Veerappan on August 6-7, the state public prosecutor had petitioned the Mysore court on August 8 to drop all charges against them. Objections were filed on August 10 and the cases came for hearing the next day. The court has now adjourned them to August 14. After charges under TADA are dropped, the court can consider the bail applications moved by the accused. “We are hopeful that the court will take into consideration their long detention in jails and grant them bail, since the Act is no longer on the statute. Everything possible is being done by the state, with speed and alacrity, to secure Rajakumar’s release at the earliest,” Krishna claimed.

3) Aug 19, 2000: Mysore Court allows Government to Drop TADA Charges: A designated court in Mysore on Saturday allowed a special public prosecutor's plea to drop charges under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act against 51 detenus suspected to be associates of forest brigand Veerappan. The detenus have been in jail for the last five to six years. Principal District and Sessions Judge Rajendra Prasad passed a 64-page order on the plea, which came following the government's decision to drop TADA cases to meet one of Veerappan's demands. Veerappan was holding Kannada film icon Rajakumar and three others hostage since July 30. Retired superintendent of police Abdul Kareem, whose son, Sub-Inspector Shakeel Ahmed, was killed in an ambush by Veerappan in 1992, filed objections against the state government's decision to drop TADA charges. The judge's order in effect meant the objections had been overruled.

4) Aug 25, 2000: Bandit Wants Cases Dropped Against 70 more: In a new twist to the hostage crisis, forest brigand Veerappan Friday demanded that cases against 70 more of his supporters be dropped. Veerappan, who held Kannada film star Dr Rajakumar and three others hostage for over 20 days now, has already demanded the release of 51 detenus. Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka met in Madras for the fourth time since the crisis began on July 30 and discussed Veerappan's fresh demands on Friday. They decided to send journalist-emissary R R Gopal again to the jungles to continue the negotiations with the bandit. Immediately after the meeting, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi said steps were being taken to release 121 Tamil prisoners detained in Karnataka for allegedly assisting Veerappan. The bail petitions of 51 of them would be heard on August 28 and they were expected to get bail, he said. Karunanidhi, however, did not explain how the number of criminals Veerappan wanted

freed swelled from 51 to 121. Senior officials said 70 new names Veerappan had given were of criminals against whom proceedings had already been dropped, but their movements were restricted to Mysore.

5) Aug 28, 2000: Veerappan's Associates Get Conditional Bail - *Fakir Chand* in Mysore : Fifty one alleged associates of forest brigand Veerappan, who have been languishing in the Mysore jail for over seven years as detainees under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, have been granted conditional bail by the Mysore district and sessions court on Monday, the 29th day of the hostage crisis. The orders were passed by principal judge Justice M S Rajendra Prasad after the bail applications were moved earlier in the day by lawyers of the accused, led by Venu Gopal. Reading out the two-page order, Prasad has set the statutory terms of seeking surety from each of the accused at Rs 10,000, or a bond of Rs 20,000 to set them free with a rider that “they will report to this court as and when summoned at a later date”.

Moments of Anxiety with Supreme Court Advancing the Date

6) Aug 29, 2000: SC Puts off TADA Detainees' Case till Sept 1- *Fakir Chand* in Bangalore: The Supreme Court bench of Justices S P Bharucha, S M S Kadri and Santosh Hegde put off their verdict on the bail plea of 51 Terrorist And Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act detainees on Friday till September 1, in New Delhi.....With this decision, the news of which Veerappan is likely to hear on the radio, the release of Rajakumar and three others is likely to get further delayed. Rajakumar was abducted by Veerappan on July 29.

7) Sept 1, 2000: SC Indefinitely Stays Release of 51 TADA Detainees - *Fakir Chand* in Bangalore/Mysore: In a major setback for the Karnataka government, the Supreme Court

on Friday indefinitely stayed the release of 51 Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act detainees, suspected associates of forest brigand Veerappan, who had been in the Mysore jail for seven years without trial. A reconstituted three-judge bench of the apex court, comprising Justices S P Bharaucha, D P Mahapatra and Y K Sabarwal, ruled that its interim order of August 29 staying the release of the accused would continue till further orders. The bench also directed the Mysore sessions court not to release the detainees until it disposed of the case. Taking a serious view of the state government's attempt to rake up the law-and-order issue in the event of the accused not being released, Bharucha said, "We make it amply clear that it is the Karnataka government's responsibility to maintain law and order and if you can't do it, then quit and make way for someone else who can do it."

8) Sept 19, 2000: SC Decision Puts Spoke in Rajakumar's Release - Onkar Singh in New Delhi: The release of Kannada film icon Dr Rajakumar from the clutches of sandalwood brigand Veerppan received a further setback on Tuesday, when the three-judge bench of the Supreme Court postponed the hearing into the release of 131 TADA detenues to October 11. The Chief Justice of India had marked the petition against their release, filed by Abdul Kareem, father of sub-inspector Shakeel Ahmed who was killed by Veerappan, to a three-judge bench headed by Justice S P Bharucha. The other two judges on the bench were Justice S N Phukhan and Justice V R Patil... The state of Karnataka was represented by additional solicitor general Harish Salve and the advocate general A N Jayaram. "We are disappointed by the delay but we have to abide by the decision of the apex court. We will put forward our arguments on October 11 and hope for an early hearing," Jayaram told newsmen outside the court premises. Sri Venugopal, advocate for Simon and 50 other TADA detenues, said most of his

clients had been in jail for over 7-8 years now. “Some of them are women and some are over the age of 70. Some have been ailing for some time, while others have even been operated upon while in jail.” According to him, theirs was a fit case for release on bail.

9) October 11, 2000: SC Raps Karnataka Govt on Rajakumar Issue: *Josy Joseph* in New Delhi: The Supreme Court Wednesday evening postponed to Tuesday hearing on the release of 51 TADA detainees to meet the demands of forest brigand Veerappan, who was holding Kannada superstar Dr Rajakumar in his custody. The court decided to continue hearing the case on Tuesday, after holding a day-long hearing in the special leave petition filed by Abdul Kareem, former deputy superintendent of police and father of Sub-Inspector Shakeel Ahmed, who was killed by Veerappan in 1992...Harish Salve told the court that there was a total of 166 accused in two cases. Of them 127 were arrested, and 73 were out on bail. Three of the accused died in judicial custody, while the present case was relating to the 51 who were in custody.

10) Oct 17, 2000: SC Postpones TADA Detenues' Case till Wednesday - *Onkar Singh* in New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday put off the case of the 151 Terrorist And Disruptive Activities Prevention Act detainees till Wednesday after giving instructions to the Tamil Nadu government to produce the documents used by the public prosecutor while seeking the release of the detainees, in particular Radio Venkatesh, from a special TADA court.

11) Oct 18, 2000: SC Pulls up Karnataka Govt in TADA Detenues' Case - *Onkar Singh* in New Delhi: The apex court on Wednesday pulled up the solicitor general, Harish Salve,

who was appearing on behalf of the Karnataka government, for not replying to some of the questions put to him by the court to its satisfaction.

12) Oct 19, 2000: SC ‘not Inclined’ to Release TADA Detenues: Criticising the Tamil Nadu government for failing to post policemen at Gajanur farmhouse despite information that matinee idol Rajakumar faced kidnapping threat from Veerappan, the Supreme Court on Thursday gave indications that it will not allow release of the 51 associates of the forest brigand. “At the moment we are certainly not inclined to allow their release,” a three-judge bench, comprising S P Bharucha, P Mahapatra and Y K Sabharwal, observed during the hearing of the case. Referring to the August 19 order passed by the Mysore designated Court allowing an application under section 321 of the CrPC for dropping TADA charges against the accused, Justice Bharucha said, “This is a terrible order. It is out of pure fear. It is a mere knee-jerk reaction. Therefore, as far as section 321 is concerned, we are not inclined at the moment in favour of the August 19 order”.

13) Oct 31, 2000: SC Reserves Verdict in Rajakumar Case - *Josy Joseph* in New Delhi: The Supreme Court Tuesday congratulated Abdul Kareem, father of a slain Karnataka sub-inspector, for challenging the Mysore special court order on release of 51 Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act detenues, as demanded by forest brigand Veerappan, making it clear where its sympathies lay. The court admonished the Centre and state governments of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu for not acting against the brigand and allowing him to create an autonomous region.

14) Nov 6, 2000: Rajakumar Completes 100 Days in Captivity - *N Sathiya Moorthy* in Madras: On any other occasion, his family and fans would have been gloating over

his achievements. Not this time. With Kannada cinema's superstar Dr Rajakumar completing 100 days in captivity on Monday, it has instead exposed the system to the inabilities and inconsistencies that could not be fought and won - even when the captor is sandalwood smuggler Veerappan, with a pan-Tamil ideology to flaunt as his latest acquisition. Only that like the mega serial, every observer is talking about what shape the script may take over the weeks, but not what may be on the screen the very evening.

15) Nov 7, 2000: SC Rules out TADA Detenues' Release

- Josy Joseph in New Delhi: The Supreme Court today upheld the petition filed by Abdul Kareem, father of a slain Karnataka sub-inspector, challenging the Mysore special court order granting bail to 51 Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act detenues currently in detention. It quashed the designated court's August 19 order dropping TADA charges against 51 accused and the August 28 order granting them conditional bail. With this ruling, the efforts of the Tamil Nadu and Karnataka governments to secure the release of Kannada superstar Rajakumar by yielding to sandalwood smuggler Veerappan's demands, have been shot down. Giving its verdict on Tuesday, the Supreme Court bench comprising Justices S P Bharucha, D P Mahapatra and Y K Sabbarwal, said the orders by the Mysore and Madras courts granting bail to the TADA detenues as demanded by Veerappan were "not good in law", and that they did not match the requirements in Section 321 of the Criminal Procedure Code while withdrawing prosecution in a TADA case.

16) Nov 15, 2000: Veerappan Releases Rajakumar,

Finally - Fakir Chand in Bangalore: Kannada matinee idol Dr Rajakumar was released by forest brigand Veerappan and

is reportedly resting in a guesthouse on the fringes of the Satyamangalam forests. Dr Rajakumar was released in the early hours of Wednesday along with his associate Nagesh.

Out of the 121 who were imprisoned as aides of Veerappan, 4 were awarded life imprisonment by the trial court appealed to the Supreme Court of India for their release, and their sentence was enhanced to death penalty on 29th Jan 2004.

17) Supreme Court of India

Simon & Ors vs State of Karnataka on 29 January, 2004

Author: Y Sabharwal

Bench: Y.K. Sabharwal, B.N. Agrawal.

CASE NO.: Appeal (crl.) 149-150 of 2002: “In view of the aforesaid, while dismissing the appeals and confirming the conviction of the appellants, we enhance the sentence of each of them from life imprisonment to death penalty”.

18) SC commutes death penalty of 15 convicts due to delay, mental illness: (source: <https://www.nchro.org/index.php/2014/01/27/sc-commutes-death-penalty-of-15-convicts-due-to-delay-mental-illness/>)

27 January 2014

In a landmark and significant judgement, the Supreme Court on Tuesday commuted death penalty of 15 convicts on the grounds of inordinate delay and mental illness. The apex court said the death penalty can be commuted when there is an inordinate and inexplicable delay in deciding the mercy plea of the convicts. While the death penalty of 13 convicts has been commuted to life on the ground of inordinate delay on part of President to decide their mercy pleas, 2 others were given life sentence after they became mentally ill after several years

on death row. Over 20 death row convicts had approached Supreme Court seeking an authoritative ruling on the matter. The Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court commuted death sentence of 4 aides of forest brigand Veerappan to life term on ground of delay in deciding their mercy plea by the government. The 4 Veerappan gang members, convicted for killing 22 policemen in April 1993, are Simon, Gnana Prakash, Madaiah and Bilavendra. They were sentenced to death on January 29, 2004 while their mercy plea rejected was in February 13, 2013. The apex court had extended the stay on hanging for 6 months on February 20, 2013. The court also ruled that a death row convict must be hanged within 14 days after dismissal of his / her mercy petition.

Out of the 4 convicted prisoners in Mysore Central Prison, Mr Simon and Mr Bilavendra died in prison due to illness after over two decades in prison. Mr Jnanaprakash is now ailing and Mr Madaiah is aging. The humiliation of being hanged to death was averted. Thus our first petition “The Courts render Justice to those who are innocent among these under-trials arrested in the Palar Blast Case 1992 under TADA and none be awarded death penalty” was answered after a long period of anxiety. The scriptures came alive in the Judgment “From his holy height in heaven, the Lord has looked on the earth to hear the groaning of the prisoners, and free those condemned to death” (Psalm 102:20).

Our Second Intention: “To succeed in starting PMI units in the places where there are prisons in Mysore Diocese – Mandya, Nanjangud, K.R.Nagar, Kollegal, Chamarajnagar and Madikeri for the benefit of prisoners”::

The Mysore PMI Unit, was successful in starting PMI units in all the prisons in the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Mysore within 15 months of its commencement. Moreover the PMI

unit members were successful in writing to the then Bishop of Chickmagalur Late Most Rev J.B.Sequeira to start a PMI unit in Chickmagalur Diocese which the Bishop gladly permitted and two PMI units one at Chickmagalur and Hassan were started in 2000 - 2001. Some service was being rendered to the prisoners by the PMI members in all these prisons. With the formation of these PMI units an opportunity was available to the PMI Volunteers to respond to the call in Isaiah 49:9 “You will say to the captives: Come out; and to those in darkness: Show yourselves”.

The Third Intention: “For Abolition of Death Penalty from the Statute Book in the Country”:

The Mysore Unit wrote nearly 120 letters in 2000 to the Bishops of India including the then CBCI President to take up the matter with the Constitutional authorities in India for removing the clause on “Death Penalty” from the Statute books since the Catholic Church did not support death penalty. Pope John Paul II and his successors have strongly denounced death penalty as the stand of the Church. The Catholic Church has a formidable voice in the country and is heard by the Government of India, especially in the Nirbhaya Case, when the opinion of the Catholic Church was sought by Justice Bagavathi, on whether death penalty should be awarded for rape. We continue to pray that this clause on death penalty be deleted from the penal provisions of the law of the land as done by over 85% of the countries of the world. We hope the CBCI will muster enough courage to take up this cause with the Government of the day. It was an inspiration from the Word of God in Lamentations 3:31-36 that compelled us to appeal to the Bishops of India: “For it is not forever that the Lord rejects man. In the abundance of his love he punishes, but has compassion. For he does not willingly abase

or afflict the human race. To trample underfoot the prisoners of the land, to deny a man his rights in the presence of the Most High, to deprive people of justice – the Lord does not approve of this”.

Over the years the Mysore PMI Unit, has been successful in installing a “Dental Clinic” for the benefit of the prisoners inside the Central Jail in 2000 in collaboration with the Rotary Club (West); installing solar water heater with the help of “Lions Club” members; introducing counseling to men and women prisoners to help in their reformation; celebrate festivals like Shankranti & Ugadi by inviting religious heads of Ramakrishna Mutt to give them talks; Eid festival with our Muslim brethren in prison by inviting prominent persons from their community; Christmas celebration; educate children of convicts in need; provide medical aid to those who seek our help; provide legal help to those in need; contribute amounts to pay up the fine for those convicts who are released on good conduct by the Government; join hands with the National PMI through contributions for their programs during COVID times; the unit has been an inspiration to many seminarians and religious men and women in developing love to serve the prisoners; conducted “Value Education” for prisoners; collaborated with the Diocesan CRI in its work especially the release of prisoners; motivated lay people to contribute generously for this noble cause; conducted weekly programs in the Correction Centres for Children’s separately for girls and boys etc.

It is in these circumstances we thankfully acknowledge the unique and great contribution to the Nation in general and Catholic Church in India in particular, by Rev. Fr Verghese Kariperry and Rev. Fr Francis Kodyan (Present PMI National Coordinator) for founding the Prison Ministry India

responding to the call of Jesus “I was in prison, and you came to see me” (Mt 25:36) which gave many of us the thought that “Prisoners need to be loved and forgiven” because we are in the category “Some are Caught, others not” even though each one of us are sinners when we introspect. By founding PMI the earlier mindset that “Prisoners deserve to be in prison” has changed to “Prisoners must be given a chance to be Reformed, Rehabilitated and restored back to the Society as a Renewed Person” which is the responsibility of every member of the Society.

PMI is an opportunity to serve for those who want to respond to the words of encouragement of St Paul in his letter to the Hebrews 13:3 “Remember prisoners as if you were with them in chains and the same for those who are suffering. Remember that you also have a body”.

TOMORROW WILL BE THE LAST TUESDAY OF YOUR LIFE! THE WOUNDED IN DEATH CHAMBERS

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

What greater mental assault one can go through than when we tell a person that he is going to be killed in 2 weeks, in 3 days, or “tomorrow will be the last Tuesday of your life here”. Those who are on death row have nightmares every day. “Guards are coming, it’s my time, I say “No, no, no!” I struggle and I wake up. I look around. I am in my cell.” It was a dream. But they will certainly come for me, soon. We have seen in movies about death row prisoners and death penalty. The death row prisoner is brought to the death chamber, the jailor looks at the time, nods his head and then the hangman pulls a lever and the body gets suspended in the air and a person is executed. This is what we see in movies? Is this same in real life?

How is a person executed? How is death warrant signed? What happens just before an execution? What is said to the convict? These are several questions that rise in our minds when we talk about death penalty. But my question is what does he/she go through as he/she knows that he/she will be executed in a few hours time? What happens to a convict just before the hanging? Once the date of the hanging is decided, the convict is taken out of the death cell and put in another cell. How does this human being spend the rest of his days and hours? What do their families go through?

The death row prisoners' only hope will be the review petition, the curative petition and the mercy petition which will be with the President of India. The moment the petition is dismissed, a black warrant will be issued by the Patiala House Court. This is the last step before the final death sentence is carried out. After the signing of the black warrant the court decides the date and time of the execution by looking at the suggestions and preparations. The death row prisoner is allowed to see the person he wants to meet for the last time. He is picked up around 4 in the morning of the execution day and he is asked to bathe and wear new clothes. One can imagine the agonizing moments this convict goes through. Usually, when someone dies we bathe them and make them wear a new dress. But, here it is just the opposite. A human being prepares himself to be killed, to be hanged as he bathes himself and wears a new dress. Imagine how a human being can walk towards the death chamber! Sometimes the convict is carried by the prison guards as their legs tremble.

Death Penalty and Human Rights

India has carried out eight executions since 2000, the last having been in 2020. Jyothi Singh Pandey was a young woman. She loved her parents. She loved her brothers. She loved cinema and life. She was training to be a physiotherapist and dreaming of being a doctor. Her dreams all were shattered on 16 December 2012. On March 20, 2020, death row convicts, Mukesh, Akshay Kumar Singh, Vinay Sharma and Pawan Kumar were executed for the December 2012 gang-rape and murder of Jyoti Singh (Nirbhaya). Finally, the rapists of Nirbhaya were hanged. Prison Ministry India volunteers from Delhi tried their level best for restorative justice by meeting the victim's parents.

Victims and their families need justice. Yes, they should be respected and given justice. But, does death penalty lower crime rates or murder rates? Take our own country for example. In 2020, four of them were executed. From 2020-22, how many girls were raped and murdered? It leaves a big question in each one of our minds. Is death penalty a good and just punishment? The death penalty violates the right to life which happens to be the most basic of all human rights. The death penalty undermines human dignity which is inherent to every human being. A human being walks towards the death chamber and closes his eyes to be killed! The moment the death sentence is passed, they are half dead.

Death Penalty and Catholic Church

In 2018, Pope Francis revised the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, a doctrinal manual used for teaching Catholic children and converts worldwide, to describe the death penalty as “an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person” that is “inadmissible” in all cases.

Wrongful Convictions

One person for every 8 executions carried out has been wrongly convicted. One was sentenced to death row, was in jail for 20 years, but by the grace of God, a good lawyer and because of the preservation of DNA evidence by the prosecution, he was saved. Manuel Ortiz was innocent and was in prison for 30 long years in Louisiana’s death row. When he finally did get a hearing of his Habeas petition in the federal court, the judge made a mistake, a human error.

Victim’s Father.....

Bud Welch whose daughter Julie was killed in the Oklahoma City bombing (19 April 1995) by Timothy McVeigh and Terry

Nichols says, “Even if I had watched Timothy being executed, when I would come home, the chair that my daughter Julie sat on would still be empty. I would still have to deal with the fact of her death.”

No Love in Death Penalty

“The prisoner is a human being and worth much more than the worst crime that he or she has committed. Every human made in the image of God has that divine spark which is the capacity to love. God’s energy is love. St John says God is love, where there is love there is God. In a death penalty there is no love. It is whimsical to claim that I am killing a person out of love for him,” said Sr Helen Prejean CSJ when she addressed Prison Ministry India volunteers during the international conference on Death Penalty Abolition.

Sr. Helen Prejean CSJ is a leading American advocate for the abolition of the death penalty. She is known for her best-selling book, *Dead Man Walking*, based on her experiences with two convicts on death row for whom she served as spiritual adviser before their executions. It was produced later as movie. The message of ‘*Dead Man Walking*’ movie is ‘The Redemptive Power of Love’. Throughout *Dead Man Walking*, Sr Prejean presents love as the one force that has the power to alter and redeem human life, as well as restore its dignity. Sr Helen accompanied 6 men who were executed. That is what ignited her heart and soul to rescue death row prisoners. She could not just walk away indifferently after witnessing the horrific. It became her moral responsibility. And she firmly believes that this is what Evangelization is all about.

The Wounded in Death Chambers

Jesus taught that God is to be found in the prison too. Pope Francis said the Church should be the field hospital where the

wounded are. The wounded are more in the prisons, especially in the death chambers. The Pope defines a holy person as one through whom God passes. We are the hands of God, we are the eyes of Christ, and we are the voice of the voiceless. When we look into the eyes of the prisoner, undoubtedly, grace passes to us from them too. 90% of the death row prisoners are victims who have been abused as children, who have faced violence, witnessed violence, and finally they act out that violence which has been all too familiar to them and the cycle is completed.

No to Death Penalty

Death penalty is inhuman and it needs to be abolished. In the November 1947 issue of *Harijan*, Gandhi wrote, “All criminals should be treated as patients and the jails should be hospitals admitting this class of patients for treatment and cure. No one commits crime for the fun of it. It is a sign of a diseased mind.” These diseased minds should not be killed, they should be treated, they need to be cured. Who has given us the right to take away someone’s life? God is the giver of life and it belongs to Him. Prison Ministry India celebrates Prison Ministry Sunday on 14 August 2022 with the theme of Integral Human Development and Pastoral care for Prisoners. Pope Francis invites the Church to learn motherhood and to be mothers to the broken ones behind bars. We learn motherhood from Jesus who left 99 sheep and went in search of the one sheep that was lost.

PRISON MINISTRY INDIA: SPECIAL TASK FORCES

Fr Dominic Puthenpurackal MST

Introduction

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”. Inspired by the words of St Paul: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens” (Phil 4, 13), PMI launched Special Task Forces in commemoration of the Ruby Jubilee and cast its new nets into deep waters by penetrating into the high security prisons to catch big sharks and whales such as terrorists, serial killers, mafia dons, death row prisoners, and so on. We are familiar with the special task forces of the superpowers, for instance, USA’s - Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team (FAST), Israel’s Sayeret Matkal, and India’s Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (COBRA). What is common in these special operation forces is their rigorous training, precision in reaching out to their targets and perfection in realizing their goals. PMI, who has so far been serving prisoners such as the innocents, infants, first offenders, undertrials, robbers, rapists, murderers and so on now lowers its net into deep waters through introducing the special task forces for a bigger catch of terrorists, mafia dons, death row prisoners, serial killers, and habituals.

