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REFORMATIVE EXPLORATIONS

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

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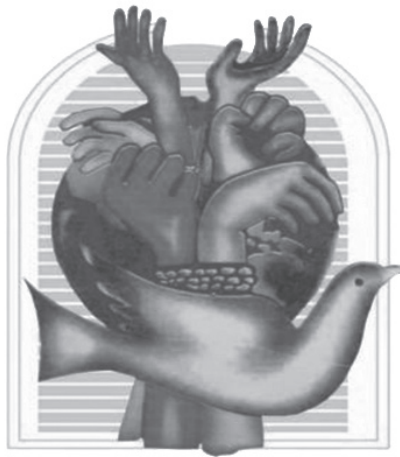
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Editorial correspondence is to be addressed to the Editor, Reformative Explorations, Prison Ministry India, 52 Thomas Layout, Sarjapura Road, Carmelaram, Bangalore – 560 035, Karnataka, India; Tel.: +91 9447710488; E-Mail: nationalpmi2015@gmail.com; www.prisonministryindia.org

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Contents

Editorial

- **The Art of Discernment of Spirits.....4**
Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

Articles

- **Prison Reform and Correctional
Administration in India18**
Suroochi
- **In Conflict with the Law: Barriers to the Rights of
Arrestees and Convicts in India31**
Alrex Romer and Anandita Dulloo
- **Restorative Justice in Brazil: The Educational
Method of APAC Prisons.....36**
Francesco Occhetta SJ
- **Human Trafficking - Facts and Figures45**
Sr Lini Sheeja MSC
- **From Death to a New Life.....50**
Sr Adele Korah SCCG

REFORMATION & REINTEGRATION

- **Children: Wounded and Broken.....56**
Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

- **The Story of My Conversion:
Looking Love in All the Wrong Places.....**63
Dale S. Recinella
- **Transform Prison Life in 2 Simple Steps.....**71
Benedict Savarimuthu
- **Afshin Javid: Strange Encounter in Prison**75
Sr Lini Sheeja MSC
- **He Was a Teen when Cops Branded
Him ‘the Devil’** 79
Nicole O’Reilly

DOCUMENTATION

- **Prison Ministry India: Report 2022-2023.....**95
Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS
- **Rights of Prisoners: Handbook on
Prisoner File Management**112
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

BOOK REVIEW

- **Left to Tell: Discovering God
Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust.....**136
Immaculee Ilibagiza and Steve Erwin
- **Prison Ministry India Publications.....**139
Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

THE ART OF DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

INTRODUCTION

The art of discernment has been central to my priestly and religious life. It has been you'll a divine assistance in my apostolate towards the renewal and rehabilitation of the prisoners and the prostitutes. Experience proves that it is not only pivotal to my life and apostolate but also to every Christian's. Although I have been practising the art of discernment since 1979 and have been very happy about my discernments, I have never made a serious scientific study on it. Because of that there used to be some obscurity and lack of clarity in certain aspects of discernment especially when dealing with consolation, desolation and spiritual combat. The goal of the present study is to have better clarification on the process of decision making, consolation, desolation and spiritual combat. In other words, it is an attempt to find answers to the questions what is discernment? and how is discernment? As the source books I have used mainly on the *Spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, the master of discernment, *Being in Love* of William Johnston, *Weeds Among the Wheat* of Thomas H. Green and the writings of Robert Faricy. In this elaboration I would be focusing only on personal discernment rather than communal.

Definition

The ordinary usage of the term "discern" involves both perceiving, distinguishing and judging. In the case of discernment of the spirits both perception and judgement are important. It is our feelings that we distinguish and evaluate in spiritual

discernment. Thomas Green says that the feelings are the raw material for the discernment. It is a process of naming, claiming, taming, and aiming the feelings, the different movements within the soul¹. Robert Faricy defines spiritual discernment as a prayerful process by which one examines, through love and in the light of faith, the nature of his\her experience: does this particular impulse or idea or plan or project or word come from the Lord or not? Is it from the Spirit of Jesus or from some other source?². It involves prayerfully bringing to the light the decisions that our life calls on us to make and seeing which way the Spirit leads us to decide - to see which is the voice of the Holy Spirit and which is not of the Holy Spirit³. Discernment enables one to walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2,6) and to walk in the light (1 John 1,7). It is choosing the way of light of Jesus Christ rather than the way of darkness and choosing prayerfully the concrete here and now options that came from his Spirit and that lead to him. The aim of discernment is to know what God is asking in some particular set of circumstances. Faricy says that discernment involves a kind of loving thinking with God, an affective “turning in” on God’s wave-length in the prayerful consideration of particular decisions to be made, of particular lines of actions to be followed out⁴.