Conception

On 12 December 2019, Rev. Dr. Francis Kodiyan MCBS, the cofounder of PMI and the present National Coordinator of PMI and CBCI secretary along with other volunteers was waiting at the inner gate of Tihar Prison at gate number 5 to celebrate Christmas with the prisoners. While he was waiting in prayer, a police bus approached and many police personnel came out of it together with some prisoners chained on their legs, hands and waist. He was frightened but soon understood that they were some hardcore criminals like terrorists or serial killers and from within him there sprouted the powerful message “PMI is called to seek and save them too”. Here lay the inception of PMI Special Task Forces (STF).

Inauguration

On 22 December 2019, Sr Adele Korah, Sr Rose Alexander two vibrant PMI missionaries in Bangalore, who set apart their whole time and energy for prisoners and their welfare, Sr Lini Sheeja MSC, the then PMI national secretary who also an innovator, active and enthusiastic missionary and a writer and Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan went to *Aradbanankunju* at Carmelaram, Bangalore, 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. Since the year 2021 was the ruby jubilee year of PMI, they decided to form 40 STFs.

Patroness

St Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897) had become a commando of this mission at the age of 14 by offering Holy Mass and mortifications for the repentance of Henri Pranzini, a hardcore triple murderer. This unrepentant convict was thankful to

St Theresa's prayer and sacrifices. At the last moment of his death, he approached the priest who was carrying the crucifix, took hold of the cross and kissed the wounds of Jesus three times, repented, and shed tears while embracing his capital punishment.

Death Row Commandos (DRC)

Death row prisoners are those prisoners who are convicted and are waiting for the execution of capital punishment, i.e., who are sentenced to death. According to the National Crime Research Bureau 2021 statistics there are 488 people who are condemned to death in Indian prisons. All over the world, there are more than 20,000 death row prisoners. "Let the groans of the prisoners come before thee, according to thy great power preserve those doomed to die" (Ps 79, 11). PMI has a great role to play in their reformation and redemption. With this intention PMI launched a new mission called DRC – Death Row Commandos. Their duty is to pray and fast for the reformation of those living in death rows. The most important spiritual weapon for this mission is the Holy Mass – the offering of the Body and blood of Jesus for their transformation.

Terrorist Saving Squad (TSS)

Terrorists are group of activists with a definite ideology and aim and they work for that even spending their lives through the medium of spreading terror. They are often militant and revolutionary. The number of terrorists and terrorist groups are on rapid growth. Every day there emerge new terrorist groups. We are familiar with Islamic State, Al-Qaida, Boko Haram, Taliban and so on who commit heinous crimes by killing innocents, raping women and demolishing Christian monuments and cities. What is more alarming is that there has always been a long queue of youngsters to follow suit. PMI

has a vital role to play in their salvation and thus launched Terrorists Saving Squad (TSS) for their transformation and salvation.

Mafia Redeemers (MR)

A mafia is a type of criminal organization whose central activity is the arbitration of disputes between criminals as well as the organization and enforcement of illicit agreements between criminals through the use of or threat of violence. They are often engaged in secondary activities like smuggling, drug trafficking, human trafficking, hawala, money laundering, and all sorts of illegal atrocities. Applying estimates of prevalence to population figures, the survey estimated that in India, whose population is just over a billion, 62.5 million people use alcohol, 8.75 million use cannabis, two million use opiates, and 0.6 million use sedatives or hypnotics. Seventeen per cent to 26% of these people can be classified as dependent users who need urgent treatment according to reports. About 25% of users of opiates and cannabis are likely to seek treatment, while about one in six people who drink alcohol are likely to do so.¹ Jesus called us to be members of PMI to work for their spiritual transformation and salvation. PMI launched Mafia Redeemers (MR) to work for the transformation of the mafia group.

Antihuman Trafficking Brigadiers (ATB)

Human Trafficking, the second largest criminal enterprise in the world, is the most barbaric crime and the postmodern slavery. Studies reveal that more than 40 million people are victims of human trafficking. Pope Francis has been giving enormous importance to the plight of millions of men, women and children who are trafficked and enslaved. On 20

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC443486/#:~:text=Applying%20estimates%20of%20prevalence%20to,million%20use%20sedatives%20or%20hypnotics.>

January 2019 during his weekly Angelus Prayer at St Peter's Square Pope Francis invited the faithful to pray for those responsible for human trafficking and its victims. PMI is committed to liberate the victims of human trafficking and launched a new battalion of Antihuman Trafficking Brigadiers who in collaboration with other agencies will be committed to search, serve and save humantrafficked victims.

Serial Killers Reformers (SKR)

Serial killers are typically persons who murder three or more people due to abnormal psychological drives, often sexual gratification, with the murders taking place over more than a month and including a significant period of time. Serial Killers can be organized (well planned, intelligent and/ or disorganized. There are four main types of serial killersⁱⁱ: Visionary: Believes that a person or entity is commanding him to kill. Most likely suffering from psychosis. Mission-oriented: Kills in order to "rid" society of a certain group. Hedonistic: Commits his acts for his own personal pleasure. For example, rape, torture or money. Power/control: Fantasizes about having power and seeks to dominate and control his victims. Furthermore, the Hedonistic type can be broken down into three subcategories called Lust, Thrill and Comfort. Dr Harold Shipman (1946–2004), a British doctor, is the most prolific serial killer in modern history, who killed more than 250 people. He hung himself in his cell in 2004, a day before his 58th birthday. PMI launched Serial Killers Reformers to reform and regain them through prayer and fasting for nothing is impossible for God. "For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men." (Tit 2: 11).

Habituals' Saving Squadron (HSS)

A large number of prisoners are called habituals. They are thieves, rapists, pedophiles who are addicted to these crimes

ii TIM (This Interests Me) retrieved on 13th March 2022 from the website: <https://thisinterestsme.com/types-serial-killers/>

and who continue to do the same and come back again and again to prison. They are known as “Once in a prison, always in a prison” and are considered to be the toughest people to be reformed. As they are dangerous being in society, they are often given long term imprisonment unlike the first-time convicted prisoners. Jesus on the cross reformed and redeemed a habitual prisoner, the good thief. “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Lk 23:43). Anchoring on Jesus’ last-minute saving action, PMI launched Habituals’ Saving Squadron (HSS) to redeem them.

Hired-Killers Liberating Squadron (HLS)

Hired or Contract killing is a form of murder in which one party hires another party, often called a hitman, to kill a targeted person or multiple people. It involves an illegal agreement between two or more parties in which one party agrees to kill the target in exchange for some form of payment, monetary or otherwise. The total number of US murders in 2010 was 12,996. If we assume 3.2 percent of these crimes were committed on a commercial basis, we get 416 contract hits. That sounds like a lot. Many of the hit men are organized killers: they target and study about the target, plan the operation, fix the methods and carry out the murder in a professional way. As many of them are vigilant and the actions are well pre-planned, the arrest rate is low and enquiry from police is difficult. PMI formed a squadron called Hired-killers Liberating Squadron (HLS) to liberate and redeem those entangled in contract killings.

Antidrug-Traffickers Redeemers (ATR)

Drug is a medicine or other substance which has a physiological effect when ingested or otherwise introduced into the body. Drug addiction is a chronic brain disease. It causes a person to take drugs repeatedly, despite the harm they cause. Repeated

drug use can change the brain and lead to addiction. The brain changes from addiction can be lasting, so drug addiction is considered a “relapsing” disease. Drug trafficking is a global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of substances which are subject to drug prohibition laws. Drug trafficking, which ravishes communities, endangers businesses, strains government institutions, and drags down the wider economy, has become a huge business, bringing in a fifth of all profits from organized crimeⁱⁱⁱ. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime’s World Drug Report 2005 estimates the size of the global illicit drug market at US\$321.6 billion in 2003 alone. Consumption of illegal drugs is widespread globally and it remains very difficult for local authorities to thwart its popularity. There are good numbers of prisoners related to drug trafficking in major central prisons of metropolitan cities. Therefore, PMI formed the Drug-traffickers Redeeming Wing (ATR) to liberate and redeem those involved in drug trafficking.

Prisoners Releasing Squad (PRS)

Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured (Hb 13:3). PMI has a team to work for the release of prisoners. Often many prisoners, even if their term of imprisonment is over, left in jail they have no one to pay the security fine or to take care. With the assistance from PMI advocates we release many prisoners by paying their security fine. Every year PMI spends millions for releasing prisoners under the leadership of Sr Adele Korah in Bangalore and Mr. Antony Jacob in Pune. In almost all central prisons we have PMI volunteers to take care of those

iii Medicine Plus, retrieved on 15 March 2022 from the website: <https://medlineplus.gov/druguseandaddiction.html#:~:text=Drug%20addiction%20is%20a%20chronic,-considered%20a%20%22relapsing%22%20disease>

prisoners who have no money and nobody to release them. Proclaiming release to captives was one of the mandates of Jesus. 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 captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor (Lk 4:18-19).

Prisoners Children Educators (PCE)

Many of the children of prisoners are deprived of their golden childhood days as they would be either in jail with their mothers or they witnessed crimes that their parents committed or are deprived of their parents in their childhood. The children of the prisoners are considered as potential criminals by many in the society. They are to be given special love, care, concern, counselling, active skill training, communication skills, personality building up classes, and moreover, acceptance in society. The PMI has a crew to take care of the education of prisoners' children. Besides the Kolbe Home under national office of PMI where prisoners' children are provided free accommodation and education, in collaboration with various congregations, PMI runs many homes for prisoners' children all over India. PMI also helps more than 100 children of prisoners with educational scholarships. The volunteers of PMI visit their homes and help them to provide their school or college fees too.

Purgatory Souls Redeemers (PSR)

Purgatory is the condition, process, or place of purification or temporary punishment in which the souls of those who die in a state of grace are made ready for heaven. "A soul stained by sin cannot present itself to God", Says Pope Benedict XVI. The people in hell and in heaven may not need our payers, but the people in purgatory need it indeed. One's call to volunteer

as a missionary in PMI is a pure gift of God. The works for lost souls include the souls in purgatory very much. The call of PMI volunteers goes further in redeeming souls from purgatory. Purgatory Souls Redeemers, the PTF commit themselves specially to pray for the souls in purgatory, to offer mass for them, pray for the departed souls who have no one to pray for and also celebrate All Souls' Day spiritually. They are to study more about the souls in purgatory and to impart the knowledge and need of praying for the dead more earnestly among other volunteers and faithful. Offering up all brokenness one faces in daily life and dedicating our great and little sufferings of daily life, can be a consoling gift for the sanctification of the souls in purgatory.

Foreign Prisoners Expatriation (FPE)

There are more than 6000 foreign prisoners in Indian prisons and a good number of Indian citizens are languishing in foreign prisons. 1.5 percentage of the total jail population in India are foreign prisoners. Among them more than half the number of prisoners is from the neighboring countries of India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar^{iv}. Very often a bulk number of people are also arrested and put in jail for various causes and sometimes they are deprived of good advocates and no one to understand them as they speak different languages, the cultures of the people are different from their land and they become frustrated without communication and support of relatives. The FPE commandos of PMI would be there for their support actively to connect them to the relatives, to go and visit them and to find out good lawyers for them. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was

iv Times of India, Retrieved on 15 March 2022 from the website: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/how-do-foreign-prisoners-eat-talk-live-in-indian-jails/article-show/70711241.cms>

hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me (Mt 25: 34-35). PMI Foreign Prisoners' Expatriation team works for the expatriation of foreign prisoners in Indian prisons and bring back home Indian citizens from the prisons of foreign countries.

Abducted Peoples' Reformers (APR)

Over 3,40,000 kids went missing as it was reported in the year 2020 alone. Around 5000 children are kidnapped every year. Girls from age of 12 to 17 are the most typical victims of abduction. Often many girls are abducted in view of marriage, prostitution, obtaining money, to influence the parents for illegal favors, etc. The definition of abduction is the act or process of illegally taking away a person by using force or coercion. We are all familiar with the tragic incident where a 58-year-old priest Fr. Tom Uzhunnalil SDB was kidnapped in March 2016 when terrorists raided his charity house in Aden (Yemen). The raid also killed 16 people, including four Catholic nuns who were from Missionaries of Charity congregation. He was finally released in September 2017. Many prayed for his safe release and finally God set him free. PMI launched Abducted Peoples' Reformers to pray and work for the release of many more abducted people.

Anointed Prisoners Consolers (APC)

In prison we also find anointed bishops, priests and religious accused of various crimes. Some of them are innocent prisoners like Fr Benedict Onamkulam of Manatharuvi murder case in Kerala; some of them are arrested and kept in custody as Fr Stan Swamy, the famous human activist; some of them are put in prison for real cases too. As human beings,

all people are fragile and weak. It includes the leaders of the church too. PMI launched Anointed Prisoners' Consolers who pray day and night for their consolation and release. They are set apart to visit them, console them and pray for them to convert them. This STF gives awareness seminars on various crimes, study classes on laws, evaluation programs on falls happening in consecrated life and give guidelines, give mandatory guidelines and suggestions to coworkers and the consecrated especially.

Anti-corruption and Anti-bribery Warriors (AAW)

Corruption is abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It erodes trust, weakens democracy, hampers economic development, and further exacerbates inequality, poverty, social division and environmental crisis^v. It is dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery. Bribery is an act of giving a sum of money or other inducement offered or given to bribe someone. In Indian context, even if vigilance and police are very much active, bribery and corruption are well rooted. Many good works suffer due to this evil. Many people lose hope and faith in goodness. Thus, PMI launched Anti-corruption and Anti-bribery Warriors to pray for the salvation and redemption of all who are involved in this evil act and also for the victims of such crime. These commandos can do a lot in the field of giving awareness to the society about this evil and try to irradiate it by abstaining from giving and taking bribery, preaching against it, giving awareness about it and praying for them.

Innocent Prisoners Redeemers (IPR)

There are many prisoners who are innocent and are in prison for no fault of theirs. These prisoners often lose faith in the

^v Transparency International, What is corruption? Retrieved on 13 March 2022 from the website: <https://www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption>

judicial system. The agony of prison life and the complete loss of freedom are only compounded by the feelings of what might have been, but for the wrongful conviction. Deprived for years of family and friends and the ability to establish oneself professionally, the nightmare does not end upon release. With no money, housing, transportation, health services or insurance, and a criminal record that is rarely cleared despite innocence, the punishment lingers long after innocence has been proven. States have a responsibility to restore the lives of the wrongfully convicted to the best of their abilities^{vi}. They often suffer from mild to severe depression. God alone knows the heart of every person. For many of them punishment continues after their incarceration too. PMI launched Innocent Prisoners' Redeemers to pray for them to Jesus, the model of an innocent prisoner who underwent vicarious suffering for humanity and to work for their release. In the history of PMI many innocent prisoners have been set free due to the interaction of PMI volunteers.

Juvenile Delinquents Reformers (JDF)

Juvenile delinquency, also known as “juvenile offending”, is the act of participating in unlawful behavior as a minor or individual younger than the statutory age of majority. It is the involvement of a kid who is between the age of 10 and 17 in illegal activity or behavior. Adolescent misconduct is likewise used to allude to youngsters who display constant conduct of underhandedness or noncompliance, in order to be considered out of parental control, getting to be plainly subject to legitimate activity by the court framework^{vii}. Each

vi Compensating the wrongly Convicted, Innocents projects retrieved on 15th March 2022 from the website: <https://innocenceproject.org/compensating-wrongly-convicted/>

vii Amandeep Kaur, Juvenile Delinquency and Related Legislations in India, JPleaders, retrieved on 16 March 2022 from the website: <https://blog.ipleaders.in/juvenile-delinquency-related-legislations-india/#:~:text=Juvenile%20Delinquency%20is%20the%20involvement,in%20illegal%20activity%20or%20behaviour.>

state has a separate legal system in place to deal with juveniles who break the law. For example, in the USA a juvenile delinquent is a person who is typically below 18 years. There are two principal sorts of guilty parties among Juvenile Delinquents: Rehash wrongdoers and age particular guilty parties. Rehash Wrongdoers: They are otherwise called “life-course constant wrongdoers.” These adolescent delinquents start culpable acts or hinting at other solitary conduct amid pre-adulthood. They keep on engaging in criminal exercises or forceful practices even after they enter adulthood. Age-particular guilty parties: They indicate adolescent reprobate conduct that starts amid youthfulness. They leave away all the tendencies of criminal activities before they turn into grown-ups. There are many reasons why minors end up in juvenile homes such as school related problems, economic problems, substance abuse, peer group pressures, physical abuse at home, lack of adult interaction etc. PMI remembers such minors and thus launched Juvenile Delinquents Reformers to pray for their conversion and release.

Psychiatric Prisoners Comforters (PPC)

In prison there are also prisoners with psychiatric disorder. Psychiatric disorder is a mental illness which greatly disturbs ones thinking, moods, and behavior and seriously increases the risk of disability, pain, death, or loss of freedom. The mostly seen psychiatric disorders found in Indian prisoners are adjustment disorder, psychosis, schizophrenia, Bipolar Affective Disorder, Depression, Epilepsy or seizures and Anti-Social Personality Disorder^{viii}. It is observed that schizophrenia

viii Syed Rabiya & Vijaya Raghavan, Prison Mental Health in India: Review, Indian Journal of Social Psychiatry, Retrieved on 16th March 2022 from the website: <https://www.indjsp.org/article.asp?issn=0971-9962;year=2018;volume=34;issue=3;spage=193;epage=196;aulast=Rabiya#:~:text=It%20is%20observed%20that%20schizophrenia,evidently%20prevalent%20%5BTable%20%5D.&text=Suicide%20and%20self%20Dharm%20behavior%20is%20another%20major%20concern%20in%20prisons.>

is the most common disorder followed by depression and adjustment disorder found in prisoners. Various substance-use disorders such as cannabis, alcohol, and nicotine are also evidently prevalent. Suicide and self-harm behavior is another major concern in prisons. In a 10-year retrospective study by Bardale and Dixit, they observed that of 179 autopsies performed, nearly 14 cases were suicide by prisoners. 71.42% of them were in lock-ups while 28.57% were in prison^{ix}. There is a need for the study and practical involvement in improving mental health of the prisoners. They need to be trained in inter personal and intrapersonal relationship, intrapersonal and interpersonal management, regulation of emotions in hardships and psychological therapies where they can let out themselves. PMI launched Psychiatric Prisoners' Comforters to pray for such prisoners and to provide medical aid and counseling.

Victims Redeemers (VR)

A Victim is a person harmed, injured, or killed as a result of a crime, accident, or other event or action. Here we consider a victim as a person who has come to feel helpless and passive in the face of misfortune or ill-treatment. They suffer the most and thus find very difficult to forgive their offenders. Some of the ways we can adopt to deal with the victims are: Listen and strengthen them, learn from them and teach the next generation all the defenses and precautions, search for the services of survivors of violence, stand against cultures of malpractices and rape, understand the consent of parties in violence, give strong support to give a view to them that 'you are not alone', keep the data and demand for it in counselling and have case studies and studies of comparisons in each case in order to prevent such cases in future. PMI not only serves

those who are in prison but also is greatly concerned about the victims who suffer unjustly from their offenders. PMI has organized and launched Victims Redeemers to pray for all the victims of different crimes all over the world. They pray especially for their change of heart and mind so that they are able to forgive their offenders and accept them as their brothers and sisters. PMI also organizes various counselling facilities for the victims especially those who undergo Post Traumatic Stress Disorders.

War-Crime Prisoners Reformers (WPR)

Article 4 of Geneva convention defines a prisoner of war. Prisoners of war are persons belonging to one of the following categories, who have fallen into the power of the enemy: members of the armed forces, Members of other militias and members of other volunteer corps who is involved directly in war, civilian members of military aircraft crews, war correspondents, supply contractors, members of labour units or of services responsible for the welfare of the armed forces, members of crews, including masters, pilots and apprentices, of the merchant marine etc^x. WPR of the PMI takes special interest to pray for them. Together with them WPR is also praying for the governments that try to encroach or occupy lands and territories too. Many are often involved in war crimes. A war crime is a violation of the laws of war that gives rise to individual criminal responsibility for actions by the combatants, such as intentionally killing civilians or intentionally killing prisoners of war, torture, taking hostages, unnecessarily destroying civilian property, deception by perfidy, wartime sexual violence, pillaging, the conscription

x Cf Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, United Nations Human Right, Retrieved on 16th March 2022 from the website: [ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/TreatmentOfPrisonersOfWar.aspx#:~:text=A.,part%20of%20such%20armed%20forces](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/TreatmentOfPrisonersOfWar.aspx#:~:text=A.,part%20of%20such%20armed%20forces).

of children in the military, committing genocide or ethnic cleansing, the granting of no quarter despite surrender, and flouting the legal distinctions of proportionality and military necessity. It is an act that constitutes a serious violation of the laws of wars that give rise to individual criminal responsibility. PMI launched War- Crime Prisoners' Reformers to pray for the conversion of such prisoners so that they may truly repent and have the courage to accept the judgment.

Antifascist Prisoners Reformers (APR)

Fascism is the word, as we know is related to the ideology followed by Mussolini of Italy who was a dictator. Today this word stands for the same ideology. It is a political philosophy, movement, or regime (such as that of the Fascist) that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition. Anti-fascism is a political movement in opposition to fascist ideologies, groups and individuals. Those who follow and promote such ideology are called antifascists. In prison there are prisoners who are antifascist. PMI launched Antifascist Prisoners Reformers to pray for their renewal and work to bring them in the main stream of society for the greater good of the human society.

Blackmailing Prisoners Reformers (BPR)

Blackmailing is the action, treated as a criminal offence, of demanding payment or another benefit from someone in return for not revealing, compromising or damaging information about them. It involves a threat to do something that would cause a person to suffer embarrassment or financial loss, unless that person meets certain demands. The threat might include revealing private information about a person that is likely to

cause them embarrassment, revealing sensitive information that is likely to cause financial harm; to accuse a person falsely of a crime or to report a person's involvement in crime. In order to avoid the threatened action, a blackmail victim must pay money to the blackmailer or perform some other action^{xi}. The action demanded by the blackmailer may or may not be illegal itself. The growth of the Internet has also led to overlap between blackmail and cybercrime. Many forms of blackmail are considered crimes under state or federal law. Most states treat blackmail as a type of extortion or coercion, which involves threats of violence or other harm in order to compel a person to do something. Blackmail is generally seen as a felony, which could result in multi-year prison sentences and large fines. There are prisoners who have blackmailed others to earn money or another benefit in return for not revealing, compromising or damaging information about them. PMI launched Blackmailing Prisoners Reformers to pray for such prisoners to bring about a change in their life.

Burglars Transformers (BT)

A burglar is a person who has committed burglary or robbery. Burglary is an illegal entry into a building with intent to commit a crime, especially theft. Burglars deprive innocent people of their goods by robbing them. The motives of burglary are not only taking away the wealth of people for their needs or pleasure, but it also has subsidiary satisfactions such as 'excitement', 'revenge', a sense of 'solidarity', and the enjoyment of the 'risks' involved in carrying out the crime. Burglars have different motivations for their crimes, but the primary one is the need for money. Generally, due to its rapid nature, burglary is one of the most difficult crimes to solve,

xi Blackmail, Justia, Retrieved on 15th March 2022 from the website: <https://www.justia.com/criminal/offenses/white-collar-crimes/blackmail/#:~:text=Most%20states%20treat%20blackmail%20as,prison%20sentences%20and%20large%20fines.>

making it a great means by which to get quick, easy money. According to statistics on burglaries, 79 percent of burglars look for cash during their burglary, 68 percent look for jewelry, 58 percent look for illegal drugs, and 56 percent look for electronic goods. When a burglary occurs, 65 percent of burglars work to dispose of stolen items as quickly as possible, often selling them to pawn shops, secondhand dealers, or friends or acquaintances^{xiii}. There are several instances of theft cases that have been solved when the original owner finds his stolen property on craigslist. Continuous counselling, giving awareness, injecting positive motivation and helping them to find out the meaning of life and values such as the importance of hard work etc. will help these prisoners to take new decisions in life. PMI launched Burglars Transformers to pray for the change of life of such prisoners.