John R. Sheets describes it as “With the help of prayer, purification and spiritual direction one attempts to sift out the various movements to see what is genuinely prompted by the Holy Spirit from what is alien, in order to come to a decision in accord with the Spirit”⁵. Quoting John Climacus M. J. Buckley says: “Discernment in beginners is true knowledge

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- 1 Cfr. T. G. Green, *Weeds Among the Wheat*, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana: 1984, 22.
 - 2 Cfr. R. Faricy, *Seeking Jesus in Contemplation and Discernment*, Christian Classics, Maryland: 1967, 69.
 - 3 Cfr. R. Faricy, *Praying*, SCM Press, London: 1983, 26.
 - 4 Cfr. R. Faricy, "Jesuit community: community of prayer" *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 8, 1976, 129.
 - 5 J. R. Sheets, "Profile of the Spirit: A Theology of Discernment of Spirits", *Review for Religious*, 30, 1971, 363.

of themselves; in intermediate souls it is spiritual sense that faultlessly distinguishes what is truly good from what is of nature and opposed to it; and in the perfect, it is the knowledge which they possess by divine illumination, and which can enlighten with its lamp what is dark in others”⁶. It seems to me that a distinctive feature of the Ignatian discernment is its extraordinary awareness of the inner movements of the psyche. In this it resembles much modern psychology, particularly that of people like Carl Roger.

Biblical Foundation

Though the expression discernment of spirits appears in the New Testament only in the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor 12,10) and in the first letter of John (1 John 4,1) the whole Bible is the lived experience of discernment. While the Old Testament speaks of the discernments made by the Patriarchs, Judges, Kings and Prophets the New Testament Speaks of the discernments made by Jesus, the first disciples and the early Christian Church. Thomas Green says that the discernment of Jesus was infallible because Jesus’ discernment was unerring since He was totally open to the Spirit⁷. Paul lists discernment of spirits along with some other charisms. “There are varieties of charisms but the same spirit” (1 Cor 12,4-7). He includes in it the capacity to distinguish between the spirits (1 Cor 12,10)⁸. Every Christian is to be guided by the Spirit (Gal 5,18; Rom 8,14). God touches the heart of men through the illumination of his Holy Spirit. Quoting Pope Leo XIII, K. V. Truhlar says that the Holy Spirit admonishes and invites and without his speaking and rousing there is neither a beginning made along the way of virtue, nor progress, nor attainment of

6 M. J. Buckley, "Discernment of Spirits" in M. DOWNEY, Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota: 1993, 278.

7 Cfr. T. H. Green, Weeds Among the Wheat, 47.

8 The other Bible references to the discernment of spirits may be seen in the following passages. Gen 4,5; 1 Kgs 19,9-13; Jer 21, 8; Isa 11,2-3; Matt 1,18-20; 25,14-46; 27,24-25; Luke 1, 35,41; 2,26; John 8,29,33-34; Rom 8,1-14,26; 1 Cor 12,3-10; 13,3; Phil 1,9-11; Eph 5,8-10; Gal 5,16,25;

everlasting salvation⁹. But evil forces are also active within men, disguised as an angel of light (2 Cor 11,14). This is the reason for the admonition of St. John, “beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God” (1 John 4,1). This is the capacity for the discernment of spirits, which St. Paul includes under “charisms” (1 Cor 12,10).

Love

Love is the basis of discernment¹⁰. The discernment of spirits is always in and through love, the love that poured in to my heart through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5,5). Discernment is judgement based on knowledge through love. Faricy quotes the example of the Church of Corinth. Though they had the gifts of the Holy Spirit they lacked love, lacking love they lacked discernment (1 Cor 13). The contribution of William Johnston to the theory and practise of discernment is the idea of *Be in Love*. He says “when love is the leading voice in your psyche you are the follower of Jesus Christ, totally committed to the Gospel”¹¹. Love calls down the Holy Spirit, who comes to dwell in you, to guide you, to direct you. Here St. John of the Cross with his “the blind stirring of love and the living flame of love” comes to his assistance.

Charism

Charism is a special gift or grace that has three characteristics. 1) It is not given to everyone but only to some people. 2) It is a gift of service for some useful purpose (1 Cor 12,7) for building up the Body of Christ. 3) It is a special relationship with the Lord¹². The first letter of Paul to Corinthians shows that discernment of the spirits is a charism. It is the charism, the ability to distinguish between spirits (1 Cor 12,10). The

9 Cfr. K.V. TruhlaR, "Discernment of Spirits" in K. Rahner (ed), *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. 2, Theological Publications in India, Bangalore: 1978, 89.

10 R. Faricy, *The Contemplative Way of Prayer* .. 50-53.

11 W. Johnston, *Being in Love*, 152.

12 Cfr. R. Faricy, *Seeking Jesus*, 66.

charism of the discernment of the spirits is the special gift of grace given to some persons enabling them to tell what things or words or manifestations come from the Holy spirit, and what does not come from the Holy Spirit but, perhaps, comes from evil spirits¹³. Thus discernment of the spirits is a charism which only few receive from the Holy Spirit. Yet everyone is called to use the discernment of spirits in one's daily life in a more general way.

Gift

Discernment is a gift. It is like a sixth sense. Johnston says: "Holy men and women will sniff the air and say: yes, the spirit of God is here; or no, no, this is not it"¹⁴. New Testament speaks it as a gift for all Christians. Those who have the charism will be stronger in the discernment of spirits than those who do not. The first letter of John shows that discernment is a gift offered to all. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, to see if they are of God" (1 John 4,1). According to Thomas Green discernment is a gift, not primarily the fruit of personal effort, but God's gift to those who love and are loved by him¹⁵.

Art

Discernment is not only a charism and gift but also it is an art. Faricy says: "Discernment is a grace and an art"¹⁶. As art can be learned discernment is also to be learned. Since it is attending to our own inner movements, feelings and the mystical stirrings that work in the depth of our being it is by experience only that we learn better to listen to the Holy Spirit. Thomas Green says: "In essence discernment is an art, not a science; it is learned by doing, by trial and error"¹⁷.

13 Cfr. R. Faricy, *Seeking Jesus*, 67.

14 W. Johnston, *Being in Love*, 153.

15 Cfr. T. G. Green, *Weeds Among the Wheat*, 22.

16 R. Faricy, *Seeking Jesus*, 65.

17 T. H. Green, *Weeds Among the Wheat*, 22.

Consolation

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius of Loyola outlines his classic “Rules for the Discernment of Spirits”. In fact, the whole *Spiritual Exercises* can be interpreted as a process of discernment. According to him consolation indicates any movement of affectivity toward God. He calls it consolation when the soul is aroused by an interior movement which causes it to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord, and consequently can love no created thing on the face of the earth for its own sake, but only in the creator of all things. He says that it is consolation, when one sheds tears inspired by love of the Lord, whether it be sorrow for sins or because of the Passion of Christ our Lord, or for any other reason that is directly connected to His service and praise. Finally, for him, any increase of faith, hope, and charity and any interior joy that calls and attracts to heavenly things, and to the salvation of one’s soul, inspiring it with peace and quiet in Christ our Lord is consolation¹⁸. Consolation is a feeling of fittingness, a rightness, a consistent peace, an interior harmony, a real joy and gladness of heart. It belongs to God to bring true happiness and spiritual joy to the soul. It belongs to God alone to give consolation to the soul without previous cause. When a cause has preceded, both the good and the evil angel may console the soul but for different purposes. The action of the good angel is gentle, light and sweet as a drop of water entering a sponge. The words, St. Ignatius uses, to explain consolation, are the words of ‘feeling’. It is the feeling that we discern and not the thoughts. But can we trust our feelings? Aren’t they notoriously tricky and deceptive? Thomas green says that feelings are essential to our spiritual life and to our discovery of God’s will for us. At the same time feelings are treacherous and cannot be blindly trusted or followed. They must be judged, rationally evaluated to distinguish the weeds among the wheat¹⁹.