Cybercrime Prisoners Redeemers (CPR)

Cybercrimes are criminal activities carried out by means of computers or the internet. Most of the cybercrimes are committed by cybercriminals or hackers who want to make money. Cybercrimes are carried out by individuals or organizations. There are cybercrimes committed in various ways such as Email and internet fraud, Identity fraud (where personal information is stolen and used), Theft of financial or card payment data, Theft and sale of corporate data, Cyber-extortion (demanding money to prevent a threatened attack), Ransomware attacks (a type of cyber-extortion), Crypto jacking (where hackers mine cryptocurrency using resources they do not own) and Cyber-espionage (where hackers access government or company data). Most cybercrimes fall under two main categories: a) Criminal activity that targets

xiii What Motivates Burglars to Strike (or to avoid) a Home?, Safe touch, retrieved on 16th March 2022 from the website: <https://safetouch.com/what-motivates-burglars-to-strike-or-to-avoid-a-home/>

b) Criminal activity that uses computers to commit other crimes^{xiii}. Cybercrime that targets computers often involves viruses and other types of malwares. Examples of cybercrimes are malware attacks, phishing, Distributed DoS attacks. It knows no borders, either physical or virtual, cause serious harm and pose very real threats to victims worldwide. People who commit cybercrime are called cybercrime prisoners. Most of them are well educated and come from good families. It is the greed for easy and quick money that is attracting many youngsters to such crime. PMI launched Cybercrime Prisoners Redeemers to pray for such prisoners and help them renew their lives.

Dacoits Redeemers (DR)

A Dacoit is a member of a gang of robbers who are armed with weapons. They rob in a group not only a house but also a whole village. They are known for even attacking vehicles and robbing the passengers. Robbery and Dacoity are different: While a single person can commit robbery, five or more people must collectively commit dacoity. Secondly, robbery is a generic offence that is an aggravated form of theft or extortion. On the other hand, a dacoity is just a specific form of robbery involving five or more offences. Dacoity has had a huge impact in the Bhind Morena of Chambal regions in MadhyaPradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh in north-central India. The exact reasons for the emergence of dacoity in the Chambal valley have been disputed. Most explanations have simply suggested feudal exploitation as the cause that provoked many people of this region to take to arms. The area was also underdeveloped and poor, so that

^{xiii} Tips on How to Protect Yourself against Cybercrime, Kaspersky, Retrieved on 16th March 2022 from the website: <https://www.kaspersky.co.in/resource-center/threats/what-is-cybercrime>

banditry posed great economic incentives^{xiv}. Many are in prison today facing trial. PMI launched Dacoits Redeemers to pray for dacoits and to help them re-establish their lives. Some of the famous dacoits in India are Veerappan, Jagga Jatt, Phoolan Devi, Rambabu Gadariya, Nirbhay Singh Gurjar AKA Baagi etc.

Espionage Prisoners Reformers (EPR)

Espionage or spying is the act of obtaining secret or confidential information from non-disclosed sources without the permission of the holder of the information. A person who commits espionage is called espionage agent. An example of espionage is when a spy infiltrates the government of another country to learn valuable state secrets. There is a slight difference between spying and espionage: a spy is a person who secretly watches and examines the actions of other individuals or organizations and gathers information on them (usually to gain an advantage) while espionage is the act or process of learning secret information through clandestine means. Espionage is not always treason, and so in itself is not a punishable offence. When it becomes treason, espionage is punishable. “Espionage” can be called an act done for one’s own country whereas “treason” is an act that is done against one’s own country. But espionage can become treason when the person involved steals valid information from his own country and gives it to another. In prison there are prisoners who are accused or found guilty of such crime. PMI introduced Espionage Prisoners Reformers to bring about a reformation in the lives of such prisoners by praying and working for them.

xiv Dacoits, Wikipedia, Retrieved on 15th March 2022 from the website: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dacoity>

Smugglers Transformers (ST)

A smuggler is a person who smuggles or transports objects, substances, information or people, such as out of a house or building, into a prison, or across national and international borders. In short s/he is someone who takes goods or people into or out of a country illegally. Smuggling can be done on goods which are legal such as alcohol and tobacco (to save taxes or any other cause opposed to applicable laws and regulations), or illegal, such as drugs and arms. Illegal trafficking of immigrants is also a form of smuggling. It is assumed that Cigarettes are the world's most smuggled legal product. Human smuggling and human trafficking are to be differentiated. Human smuggling is the smuggling of humans with their consent by involved organizations, from one place to another illegally for financial benefits of themselves. For example, illegal border crossing. Whereas in human trafficking, a person is being trafficked or acquisition of people done forcibly in a very degrading, dangerous conditions for various purposes such as prostitution, slavery, cruelty, violence etc. But both the concepts are somehow interrelated as in the course of human smuggling, it's also involved in the occurrence of mentioned heinous crimes and vice versa. PMI launched Smugglers Transformers to pray and bring about a conversion in the lives of such prisoners.

Sick Prisoners Healers (SPH)

Healing the sick is the basic ministry of missionaries. Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness (Mt 10:1). And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them;

they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover (Mk 16: 17-18). People in prisons and jails are disproportionately likely to have chronic health problems including diabetes, high blood pressure, and HIV, as well as substance use and mental health problems. Nevertheless, correctional healthcare is low-quality and difficult to access. Among prisoners, hepatitis C was the most commonly reported infectious disease (10%), followed by tuberculosis and STDs (6% each). Among jail inmates, nearly 6% reported ever having hepatitis C, 6% ever had some other STD, and 2% ever had tuberculosis. Many prisons do have physically, mentally, and spiritually sick prisoners and the causes of their sickness vary from one to another. Being sick adds more to their grievances leading to feeling of hopelessness. PMI launched Sick Prisoners Healers to bring hope and healing to sick prisoners through prayer and medication.

Sex Offenders Healers (SOH)

A sex offender is a person who has committed a sex crime. S/he is a person who has been convicted of certain sex crimes, such as sexual assault or sexual misconduct with another person without permission or with a minor. Because of the seriousness of sex offenses, a number of factors come into play when it comes to sentencing and penalties for sex offenders at both the state and federal levels. A person must have been motivated to commit a sex crime by one or many factors, and the greatest attack comes from the temptation to gratify the desires of the flesh from the evil one.

Research suggests that a combination of factors is likely to contribute to sexual offending behavior. Negative or adverse conditions in an individual's early development might lead to poor attachment to others, particularly caregivers, and these conditions contribute to the development of sexually offending behaviors. These negative or adverse conditions

may include sexual and/or physical abuse, as well as emotional neglect or absence. Further, the learning of sexually abusive behavior is influenced by reinforcement and punishment. If the perceived punishment for sex offending is sufficient, the behavior is less likely to occur. Many sex offenders have cognitive distortions or thinking errors, and these distorted thinking patterns appear to be involved in maintaining deviant sexual behaviors. Many child victims of sexual assault who have thinking errors related to their own assault develop sexual offending behaviors as adults and they many times possess distorted thinking like: there's nothing wrong with it, no harm is done, the victim wants it and enjoys it etc.

Repeated exposure to sexually violent pornography may contribute to hostility toward women, acceptance of rape myths, decreased empathy and compassion for victims and an increased acceptance of physical violence toward women. Sex offenders appear to have a problem with self-regulation of emotions and moods as well as with impulse control. Self-regulation and impulse control problems both appear to be related to sexual offending behavior. Men who use sexual coercion are more likely to engage in short-term relationships and maintain negative attitudes toward women. Men with self-interested motives are more likely to act on aggressive thoughts than those with more compassion or empathy^{xv}. Living in prison with guilt and shame, every offender looks for some compassion. Jesus alone shows true compassion. PMI launched Sex Offenders Healers to bring compassion and healing to our brethren who are accused of or are found guilty of sexcrime.

xv Etiology of Adult Sexual offending, Susan Faupel and Roger Przybylski, SMART, retrieved on 16th March 2022 from the website: <https://smart.ojp.gov/somapi/chapter-2-etiology-adult-sexual-offending#:~:text=Research%20suggests%20that%20a%20combination,development%20of%20sexual%20offending%20behaviors.>

Gangsters Reformers (GR)

A gangster is a criminal who is a member of an organized crime gang. There are local, regional, national and international gangs operating worldwide. Generally, lust for money, power, sex, name and fame draws a person into the crime world. Joining a gang gives them confidence, sense of security and an open invitation to explore the underworld. For some it's too late to return and they end up either being killed by the police or rival gangs. Some end up in prison and some continue to remain safe with their money, power and influence. Al Capone of America is considered as the most notorious gangster the world has ever seen. Dawood Ibrahim is the number one gangster in India. Abu Salem, Tiger Memon, Chhota Rajan, Bada Rajan, Haji Mastan, Ravi Pujari are some of the notorious gangsters of India. PMI launched Gangsters Reformers to touch the life of gangsters with the love of God and to help a willing gangster to repent and renew himself.

Hackers Transformers (HT)

Hacking, if positively used is a service. Ethical Hacking is compromising computer systems for assessing security and acting in good faith by informing the vulnerable party. It is a key skill for many job roles related to securing the online assets of an organization. The professionals working on these job roles maintain the organization's computers, servers, and other components of its infrastructure in working conditions preventing unauthorized access through non-physical channels. Ethical hacking is to scan vulnerabilities and to find potential threats on a computer or network. An ethical hacker finds the weak points or loopholes in a computer, web applications, or network and report them to the organization.

As a criminal, hacker is a computer expert who uses their technical knowledge for monetary or selfish gain. There are

different types of hackers starting from White Hat Hackers to State/Nation Sponsored Hackers (P). Most of the hackers are young in age. Cybercrime and Hacking is different, while hacking can be a cybercrime. Hacking is identifying and exploiting weaknesses in computer systems and/or computer networks. Cybercrime is committing a crime with the aid of computers and information technology infrastructure. In hacking, the hacker uses 'computer as tool' and 'computer as target'. There are hackers in the prison for committing different cybercrimes. PMI felt the need to launch Hackers Transformers to help the hackers repent and reform their lives.

Hooligans Reformers (HR)

A hooligan is a person who is disruptive, unlawful and intentionally makes trouble or breaks law with rowdy and unruly behavior. Hooligan is often used for a youth, who does not give any regard for laws and acts rudely often as part of a gang. They are similar to bullies and thugs. A thug is a criminal with an intimidating and unseemly appearance and mannerisms, who treats others violently and roughly, especially for hire while gangster is a member of a criminal or street gang. Hooligans are not organized as part of a criminal group, like gangsters. There is difference between hoodlum and hooligan: hoodlum is a gangster, a hired thug while a hooligan is (informal/pejorative) a person that causes trouble or violence. In most prisons we find hooligans for one crime or the other. PMI launched Hooligans Reformers to pray for their renewal and liberate them from the clutches of the evil one.

Genocide Prisoners Redeemers (GPR)

Genocide is the preplanned intentional action to eliminate a people belonging to a particular ethnic, national, racial, or

religious group. The word “genocide” was first coined by the Polish lawyer, Raphaël Lemkin, in 1944 in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. It consists of the Greek prefix *genos*, meaning race or tribe, and the Latin suffix *cide*, meaning killing. Lemkin developed the term partly in response to the Nazi policies of systematic murder of Jewish people during the Holocaust, but also in response to previous instances in the history of targeted actions aimed at the destruction of particular groups of people. Later on, Raphaël Lemkin led the campaign to have genocide recognized and codified as an international crime. Ikiza (1972), Gukurahundi (1983–1987), Isaaq genocide (1987–1989), Rwandan genocide (1994), Massacres of Hutus during the First Congo War (1996–1997), Effacer le tableau (2002–2003) and Darfur genocide (2003–) are some of the examples of Genocide. Humanity has witnessed much genocide. India too has experienced the blood bath of genocide. PMI launched Genocide Prisoners Redeemers to save the lost through prayer and fasting.

Lynchers Reformers (LR)

Lynchers are a group of people who take law into their own hands by pronouncing judgment on an individual or a group and executes them. If an angry crowd of people lynches someone, they kill that person by hanging him, without letting him have a trial, because they believe that that person has committed a crime. Mob lynching is a term used to describe the acts of targeted violence by a large group of people. The violence is tantamount to offences against human body or property - both public as well as private. There are many cases of mob lynching in India. It is rightly said that the mob has no face. It is different from mob violence. Mob violence is a disturbance of the peace by several persons, assembled and acting with a common intent in executing a lawful or unlawful enterprise in a violent and turbulent manner. Some of the examples for lynching are attacks such as the 2015 Dadri

mob lynching, the 2016 Jharkhand mob lynching, 2017 Alwar mob lynching and the 2019 Jharkhand mob lynching. Mob lynching was reported for the third time in Alwar in July 2018, when a group of cow vigilantes killed a 31-year-old Muslim man named Rakbar Khan. Lynching is an inhuman act of crime. Presently there are a number of prisoners for lynching case. PMI launched Lynchers Reformers to extend spiritual and legal support for the sanctification of such prisoners.

Military Prisoners Reformers (MPR)

A military prison is a prison operated by the military. Military prisons are used variously to house prisoners of war, unlawful combatants, those whose freedom is deemed a national security risk by the military or national authorities, and members of the military found guilty of a serious crime. Thus, military prisons are of two types: penal, for punishing and attempting to reform members of the military who have committed an offense, and confinement-oriented, where captured enemy combatants are confined for military reasons until hostilities cease. Each unit has its own prison and every prisoner is judged guilty or innocent by Court Martial. Service personnel who are convicted of less serious offences are considered to be in 'detention', and undergo a strict military routine aimed at rehabilitation for their return to regular military service, whereas personnel convicted of more serious offences are considered to be in 'prison' and upon completion of their sentence they are released from the military. PMI formed Military Prisoners Reformers to pray for every military prisoner all over the world. Prayer is the biggest channel to renew and sanctify lives.

Murderers Transformers (MT)

Murder is a type of homicide that involves very specific elements under the law. The crime of murder is the killing

of one human being by another intentionally and unlawfully done by aforethought malice with the intent to kill, intent to inflict very serious or grievous bodily harm, extremely reckless indifference to the value of human life, or intent to commit a dangerous felony (which accidentally results in the death of another). There are a few common types of murders: First-degree murder: A deliberate, premeditated killing is generally considered first-degree murder. Second-degree murder: Unintentional and not premeditated murder that one commits is in this category. Felony murder: Accidental killing, not preplanned and non-intentional death of a person where the murderer is instrumental. Aggravating circumstances: **murder** committed under certain circumstances, such as by lying in wait or targeting a person in a particular position, such as a police officer, judge, or firefighter that can lead to more severe sentence including the death penalty. There are some common defenses to murder such as self-defense, insanity and mental disorders, heat of passion which can be justifiable.

Life is a beautiful gift of God to every person. God is the giver of life and He alone has the right to take it back. The one who kills a person deliberately and illegally is a murderer. In every prison we will find persons facing charges of murder. Some have committed the crime and are guilty, and there are also some who are innocent but murder charge is imposed on them or they themselves owned up the murder for some monetary or material gain. PMI launched Murderers Transformers to liberate such prisoners from the clutches of the evil one through prayer and support.

Pedophiles Reformers (PR)

A pedophile is a person who has a sustained sexual orientation towards children. Pedophilia is a psychiatric disorder. Pedophilia is termed pedophilic disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), and the

manual defines it as a paraphilia involving intense and recurrent sexual urges towards and fantasies about prepubescent children that have either been acted upon or which cause the person with the attraction distress or interpersonal difficulty^{xvi}. The International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) defines it as a “sustained, focused, and intense pattern of sexual arousal - as manifested by persistent sexual thoughts, fantasies, urges, or behaviours - involving pre-pubertal children^{xvii}.” Pedophiles have been hypothesized to seek sexual relations with children in response to social anxiety, poor self-confidence, or other personality traits that inhibit appropriate sexual relations with adults. Many factors could play a role in the development of pedophilic disorder, such as: genetics and epigenetics, differences in brain structure, hormones, developmental differences and childhood experiences. Pedophilia can be treated with long-term individual or group psychotherapy and drugs that alter the sex drive and reduce testosterone levels. PMI launched Pedophiles Reformers to help such prisoners overcome their guilt and repent for the crime committed. Through prayer and mortification every impossible mission is accomplished.

Pirates Transformers (PT)

Pirates are sailors who attack other ships and steal property from them. Pirates steal and rob at sea and dacoits steal and rob on land. A pirate is a robber who travels by water. Though most pirates targeted ships, some have also launched attacks on coastal towns. We often think of pirates as swashbuckling

xvi Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition. American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013

xvii “The ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders Diagnostic criteria for research World”, World Health Organization/ICD-10. 1993. Section F65.4 “Paedophilia”. B. A persistent or a predominant preference for sexual activity with a pre-pubescent child or children. C. The person is at least 16 years old and at least five years older than the child or children in

and daring or evil and brutish, but in actual fact most of them were ordinary people who have been forced to turn to criminal activity to make ends meet. Pirates have their way of life and customs: they are alcoholic and most of them use Rum because it is mostly available in the areas of the Caribbean Sea. Many of them own a ruthless attitude. They regularly pillaged and plundered in search of riches, and often violence was needed in order to get what they wanted. They are Strategic. When a clever pirate began proving that he was good at strategizing about their next move or how to gain control of a targeted ship, he was often rewarded with a promotion. They are accurate navigators. One of the most basic yet overlooked traits that were important to becoming a successful pirate was the ability to sail without getting seasick^{xviii}. There are some prisons in which pirates are kept. PMI launched Pirates Transformers to pray for such prisoners and bring a might conversion in their lives.

Political Prisoners Transformers (PPT)

A political prisoner is someone imprisoned for their political activity. A political prisoner is imprisoned because that person's actions or beliefs are contrary to those of his or her government. For example, Rowlatt Acts, (February 1919), legislation passed by the Imperial Legislative Council, the legislature of British India. The acts allowed certain political cases to be tried without juries and permitted internment of suspects without trial. It gave the government enormous powers to repress political activities, and allowed detention of political prisoners without trial for two years. The law was unfair and Indians called it the 'Black Act'. Our Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi is the best example of a political prisoner. On March 10, 1922, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was arrested on charges of sedition by British officials in

xviii What did it take to be a great Pirate? Retrieved on 16th March from the website: <https://www.pirateshipvallarta.com/blog/pirate-stories/take-great-pirate>

Bombay (now Mumbai), India. He was sentenced to six years of imprisonment for his involvement in protesting the British colonial government in India. Other examples of famous political prisoners are: Aung San Suu Kyi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., Andrei Sakharov, Vaclav Havel, Akbar Ganji, Benigno Aquino Jr., Ho Chi Minh, etc. There are many political prisoners in the world. PMI launched Political Prisoners Transformers to pray for their renewal. A renewed political prisoner may bring about a positive change in society by witnessing.

Prison Police Reformers (PPR)

Overcrowding, prolonged detention of under-trial prisoners, unsatisfactory living conditions, lack of treatment Programs, allegations for the indifferent and even inhuman approaches of prison staff etc are the allegations of problems in Indian Jails^{xix}. Corruption of the prison staff is one of the main problems in jails worldwide. Corruption by prison staff, and its less aggressive corollary, guard corruption, is common in prisons around the world. Given that the substantial power, for guards exercised over inmates, these problems are predictable, but the low salaries that guards are generally paid severely aggravate them. In exchange for contraband or special treatment, inmates supplement guards' salaries with bribes^{xx}. Prison Ministry India is concerned with everyone who is directly or indirectly involved with prisoners; with Prison Police who are day and night with them. Many of them are very kind and gentle with the prisoners. There are some who ill-treat them in a very inhuman way and disrespect their dignity as human persons. PMI launched Prison Police Reformers to pray for them and help them become better guardians.

xix Major Problems of Prison System of India, Reader's Blog Retrieved on 16th of March 2022 from the website: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/shubham-kashyap/major-problems-of-prison-system-in-india-40079/>

xx *ibid*

Transformation Warfare

Transformation of hard-hearted prisoners is neither an easy task nor an impossible mission. This is a spiritual warfare, reformation warfare, a warfare between God and Satan, good and evil, virtue and sin. “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Mt 19, 26). To do this impossible mission we follow 40 days program:

40 Holy Masses and Communion

40 Chapters of the Gospel: Luke and Mark

40 Creed

40 Rosaries

40 Divine Mercy Rosaries

40 Mortifications

4000 Glory be to the Father

4000 Thank you Jesus

If You Believe God Can. If You Believe You Can. Join Us!
Thank You. God Bless You!

Conclusion

These Special Task Forces of PMI are always at the transformation and welfare of people related to the incarcerated and the jail. Transformation of hard-hearted prisoners is neither an easy task nor an impossible mission. This is a spiritual warfare, reformation warfare, a warfare between God and Satan, good and evil, virtue and sin. PMI bases itself on spiritual strength, goes ahead leaving everything in the hands of God entrusting to the work of the Holy Spirit who converts and renews. Through STF, PMI establishes different prayer groups which are very active in spiritual practices and sacrifices and wage war against all evil tendencies. It is also an active operation where souls of the prisoners are liberated, and their lives are renewed. “With man this is impossible, but with God allthings are possible” (Mt 19, 26).

THE ORDER OF OUR LADY OF MERCY RELEASING IMPRISONED CAPTIVES

Prof Edmund Frank

This article is about the efforts made by individuals and leaders of religious orders to release captive prisoners who were reduced to the level of slaves and takes the readers back to the black medieval ages in Europe between the 8th and 15th centuries. In this context we can assess and compare the injustices and sufferings endured by those prisoners and the present day under trial prisoners lodged in the prisons of India awaiting justice and release. We also examine the role played by the good Samaritans during the medieval ages to give solace, relief and freedom to these unfortunate souls held as slaves in Europe and America and the work done by Prison Ministry India to bring justice and solace to the undertrial prisoners lodged in prisons across India.

Medieval Europe during those years was in a state of continuous war between the kingdoms of South Europe, Muslim chieftains of South Africa, Southern France and the Muslim dominated regions of Spain. Raids and wars by militants and armies for over 600 years had produced thousands of war prisoners taken as captives who were reduced to a state of slaves and considered as war booty. In Spain, both Christian and Muslim societies had become so accustomed to the buying and selling of captives that the 10th century Andalusian merchants formed caravans to purchase

slaves in Eastern Europe. In the 13th century, in addition to spices, slaves constituted one of the goods of the flourishing trade between Christian and Muslim ports.

During the 13th century, the powerful Islamic kingdoms in Spain and the Ottoman Empire operated a slave trade, the scope and horror of which has not been seen any time else in world history. The Spanish were subjected to raids and were captured, imprisoned and sold into slavery and often forced to renounce their Catholic faith or face indiscriminate torture and death. It is estimated that in a single year, more white Europeans were taken captive than the number of all the slaves shipped to America during the entire time of the slave trade there.

Seeing the plight of these captives taken as slaves as early as 1190 certain noblemen of Barcelona had formed a confraternity for the purpose of caring for the sick in hospitals and also for rescuing Christian captives from these Muslim chieftains. It was during this time in the year 1203, a young man named Peter Nolasco formed an organization to buy these poor and unfortunate prisoners for a ransom price and free them. Peter Nolasco was a native of Languedoc, France. After taking part in the crusade against the heretic Albigensians of Southern France, he became a tutor of young King James of Aragon and then settled at Barcelona. There he became friends with St Raymond of Penyafort. Nolasco was not a priest and very soon other men joined him in the work of releasing the imprisoned captives. Regretfully after fifteen years he observed that the number of captives was growing day by day and there were far more captives than he was able to release.

At this point Peter Nolasco decided to establish a well-structured religious order under the patronage of the Blessed

Virgin Mary. It was then that Peter turned to God and his Blessed Mother in prayer for help. It was as if in answer to his prayers, the Blessed Mother appeared to him as Our Lady of Ransom on 1 August 1218 reassuring him of her support and wanting to convert his organization into a religious order with the assistance of his friend and confessor Raymond of Penyafort a Dominican friar, and with the protection of King James 1 of Aragon. Our Lady of Ransom also appeared to Raymund and to King James1 of Aragon simultaneously in separate apparitions making known to both of them that she desired each of them to contribute to establishing an Order for redeeming captives.

Inspired by the apparition of the Blessed Mother, Peter Nolasco went to the court of King James the following day and as the King also had received the vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary, he was extremely supportive of what he was supposed to do and extended to Nolasco all support and protection. After the initial formalities and due procedures to be followed, on 10 August 1218 a new religious order for the Redemption of captives was officially constituted by Bishop Berenguar de Palou at the main altar erected over the tomb of St Eulalia in the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Barcelona, also known as the Cathedral of Santa Eulalia. The Bishop gave them the white religious habit that he and his companions would wear. As characteristic of the Order he put them under the rule of St Augustine as a norm for their life and gave his authorization for the sign of his Cathedral, the Holy Cross, to be on the habit before the Order. After that Nolasco and the first Mercedarians made their religious profession there before the Bishop. The new order was named “The Order of the Virgin Mary of Mercy of the Redemption of Captives”. St. Peter Nolasco is the founder of this Order. The Order is also known as the Mercedarians, the religious community

which sent members as ransom for Christian prisoners and captives who were in the custody of the Muslim and Arab chieftains. The members are called Mercedarian friars.

In addition to the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience the Mercedarians took a fourth vow to offer themselves as hostages for Christian prisoners in danger of losing their faith and even die for them. The fourth vow of redemption was fulfilled by paying ransom or by exchanging themselves for Christian captives whose faith was in danger. If necessary, the members remained within Moslem territory as hostages. The act of redemption required skill and courage. The Mercedarians particularly provided assistance to those without funds of their own accord. The work of the Mercedarians was to do charity work and to buy and release helpless Christian captives for a ransom from Muslim traders and merchants. Their headquarters was the Monastery of St Eulalia of Barcelona which served as the first Mercedarian convent and a house of welcome for redeemed captives.

On 10 August 1235 Pope Gregory IX officially recognized and constituted the Order and it spread rapidly through Europe. Inspired by Our Lady of Ransom the order has its active presence in seventeen countries of the world. The Order was established for charitable works and to release imprisoned captives. The Mercedarians had to visit and free Christians who were in captivity. Their work was to buy helpless captive Christian slaves for a ransom from Muslim slave traders and merchants. The brothers of this order had to be ready to give up their lives gladly if necessary. Twice Peter Nolasco went to Africa to serve as a captive, and it was reported that during one journey to Granada and Valencia he won the release from Moorish jails some four hundred captive Christians. The Order at one point was renowned for having rescued over

70,000 Christian captives. Over 2700 were rescued during the life time of St Peter Nolasco. In 1265, a second order of Mercedarians for women was founded in Spain by St Mary de Carvello. The members of this order were called Mercedarian nuns. They are mostly engaged in hospital work.

Can we draw any comparisons between those imprisoned captive slaves for whose release the Mercedarians fought and the efforts made by Prison Ministry India today for the release of under trial prisoners? Yes comparisons are many. Those captives who were poor and defenseless were captured and taken as prisoners and used as merchandise by powerful gang leaders and chieftains to accumulate wealth and power. These captives had committed no crimes, done no wrong or violated any laws and were innocent victims condemned by their fate. The only way for their release and freedom was to pay the ransom demanded by their masters. These poor victims did not have the means to negotiate their own freedom to help themselves and were totally dependent on persons like Nolasco to win their freedom.

In a similar manner, today a large majority of the undertrial prisoners are in prison because it was their fate and destiny to be there. Many of them are charged with crimes they have not committed and are languishing in jail waiting for their cases to come up for hearing and if lucky to be declared not guilty and released. These are the “poor of Christ”. Quite a few are waiting for the ransom money for their release which we call the bail amount with adequate collateral security. There is no difference between these under trial prisoners and most of us outside the prison walls. Many of us may have committed similar or even grave crimes than those prison inmates the only difference being for committing the same offence they were caught and imprisoned and we were not. Perhaps, because the offense we committed went unnoticed or was ignored because

of our connections and position. It can be the violation of law, drunken driving, transporting and consumption of drugs or banned substances, a fight or a quarrel, a minor or major theft or pilferage and even murder. St Peter Nolasco died on 6 May 1256. He was canonized by Pope Urban VIII on 30 September 1628. His feast day is celebrated on 28 May.

TOWARDS A MISSIONAL THEOLOGY OF PRISON MINISTRY¹

Linda Lee Smith Barkman

I was incarcerated at the California Institution for Women (CIW) for 30 years, from 1980 to 2010, as a result of domestic violence; the man with whom I was cohabiting beat my two-year-old daughter to death. Because I was unable to stop him, and this was prior to the state's recognition of battered woman syndrome, I was considered an abettor and was sentenced to 15 years to life in prison. For 28 years I served as lay minister to the psychiatric unit of the prison while also being an active leader in the general population church. Most of my Masters in Theology degree work from Fuller Theological Seminary was completed while I was still incarcerated. After having parole granted by the Board of Prison Hearings ten times between 1989 and 2009, and vetoed each time by California governors, I was finally released on parole August 12, 2010. I am now discharged from parole as a Ph.D student who advocates for women prisoners. My experience has been that prison theology originates within prison and prisoners, and is not something that can be imposed or formulated by outsiders such as chaplains, volunteers, or any other well-meaning person who has never been incarcerated. However, as someone who for thirty years lived, studied, and ministered as a prisoner, I propose to speak to some rudiments of prison theology, and that with a gendered perspective. I do

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not presume to speak for all prisoners, not even all women prisoners, but to provide a basic survey of topics and issues that will inform those who can be most effective in grappling with theology of prison ministry.^{xx}

“I was in Prison, and You Visited Me”

There are two reasons why Matthew 25:36b is not sufficient to be foundational for prison ministry. First, I maintain that the prison and prisoners referred to here by Jesus are not at all analogous to that of contemporary western society. This is because prisons as we know them were largely unheard of prior to the thirteenth century (Scotnicki 2012, 25). Modern prisons are a late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Christian (Quaker) correction to prior practices of either summary execution or of corporal punishment (Moltmann 1994, 61). In biblical times and up until the eighteenth century, most people in prison were either debtors or political prisoners. In other words, most prisoners in biblical literature were not guilty of anything contemporary culture would be defining as crime because, historically, most people caught committing crimes were summarily executed, flogged or enslaved, but not imprisoned. Second, Matthew 25:36 refers primarily to hospitality. Jesus is emphasizing the Old Testament themes of caring for the orphan, widow, and stranger by meeting their needs for food, water, clothing, shelter, and medical care. Matthew 25:36 does not address the underlying issues that the church faces today in dealing with imprisoned criminals and their reentry into society.²

While hospitality to prisoners and ex-prisoners is a necessary component of prison ministry, hospitality is not the appropriate foundation for Christian response to the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of persons incarcerated for crimes. Prison ministry teams who lead worship services in

prisons will be crippled if what they are offering goes no deeper than a helping hand of hospitality. Likewise, churches will be greatly hindered in ministering to released prisoners and accepting them in their midst, if their members have not been helped to surmount their own fears, prejudices, and traumas related to crime and criminals. Yet the magnitude of the problem of mass incarceration in the U.S. is such that the church must be part of the solution. Formulating a Robust Missional Theology of Prison In order to formulate a robust missional theology of prison ministry, churches need to examine specific themes relating to both prisoners and to prison theologies. After a brief look at the purpose and nature of prison ministry, this paper will probe Christological, ecclesiological and pneumatological aspects of a missional theology of prison ministry.

Theological Foundation

The theological foundation for prison ministry is not precisely the same as the purpose of prison ministry. As with so many mission fields, it is a mistake to believe that the church in the community is bringing God to a godless place; God is already in the prison. The real purpose of prison ministry is twofold: to support the church in prison in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to further the unity of the Church, the body of Jesus Christ. However, before a theology of prison ministry can be formulated, an important distinction must be made. A theology of prison ministry is not the same as prison theology! Because God is already in the prison, prison theology exists: a specific contextualization of the gospel that gives meaning to the pain of crime, sin, victimization, and incarceration (Pounder 2008, 288). Prison theology is about how prisoners think of their condition, community and whole life span in light of their experience of God and the gospel.

Still, while prison theology and theology of prison ministry are not the same, they are inexorably linked (Pounder 2008, 288). A theology of prison ministry is messy, interacting as it does with prison theology, with systematic theology themes, and with specific contexts of the individual churches as well as the particular prison facility(s) within the local context. Therefore, theologies of prison ministry are likely to be as diverse as the contexts of the individual churches in the community. There is no one single prison theology (Haysom 2007, 133). At CIW alone, congregations from various parts of the prison differ radically in contexts, needs, and theologies. The Reception Center houses only new or returning prisoners who are dealing with identity issues and traumas associated with crisis. The Support Care Unit houses diagnosed psychiatric patients, a context in which demons and spiritual warfare are of immanent concern. In the 1980's, when the diagnosis of AIDS was a two-year death sentence, the closed HIV+ Unit prisoners were focused more on eschatology. Spanish speaking Latina services contextualize for both prison and Hispanic culture. Finally, and of vital importance, is contextualization for gender. Prison is not gender neutral, prison theology is not gender neutral, and prison ministry is certainly not gender neutral. The "W" in CIW stands for women, and most of these women are mothers. I have witnessed, and experienced, the pain that well-intentioned but ill prepared prison ministry volunteers can cause by repeating the same Mother's Day sermon that had been so well received in their home church.

Christology

Christology is the contextual answer to Jesus' question "Who do you say I am?" (Kärkkäinen 2003, 9). When prisoners answer this question there is no artificial boundary between ontology and praxis, between who Christ Jesus is and what

His incarnation, death, and resurrection accomplishes, past, present, and future, in creation and in the lives of believers. I propose that this holistic approach to Christology must also inform a mission theology of prison ministry. Christ Son of God and Christ Son of Man: I, like many other prisoners, attribute the dual, fully God/fully human, nature of Jesus to mystery. While few prisoners are acquainted with the arguments of Athanasius and Arius regarding the humanity and divinity of Christ, to many prisoners it is still obvious that if Jesus is not fully God, He does not have the power to save us, and that if Jesus is not fully human, he cannot understand our sinful condition (Kärkkäinen 2003, 70). Therefore, a theology of prison ministry must be aware that while the ancient metaphysical arguments may not be immediately relevant to prisoners, the resultant understanding of Jesus' dual human/divine nature is vitally so. Christ our Redeemer: (Rom. 3:24, I Cor. 1:30, Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14, Heb. 9:12-15) The historic sense of redemption involved securing someone's release through payment, often in terms of prisoners of war or those who had sold themselves into slavery to pay off a debt. In Christian redemption, Christ's death provides freedom from death or slavery to the law so that believers become slaves of God (McGrath 2011, 338).

I found that this redemption was easy to explain and relevant to the congregations in prison, using the pawnbroker metaphor. We have sinfully stolen our souls from God, hocked our souls to the devil (pawnbroker), and now we cannot come up with the currency to buy them back; no matter how hard we try, we just end up further in debt. Time is running out on our tickets, and if they are not redeemed, we will permanently forfeit our souls. But if we come to Jesus, who has obtained through his death on the cross and resurrection the currency needed, he will redeem our souls.

This is prison theology, and as already argued, not the same as a theology of prison ministry. Yet I make this point because, unlike many congregations in the community who need to be convinced that they are sinners, the issue with prisoners is not in convincing us that we are sinners, it is in convincing us that we are salvageable, redeemable. However, it is questionable as to whether all prison ministry team members are convinced that redemption extends to all prisoners. How can the church be effective in ministering redemption to prisoners if prison ministry is not thoroughly grounded on the key biblical belief that redemption extends even to the guilty criminal (Lösel 2010, 180)?

Christ the Redeemer of All Creation

According to Romans 8:19-23, Christ Jesus redeems more than just humans. He is the redeemer of all creation (Raabe 2014, 157). This is of inestimable value in ministering to those who are unsure of their humanity. The healing process that culminates in a prisoner believing in her/his own humanity may be lengthy and difficult. It may, in some cases, be entirely impossible without the kind of intervention by God that can only be called a miracle. Many prisoners know that we have acted inhumanely and believe we have forfeited our humanity, a view that is often reinforced by the correctional system. While preparing my report in preparation for an impending parole board hearing, a Correctional Counselor once assaulted me with the words, “Even a dog knows how to protect its young. How do you explain that you allowed your daughter to be killed?” At this point, what does redemption in Christ have to do with me if redemption only applies to humans? Christ our Atonement: (Rom. 3:25, Heb. 2:17) Various models for conceptualizing atonement exist (e.g., ransom theory, satisfaction theory, penal substitution, Christus Victor, Moral

influence theory, and Girard's scapegoat theory), and each has something of value to offer in the development of a theology of prison ministry. It is not the purpose of this essay to discuss at length each of these theories, but rather to acknowledge that each is an attempt to explain the incontrovertible truth that the Bible overflows with metaphors and images of the atoning work of Jesus Christ (Peters 2005, 18).

My experience is that penal substitution is a metaphor of atonement that is particularly relevant and helpful within the context of prison ministry. In this metaphor sin is equated with crime, and in Jesus' work on the cross He substituted himself and paid the penalty for our crime. Ultimately, the atoning work of Jesus results in the redemption of sinners, and extends even to prisoners (Peters 2005, 3; Moltmann 1994, 68). Christ our Freedom: (John 8:36, 2 Cor. 3:17) The connection between freedom in Christ and prison ministry seems rather obvious, but if this aspect of Christology is not adequately developed, it can be terribly counterproductive. It is a "no-brainer" that most prisoners desire freedom. However, I have seen too many prisoners turn away from the Church as a result of misunderstanding what freedom in Christ means, believing that freedom means a change in physical circumstances. While it is true that sometimes God performs a miracle that results in an early release from prison or jail for a prisoner, as a rule this is not how things work out. For that matter, I have seen more than one prison ministry volunteer face a serious crisis in faith when God did not grant their prayers for my release in the timeframe that they were expecting. Therefore, two important questions must be asked about what it means that Christ is our freedom: freedom from what, and freedom to do what? For the first, prisoners no longer need to be slaves to sin, slaves to whatever masters us (Acts 13:39, Rom. 6:18-23, 2 Pet. 2:19). This may mean addictions, relationships, or old

thought and behavior patterns. And we are free from the fear of death (Heb. 2:15). As for what prisoners are free to do, we are free in Christ to love and serve one another (Gal. 5:13). Shockingly to many of us, this means free to love those who have harmed us, to love those who hold us prisoner, and to love even ourselves. Christ our Restorer: Restoration is a topic far more significant to those who know how much they have lost than to those who have never really experienced loss.

Christ our Restorer of Relationships

Too often in western individualistic Christianity, the restoration of relationship with God is seen to be a personal event, between the believer who is saved and restored, and God the Father. While not untrue, what this narrow view misses is that our triune God, whose very nature is communal, restores believers to His Body, which by its very nature is community. Restoration to relationship within the prison church is only a first step. Restoration of relationships with family, with society in general through release, and ultimately by inclusion in the churches in the community needs to also be understood as included in the restoration of the relationship with God.

Christ our Restorer of Mental and Physical Health

The physical and emotional health of prisoners is frequently as devastated by the result of sin as is their spiritual health. So when mentally ill prisoners come to understand that Jesus restored the Gerasene demoniac, Mary Magdalene, and others to their right minds (Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8:20, 7:21), this aspect of who Christ is and what He does becomes an important aspect of Christology. Prison is not a healthy environment at best, and prison medical care is notoriously bad (Talvi, 2007, 89-90). In addition to this, many prisoners had lifestyles prior to their incarceration that harmed their health. Whether the

issue is HIV and hepatitis from needle sharing and other risky behaviors, the poor nutrition of addicts and alcoholics, or the abuses upon bodies that are the result of violence, prisoners rely on the possibility of healing and the restoration of health in Christ Jesus.

Christ our Restorer of Purity

That this aspect of Christ's person and work is underrepresented to prisoners, specifically women prisoners, was made astonishingly real to me while I was still in prison. As part of an assignment for a Fuller Seminary distance learning class, I interviewed the women of CIW's Muslim community. All but one of these women had converted to Islam (from nominal Christianity) while in prison, and over half of them volunteered that a major contributing reason was that Islam, through practices of prayer, fasting, and modesty, provided an avenue for restoring their purity that they had not found within Christianity. Although there is no specific addressing of Jesus as restorer of purity, Scripture supports this understanding. When the woman with the issue of blood touched Jesus, she had been ritually impure for twelve years (Luke 8:43-48). By making her healing public, Jesus restored her purity in the sight of her community. Peter was told by God not to call unclean what God Himself had made clean (Acts 10:15). Jesus washed the disciples' feet and called them clean (John 13:3-10). Further, Scripture says that former sinners have been washed and sanctified (1 Cor. 6:11). Therefore, Christ as the restorer of purity needs to be included in a robust theology of prison ministry. Christ our Restorer of hope: Hope can be a very hard sell to prisoners. Simultaneously, hope may be all that a prisoner has. Still, 1 Cor. 15:19-20 says Christ is our hope not only for this life, but also for the one to come. It is only when hope is understood

as a subject, not an object that hope becomes a vital force. Ray Anderson recognized this when, in his last book *The Seasons of Hope*, he cited a letter I had written to him from prison in which I said, “I will not always get what I hope for, but I will never be disappointed by hoping in Christ” (Anderson 2008, 80-1).

Ecclesiology

A robust missional theology of prison ministry will closely examine the relationship of prisoners to Church and churches. I will be distinguishing between the Church (singular), the entire body of Christ and consisting of all believers across space and time, and churches (plural), the contextual expressions of the local congregations of believers.

The Church as the Body of Christ

(Rom. 12:5, 1 Cor. 12:12-27, Eph. 4:11-13) It is important to remember that the churches in the community and the churches in prisons are equally constituent of the Church as the Body of Christ. As mentioned earlier, it is a mistake to believe that the church in the community is bringing God to a godless place; God is already in His church within prison. *Ecclesia incarcerate*: I am extremely grateful to Jason Sexton for coining the term “ecclesia incarcerate” to refer to the church within prison (2015, 83). He rightly recognizes that: within the space established by one of California’s most problematic institutions is an underestimated, under-represented and under-utilized actor: the church. It exists in this unique and fixed context in which volunteers (who often do not know this context experientially) and chaplains (employees of the State) either err to impose alternate structures or else simply lack the ability to contextualize due to other real constraints. Christian theology, however, doesn’t share these same impediments,

since Jesus has already designated his location – the location of his body – as incarcerated (2015, 88).

The Churches in Context

Community churches are not accidental; each church is in its specific context for the sake of fulfilling God's purpose within that geographical and cultural space (Branson & Martinez 2011, 76). There is no community in the U.S. that is not in some way affected by mass incarceration. But how each community church is affected will be unique to that church, and therefore its responses will be unique. Whether shaped by ethnicity, culture, wealth, or geography, specific context will shape and affect the missional theology of prison ministry of each church.

The Church as the Community of the Spirit

When ecclesiology over-emphasizes the local church, it limits our understanding of the Church as the community of the Spirit (Bazzell 2015, 221). One challenge to churches involved in prison ministry is Lesslie Newbigin's claim that "The fulfillment of the mission of the Church thus requires that the Church itself be changed and learn new things" (1989, 124). In other words, the church inside prison has much to offer and teach the church in the community! In fact, I maintain that in many ways the church in prison is closer to the ideals of the Early Church than are those in the United States at large, with more reliance and interdependence between members who are learning Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxis under oppressive and difficult circumstances. The Holy Spirit is not tame (Sunquist 2013, 234), and is quite liable to disrupt our preconceived notions of what it means to be a member of the Church. *Ministries of the Church*: If Christ is redeemer of all creation, the Church has many ministerial responsibilities

as Christ's body. What follows is not an all-inclusive list, but rather a brief examination of those ministries that are most directly applicable to prisoners.

Hospitality and Neighborliness

(Matt. 25:36, I Pet. 4:9) I wish to stress that this paper is neither a diatribe against hospitality nor a judgment against churches that practice hospitality. Hospitality, mandated in both Old and New Testaments as a way to address the problem of how the church should relate to the 'other' (Bretherton 2004, 91), is the genuine and complete welcoming of the stranger (Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006, 155-6). Currently in the United States, the consummate "outsider" or "other," is the one "on the inside," as prisoners are often referred to (Boulton 2007, 129). Closely aligned with hospitality is the concept of neighborliness. Many people will read the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) and consider a prisoner to be a neighbor, but only as long as the prisoner remains confined. The prisoner is often not invited to be neighbor in the near sense, of someone who lives close to me and is part of my community. Even Ray Anderson, a theologian best known as being, if anything, overly generous with God's grace, argues "The use of the word neighbor in Scripture obviously refers to persons who are living in some form of civil and social community rather than to individuals who are engaged in unlawful or criminal activities destructive to the community" (Anderson 2006, 151). Mathew Boulton rebuts with the stance that it is precisely the criminal's guilt that necessitates that the church extends the mercy of neighborliness in the spirit of reconciliation (2007, 141). I simply assert that hospitality and neighborliness have limitations that need to be recognized, and create tensions that need to be examined by the churches within a theology of prison ministry.

Retribution and punishment

The concept of retribution is certainly biblical. The Old Testament formulates it as the principle of an eye-for-an-eye and a tooth-for-a-tooth (Ex. 21:24). However, we too often forget that in the New Testament Jesus specifically addresses and negates this principle (Matt. 5:38-41). There is never an excuse for retributive justice in Christianity when the entire New Testament is taken as a whole; Jesus never gives place or acceptance to the violence of punishment (Skotnicki 2012, 21). We also overlook that God says, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay” (Deut. 32:35, Rom. 12:19, Heb. 10:30). Likewise, only once in New Testament Scripture is punishment within the Church administered by someone other than God (2 Cor. 2:6-11). Even here, Paul admonishes the church at Corinth to forgive and console the offender. In stark contrast to the current incarcerative practices of our government is the radical and subversive love of Christ, even for prisoners. Robert W. Bertram, writing in the Vietnam War era, wryly points out that if in spite of God’s “monopoly on retribution you still insist on competing with Him, then your chances of winning in that sort of competition are frankly not encouraging” (1971, 319). Justice and mercy: True justice is multi-faceted, looks at all sides, and for the church to practice justice each facet must be addressed. The church must consider the needs of victims of crime. The church must consider the plight of innocent prisoners. The church must consider the position of repentant guilty criminals. But the church must also consider the situation of the unrepentant guilty criminals. All of these facets must be in balance in the pursuit of greater justice (Nelson 2013, 97). There is an inter-relatedness between justice and mercy beyond polarity; mercy is a constituent aspect of justice. Coming at the interface of mercy and justice from another direction, the church needs to also consider how

to deal with prisoners such as pedophiles, rapists, and serial killers, who may be incurable (Paris 2006, 227). Peter Paris offers the perspective that acts of mercy need to coincide with acts of justice, and that all such should be “treated as mentally deficient and thus a public health risk” and “then treated in a morally just way” (2006, 227). The weakness with this approach is that it could lead to the church confusing incurable people with unredeemable people.