18 Cfr. A. Mottola, Tr., *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Image Books, New York: 1964, 129-130.

19 T. H. Green, *Weeds Among the Wheat*, 98-99.

How to Handle Consolation

St. Ignatius gives the guidelines to handle consolation. 1) When one is in consolation, he has to think of how he will conduct himself during the desolation, that will follow. It is the time to build up new strength for the coming desolation. 2) One has to take care to humble and abase oneself as much as possible. 3) One has to be aware of the fact that the enemy acts like a woman in that he is weak in the presence of strength, but strong if he has his will. The enemy behaves like a false lover who wishes to remain hidden and does not want to be revealed. The enemy's behaviour is like a military leader who wishes to conquer and plunder the object of his desires. We must pay close attention to the course of our thoughts in the beginning, middle, and end²⁰.

Desolation

Desolation indicates any movement of affectivity away from God. It is darkness of the soul, turmoil of the mind, inclination to low and earthly things, restlessness resulting from many disturbances and temptations which lead to loss of faith, loss of hope, and loss of love. It is desolation when a soul completely finds itself apathetic, tepid, sad, and separated from the Lord. It is the nature of the evil spirit to fight against spiritual consolation by proposing seemingly serious reasons, subtleties, and continual deceptions. It is the characteristic of the evil one to transform himself into an angel of light, to work with the soul in the beginning and in the end to work for himself. The action of the evil spirit is sharp, noisy, and disturbing like the drop of water falling upon a rock²¹. There are three principal reasons according to St. Ignatius for the experience of desolation. 1) Through our own fault, since we are negligent in our spiritual exercises. 2) The test of God. To see our worth and progress that we have made in His service and praise, when we are without generous rewards and graces. 3) The desire of

20 Cf. A. Mottola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 74.

21 Cf. A. Mottola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 133.

God to give us a true knowledge and understanding that the devotion and the spiritual consolation is a gift and a grace of God²².

How to Handle Desolation

Ignatius gives certain rules to practice at the time of desolation. 1) He says that we should never make a change, instead we must stand firm and constant in the resolutions and decisions which guided the day before the desolation. 2) We need to intensify the activity against desolation by insisting more on prayer, meditation, frequent examinations, and by increase of penance. 3) We have to consider Lord Jesus who was left to his own natural powers to resist the different agitations and temptations of the enemy. 4) We have to strive to persevere in patience, which is contrary to the vexations that have come upon. 5) We should recall that Jesus can do much to withstand all of his enemies by using the sufficient grace He has²³. Both consolation and desolation are feeling states and lead to thoughts and inspirations to act. Consolation is contrary to desolation. The thoughts that spring from consolation are the opposite of those that spring from desolation. As the good spirit guides and consoles in consolation so the evil spirit guides and consoles in desolation. Though desolation is never from God it can be an effective means to purify and deepen our love for God and thereby helps to a spiritual growth.

Spiritual Combat

There are different spirits like the Holy Spirit, the evil spirit, and the human spirit²⁴. The human soul has different movements. There are good movements that is to be accepted. There are bad movements that is to be rejected. Ignatius of Loyola, in his *Rules for the Discernment of Spirits* distinguishes between good

22 Cfr. A. Mottola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 131.

23 Cfr. A. Mottola, *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 130.

24 Cfr. R. Faricy, *The Contemplative way of Prayer*, 50.

spirits and bad spirits. The *Meditation on the Two Standards*²⁵ speaks of the Satan and Jesus as the commanders of two opposed armies, each with its own flag, its own strategy, tactics and program for victory. Here there can be a confusion of the Manichean dualism. But Christ's triumph over evil especially in his resurrection avoids any kind of Manichean dualism regarding God and the devil. Jesus has given us the authority over the devil and over all evil spirits. The name of Jesus is the best weapon against the devil. The armour consists of faith, hope, love, truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, the Word of God, and the rebuking of the devil²⁶. Though depth psychology attributes the existence of devil to our own subconscious and subtle interplay of mind and body in each of us, in my life and ministry I am convinced of the reality of the literal devil.

The Evil Spirit

The existence of the evil power is evident in the writings of Paul (Eph 6,10-20)²⁷. Ignatius of Loyola was acutely aware of the existence of the evil forces in the world, and he spoke constantly about the crafty enemy of the human nature. He refers to the evil spirit, as the enemy of our progress, eternal salvation and to the enemy of our human nature²⁸. The idea or impulse that comes from the traditional source of temptation - the world, the flesh and the devil - are from the evil spirits²⁹. St. Ignatius writes to those persons who go from mortal sin to mortal sin that the evil spirit proposes apparent pleasures. It causes them to imagine sensual delights and pleasures in order to hold them more and more easily and to increase their vices and sins. To those who earnestly strive to purify themselves

25 Cfr. A. Mottola, *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 75-77.

26 Cfr. R. Faricy, *Seeking Jesus*, 86-88.

27 See Matt 12,22-28. With regard to diabolical influence on individual persons, theologians distinguish between possession, oppression, and temptation. See also the papal document of Paul VI, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Language Edition, Nov. 23, 1972, 3.