Reconciliation

(Rom. 5:9-11, 2 Cor. 5:17-19, Gal. 6:1) The crux of prison ministry theology is to realize first that we have not only, as believers, become reconciled but specifically that reconciliation applies to those who did evil deeds, which means to criminals (Col. 1:21). Secondly, we cannot minister to prisoners the good news that they are reconciled to God without also fully reconciling them to the body of Christ. Reconciliation involves full restoration into the community of the Spirit. Therefore, the collateral issues of forgiveness and resultant reconciliation are additional aspects of prison ministry that must be addressed and must be grounded upon a foundation of redemption (Wabanhu 2008, 296). Logic tells us that if the perpetrator of a crime cannot be redeemed, then forgiveness is unlikely or impossible and attempts at reconciliation are fruitless. Reconciliation is more and more being recognized as an emerging paradigm of mission (Bevans & Schroeder 2009, 389). Bluntly, the Church has the vocation to be reconciled and to be reconcilers (Branson & Martinez 2011, 61-2).

Pneumatology

As Scott Sunquist rightly reminds us, an inadequate doctrine of the Holy Spirit often results in misunderstood or misguided Christian mission, and Protestant theology can be timid in

talking about the Holy Spirit in terms of missional ministry (2013, 231). As Pentecostal and charismatic movements have gained strength worldwide (Sunquist 2013, 233), this is reflected in prisons (Johnson 2015). Therefore, a strong and coherent pneumatology, one that includes discussion of Spiritual gifts and manifestations, is an integral part of a robust theology of prison ministry. Spirit of Christ within us: (Rom. 8:9-11, 2 Cor. 13:13, Phil. 1:19) The Holy Spirit is the very Spirit of Christ, of whom Jesus said it was better for his disciples that He left in order for the Spirit to come. A prisoner needs only look at Peter before and after Pentecost to understand the difference that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit can make in a life. Spirit of Truth: (John 14:17, 16:3) Prisoners are well acquainted with lies, with liars, with broken promises, and other distortions of truth. It is sometimes the case that lies are so deeply imbedded that a prisoner no longer has the ability to discern between lies and truth, even in his or her own thoughts. Therefore, the role of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Truth must be included in a pneumatology of prison ministry theology. Spirit of Power: (Eph. 3:16) Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will bring power to believers (Acts 1:8). The first fulfillment of this promise is experienced on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4). The idea that the Spirit of Power actually resides within a prisoner can have far reaching ramifications. This is because prisoners, by definition again, are those from whom power is generally withheld. Many of these same prisoners have always, in their experience, been those who are relatively powerless within the structures of American society due to ethnicity, socio-economic level, and/or gender. Therefore, power differentials influence almost every aspect of prisoner interface with others, including other prisoners (Hofstede 2009, 24). Prison ministry volunteers need to be aware of this since, in relationships with unequal

power, it is those with less power who need be cognizant of the power differential, while those with more power have the luxury of disregarding power differential (Kraft 1991, 136). Power is also associated with dignity; those with the former are usually afforded the latter. Thus, the indwelling presence of the Spirit of power can be an internalized source of human dignity, the sort that counters the dehumanizing effects of prison. Spirit of Wisdom: (Isa 11:2, Acts 6:3, Eph. 1:17) Many prisoners are painfully aware that they have made “stupid” mistakes and choices. And in an environment where it is difficult to think that anyone has your best interests at heart, to whom does one turn for advice? This is one more value to prisoners of the indwelling Spirit of wisdom and understanding. Spirit of Redemption: (Eph. 4:31, Rom. 8:23) Redemption is one of those aspects of the Kingdom of God that is both accomplished in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ and yet also an event to come in the Day of the Lord (Ladd 1993, 56). The Spirit’s part is to be the seal that marks us for this redemption. Prisoners understand what it means to have an official governmental stamp that seals their fate, such as the judge’s or governor’s stamp on paperwork that incarcerates or frees. But for prisoners in a country where judicial appeal, by the prosecution side as often as the petitioners’ side, easily results in the overturning of a decision, trust is not a ready commodity. In this context, the value of God’s seal in the form of the Holy Spirit as assurance of future redemption cannot be overstated. This is one benefit to prisoners of Pentecostal/charismatic signs, such as speaking in tongues. These signs of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer provide a tangible confirmation that redemption is indeed intended even for the guilty prisoner (Acts 8:14-17). Unfortunately, the opposite is also true; many believers suffer greatly when they do

not see the traditional Pentecostal signs of the Holy Spirit and therefore doubt whether the Spirit is indwelling. Spirit as Advocate: (John 14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:7, I John 2:1) This is another metaphor that deeply resonates with prisoners. Merriam Webster online dictionary defines “advocate” as “one that pleads the cause of another before a tribunal or judicial court,”³ in other words, an attorney. By constitutional law, there is not a single U.S. prisoner who did not have access to a defense attorney prior to conviction and incarceration. There is some overlap in the above-cited Scriptures as to whether our advocate is Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Christ in the world sent by the Father. But in both, the role of the Advocate is to be with us forever, to testify of Jesus, to teach, and to plead for us when we sin. We have all sinned (Rom. 3:23). We all know that the crime of sin makes us deserving of the death penalty. But believers have an Advocate, one who has never lost a case and who is closely related to the Judge. When we go before the Judge, the Advocate will make the argument that we cannot be tried for our crimes due to a double jeopardy clause. We cannot be punished when someone else has already taken the blame and completed the punishment for the crime. And in closed session in the Judge’s quarters, our Advocate argues that even if it means that we criminals are getting off easy, the Judge should give us mercy because we are, after all, siblings of the Advocate by a different mother. Spirit of Adoption: (Rom. 8:14-16) To stretch the former metaphor even a bit further, it doesn’t matter if we have different mothers, because even prisoners are now formally adopted into the family of God, and the Holy Spirit of Truth bears witness that this is so.

Conclusion

In this essay I have provided evidence in support of the position that Matt. 25:36b is inadequate as the foundational

Scripture for a theology of prison ministry. When Jesus says, “I was in prison, and you visited me” he was requiring that hospitality be extended to political prisoners and debtors, analogous to orphans, widows, and strangers. It is both of these components, that what is being required is hospitality and that the hospitality is not directed towards persons who are not guilty criminals that make this Scripture problematic. There are many Scriptures addressing crimes and criminals, but Matt. 25:36 is not one of them. And while hospitality is a necessary component, comprehensive prison ministry needs to be based on the principle of redemption in Christ Jesus. I admit that my perspective as a formerly incarcerated woman results in an unavoidable gender bias to the prison theology I have presented. Therefore, it will be extremely important for each church undertaking the development of its own contextual theology of prison ministry to interact in a meaningful way with the prison theologies of those with whom they intend to minister. Towards this end, it is important that the ecclesia incarcerate and emerging prison theologies be recognized and valued, and that who have been incarcerated be encouraged to articulate their theologies. Finally, the reality is that most prisoners do not end their lives in prison; at least 95% of all state prisoners are, sooner or later, released (U. S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics 2015). Prison ministries in the U.S. who are basing their mission on Matthew 25:36 are offering hospitality, hospitality that reinforces the wall between self and other, between those of one’s household and those who are outsiders. However, successful prison ministry is not bounded by prison walls. Quite the opposite, the work of prison ministry is not complete until the prisoner is no longer the “other” who is ministered to, but has become a full member of the community of the Spirit, that is, of the Church. This level of restoration and reconciliation can be

attainable if the churches embrace a robust mission theology of prison ministry that is grounded in the concept that prisoners are redeemable, and that each prisoner's redemption is accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit through the resurrection of Christ Jesus. When prisoners successfully transition into the community and integrate into the local churches, this benefits the local churches every bit as much as it does the individual prisoner.

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CHILDREN TRAFFICKED INTO BROTHELS: CHILDREN SOLD, BOUGHT GANG-RAPED AND FORCED INTO PROSTITUTION

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

“I awoke at night and found my father on top of me. My mother was mentally ill. She would try to fight him, but she was always beaten by my father. I ran away to Delhi with a boy I loved, but my father came and found me. He took me by train to Mumbai and sold me in Kamathipura, one of the largest red-light districts in Asia, for Rs 10,000/-,” cries Shwetha, aged 16 (all names in these true stories have been changed). “I was sold into it at about eight years of age. I didn’t understand much. Nowadays kids understand more, but I wasn’t like that. There was a woman who offered me a few chocolates and I followed her here. She brought me here and then sold me. We came in through the front and she left from the back. And then they said to me, “we have bought you for 50,000/-, so you have to stay with us”. They threatened me, so I had to stay there. I stayed because I was a victim of the situation. The first two days I cried a lot uncontrollably. But where could I go? I didn’t know a way out. I had no choice, but to stay”, cries another girl, aged 15 from a brothel house. Is this the world in which we move and breath? Children are the vulnerable section of our society. They are too young to stand on their feet and very much dependent on adults. The society which needs to protect them is abusing and torturing

them. Humanity which ought to uplift them is trampling them down. Humanity which is expected to carry them is instead crushing them under their feet. Why do we look at them with eyes of lust instead of eyes of love?

The Cry Continues...

“They would beat me with belt and stub me with cigarette buds to drown my voice”, cries another girl who was forced into prostitution at the tender age of 10. “I was 14 when I was forced into prostitution. My body was used and degraded by men seeking sex with young girls in return for money”, cries another survivor of commercial sexual exploitation of children. Hiding behind the facade of being ‘clients’ or ‘customers’, they raped me, sometimes more than thrice a day, for seven long years. They would specifically demand girls like me. ‘Young and fresh’, that’s how we were marketed, she continues.”

“I used to cry a lot. I stopped eating what they served me so then they would give me medicine that would make me faint. I don’t know the name of the medicine” says a young rape survivor. “I used to look like a kid and because of that they gave me hormonal injections. I was a skinny 13-year-old and to match up to the demands of the clients they made me look older by giving me injections,” recounted another young rape survivor. The children who are rescued claim that they were pushed into prostitution because some men wanted virgins for sexual activity.

Is it a Crime to be a Female?

Is it their mistake that they are born as girls? Is it a crime to be a female? Some victims are throwaways; others are sold by their parents or forced into prostitution and others are street

children. Prostitution of children is illegal under international law, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 34, states, “the State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography”. The convention was first held in 1989 and has been ratified by 193 countries.

Traffickers and Pimps

Offenders of this crime who are commonly referred to as traffickers, or pimps, target vulnerable children and gain control over them using a variety of manipulative methods. Victims frequently fall prey to traffickers who lure them in with an offer of food, clothes, attention, friendship, love, and a seemingly safe place to sleep. After cultivating a relationship with the child and engendering a false sense of trust, the trafficker will begin engaging the child in prostitution, and use physical, emotional, and psychological abuse to keep the child trapped in a life of prostitution.

UNCRC

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international human rights treaty which sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. Article 20 concerning Protection of a child without family says, “The State is obliged to provide special protection for a child deprived of the family environment and to ensure that appropriate alternative family care or institutional placement is available in such cases”. When will this law become a reality?

Sad Statistics

It is estimated that there are 40-42 million prostitutes worldwide. 80% of the world population of prostitutes are

female and range in age between 13-25. A report by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development has come out with a report 'Commercial sexual exploitation in India', according to which there are over three million sex workers in India, out of which 35.47% enter into prostitution before they enter their 18th year of age. The other facts in the report include an alarming rate at which minors are being forced into flesh trade. According to a survey, about 1.2 million children are involved in such trade.

Illness and Mental Anguish

Prostitution also appears to be linked with a host of mental and physical health problems, including HIV, physical injuries, gynecological problems, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and increased likelihood of suicide attempts. According to Humanium, an NGO that opposes the prostitution of children, the practice causes injuries such as "vaginal tearing, physical after-effects of torture, pain, infection, or unwanted pregnancy". As clients seldom take precautions against the spread of HIV, prostituted children face the high risk of contracting the disease, and majority of them in certain locations contract it. Other sexually transmitted diseases pose a threat as well, such as syphilis and herpes. High levels of tuberculosis have also been found among prostituted children. These illnesses are often fatal.

Psychological effects include anger, insomnia, sexual and personality confusion, inability to trust adults, and loss of confidence. Drug-related health problems include dental problems, hepatitis B and C, and serious liver and kidney problems. Other medical complications include reproductive problems and injuries from sexual assaults; physical and neurological problems from violent physical attacks; and other general health issues including respiratory problems

and joint pains. These children undergo psychological trauma, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

World Day Against Human Trafficking

Pope Francis has made the fight against human trafficking one of the cornerstones of his papacy, calling it a crime against humanity. Under his express wishes, the Vatican has hosted several conferences on eradicating trafficking, featuring women freed from forced prostitution. Human trafficking is a “crime against humanity,” because it denies the human dignity of the victim, seeing him or her only as a piece of merchandise to be used to enrich or give pleasure to another, Pope Francis said on 11 April 2019. Pope Francis has designated 8th February, the feast of St Josephine Bakhita, a Sudanese woman religious who was familiar with the humiliations and sufferings of slavery as the World Day of Prayer, Reflection and Action Against Human Trafficking, following a request from Talitha Kum, the worldwide Network of Consecrated Life Against Human Trafficking.

Who can Voice their Violations?

The abuse and trauma continue and their tears continue to wet our mother earth to which our eyes are closed. Who can voice their violations? Runaways, throwaways, sexual assault victims, and neglected children are recruited into a violent life of forced prostitution day after day. There are those who have eyes but refuse to see the inhumanity around. There are those who have ears but refuse to hear the cries of those in agony. There are those who have mouths but refuse to speak against the injustice done to some.

Are they not someone's Daughter/Sister?

As she stood awaiting her bus, little did the unsuspecting 9-year-old realize that the food offered to her had been drugged. When she came to her senses, she found herself in a strange place where strange activities were going on. It was a brothel house in Mumbai, run by transgenders. She had been deceived and was now trapped! Much against her will, she suffered the life of a prostitute. It took 3 years before she could be rescued by Mr Anson Thomas, a freedom fighter for trafficked victims who turned his life from being a Hockey Player to a Rescuer. Her struggles and torments had however empowered her, so that, as she grew older, she took it upon herself to rescue similar girls from the cruel clutches of this well-organized evil set-up. And she is doing a commendable, selfless service, no doubt. Thanks to her courage and empathy, she has managed to rescue many a girl. Are they not someone's daughter, sister? Instead of seeing them for the lust of men, can we see them as mothers of men?

Come to think of it, isn't it a sad state of affairs that despite so much of all-round development in society, the world still has its dark sides? It is the wicked world of rape, child abuse, sexual exploitation, child labour, human trafficking, and so on? Hapless girls are literally pushed into this immoral dungeon and made to suffer, often for no apparent fault of theirs. It is high time that the so-called "developed" society awakens to a morality of seeing their own mothers, sisters and daughters in these forsaken females.

Saving a Child

The little girl wept bitterly as she narrated the happenings of the past 3 days. Shanthi (name changed) had run away from home following some misunderstandings with her mother. She

came to Bangalore Railway Station, with the intent of going to her friend's place in New Delhi. But when she reached the Station, the train to New Delhi had already left. She decided to wait in the Waiting Room, for the next train to arrive. As she waited there, a seemingly kind man, the father of 3 kids approached her, showed sympathy, and with ulterior motives, managed to take her to a lodge. There the man sexually abused her, brutally raped her, and then brought her back to the railway waiting room. It was at this point, late in the evening, that we at the Childline Help received a call on 1098. We rushed to the spot and rescued the girl, placing her safely with the BOSCO rescue booth in the station. We cornered the man, speaking to him pleasantly until the police came. He was shocked and surprised, and in horrible anger as he blurted out to me, "Sister, the next time I happen to see you, you will breathe your last in my hands!" This incident robbed me of my sleep that night. I decided to do something to reach out to more such Shanthis, so that they are not deceived, and shoved into brothels. No child should have to bear such a terrible fate. The world needs to wake up to the sentiments of these little girls, and learn to respect them as human beings made in the likeness and image of God Himself, just like any man.... Yes, we need to heed to the call of Pope Francis, to go to the peripheries, to rescue the marginalized. My ministry began....

Talitha Cum

We read in the gospel of Mark 5:41, "Talitha cum" "Little girl, I say to you, rise up!" In Mark 5:40, we read Jesus went in where the child was. Jesus had showed the way to each one of us to go to the lost sheep, to the vulnerable ones. Jesus took the girl by the hand and said to her to rise up. We continue to read in the Bible that immediately the girl stood up. That's

the miracle Jesus performed and that's the power given to us. Should we not walk in to their realities and take them by hand so that they can stand up in society? The International Union of Superiors General (UISG) together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), between the years 2004 and 2008 developed a worldwide program, forming regional networks against human trafficking in nine countries. Catholic women leaders noticed the rapid rate at which human trafficking was increasing, and came up with the idea of "Talitha Kum". Talitha Kum came into form in the year 2009 and brought the individual groups together. By the year 2013, Talitha Kum had developed counter trafficking missions in 75 countries, and more than 600 Catholic Nuns were involved, and by 2015, there were mission groups serving in 80 countries through about 1100 women volunteers. Let us also connect with these missions and be of service to these little children, in the manner of Christ's "Talitha Cum".

PMI Rehabilitation Centres

There are rehabilitation centres working for women in distress, trafficked women and children across the world. Prison Ministry India runs many centres, such as Karuniyashram in Kochin, Sneathashramam in Trivandrum, Jeevodaya in Bangalore, Premodaya in Bangalore, Noida in Delhi, Jeevan Jyothi in Iduki, Asha Kiran in Jharkhand, Marie Pushpan Home in Ranchi, Kolbe Home in Gujarat.

They are Daughters, Sisters and Future Mothers

Each child/woman has her own story to narrate to us. Let us walk into their realities and take them by hand with courage. In the gospel of Mathew 5:39-40 we read, "He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.' But they laughed at him". The crowd laughed at Jesus. When we lay our lives at the service

of those in distress, we too may have to go through mockery, threat and many other troubles. For people, the little girl was dead, but for Jesus the little girl was asleep. As Jesus didn't pay heed to those people, but focused on his goal for which he came, let us follow the footsteps of our Master to give life to these vulnerable children and women whom society considers as objects. They are not objects. They are daughters, sisters and future mothers. Their lives and dreams are precious and valid as those of our own family members.

FROM DEATH TO A NEW LIFE

Sr Adele Korah SCCG

Jenny was a very popular person, admired by all his friends and comrades as a helpful person. He was a good husband and a loving father to his children. He was successful in his business, and was known as a good social worker in the parish. He was closely associated with all the activities of the parish and cooperated with his parish priest in organizing programs in his parish. In short all knew him as a good catholic and a successful business man, though he had only a small-scale business. One evening as he was returning home after his work, he made some purchases of groceries for his family and arrived home late. After parking his car, as he entered the front yard of his house, he was surprised to see that someone had emptied a lorry load of mud and sand in his yard. He was infuriated at seeing his neighbor's action without giving him any prior information on it and it made his blood boil with anger. Jenny felt that it was an infringement to take advantage of his land with no intimation given to him. On contacting the man by phone, Jenny was shocked to notice that rather than being apologetic about what had happened, the man was irritated with Jenny for having made a call to him and blaming him. He came to meet Jenny along with a group of his friends to argue and defend himself. Some of them spoke rashly and the argument between them grew into an altercation. The people who were brought there were growing more quarrelsome and started raising their fist to

attack Jenny. As the fighting spirit in the group got worsened, Jenny felt that he was all alone on his side. For a moment he was perplexed as he was gripped with fear of being attacked by the gang just for calling his neighbor and asking why he had not informed him. He was scared of the whole group and dreaded the thought that they might pounce on him together any moment. The man responsible for the whole event was enraged and charged at Jenny advancing towards him. At this point, Jenny felt the need to defend himself. He had a folded knife in his pocket which he had taken for any need in his house. He took it out to threaten the crowd, but in an impetuous action he thrust the knife on the man who moved towards him. It was a fatal blow and the man collapsed on the ground. Jenny was trembling with fear, not knowing what would be the consequence.

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

Jenny was shifted to Central prison and was admitted to the Convicts section. One can guess the feelings of a prisoner

who receives a judgment that means he has to be in prison till the end of his life without any ray of hope of returning to his family. He felt totally cut off from all those whom he held close and was deprived of the presence of all who loved him, such as his wife, children and friends, and he missed them all. In such a situation he felt that God alone could be close to him. He came to the prison chapel for getting some consolation in prayer. That was the time and place where I met Jenny. I gave him the assurance that I would be in touch with his wife and children and would help them to accept their situation and offer them whatever help they needed. He was not depressed, but the thought of living in prison for his whole life, kept haunting him.

Prayer Meeting in the Prison

I had started the weekly prayer meeting as a spiritual help for the inmates of the prison who came to the prison chapel. I believed that besides counseling, spirituality could give strength to the suffering brethren and prayer and meditation on God's personal, unconditional love could lead persons out of despair. It is in the presence of a loving and forgiving God that people languishing within the prison can find consolation. Or else having been deprived of human help from their dear ones who are their main support, there is every possibility of persons going in to depression and despair. In such circumstances, the presence of a person of compassion and understanding who can lead them in prayer can be of great help. In the deep experience of the love of a living God, they receive the needed strength to face loneliness and deprivations. God assures, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not

be burned, and the flame shall not consume you, for I am the Lord your God the Holy One of Israel, your Savior” (Is 43:1).

A Ray of Hope in Jenny’s Life in the Prison

At every prayer meeting Jenny was the first person to start the prayer. I recall the times when I started the prayer meeting with one single person. On some days, it was when Jenny started singing the praises of God that others joined in prayer one by one. His faith was deepened through prayer. Gradually he was drawn to repentance for the crime he had committed. In the counselling sessions he realized his weakness which had led him to the heinous crime of murder. He recalled the many occasions in his life when he caused pain and hurt to his own wife and children by his angry words and unruly, defiant actions. He came to understand that he had not made any serious effort to control his anger. He got convinced then of the necessity of having control over his temper. It was when his anger got the better of him at the wrong time, he ended up by stabbing his opponent and committing a serious crime having serious legal consequences and criminal charges. When he became angry, resentfulness and irritability followed and made him to strike out verbally and physically. “Refrain from strife and your sins will be fewer for the hot-tempered kindle strife.” “In proportion to the fuel, so will the fire burn and in proportion to the obstinacy, so will strife increase” (Sirach28:8,10) Jenny started reading and meditating on God’s word regularly, as he felt the need to get his anger issues under control. Jenny turned to the Lord in repentance and prepared himself for a good confession. True repentance is decision to amend one’s ways. Believing that he needed the power of the Holy Spirit to control his temper, he started reading the books available about the power of the Holy Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit that could bring peace and joy in his life.

He borrowed my book on the Holy Spirit and got a photo copy of it as it was not available on sale; so firm was his determination to begin a new life led by the Holy Spirit. He was strengthened by the reception of Holy Communion and received a new anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Jenny's main regret was the thought about his wife and children who needed his support for their maintenance and education. The fact that the judgment he received was to undergo punishment in prison until death loomed large in his mind threatening him with a blank future without any hope. It was then I gave him the following passages for reflection. "For surely, I know what plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans 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, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations where I have driven you, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you in to exile" (Jer 29: 11-14).

Jenny placed his hope in these words of scripture, firmly believing in God's promises and started reciting the Creed, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty' 33 times a day. He believed in the words spoken by Moses to Israelites, "The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still" (Ex 14:14). Trusting in God, I approached a good advocate to help him appeal to the High Court, as he was the only bread winner for his family. Jenny's judgment copy was submitted to him. I agreed to arrange for the expenses of his court case with the help of his relatives and other benefactors. The advocate studied scrupulously the judgment meted out to him by the Sessions court and consented to do his best. We

waited for a few months with hope and prayer. During this interval I was able to visit his wife and children. The youngest son pleaded with me “Sister, please bring back our daddy soon.” I told them to pray believing in Almighty God, “For men it is impossible, but not for God: because everything is possible for God” (Mk10:27). Jenny used his time fruitfully by studying the Word of God deeply and sharing the same with his companions in the prison for their benefit. He spent time also in personal prayer.