28 Cfr. A. Mottola, *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 133

29 Cfr. R. Faricy, *Seeking Jesus*, 70.

from their sins, the evil spirit causes anxiety and sadness, and to create obstacles based on false reasoning, preventing the soul making further progress.

The Good Spirit

The good Spirit is God Himself, the Holy Spirit and the good angel. For instance, God can cause consolation without previous cause whereas consolation with a preceding cause can come from either the good angel or the evil spirit. To those persons who go from mortal sin to mortal sin, the good spirit awakens the conscience to a sense of remorse through the good judgement of their reason. It is the characteristic of the Good Spirit to give courage and strength, consolation, tears, inspiration, and peace, making things easy and removing and removing all obstacles so that the soul may make further progress in good works³⁰. St. Ignatius writes that the action of God in the soul is like a drop of water falling gently into a sponge while the action of evil forces is like rain pattering on rock.

The Criteria for Discernment

Paul's chief criterion for discernment is a person's relation to Jesus Christ (1 Cor 12,3; 13,3). The same is true of John's gospel and the letters of John (1 John 4,2-3). The supreme norm for discerning the Spirit is Jesus himself. Any Spirit which leads you to cry out that Jesus is Lord Comes from God: any spirit that leads you to say that Jesus is accursed comes from Satan. Such is the norm of John and Paul³¹. Johnston writes that whatever leads you to Jesus in the flesh, Jesus in the Eucharist, Jesus in the Gospel, Jesus in the poor and afflicted is good³². Robert Faricy speaks about the objective and subjective norms. The objective norms exist outside a person and go beyond him\her. Objectively, the Lord speaks through the Bible, the

30 Cfr. A. Mottola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 129.

31 Passages such as Gal 5,22-23; 1 John 4,2; John 13, 35; 14,27 etc. provide some other biblical criteria for the discernment.

32 Cfr. W. Johnston, *Being in Love*, 157.

doctrines and the teachings of the Church and through the legitimate authority. The objective norms are insufficient to take a judgement on a personal idea or feeling. The subjective norms are one's own conscience and other interior feelings, thoughts, and urgings. They are reliable norms grounded in the whole Christian tradition of the discernment of spirits³³. At the same time if the conclusion of a discernment goes against the Bible, the church documents one must obviously question and re-examine the process of discernment³⁴. Ultimately, the inner, non-objectivated consciousness of God takes on its Christian character only by being constantly integrated with the faith of the church. Truhlar writes that the ultimate norm for the discernment of spirits is the non-objectivated consciousness of God, accessible to all Christians, which is contained in the exercise of theological virtues³⁵. The true presence and activity of God necessarily manifest themselves in their "fruits": these are the credible evidence of that presence, hence the further necessary criteria for the discernment of spirits (Gal 5,22-23).

The Pre-Requisites of Discernment

One of the basic prerequisites of discernment is personal prayer. Faricy writes "If I do not have a regular prayer life, and even regular contemplation in my life, I will not have the necessary relationship with the Lord for the discernment of spirits and for the discernment-based decision-making"³⁶. Thomas Green says: "the discerning person must be a praying person"³⁷. For him discernment is "the meeting point of prayer and action in the life of the Christian apostle"³⁸. Going a step further William Johnston speaks about the need of mystical contemplation. He says that when one enters into mystical contemplation discernment takes a mystical character. Just as in mystical contemplation one must let go of discursive prayer so

33 Cfr. R. Faricy, *Seeking Jesus*, 70-71.

34 Cfr. R. Faricy, *Praying*, 27.

35 Cfr. K. V. Truhlar, "Discernment of Spirits", 90.

36 R. Faricy, *Seeking Jesus*, 82.

37 T. H. Green, *Weeds Among the Wheat*, 21.

38 T. H. Green, *Weeds Among the Wheat*, 7.

in mystical discernment one must let go of discursive reflection in order to live by faith³⁹. St. John of the Cross expresses it by saying that you are safer when you walk in darkness - without the light of reason. One of the pre requisites for the discernment of spirits is the contemplative prayer. The core commitment or the fundamental option is the second pre requisite for discernment according to St. Ignatius. For him if one's core commitment is for good, or for God, then whatever leads to good and God and is in conformity with this commitment will bring joy; and what leads to evil will bring disturbance. Thomas Green interprets it as the desire to do God's will. By the word "committed believer" he means that a person who sincerely desires to do God's will, to accomplish His work in this concrete given world. Furthermore, he suggests two more predispositions like openness to God and knowledge of God⁴⁰.