Prayers Answered

The Lord said to Hezekiah who prayed to him with faith, “I have answered your prayer” and gave him an extension of life filled with blessings (2 Kg20:5). Jenny’s prayer too was answered when he called out to the lord in his distress. “When they call out to me, I will answer them; I will be with them in their trouble, I will rescue them and honor them” (Ps 91:15). The judgment given to Jenny by the Sessions Court was to undergo imprisonment until his death. The Lord in his mercy granted reduction of his punishment. He received the happy news that his punishment was reduced to just seven years as per the judgment of the High Court. Great was his joy when the Lord rewarded his faith in His mercy and forgiving love. The Lord who brought his people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, was merciful to Jenny, and brought him out of prison soon as he had already completed seven years by then. Jenny returned to his family as a new man. He was no more the man who once used to burst out in anger at any one who thwarted his path. As one strengthened by the Holy Spirit, he entered his family and society as one specially blessed by the Lord. Jenny believed and felt that Jesus who welcomes every stray sheep back into his fold had accepted him as his son and blessed him with His own Spirit. He began

a new life relying on God who alone could strengthen him in his weakness. He realized that he had to “Make every effort to support his faith with goodness and goodness with knowledge and knowledge with self- control and self -control with endurance and endurance with godliness and godliness with mutual affection and mutual affection with love” (2 Pt1:5-7).

A New Life in Christ

When he went back to his home, Jenny had to face the people in his surroundings who were aware that he was bearing the stigma of a criminal who had come back from prison. But in his behavior every on-looker could sense that he was a man renewed in Spirit. He noticed how his wife was cheated by businessmen in his absence and how hard he had to work to make up for the big loss. But he accepted everything with total self- control and immense patience. He thanked the Lord for the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit he had received during the period of incarceration through prayer and the study of the Word of God. In calmness and patience, he made up for the loss within a short period of time. He built a new house and I had the privilege of rejoicing with him for the blessings he received from God’s abundant goodness and mercy. Hence, he continues to live a renewed life in the Spirit now, counting his blessings. “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).

FROM GUILTY JUDAS TO FAITHFUL PETER

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

A Blow that Proved Fatal

It was like any other day in the life of Jose. There was nothing unusual in the fact that he got into a fight with his drunken father. In the midst of the tussle between father and son, Jose shoved his father so hard that he fell to the ground. The inadvertent happened. His father died on the spot! Jose was struck dumb for a moment as he looked at the lifeless body of his father. The gravity of his unintended deed suddenly dawned on him. He had murdered his own father! He had had no ulterior motive of killing him of course, but who on earth would believe that? He realized that nobody, least of all the police would accept that it was an accident. He acted swiftly, and, carrying the body to the backyard of the house buried it there safely. Not a soul would come to know. To those who inquired about his father, Jose would casually say that he had gone out to work.

The Backdrop

Jose was born the youngest of 5 siblings, into a poverty-stricken family in Wynad. With a father who was addicted to alcohol, the family knew no peace. Every single day his father would come home drunk like a skunk. It wouldn't stop with that. A flurry of foul words and filthy language would follow. Jose could not bear to see his mother being beaten up daily

by the inebriated father. So he would come to her rescue by taking up for her. A fight would ensue for sure. This was the scene almost every day. There was no peace or happiness in the family. The children were literally fed up with these daily squabbles.

Looking Back, the Lead

All had been somewhat fine up till the eldest of the daughters got married. The 2nd daughter was a mentally challenged girl. To get the 3rd daughter married off they had to sell all the property they owned. This landed them in severe financial crunch and abject poverty. The eldest son however was least concerned with the affairs of the house. He got married and settled elsewhere without bothering about the pathetic condition of the family. The drunkard father only contributed to disrupting the peace of the family. There was absolutely no financial support forthcoming from his end. So the onus of providing for the family and getting the girls married fell on the little shoulders of Jose. He had to work as a daily wager even as a child, in order to meet the basic needs of the family. In the midst of so much adversity, the diligent boy completed a 2- year course at the Industrial Training Institute. He somehow managed to get his sisters married and then decided to settle down. Wanting a reprieve he too got married, hoping to enjoy a bit of life and cheer, but his happiness was to be short-lived. His hopes for a placid life came crashing down when he accidentally killed his father.

Guilt and Thereafter

Even though he was not found out, he spent sleepless nights, feeling guilty that he had not owned up his crime. Finally unable to hold on any longer, he went to the police station and confessed his misdeed. The police came home, dug up

the grave and exhumed the body. As he had himself confessed his lapse, there was leniency in his punishment. Even after coming out of jail his conscience continued to prick him. He had lost face and had tarred his image in society. So, he, with his pregnant wife, decided to end their hapless lives. Both of them consumed poison, and sad to say, his wife and the baby in the womb died, but he survived. A semi-conscious Jose got to see a glimpse of his wife's body when he was still in the hospital. In those days attempting suicide was considered an offence, so a case was registered against him. After he was discharged from the hospital, with his wife and child too gone, life seemed utterly meaningless for him. Guilt crushed his mind all the more.

Dejected and Lonely

With the intention of taking his life he went to the Kovalam beach and sat there for a while, in fact for quite a while. A man walked up to him and asked him curiously why he had been sitting there staring into the ocean. Jose told the persistent man that he was contemplating suicide. Advising Jose to return, the man gave him an address with the name of Fr Alexander Kureekkattil, and told him to go and meet the priest first. What prompted Jose to obey him is a matter known only to Providence. And who that man was, is also not known to this day. Yet, that was the first step towards transformation, a step initiated by a total stranger who was sent by a God who loved Jose.

Jose followed the directions on the letter that the man had handed him, and reached the Pastoral Orientation Center at Kochi in search of Fr Alexander. Not finding him there, he traveled that night and went to Sneharamam at Trichur. Father was just about to enter the Chapel to offer Holy Mass when he was met by Jose. He listened to Jose for 10

minutes and gave him a tight hug. Then he went in to offer Mass, promising Jose that he would see him again after the Mass. Today Jose claims that it was that hug of Fr Alexander that sparked a hope within him, a hope to live again. Jose was astonished that Father Alexander could so lovingly embrace a criminal like him who was a murderer, and one who had made an unsuccessful attempt at suicide, killing his wife and child in the process too. He felt consoled and encouraged. After Holy Mass, Father listened to the rest of his story. Tears rolled down his cheeks as he unfolded the story of his entire life.

The Happy Ending

He stayed at Sneathashramam for some time and then worked as a cook in a rehabilitation center for 5 years. He too had taken to drinking, but the grace of God, aided by the prayers of his well-wishers healed him completely. He now lives with his wife Mary and a student daughter. His elder daughter has joined the Convent of the Holy Spirit Sisters in Kolkata. In the meantime, he suffered a heart attack which left him incapable of working for a living. His 2nd wife, who was already impaired in her limbs, lost her job recently with a candle manufacturing concern. They are now in great hardship for money to sustain themselves. Despite the impoverished state, Jose lives a quiet, reformed life, keeping up his hope and trusting in God to supply all his needs. Jose now stands out in society as an example of conversion, a conversion from a guilty Judas to a faithful Peter. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 Jn 1:9)

WHY PROMOTE PRISON REFORM?¹

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Central to the arguments to promote prison reforms is a human rights argument - the premise on which many UN standards and norms have been developed. However, this argument is often insufficient to encourage prison reform programs in countries with scarce human and financial resources. The detrimental impact of imprisonment, not only on individuals but on families and communities, and economic factors also need to be taken into account when considering the need for prison reforms.

Human Rights Considerations

A sentence of imprisonment constitutes only a deprivation of the basic right to liberty. It does not entail the restriction of other human rights, with the exception of those which are naturally restricted by the very fact of being in prison. Prison reform is necessary to ensure that this principle is respected, the human rights of prisoners protected and their prospects for social reintegration increased, in compliance with relevant international standards and norms.

Imprisonment and Poverty

Imprisonment disproportionately affects individuals and families living in poverty. When an income generating member

¹ Courtesy to United Nations.

of the family is imprisoned the rest of the family must adjust to this loss of income. The impact can be especially severe in poor, developing countries where the state does not provide financial assistance to the indigent and where it is not unusual for one breadwinner to financially support an extended family network. Thus the family experiences financial losses as a result of the imprisonment of one of its members, exacerbated by the new expenses that must be met - such as the cost of a lawyer, food for the imprisoned person, transport to prison for visits and so on. When released, often with no prospects for employment, former prisoners are generally subject to socio-economic exclusion and are thus vulnerable to an endless cycle of poverty, marginalisation, criminality and imprisonment. Thus, imprisonment contributes directly to the impoverishment of the prisoner, of his family (with a significant cross-generational effect) and of society by creating future victims and reducing future potential economic performance.

Public Health Consequences of Imprisonment

Prisons have very serious health implications. Prisoners are likely to have existing health problems on entry to prison, as they are predominantly from poorly educated and socio-economically deprived sectors of the general population, with minimal access to adequate health services. Their health conditions deteriorate in prisons which are overcrowded, where nutrition is poor, sanitation inadequate and access to fresh air and exercise often unavailable. Psychiatric disorders, HIV infection, tuberculosis, hepatitis B and C, sexually transmitted diseases, skin diseases, malaria, malnutrition, diarrhoea and injuries including self-mutilation are the main causes of morbidity and mortality in prison. In countries with a high prevalence of TB in the outside community, prevalence

of TB can be up to 100 times higher inside the prisons. In most countries HIV infection in prisons is significantly higher than within the population outside prison, especially where drug addiction and risk behaviours are prevalent. Prison staff are also vulnerable to most of the diseases of which prisoners are at risk.

Prisons are not isolated from the society and prison health is public health. The vast majority of people committed to prison eventually return to the wider society. Thus, it is not in vain that prisons have been referred to as reservoirs of disease in various contexts.

Detrimental Social Impact

Imprisonment disrupts relationships and weakens social cohesion, since the maintenance of such cohesion is based on long-term relationships. When a member of a family is imprisoned, the disruption of the family structure affects relationships between spouses, as well as between parents and children, reshaping the family and community across generations. Mass imprisonment produces a deep social transformation in families and communities.

The Cost of Imprisonment

Taking into account the above considerations, it is essential to note that, when considering the cost of imprisonment, account needs to be taken not only of the actual funds spent on the upkeep of each prisoner, which is usually significantly higher than what is spent on a person sentenced to non-custodial sanctions, but also of the indirect costs, such as the social, economic and healthcare related costs, which are difficult to measure, but which are immense and long-term.

THE BENCHMARKS FOR ACTION IN PRISON REFORM: THE UNITED NATIONS STANDARDS AND NORMS

Key among Standards and Norms that Relate Directly to Prison Reform are:

- United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners
- Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention and Imprisonment
- Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners
- United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures (Tokyo Rules)
- United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (Bangkok Rules)

Other UN Instruments Relevant to the Prison System:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners
- UN Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials
- Basic Principles on the use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials
- Safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty
- UN Recommendations on Life Imprisonment
- Basic principles on the use of restorative justice programs in criminal matters
- Kampala Declaration on Prison Conditions in Africa
- Arusha Declaration on Good Prison Practice

UNODC'S INTEGRATED AND MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO PRISON REFORM STRATEGY

It is of utmost importance that prison reform is not regarded in isolation from broader criminal justice reform. UNODC believes that effective prison reform is dependent on the improvement and rationalisation of criminal justice policies, including crime prevention and sentencing policies, and on the care and treatment made available to vulnerable groups in the community. Reform of the prison system should therefore always take into account the needs relating to the reform of the criminal justice system as a whole and

employ an integrated, multi-disciplinary strategy to achieve sustainable impact. Thus, reform initiatives will usually need to also encompass criminal justice institutions other than the prison service, such as the judiciary prosecution and police service, as relevant.

An integrated approach also takes account of areas that are typically not regarded as part of the “criminal justice system”. These include, for example, the development of substance dependence treatment programs in the community or psycho-social counselling programs, to which certain offenders may be diverted, rather than being imprisoned, thus ensuring that services in prison are not overstretched, trying to meet the needs of a growing number of prisoners with special needs.

The integrated strategy to prison reform can benefit immensely from the establishment and development of collaboration and partnerships with other UN agencies and other international and national organizations engaged in complementary programs.

THEMATIC AREAS OF WORK IN THE FIELD OF PRISON REFORM AND ALTERNATIVES TO IMPRISONMENT

UNODC’s technical assistance in the area of prison reform covers the following thematic areas:

- Pre-trial Detention;
- Prison Management;
- Alternative Measures and Sanctions;
- Social Reintegration.

Pre-trial Detention

There are three main issues that need to be taken into consideration in the context of pre-trial detention: firstly, pre-trial detention is overused in most countries worldwide and in many developing countries the size of the pre-trial prisoner population is larger than that of the convicted prisoner population. This situation contradicts the provisions in international standards, including ICCPR, that provide for the limited use of pre-trial detention, only when certain conditions are present. Secondly, pre-trial detention is the period most open to abuse in the criminal justice process. Recognizing the particular vulnerability of pre-trial detainees, international human rights instruments provide for a large number of very specific safeguards to ensure that the rights of detainees are not abused, that they are not ill-treated and their access to justice not hindered. Thirdly, although pre-trial detainees should be presumed innocent until found guilty by a court of law, and treated as such, conditions in pre-trial detention are often much worse than those of prisons for convicted prisoners. In addition, the lack of resources for prisons in many low-income countries means that people in detention do not have access to legal advice and assistance, with the result being that they may overstay on remand, and/or not receive a fair trial, further adding to the congestion of prisons. Therefore, improving access to justice, supporting legal and paralegal aid programs, improving information management and cooperation between courts and prisons, to speed up the processing of cases, as well as assisting with the development of safeguards for pre-trial detainees, such as independent monitoring and inspection mechanisms, comprise important elements of UNODC's work in the field of penal reform.

Prison Management

In order for a prison system to be managed in a fair and humane manner, national legislation, policies and practices must be guided by the international standards developed to protect the human rights of prisoners. Prison authorities have a responsibility to ensure that the supervision and treatment of prisoners is in line with the rule of law, with respect to individuals' human rights, and that the period of imprisonment is used to prepare individuals for life outside prison following release. But often national legislation and rules relating to the management of prisons are outdated and in need of reform. In many countries the prison department is under the authority of police or military institutions and managers and staff have received no specific training regarding prison management. Staff morale is usually low and effective leadership to drive prison reform is lacking. Information collection and management systems are also very inadequate (or non-existent) in many prison systems worldwide, hindering the development of sound policies and strategies based on reliable, factual data. UNODC can provide much assistance in reforming national legislation, developing training programs for prison managers to improve their leadership role and staff to apply international standards and norms in their daily practice, and by contributing to the institutional capacity building of prison administrations.

Alternative Measures and Sanctions

Overcrowding is a key concern in almost all prison systems worldwide, while punitive criminal policies, as well as a shortage of social protection services in the community, continue to contribute to the rapid growth of the prison population in many countries. As mentioned earlier, overcrowding is the root cause of many human rights violations in prisons. Solutions

to overcrowding need to be explored and implemented in almost all countries in which UNODC is operational.

While overcrowding can be temporarily decreased by building new prisons, practice shows that trying to overcome the harmful effects of prison overcrowding through the construction of new prisons does not provide a sustainable solution. In addition, building new prisons and maintaining them is expensive, putting pressure on valuable resources. Instead, numerous international instruments recommend a rationalization in sentencing policy, including the wider use of alternatives to prison, aiming to reduce the number of people being isolated from society for long periods.

The use of non-custodial sanctions and measures also reflects a fundamental change in the approach to crime, offenders and their place in society, changing the focus of penitentiary measures from punishment and isolation, to restorative justice and reintegration. When accompanied by adequate support for offenders, it assists some of the most vulnerable members of society to lead a life without having to relapse back into criminal behavior patterns. Thus, the implementation of penal sanctions within the community, rather than through a process of isolation from it, offers in the long-term better protection for society. Supporting the introduction and implementation of non-custodial sanctions and measures is therefore a key element of UNODC's work in the area of prison reform.

Social Reintegration

One of the principle objectives of the United Nations in the area of prison reform is to contribute to the successful reintegration of prisoners into society following their release. Social reintegration initiatives should start as early

as possible within the criminal justice process in order to have maximum effect. This means that diversion from the criminal justice process (especially of vulnerable groups) to appropriate treatment programs, non-custodial sanctions, instead of isolation from society and purposeful activities and programs in prisons, can all be considered as elements of a comprehensive “social reintegration” policy. Interventions to support former prisoners following release from prison, continuum of care in the community for those in need, will all be more effective if the period in prison is used to prepare a prisoner for re-entry to society. This policy requires close coordination between criminal justice institutions and social protection and health services in the community and probation services where they exist. UNODC can offer key support and advice in this area, including supporting the development of social reintegration programs in prisons and in assisting with the planning and implementation of continuum of care and support in the community.

Healthcare

Equivalence of healthcare and the right to health is a principle that applies to all prisoners, who are entitled to receive the same quality of medical care that is available in the community. However, this right is rarely realized in prisons, where usually healthcare services are extremely inadequate. Prison health services are almost always severely underfunded and understaffed and sometimes non-existent. Most of the time under the responsibility of the authority in charge of the prisons administration, prison health services work in complete isolation from national health authorities, including national HIV and national TB programs. Specific women’s health needs are rarely addressed.

The right to health includes not only the access to preventive, curative, reproductive, palliative and supportive health care but also the access to the underlying determinants of health, which include: safe drinking water and adequate sanitation; safe food; adequate nutrition and housing; safe health and dental services; healthy working and environmental conditions; health-related education and information and gender equality.

Technical assistance provided by UNODC in this area is based on the premise that penal reform and health in prisons are interrelated, and that an integrated strategy needs to be adopted in addressing the enormous challenge of HIV/AIDS and other transmissible diseases such as tuberculosis (TB) in prison settings. Improved prison management and prison conditions are fundamental to developing a sustainable health strategy in prisons. In addition, prison health is an integral part of public health, and improving prison health is crucial for the success of public health policies.

COMMON POSITION ON INCARCERATION¹

APRIL 2021

United Nations System

“It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.” Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

Abstract

Judicial and prison systems around the globe continue to face fundamental challenges that undermine the ultimate purpose of incarceration as a sentence, namely, to protect society from crime and to prevent recidivism by supporting rehabilitation and preparing prisoners for their social reintegration upon release.

Overincarceration, overcrowding, poor conditions and the serious neglect of prison services are causing prisons to be a weak link in criminal justice systems and a low priority in reform efforts. The consequences for public safety, health and human rights, as well as the financial and socio-economic costs resulting from these deficiencies, are immense. In some countries, including those in conflict, post-conflict and other crisis situations, severe prison deficiencies have had a negative impact on peace, security and stability. The disproportionate impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in prison

¹ Courtesy to United Nations

settings has demonstrated what can happen when already overburdened and ill-equipped prisons are confronted with crises. Addressing the challenges associated with incarceration, including its overuse, should be a key part of the effort to “build back better”.

Many problems manifested in prison settings are the result of socio-economic disparities and systemic deficiencies in criminal justice systems. Societal, racial and other forms of discrimination may be equally reflected in criminal justice policies and practices. Effective and sustainable reform efforts therefore require a holistic reform approach aimed at addressing the root causes of over-incarceration and overcrowding, and shifting policies towards prevention and alternatives to imprisonment.

The United Nations commitment to “leave no one behind” recognizes prisoners as a particularly vulnerable and marginalized group that is subject to discrimination and exclusion. Sufficiently resourced and well-managed prison services and State policies that advance noncustodial measures are important enablers of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The United Nations system common position on incarceration provides a common framework for United Nations support to Member States, with the objectives of reducing the over-reliance on incarceration and reducing the prison population, strengthening prison management and improving prison conditions and advancing the rehabilitation and social reintegration of offenders.

It is closely informed by research findings and is firmly grounded in both international human rights law and the United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and

criminal justice. As such, it constitutes a guide for consistent United Nations advocacy and assistance aimed at supporting reform efforts in Member States relating to incarceration.

Purpose and Scope

The present paper sets forth the United Nations system common position on incarceration. It addresses prison and associated challenges at the global, regional and national levels and constitutes the common framework for United Nations support to Member States in relation to incarceration.

The paper reflects a “One UN” approach aimed at supporting efforts to rethink the current overreliance on and implementation of incarceration, including through better coordination and integrated efforts.

The United Nations system common position on incarceration is based on the understanding that no one should be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention and that the deprivation of liberty in response to a criminal charge or offence should constitute a measure of last resort, with due consideration first being paid to non-custodial sanctions or measures.

It also acknowledges that, as part of individualized, balanced and proportionate criminal justice responses to offending, well-managed prisons constitute an important aspect of the justice chain. Prison services that respect human dignity and operate in line with international norms and standards constitute a core element of efforts to maintain peace and security, public safety and respect for human rights.

As such, prison reform and the treatment of offenders should be viewed as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular with regard to Sustainable Development Goal 16, on peace, justice and

strong institutions, as well as Goal 3, on good health and well-being, Goal 5, on gender equality, and Goal 10, on reduced inequalities.

This paper focuses on the deprivation of liberty in places of detention within criminal justice systems. It therefore excludes other forms of deprivation of liberty, such as immigration-related detention of an administrative nature. The specific situation of children deprived of liberty is not addressed in detail, as it is governed by an additional set of legal considerations and obligations.

Definitions

- > **Incarceration.** The state of being deprived of liberty in prisons, including pretrial detention facilities.
- > **Prisons.** All authorized places of detention within a criminal justice system, including those used for the purposes of pretrial detention and imprisonment upon conviction.
- > **Prisoners.** All persons who are held in prisons as defined above, irrespective of their legal status, excluding children accompanying an incarcerated parent.
- > **Pretrial Detainees.** All persons who, in connection with an alleged offence, are detained in prison between the time of arrest and the time of judgment at first instance.
- > **Non-custodial Measure.** A decision made by a competent authority, at any stage of the administration of criminal justice, that requires a person suspected or accused of, or sentenced for, an offence to submit to certain conditions or obligations that do not include incarceration.
- > **Children.** All individuals under the age of 18 years.

Global Prison Challenges

Criminal justice responses to crime, including the deprivation of liberty, are implemented by States in the name of justice. Incarceration and the treatment of offenders should therefore reflect a State's obligation to ensure justice, preserve public safety and hold offenders accountable while fully respecting applicable human rights in the process.

Overuse of Pretrial Detention and Imprisonment

In 2019, more than 11 million people, including 410,000 children, were held in prisons across the globe, representing an increase of 25 per cent since 2000 in the total number held. While the number of female prisoners worldwide represented a small minority of the prison population in most countries, their number grew by 50 per cent over the same period, reaching more than 714,000 women.

Member States resort to imprisonment to very different degrees. According to estimates, while the global average imprisonment rate stands below 150 prisoners per 100,000 of the overall national population, it has reached 300–650 prisoners per 100,000 of the overall national population in more than 25 Member States.

Studies have found that general crime trends do not explain the overall use of imprisonment. Neither reported crime nor victimization are systematically reflected in incarceration levels.

Despite these circumstances, incarceration often remains the default choice, if not the only response, to address criminal behaviour. Investments in the availability, quality and use of non-custodial measures continue to be overlooked.

“Imprisonment has become an almost automatic response rather than a last resort, as mirrored in increasing and disproportionate penalization, excessive use of pretrial detention, increased length of prison sentences and little use of noncustodial alternatives. Furthermore, the penitentiary system in most countries is no longer aimed at the reformation and social rehabilitation of convicts but simply aims to punish by locking offenders away. Noncompliance with international standards in relation to conditions of detention is caused by resource constraints and by the punitive approach of most criminal justice systems.”

Despite relevant provisions in international law, the overuse and excessive length of pretrial detention remains a global challenge. Even though many individuals charged with criminal offences do not pose a risk to public safety or the administration of justice, their number among the prison population has nevertheless risen by 30 per cent since 2000, to more than 3 million people. Pretrial detainees outnumber convicted prisoners in 45 Member States; in 14 of those States, pretrial detainees represent more than 70 per cent of the prison population.

In some countries, pretrial detainees remain in detention for a period longer than the sentence period that would typically apply to those found guilty of the alleged offence. Others are subject to prolonged detention in holding cells that are not designed, and should not be used, for that purpose. For these reasons, Sustainable Development Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions, establishes the percentage of pretrial detainees within prison populations as an indicator for measuring the efficiency of, and access to, justice systems.

As a result of a limited range of alternatives to incarceration provided in law, courts may lack the necessary options to

ensure that imposed sentences are proportionate to the gravity, nature and circumstances of the offence. More often, however, the problem is a reluctance to apply non-custodial measures embodied in national law. This may be due to a lack of awareness of, or confidence in, their effectiveness, a lack, or perceived lack, of public support, or insufficient health-care, housing and social welfare services. The absence or inadequacy of the entities and infrastructure required to implement alternatives to incarceration, including restorative justice approaches, compounds the problem.

The overuse of incarceration is often fuelled by “zero tolerance” policies and populist rhetoric that call for stricter law enforcement and sentencing. This occurs despite research findings indicating that it is not the prospect or severity of a prison sentence that deters crime, but the perceived probability of apprehension.

For example, the use of life imprisonment, which has replaced capital punishment as the most severe penal sanction in 149 countries, increased by 84 per cent from 2000 to 2015, when 479,000 prisoners were serving a formal life sentence. It appears that the progressive abolition of the death penalty was not the exclusive driver of that increase, as research also points to the application of life sentences to a wider range of offences and for longer or indefinite time periods, including life sentences without parole.

Reinforced Discrimination and Inequalities

Inequalities and low socio-economic status have been found to be relevant to the incidence of crime. Incarceration therefore disproportionately affects and impacts the segments of society that are living in poverty or are marginalized. In some countries, people are imprisoned as a result of factors

directly linked to poverty, such as homelessness or the inability to pay fines.

When poverty and insufficient access to social, health and legal aid services for the disadvantaged are combined with policies aimed at being “tough on crime” and systemic forms of discrimination (e.g., based on race, ethnicity, sex or gender), the result is the overrepresentation of minority and marginalized groups among prisoners, many of whom are charged with petty and nonviolent offences. The time spent in prison is likely to aggravate unemployment, homelessness and poverty, thereby feeding a vicious cycle of deprivation and exclusion.

“Because law enforcement officials often use ‘poverty’, ‘homelessness’ or ‘disadvantage’ as indicators of criminality, persons living in poverty come into contact with the criminal justice system with a disproportionately high frequency. They also encounter considerable obstacles maneuvering within or exiting the system. As a result, disproportionately high numbers of the poorest and most excluded are arrested, detained and imprisoned.”

Individuals may also be deprived of liberty for apostasy or so-called “moral crimes”, many of them linked to discrimination against women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex persons.

Children may be deprived of liberty for noncriminal acts that are only prohibited under the law on the basis of the person’s status as a child (referred to as “status offences”), or as a substitute for referral to childcare and protection services. Owing to a lack of community-based support and public health-care facilities, in numerous countries, persons with mental health conditions or psychosocial disabilities are

often imprisoned, even when they have not committed any offence or have been found not to be criminally responsible. Incarceration for the above reasons amounts to arbitrary detention in violation of international norms and standards.

The number of individuals convicted for drug-related offences is estimated to account for 18 per cent of the global prison population. Reflecting socioeconomic inequalities, those detained for drug-related offences are often low-level offenders, such as persons who use drugs or who have drug use disorders, drug couriers or small-scale dealers. The proportion of women (35 per cent) imprisoned for drug-related offences is higher than that of men (19 per cent), which illustrates the need to address intersecting forms of gender-based discrimination, inequality and abuse.

In many countries, national drug laws make no or limited provision for alternatives to imprisonment, even for low-level offenders. In addition, available data point to a lack of evidence-based programs for the treatment of drug use disorders and the reduction of the negative health consequences of drug use in prisons, and to an increased risk of relapse to drug use and drug overdose upon release. Where such evidence-based interventions for prisoners with drug use disorders do exist, they have been proved to reduce the risk of relapse and recidivism.

The distinct background, profile and specific needs of women and girls in conflict with the law tend to be grossly neglected and subsumed into a male-centred model of incarceration. Incarceration has a particularly negative impact on women and their dependants in terms of safety, exposure to gender-based violence, mental health and stigma, owing in part to the lack of gender-responsive prison management practices and rehabilitation programs.

The impact of incarceration extends well beyond the actual prisoners. It is also heavily felt by their families in terms of economic status, compromised family ties and stigma, thereby perpetuating inequalities, discrimination and exclusion. A particularly affected group is the children of incarcerated parents, including those children who are temporarily allowed to live with a parent in prison. Studies indicate that children of incarcerated caregivers suffer from higher rates of behavioural, emotional and cognitive problems, and are more likely to get caught up in a cycle of intergenerational risky behaviour and contact with the criminal justice system.

Prison Overcrowding

Prison overcrowding constitutes an acute global human rights, health and security crisis and stands out as the greatest contributor to violations of international minimum standards in prisons. The phenomenon continues to affect a majority of Member States worldwide (110 Member States), with more than 50 Member States operating prison services at more than 150 per cent of their official capacity. In many prisons, overcrowding is so acute that prisoners are forced to share beds, sleep in shifts or on top of each other, or spend the night standing.

The excessive resort to pretrial detention has been identified as a main contributor to prison overcrowding worldwide. While pretrial detainees should be presumed innocent until proved guilty by a court of law, and treated as such, conditions in pretrial detention are often worse than those for convicted prisoners, and are characterized by, *inter alia*, poor infrastructure and poor service and program delivery.

Operating significantly over the intended capacity of prisons is not simply an issue of lack of space. It also gravely affects

the quality of nutrition, sanitation and hygiene, health services, rates of transmission of infectious diseases, the provision of care to vulnerable groups, and the physical and mental health of prisoners, as well as their access to constructive activities and programs. Overcrowding generates conflicts, fuels violence, decays prison infrastructure and poses immense security and management challenges.

Insufficient supervision, safety and prisoner classification schemes in overcrowded prisons can lead prisoners to seek protection from high-risk prisoners or prison gangs and can provide dangerous entry points for radicalization to violence. The declining ratio of prison staff per prisoner and adverse work environments have had a negative impact on staff performance, attitudes and well-being. In such circumstances, prison officers are more likely to take on a more authoritarian and less positive role.

In summary, the impact of overcrowding multiplies the challenges faced by prison services in preserving the integrity of prison management, ensuring the health, safety and well-being of prisoners, maintaining a rehabilitative prison regime and preserving prison security.

Neglect and Abuse

Incarceration creates a situation in which prisoners depend upon prison services for the fulfilment of all their day-to-day needs. Member States therefore owe a heightened duty of care and special responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of prisoners. In this regard, public scrutiny is crucial, owing to the closed nature of prisons.

Notwithstanding these factors, prison management and the treatment of offenders are a low priority in many Member

States. Prisons tend to be under-resourced and often struggle to provide for even the most basic and life sustaining needs of prisoners. Budgets for the maintenance, refurbishment or construction of sound prison infrastructure are scarce or do not take into account evidence-based designs that would support a safe, decent and healthy prison environment.

This situation, exacerbated by the typically poorer health status of prisoners at the time of admission and poor linkages with public health facilities, often leads to a higher mortality rate and the prevalence of communicable and non-communicable diseases in prisons. Those diseases not only affect prisoners, their families, visitors and prison officers, but also put an increased health burden on society at large. Unsurprisingly, prison settings have been hit particularly hard by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and continue to be at severe risk of amplified transmission and outbreaks of the disease. It has been estimated that, as of April 2021, more than 538,000 prisoners in 122 countries have tested positive for the coronavirus, among which there have been 3,900 COVID-19-related fatalities. In addition, research in individual countries indicates that, compared to the general population, prisoners are more likely to become infected with the coronavirus and more likely to die from COVID-19.

The neglect of places of detention increases the risk of inadequate management, oversight and accountability mechanisms. Even basic and key requirements, such as the separation of men from women, adults from children and sentenced prisoners from pretrial detainees, are not consistently met in many countries. Furthermore, the access of prisoners to legal advice, as well as to representatives of independent inspection bodies, may be seriously compromised or impeded.

Prison officers are typically held in lower regard than other public officials working in the criminal justice system. They tend to have lower salaries, less training and fewer career opportunities. This not only leads to difficulties in recruiting qualified staff, but also has negative consequences on their morale and performance.

All of the above factors increase the risk of torture, ill-treatment and other human rights violations in prisons. Widespread corruption and security breaches, including continued criminal activity while imprisoned, can also have a destabilizing effect well beyond prison walls.

Key Observations

Despite commendable initiatives and progress in individual jurisdictions, prison systems around the globe continue to face fundamental challenges that undermine the ultimate purpose of a prison sentence, namely, to protect society from crime and to prevent recidivism by supporting rehabilitation and preparing prisoners for their social reintegration upon release.

- > Overcrowding, poor prison conditions and the serious neglect of prison services cause prisons to be a weak link in criminal justice systems and a low priority in related reform efforts. The consequences for public safety, health, and human rights, as well as the financial and socioeconomic costs resulting from these long-standing deficiencies, are immense.
- > Prison management and the treatment of offenders have an impact on progress towards a variety of Sustainable Development Goals, and related targets and indicators. Sufficiently resourced and well-managed prison services and entities in charge of non-custodial measures are an

important enabler of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The United Nations commitment to “leave no one behind” recognizes prisoners as a particularly vulnerable and marginalized group subject to discrimination and exclusion.

- > Given the closed nature of prisons and the inherent risk of abuse and violence in them, a two-fold system of regular monitoring and inspections by the prison service, on the one hand, and by external, independent bodies, on the other, is essential for preventing torture and ill-treatment.
- > Many problems manifested in prison settings are the result of systemic deficiencies in criminal justice systems, including in relation to racial and gender justice and justice for children. Effective and sustainable reform efforts require a holistic approach that identifies legislative shortcomings, procedural bottlenecks and deficiencies in physical rule-of-law infrastructure, and that invests in the use of non-custodial measures and access to quality legal aid.
- > Strategies to prevent and combat racism and racial discrimination in criminal justice systems, in line with human rights norms, should encompass dedicated measures regarding prison management and the treatment of offenders.
- > The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 in prison settings has demonstrated what can happen when already overburdened and ill-equipped prisons are confronted with crises. Addressing the challenges associated with incarceration, including insufficient coordination between the justice and health sectors, should be a key part of the effort to “build back better”.

- > The post-COVID-19 recovery will provide an important opportunity for criminal justice systems to address their chronic shortcomings and engage in holistic prison reform. Building on the emergency initiatives adopted by Member States, which have authorized the release of at least 700,000 prisoners globally, a concerted effort is needed to fully implement these results in a sustainable manner and to urgently rethink the overuse of incarceration.
- > In many cases, women offenders do not pose a serious risk to public safety. Greater efforts to promote gender-responsive alternatives to incarceration, taking into account their specific circumstances, such as pregnancy or caretaking responsibilities, are essential. Responses to the distinct backgrounds and needs of women prisoners and offenders must be enhanced, including through social reintegration strategies that address the underlying socioeconomic issues they may face.
- > Although incarcerated, prisoners remain a part of society. Accordingly, civil society has an important role to play in supporting the treatment of offenders in both the community and in prisons through complementary support, monitoring and services in support of rehabilitation and social reintegration.
- > Public opinion has a major influence on how policymakers respond to crime. While public demand for harsher penalties is often used to justify punitive criminal justice policies, proactive information-sharing and awareness-raising can result in a more balanced understanding. Solid research, data and close collaboration with the media and communities are the key to fostering public support and political will for penal reform.

- > Prison challenges may be particularly acute in conflict, post-conflict and other crisis settings, resulting not only in serious human rights violations, but also in prison riots, mass escapes and the increased potential for the spread of violent extremist ideology. By serving as drivers of conflict and weakening public confidence in rule-of-law institutions, such developments seriously undermine the stabilization and peace sustainment efforts of United Nations peace missions. At the same time, efforts to counter armed groups, deter the perpetration of serious conflict-related crimes and ensure the criminal accountability of State and non-State actors require functioning prison systems.

Common Approach

The United Nations system stands ready to assist Member States in addressing global prison challenges within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

All efforts to address global prison challenges will be based on international human rights law and the United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules). This will not only serve to ensure the human dignity of prisoners, but will also benefit public safety and the social cohesion of societies at large.

The United Nations system recognizes that more needs to be done, and is committed to enhancing its efforts, in a systematic and integrated manner, in three thematic areas:

- (a) Shifting policies towards prevention and alternatives;
- (b) Strengthening prison management and improving prison conditions;

(c) Advancing the rehabilitation and social reintegration of offenders.

Shifting Policies Towards Prevention and Alternatives

Incarceration should be used as a last resort, taking into account the nature and gravity of the offence, the risk the offender poses to the public and the offender's social reintegration needs. Crime prevention and alternatives to incarceration are the key to avoiding the over-reliance on, and inappropriate use of, incarceration.

The focus of criminal justice responses should be shifted from imposing punishment and isolation to investing in longer-term strategies for crime prevention, rehabilitation, restorative justice and social reintegration, with an emphasis on the most vulnerable. This shift also requires a movement towards depenalization and decriminalization in appropriate cases, in line with international norms and standards.

Preventing crime from occurring in the first place is essential for reducing the number of people who come in contact with the criminal justice system. There are factors at the individual, family, community and wider society levels that can place individuals at a higher risk of crime, violence and victimization.

Identifying and minimizing these risk factors is key, and can be accomplished through, inter alia, multi-stakeholder consultations, a review of existing crime data, and empirical research on the structural conditions that give rise to crime. The findings of such efforts should inform the design and implementation of evidence-based crime prevention strategies and programmes and ensure a more coordinated response from all relevant services.

The effective use of alternatives to incarceration is another precondition to addressing global prison challenges, as such measures directly reduce prison populations.

Concrete measures may include: diversion or discharge, including conditional discharge, at the pretrial stage; status penalties, economic sanctions, restitution or compensation orders, suspended sentences, probation and judicial supervision, community sentence orders, house arrest or any other form of non-institutional treatment, at the trial stage; and halfway houses or various forms of parole and pardoning schemes, at the post-sentencing stage; as well as treatment measures for offenders with drug use disorders at various stages of their contact with the justice system.

While a proper balance needs to be struck between the rights of victims, the rights of offenders and the need for public safety, the potential of non-custodial measures has not been fully realized in many Member States.

For various categories of offences and offenders, non-custodial measures can be more effective in reducing the risk of reoffending, as they can support rehabilitation in the community. Given the significant cost of imprisonment, even in low-resourced prison settings, non-custodial measures tend to be more cost-effective, enabling resources to be invested in social, welfare and health services with long-term benefits for communities at large. As they prevent the unnecessary exposure to the harmful impact of incarceration, alternatives are also a more proportionate and humane criminal justice response, in appropriate cases.

Prior to any decision to expand prison capacity, States that are confronted with prison overcrowding should first explore and exhaust opportunities to reduce the prison population,

and then conduct a comprehensive and realistic assessment of remaining needs.

The United Nations system will give priority to assisting Member States in moving towards appropriate depenalization and the enhanced use of alternatives to incarceration at all stages of the administration of criminal justice, in compliance with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules on Non-custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules).

This approach will be pursued in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, including governments, legislators, judges, prosecutors, the police, lawyers, legal aid providers, social service providers and civil society. Analysing the composition and characteristics of the national prison population will provide key insights into predominant crime types and overrepresented categories of offenders for whom the deprivation of liberty may be unsuitable or disproportionate.

While they are typically less resource intensive than incarceration, non-custodial measures nevertheless require sufficient physical infrastructure and resources, including for probation and parole agencies, social services and civil society organizations, in order to be functional and effective.

The United Nations system will support Member States in building the capacity of criminal justice, social welfare and other agencies that supervise and support offenders who are subject to community-based sanctions or measures.

Given the particularly harmful impact of incarceration on women, additional consideration should be given to gender-

responsive prison design, management practices and non-custodial measures for women offenders, taking into account their specific circumstances, the often non-violent nature of the offences they commit and any wrongful criminalization, including with regard to bodily autonomy and access to sexual and reproductive health.

The United Nations will advocate for consistent gender analysis and responsiveness in all policies, laws and practices concerning incarceration and the broader criminal justice system, in line with the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules).

Prisons and the resort to imprisonment strongly reflect societal inequalities and discrimination. Particular vigilance is therefore required to ensure that persons who belong to minority groups and who are in contact with the law, whether they are suspected, accused or convicted of criminal offences, whether they are detained or imprisoned, or whether they are victims or witnesses of crime, are protected from all forms of discrimination.

The United Nations system will advocate for criminal justice and prison systems that are free from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including by ensuring that recruitment into public employment within criminal justice systems reflects the diversity of the population, including minority groups.

The best interests of children should be a priority in all actions that affect them. In the case of child offenders, all efforts should be made to resort to diversion, other noncustodial measures and restorative justice, regardless of their alleged

associations and offences. Any alternative dispositions should ensure that children are dealt with in a manner that is appropriate to their circumstances and the nature of their offences. A child deprived of liberty should be held separately from adults, unless it is in the child's best interest not to do so.

The United Nations system will advocate for the principle that children should only be deprived of their liberty as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate time period, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Because of the number of criminal justice institutions it would involve, reducing the overuse and excessive length of pretrial detention is one of the most complex challenges to be addressed. Reform efforts need to be aimed at ensuring fairness, efficiency and effectiveness at all stages of the criminal justice process, including investigation, prosecution and adjudication. In order to address procedural delays, case backlogs and miscarriages of justice, it is crucial to build the capacity of criminal justice actors, improve inter-agency cooperation, simplify and speed up criminal justice procedures and improve data management systems and other infrastructure, at the same time ensuring transparency and accountability.

The right of suspects and defendants to have access to legal representation and advice is also important for guaranteeing fair trials that meet the requirements of international law. This should include timely access to legal advice at no cost where the person has no means and where the interests of justice so require. Early access to effective legal aid, including in police custody and pretrial detention, is key to ensuring that detainees are able to effectively challenge the basis for their detention early on, that proceedings are fair and that

the rights of detainees and prisoners are respected. Access to legal services has also proved to be a key safeguard against torture and ill-treatment.

The United Nations system will assist Member States in restricting the use of pretrial detention to narrowly prescribed circumstances through criminal justice reform targeting legislation and access to effective legal aid and affordable bail, as well as the efficiency of national criminal justice systems, guided by the principles of fairness and due process.

This objective will be embedded in efforts to promote proportionate and individualized sentencing that takes into account the nature, gravity and circumstances of the offence, as well as the background of the offender, and that ensures proper consideration of diversion and other noncustodial measures.

In the case of persons with drug use disorders, the approach will also be aimed at increasing access to evidence-based and voluntary drug treatment, as well as to other health services at the community level. Not only is such an approach supported by clear evidence that health-oriented approaches are the most effective in reducing drug use and the social harm that it causes, but it is also in full compliance with the international drug control conventions.

The phenomenon of drug use disorders is a public health concern that requires evidence-based responses that are health-centred and in line with ethical standards.

The United Nations system will support reform efforts aimed at ensuring proportionate and individualized sentencing policies and alternatives to conviction

or punishment in appropriate cases, including for minor drug-related offences. It will equally advocate for the decriminalization of acts that are protected by international human rights law.

Strengthening Prison Management and Improving Prison Conditions

The mission of all prison services is to keep prisoners in safe and secure custody, while treating them with respect for their human dignity. Constituting the minimum conditions accepted as suitable by the United Nations, the revised United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) have led to a renewed momentum in prison reform efforts worldwide, and form the basis for United Nations support. The Nelson Mandela Rules promote a human rights-based approach to prison management that places the human dignity of prisoners at centre stage and outlines what is generally accepted as being good principles and practice in the treatment of prisoners and prison management.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which at the time of writing had been ratified by 91 Member States, establishes a system of regular visits to places of deprivation of liberty in order to prevent torture and ill-treatment at the national level. The visits are undertaken by the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and by so-called national preventive mechanisms, which are independent national bodies that States parties are required to establish in accordance with the Optional Protocol.

The United Nations system will align its prison reform support with four thematic priority areas that encapsulate the prerequisites for sound and humane prison management in line with the Nelson Mandela Rules and other relevant international norms and standards.

Thematic Priority 1.

Conditions of Incarceration

Thematic priority 1, on conditions of incarceration, relates to the overall quality of accommodation, sanitation, and hygiene, and the provision of basic services, as well as rehabilitation opportunities, including humane and gender-responsive prison infrastructure that supports a decent and constructive prison environment. Prison conditions constitute a key aspect of the overall quality of prison life and the human dignity of prisoners. The responsibility of Member States to provide for prisoners' basic needs and well-being cannot be conditional on the material resources available in those States or be "outsourced" to the prisoners' families.

In addition, prisoners need to have access to health services free of charge and of a standard of quality at least as high as that applicable in the community. These should include psychological support and sexual and reproductive health care, as well as access to essential medicines. Such access is particularly important for prisoners, as they often have poorer physical and mental health than the general public. In line with the universal right to health, prison health services need to be in a position to provide for the health-care needs of prisoners, including needs of a gender-specific nature. Health-care professionals in prisons must be guided by the same ethical and professional standards as those applicable to patients in the community.

Good health in prisons also benefits public health outcomes and the prevention of recidivism, as many drivers of criminal behaviour, such as drug use or mental health disorders, are related to health.

Thematic Priority 2.

Human Rights Safeguards for Prisoners

Human rights safeguards for prisoners are crucial for ensuring the integrity, transparency and accountability of prison management. Prison sentences punish offenders through the deprivation of their liberty alone and must not involve additional hardships or abuse. Concrete mechanisms to counter the vulnerabilities that stem from closed prison environments, including the unequal power relationship between prison officers and prisoners, are required to ensure safety for all and at all times.

Furthermore, adequate information for prisoners on their rights and obligations, an accessible, safe and effective complaints system, the access of prisoners to legal aid and regular independent inspections of prisons are all essential to mitigating the risks of corruption and abuse inherent in prison systems and ensuring the absolute prohibition of torture and ill-treatment.

Certain groups will require particular attention, owing to the specific needs they have in prisons or to the heightened risk of discrimination and abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence, to which they may be exposed by prisoners or prison staff. Categories to which particular attention needs to be paid include: women; children; young people; the elderly, including those with terminal illness; prisoners with disabilities; prisoners with chronic diseases or mental health-care needs;

foreign prisoners; prisoners belonging to ethnic minorities or indigenous peoples; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex prisoners; prisoners serving life sentences; and prisoners under sentence of death.

Many of these prisoners are in a situation of vulnerability attributable to more than one cause (a concept referred to as intersectionality), thus they may suffer as a result of their existing special needs, which may be intensified in prison, and as a result of the additional risks they face, stemming from their particular status.

Thematic Priority 3

Security and Safety

Safety and security are core elements of prison systems that require the significant attention of prison managers. In this regard, related prison management practices, such as the classification of prisoners according to individually assessed risks and needs, corresponding sentence plans and the prisoners' subsequent allocation to a suitable prison regime, are indispensable prerequisites. Such practices also serve to ensure that prison planning and design matches the actual profile of the prison population.

More broadly, evidence has demonstrated the value of investing in the concept of dynamic security, which involves fostering professional and positive prisoner-staff relations, ensuring adequate ratios between prisoners and staff, diverting the energy of prisoners into constructive activities and establishing a decent and balanced prison regime.

A particular challenge for prison systems has been offenders who are members of crime syndicates or who enter prisons with extensive organized crime contacts already at their

disposal. In cases involving such offenders, ineffective security and safety measures are likely to facilitate their continued involvement in crime and the exercise of undue control and influence vis-à-vis prison officers and prisoners alike.

More recently, the increasing inflow of individuals charged with or convicted for terrorism-related offences has highlighted the risk of violent extremism in prisons, including radicalization to violence and related recruitment efforts. These serious threats must be addressed, as called for by the Security Council.

At the same time, prison security is an area prone to abuse. Implementing legitimate security measures in line with international norms and standards, including in relation to human rights and the use of force, is therefore essential.

Thematic Priority 4.

Organizational Culture

The organizational culture in prison services greatly influences how the overall principles governing prison management are translated into practice. Where and how prisons are administered within government plays an important role in this regard.

In order to ensure a strict separation between law enforcement or military entities, on the one hand, and the agency in charge of the implementation of prison sentences, on the other, the existence of a civilian prison system with professional prison staff is key. Depending on the national context and the access to sufficient resources, this may include placing the responsibility for prisons with the Ministry of Justice or a similar government department. For similar reasons, it is preferable to place the responsibility for health services in

prisons under the Ministry of Health or to at least ensure a close relationship between prison health-care services and public health authorities.

An enhanced investment in the most important resource of a prison system, namely, its personnel, is crucial in this regard. Supporting an ethos and self-perception among prison officers, including senior management, that they are not merely guards or wardens, but rather agents for change, can help to harmonize legitimate security requirements with those of rehabilitation and reform. Improved recruitment processes, workplace policies and conditions, career opportunities, tailored training and staff support infrastructure are the key to enabling them to fulfil their complex and multifaceted tasks. Such efforts should be complemented by an enhanced public acknowledgement of the “social service of great importance” provided by prison personnel.

International minimum prison standards, such as the Nelson Mandela Rules, clearly require that prisons be managed by professional prison staff that have civil service status. A contrary decision to privatize prison management does not exonerate States from their responsibility to guarantee prisoners’ human rights and their duty of care towards prisoners. Effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms that protect prisoners’ rights should be in place. Furthermore, it should be noted that there appears to be no solid data or conclusive evidence that would suggest that privatized prisons are characterized by enhanced cost-effectiveness.

Advancing the Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration of Offenders

Incarceration, by itself, does not have a reformative effect. On the contrary, it exacerbates many of the challenges

faced by individuals who have come into conflict with the law. In addition, long or harsh prison sentences may result in so-called institutionalization, which affects prisoners' personalities and social and life skills in a way that makes their social reintegration even more difficult.

In line with the Nelson Mandela Rules, the United Nations system will promote a rehabilitative approach to prison management that fosters the willingness and ability of prisoners to lead law-abiding and self-supporting lives upon release, and that is embedded in a decent, safe and healthy prison environment and the positive engagement of officers with prisoners.

Since the vast majority of prisoners will eventually return to society, such an approach is a precondition for fulfilling the ultimate purpose of prison sentences: to protect society from crime. Rehabilitation and security are often seen as opposites, however, on the contrary, a rehabilitative prison environment enhances safety and control inside prisons, as prisoners who are involved in constructive and meaningful activities are easier to manage and less prone to violence.

Dedicated programs should be designed to address the root causes of offending and enhance the social reintegration prospects of prisoners upon release in accordance with their individual treatment needs. Such needs may include education; vocational training and work experience; counselling; physical and mental health care, including psychological support; treatment for substance use disorders, cognitive-behavioural therapy, life skills training and family-oriented programming for incarcerated parents. Access to constructive activities should equally include physical exercise and sports, and spiritual, cultural and recreational programs.

Women prisoners should not only have equal access to rehabilitation and social reintegration programs, but also be offered gender-responsive programs that address their specific backgrounds, needs and perspectives without being limited to stereotypical activities considered “suitable” for women.

Many of the above-mentioned activities require suitable prison infrastructure, which is often lacking. Prison facilities should have sufficient space and capacity to maximize prisoners’ daily access to related services. In addition, rehabilitative prison regimes also include opportunities for the early, conditional or compassionate release of prisoners, subject to their behaviour, progress and circumstances and in line with institutionalized reviews provided for in national legislation.

The rehabilitation and social reintegration of prisoners is a societal task that cannot be fulfilled by prison services alone. More than any other aspect of prison management, this is an area for which the support of relevant government entities – complemented by the active involvement of civil society – is critical. Such cross-institutional cooperation ensures that services are provided in accordance with the standards applicable for similar services in the community, and are continued in the community upon release, as required.

More broadly, this approach mitigates the isolation of prisons from the outside world and contributes to the normalization of prisons vis-à-vis the community, minimizing, as much as possible, the differences between prison life and life at liberty. The approach is also important for preventing any prison-based scheme purported to be rehabilitative from becoming exploitative or afflictive in nature. The rationale for rehabilitation programs must be to enhance social reintegration prospects as per in line with individually assessed risks and needs, and in consultation with the prisoner concerned.

The United Nations system will promote an all-of-government approach to the rehabilitation of prisoners and offenders, in close coordination with civil society. It will not support any program that is exploitative or primarily geared towards making a profit from prison industries, compulsory treatment or purported re-education programs that run counter to human rights or medical ethics.

The transition period from incarceration to liberty and the period immediately following release are critical and difficult for all prisoners. Social reintegration support must therefore not end at the prison gate but instead ensure a continuity of care, including for physical and mental health-related matters. Even the best prison-based rehabilitation program will be undermined if former prisoners find themselves without any post-release support (or supervision, where applicable). Community-based support services are equally important for offenders subject to non-custodial measures.

The United Nations system will support inter-agency arrangements to prepare prisoners for their social reintegration in order to facilitate their gradual and carefully accompanied return to society, coupled with efforts to reduce the stigma associated with being a former detainee or offender.

Public attitudes towards prisoners and offenders play an important role in reducing the risk of their return to crime. Reducing recidivism requires efforts to prepare the community, including potential employers, to receive former prisoners and offenders and to reduce the severe stigma typically associated with offending. This can include political support, awareness-raising, multiagency collaboration, incentives and the active engagement of civil society, coupled with efforts to ensure

that victims of crime are not afforded less support and fewer resources for their recovery and welfare.

Directions for Action

Ensure that the Topic of Incarceration Remains High on the Political Agenda

The United Nations system recognizes that the response of Member States to crime, including by means of incarceration, is intrinsically linked to human rights, equality, public safety, security, health, sustainable development and public trust in the fairness and effectiveness of criminal justice systems. It equally acknowledges, however, that enhanced efforts are required to sensitize policymakers and the general public to the issue of incarceration and its impact.

The United Nations system will therefore work to ensure that incarceration and its overuse remain high on the political agenda, including as part of the discussions relating to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights. This will include advocacy for the core principles and safeguards by which incarceration should be governed. Regular thematic meetings and debates in relevant intergovernmental bodies will be actively encouraged and supported.

Priority attention will be paid to building on existing platforms in which Member States are already engaged, such as the Group of Friends of Corrections in Peace Operations (New York) and the Group of Friends of the Nelson Mandela Rules (Vienna). Consultations among Member States through these processes and other multilateral mechanisms will foster the exchange of promising practices, provide policy coherence and create opportunities to address emerging challenges.

Enhance United Nations Advocacy Efforts in Support of Member States

In order to alleviate global prison challenges and generate tangible positive change, the United Nations system will intensify its advocacy efforts at the international, regional and national levels to support Member States in addressing those challenges. Depending on the country context concerned, priority objectives will include the following:

Pretrial detention and imprisonment are restricted to measures of last resort and are embedded in a variety of noncustodial measures that can serve as effective alternatives.

- > Legislative and policy amendments lead to proportionate and individualized sentencing and the decriminalization of acts that are protected by international human rights law.
- > Gender analysis and responsiveness are consistently applied in all policies, laws and practices concerning incarceration and the broader criminal justice system.
- > Procedural bottlenecks in criminal justice systems and other deficiencies that contribute to delays and overcrowding are identified and effectively addressed.
- > The access of alleged offenders and sentenced prisoners to legal advice, assistance and representation, including through legal aid, is guaranteed at all stages of the criminal justice process.
- > Drug use and drug use disorders are acknowledged as a public health concern that require, above all, evidence-based and health-centred responses in the community, as opposed to incarceration.

- > Prison conditions and infrastructure and the treatment of prisoners are in line with human rights and are consistently aimed at strengthening the social reintegration prospects of prisoners, all the while ensuring safe and secure custody.
- > Compliance with international norms and standards related to prison management and the treatment of prisoners, including the Nelson Mandela Rules and the Bangkok Rules, is monitored and enhanced, and efforts are undertaken to promote the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- > Such compliance and related efforts are recognized as also constituting a fundamental basis for the effective management of high-risk prisoners and for countering the risk of radicalization to violence in prisons.
- > Rehabilitation and health services in prisons are integrated, as much as possible, in the corresponding public systems, and are provided at a similar standard as in the community.
- > The buy-in of all relevant stakeholders and the general public to the societal task of supporting the rehabilitation and social reintegration of offenders is promoted as a key contributor to public safety.
- > Lessons learned from the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 in prisons are translated into a renewed impetus for comprehensive penal reform, including sustainable strategies to reduce prison populations.

With regard to entry-points for advocacy, it is important to note that, in 2015, the General Assembly decided to extend the scope of Nelson Mandela International Day (18 July) to promote humane conditions of imprisonment, to raise

awareness of prisoners being a continuous part of society and to value the work of prison staff as a social service of particular importance.

In the light of the invitation of the General Assembly to organizations of the United Nations system to celebrate the occasion in an appropriate manner, attention will be paid to organizing awareness-raising campaigns and other events on this particular day.

Strengthen United Nations Capacity to Respond to Requests for Assistance

Strengthened United Nations capacity will enable the United Nations system to better support countries that lack the expertise and resources to address incarceration-related challenges. Given the increasing number of requests from Member States for advisory services and technical support in the fields of prison reform and penal reform, strong and well-coordinated United Nations capacity will play a vital role in responding to such requests in a timely, effective and consistent manner.

High-level advocacy aimed at the principal organs and subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Secretariat, as well as at Member States, including host countries and donors, is required to ensure sustained engagement in this area.

Closely guided by the present common position, the United Nations system will leverage the specialized expertise of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Department of Peace Operations and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), working in close coordination with other relevant United Nations entities.

As part of the United Nations rule of law arrangement, the senior United Nations official in-country will assist in building political consensus at the country level on the need to address prison challenges, in resolving political obstacles and in coordinating United Nations country support on the rule of law. United Nations resident coordinators, country teams and operations will work to ensure that the topic of incarceration and associated criminal justice challenges will be mainstreamed into sustainable development cooperation frameworks and, where applicable, integrated strategic frameworks, as an integral part of the overall technical assistance provided by the United Nations in the country.

The United Nations system will focus on delivering technical assistance that is consistent across all lead agencies, in order to harmonize efforts and with a view to generating sustainable change.

Establish a Centralized United Nations Information Hub on Incarceration

The United Nations system and its specialized entities continuously monitor, collect and analyse a variety of data and develop technical guidance manuals, training curricula and other tools and resources that include promising practices, all of which are highly relevant to informing prison and penal reform processes in Member States.

In an effort to consolidate and further enhance this wealth of expertise and to facilitate access by both United Nations entities and Member States, the United Nations system will work towards establishing a digital “one-stop-shop” on issues related to incarceration.

The United Nations will also seek to strengthen its research capacity and that of Member States to continuously assess the effectiveness, including the cost-effectiveness, efficiency and human rights compliance of criminal justice responses to crime, and to generate a solid evidence-base. With regard to the generation of data, the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems will be a priority source for relevant statistics and data analysis, complemented by the Health in Prisons European Database, as a source of health-related data.

Enhancing Prison Support in United Nations Field Missions and Other Crisis Settings

While safe, secure and humane prisons are critical to the efforts of United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions to sustain peace, support stabilization and protect civilians, prison reform tends to remain a low priority. More robust support from host countries and the international community to enable the United Nations to adequately respond to the issue of incarceration in these settings, including the explicit provision of corrections mandates for field missions and the allocation of sufficient resources, is critical and a collective responsibility.

United Nations support in field missions and other crisis settings will be strategically aimed at improving prison conditions, strengthening prison management and reducing the unnecessary use of incarceration, as part of the mission's broader peace and security objectives. Particular emphasis will be placed on the following measures:

- > Establishing, from the outset, stronger linkages and cooperation between police, justice and corrections authorities, and with security, development and humanitarian partners.

- > Advocating for and supporting adequate international and national investments in prison systems to ensure safe, secure and humane custody, complemented by community outreach strategies.
- > Addressing overincarceration, including the excessive use of pretrial detention, and fostering commitment at the national level to enhance the resort to noncustodial measures, including law reform and increased access to legal aid.

Ensuring accountability in the criminal justice system and the safe and secure custody of perpetrators of atrocity crimes, terrorist offences and other serious crimes that fuel armed conflict, including conflict-related sexual violence.

The Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law will serve as the main forum for United Nations inter-agency coordination on the rule of law in post-conflict and other crisis situations. The United Nations system will also ensure that efforts invested in supporting criminal justice systems, including prisons, are continued after the conclusion of field operations, so that the gains achieved are not reversed during and after mission transitions.

Strengthen Partnerships with International Organizations and Civil Society

The United Nations system will further strengthen its coordination and partnerships with international and civil society organizations, including women and youth-led organizations, as well as renowned research institutes, think tanks and local communities.

HOLY WARRIORS IN PRISONS

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Lini Sheeja MSC

To endure prison is to contend with our humanity. Whether in an overcrowded, unsanitary jail cell grappling for food, sleep and other basic necessities or in solitary confinement where one's own mind is even more entrapping than the actual steel bars, incarceration is an unimaginably shattering ordeal. It forces us to relentlessly confront a torrent of pain, suffering, trauma, doubts, sorrow, disbelief, anger and more. It is an onslaught that can be overcome only if we delve deep into our souls to find faith, courage, strength and hope to endure.

It is not easy to find our faith when we or our loved ones are in the darkness of imprisonment. Why do we suffer? Why are God's chosen ones allowed to suffer? When Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Lk 9:23), did he mean that we should suffer beyond our capacity? Are we called to follow this God who declared, "You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved" (Mt 10:22)? If we say yes to the Lord, are we to be imprisoned, mocked, insulted, tortured, tormented, flogged and even executed? Does this make us abandon the call of Jesus, who clearly asks us to journey with a cross? Or do we believe that God abandons us in our suffering, or that if there

is a God, there would be no suffering? Can we really believe this of a God who was born poor in a manger and spent his ministry in healing and outreach only to be wrongfully condemned and crucified to death?

The answers to these burning questions are found through the exemplary stories of innocent prisoners – little girls, men and women – that Sr Lini Sheeja MSC portrays in her book *Holy Warriors in Prisons*. Sr Lini is the former National Secretary of Prison Ministry India and has vast experience in the field of Social Work, where the weaker sections of humanity are still ill-treated, mocked and abused by those in power. Conveying the powerful message that no suffering will go in vain, she narrates how the featured holy warriors stood firm gazing at the crucified Lord in dark cells as they suffered for him and his people. Nothing separated them from Christ. In dark prison cells they saw beauty and radiance in suffering – an eternal gift to them by Jesus, our Saviour who conquered death and gained our redemption. For indeed, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?” (Rom 8:35).

The first story of *Holy Warriors in Prisons* is one which is most familiar – of Jesus Christ, whose life of service ended with the ignominy of a criminal’s death. He who did not condemn, went through a farcical trial, was made to carry the heavy cross to the place of his crucifixion, and his corpse was hurriedly buried in a borrowed tomb. Despite immense torment, Jesus died with open arms to embrace and lift up fallen, sinful humanity. His experience led to the growth of the discipleship, and in turn, the execution of his followers

led to the growth of the Church. Everyone who stood firm in their tribulations received glory. The crown of martyrdom by humanity led to the crown of glory by divinity.

Subsequent stories depict that suffering has meaning and growth. Jesus' followers were attacked by bears, leopards, and wild boars. Women were stripped to face a rabid heifer. A little girl named Agatha was stretched on a rack to be torn with iron hooks, burned with torches, and whipped. Quiteria was beheaded, she and her siblings being condemned by their own parents. Margaret Clitherow was blindfolded, stripped, bound, and laid on sharp rocks. A door from her own house was laid above her over which heavy weights till she was crushed to death. Young and pure Agnes was stripped naked and dragged through the streets to a brothel. These and the other holy warriors dedicated their lives to live and die for the Lord. Neither wild animals nor the sword nor brothel houses nor sharp rocks nor heated arrows could make them step back. Are we ready, as they were, for a surrender of the human to the divine?

The book *Holy Warriors in Prisons* is the 5th book of Sr Lini Sheeja MSC, who served as the former Chief-Editor of *Prison Voice*, the national monthly magazine. The book has the blessing and message by His Eminence Cardinal Poola Anthony, message by Most Rev Dr Anil J T Couto, Archbishop of Delhi, message by Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, PMI Cofounder, Bro Dr Pius Kizhakkebhagam CMSF, Former Superior General and foreword by Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva, PMI Chairman. The book also has the message of Emeritus Bishop Peter Remigius, PMI Former Chairman at the cover page. The book is very inspirational and it moves the hearts of the readers as the sufferings of the innocent prisoners' sufferings are portrayed. The innocent holy warriors whose

stories are depicted in the book did not let go their sufferings in vain, but they glorified God through it. The innocents continue to suffer and glorify God even in our world of today.

The book *Holy Warriors in Prisons* invites us to gather in our hearts the thousands of innocent prisoners and undertrials languishing behind bars and ask ourselves what we can do for them. What can we do for people like Vishnu Tiwari who was only 23 when a trial court sentenced him to life imprisonment? Convicted of rape and with no means to hire better lawyers, he could only repeatedly assert time and again that he had not committed the crime. After twenty years, during which every member of his family died, he was declared innocent by the Allahabad High Court. Let us stand for justice so that such suffering is never in vain.

Over 300,000 people are jailed in Indian prisons without being found guilty via the court system. The numbers of actual convicts are lesser than the people who are thrown behind bars without trial. There are nearly 21 million criminal cases pending for ten years, 300,000 cases pending for twenty years, and 54,886 cases pending for more than thirty years. In 2017, without any given conviction, 77,000 people were imprisoned in India for more than one year, whilst 4,876 people were forsaken there for more than five years. According to a recent survey, an estimated 10,000 persons are wrongly convicted of serious crimes each year. Far too often, criminals go scot-free and innocent people, many a time Dalits, tribals, the illiterate, the mentally challenged, are made scapegoats instead.

Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva

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Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

Introduction

Michel Foucault in his *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* wrote: “Prison is hell for the majority, but salvation for the few”. Prison Ministry India has been experiencing the same in the past 40 years: salvation of thousands of prisoners. *Prison Voice* is a collection of articles which Fr Francis wrote in *Prison Voice* magazine in its Coordinators Desk column from June 2019 to May 2022. This book is structured in five parts besides foreword and acknowledgements: Prisoners, Prison Ministry India, PMI Spirituality, Reformed Prisoners and Role-models for Prison Ministry. Fr Francis received the unique call within his call in 1981 to search, serve and save prisoners. After 40 years of service to the incarcerated he proudly says that India has steadily been improving in handling prisoners with humane, providing them basic facilities and respecting their human rights. What Fyodor Dostoyevsky said in *The House of the Dead* is true: “The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons.” Fr Francis’ encounters with the brethren behind bars reminds him of the poem *To Althea, from Prison* of Richard Lovelace: “Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage. Minds innocent and quiet take that for a hermitage. If I have freedom in my love and in my soul am free. Angels alone, that soar above, enjoy such liberty”.

Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

Prison Voice illustrates the immense Divine Providence experiences and blessings Fr Francis has been enjoying in the past 40 years of prison ministry. The rapid progress of Prison Ministry India is visible through this book. *Prison Voice* the 15th book of Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, the PMI cofounder, Secretary to Catholic Bishops Conference of India's Desk to Prison Ministry and its national coordinator, demonstrates profoundly the extent of hard work he does every day. This book is a proof of all that were done by PMI, especially Fr Francis' initiative and dreams in searching, serving and saving the lost. Through the diverse ministries of PMI many brethren behind bars could enjoy a dignified life especially through projects like prisoners' release, housing scheme for released prisoners, scholarship scheme for prisoners' children, provision scheme for prisoners' families and other ways and means for the integral human development of prisoners.

Prison Voice

Prison Voice provides an outline of the concepts and tangible works done with the initiative and creative methods used in rebuilding the lives of prisoners especially through the Ruby Jubilee Projects. The first section of this book speaks about 'Prisoners' and gives a holistic view of the innocent prisoners and serial killers and their integral human development. The second part of the book goes into great detail about the birth of Prison Ministry in India through God's great instrumentality in the persons of Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS and Fr Varghese Karipperry. It primarily speaks about the divine interventions in the history of PMI and in the lives of the incarcerated and illustrates the holistic approaches taken for this ministry. The third section is on PMI Spirituality. With God we are heroes and without God we are zeros. It was Fr

Francis' initiative to launch the Incessant Intercessory Prayer for the Incarcerated 24/7, Burning Bush Spiritual Banquet, Jericho Prayer and Special Task Forces for the renewal and reintegration of worldwide prisoners.

Prisoners' Reintegration

The fourth section focuses on reformed prisoners. Rehabilitation and reintegration may occur gradually, as in the case of paroled inmates, inmates completing their term of punishments in halfway homes, and serving the final part of their sentence in home confinement. Alternatively, reintegration may occur immediately as in the case of sentence expiration that refers to the situation of a person who has served the entirety of his or her maximum sentence behind bars. The reintegration process involves substantial conscious lifestyle changes that are complicated and difficult. Such a process is done in our PMI rehabilitation centres. Pope Francis said, "Many times society, through legalistic and inhumane decisions, justified by an alleged search for good and security, seeks in the isolation and detention of those who act against social norms, the ultimate solution to the problems of community life".

The Pope lamented that large amounts of public resources are allocated to suppressing offenders instead of truly seeking the promotion of the integral development of people, which reduces the circumstances that encourage committing illegal acts. "It is easier and comfortable to suppress than to educate, to deny the injustice present in society and to create these spaces for shutting off transgressors into oblivion than to offer equal opportunities for development to all citizens." He voiced this in the educated way of discarding persons.

Pope Francis noted that places of detention often fail to promote reintegration into society because they lack sufficient resources and also because of frequent overcrowding which turns prisons into real places of what he called, “depersonalisation”. On the contrary, real social reintegration, he said, starts by guaranteeing opportunities for development, education, decent work, access to healthcare, as well as generating public spaces for civic participation. The Pope urged today’s society to overcome the stigmatization of someone who has made a mistake because, he said, “instead of offering help and adequate resources to live a dignified life, we are accustomed to discarding the person rather than making efforts for him or her to return to the love of God in his or her life.” “Often”, he said, “a person leaving prison faces an alien world that does not recognize him or her as trustworthy, denying him or her the possibility of working for a dignified livelihood. With these people who are prevented from regaining the full exercise of their dignity, the Pope warned that they are once again exposed to the dangers of the lack of development opportunities in the midst of violence and insecurity. The Holy Father said that these prisoners, who have already served their sentences for the evil committed, should not be subject to a new social punishment with rejection and indifference. Such aversion, he warned, exposes them to falling back to the same mistakes.

Conclusion

Most warmly I congratulate Rev Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS for publishing his 15th book, *Prison Voice*. I have never read such a pertinent and inspiring book on caring of prisoners, a section neglected by family and society. It is an excellent book and a great gift to PMI.

Sr Amala DC

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