The Process of Discernment

There are some important steps to be considered carefully in the decision-making process of discernment. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, St. Ignatius mentions about it when he speaks of making a choice of a way of life⁴¹. They are 1) collection of the pertinent facts, 2) consultation with the experts, books and documents, 3) prayer for the Lord's light and guidance and finally 4) in a brief period of contemplation, looking with faith and love at the Lord, ponder the possible alternative decisions. See how we feel about each one in terms of our relationship with the lord and take the decision as what the Lord wants us to do. According to William Johnston there are some transcendental precepts: Be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, be in love. He says that if we make decisions like these, we will undergo intellectual, ethical and religious conversion. We will transcend ourselves and attain to true humanity⁴².

39 W. Johnston, Being in love, 154.

40 Cfr. T. H. Green, Weeds Among the Wheat, 58-61.

41 Cfr. A. Mottola, Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, 82-87.

42 Cfr. W. Johnston, Being in Love, 151.

To which option we feel consolation that option comes from the good spirit and to which option we feel desolation that option comes from the evil spirit. Here comes the relevance of the dignity of conscience which Gaudium et Spes speaks. "His conscience is man's most secret core, and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths" (GS 16). The discernment of this discernment can be done by verifying the continuation of the consolation. If the consolation continues, we can be sure that the discernment is right and we can proceed with the execution of the decision⁴³. We need to pay attention not only to the beginning of ideas, but also to their middle and end. If beginning, middle and end are completely good and tend toward what is right then we have a sign of what is right⁴⁴. "The proper act of discernment consists less in judging the origin of the phenomena than in recognizing their orientation"⁴⁵. Since evil spirit could mislead us in this decision-making process, consultation with a prayerful friend, a regular confessor, or with a spiritual director would be very helpful.

Conclusion

We have been discussing the definition, the criteria, the prerequisites, and the process of the art of discernment. As Faricy says discernment is an affective "turning in" on God's wave-length in the prayerful consideration of the particular decisions to be made. Discernment is a charism, a gift and an art. The basis of discernment is love. It has solid biblical foundations. The *Rules for the Discernment of Spirits* in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola are the best-known answers to the how of discernment. Even Today these rules are the Church's canonical *locus* on discernment. As St. Ignatius writes, consolation is any movement of affectivity toward God and desolation is any movement of affectivity that takes us away from God. St. Paul and St. John say that the chief criterion

43 Cfr. R. Faricy, Seeking Jesus, 80.

44 Cfr. R. Faricy, Seeking Jesus, 75.

45 J. Pegon, "Discernment of spirits" New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol.4, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York: 1967, 894.

for discernment is a person's relation to Jesus Christ. Among the objective and subjective norms, subjective norms are more reliable. Contemplative prayer and the core commitment are the two important prerequisites for the discernment. Collection of the facts, consultation with experts, prayer, and taking the decision as Jesus wants us to do are the process of deciding.

PRISON REFORM AND CORRECTIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA

Suroochi

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyse the deprivation of prisoners' freedom and personal contact and the issues related to their normal life. The study also signifies upon the innocent prisoners and who has to bear the rigorous prison life due to miscarriage of justice. Further, the study lays down certain criteria through which the prisoners can be rehabilitated to normal life in the community by probation or parole, etc. It also focuses upon the criminal justice system and the committee appointed for various motives such as correctional administration and achieves certain measure of humanization of prison conditions. Working on this project on - *Application of Science and Technology Used during Criminal Investigations* was a source of immense knowledge to me. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the guidance and valuable support though out the project work. I would acknowledge with a deep sense of gratitude, the encouragement and inspiration received from our faculty members and friends. I would also like to thank my parents for their love and support.

Introduction

Prisons is a State subject under State List of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The management and administration of Prisons falls exclusively in the domain of the State Governments, and is governed by the Prisons Act, 1894 and the Prison Manuals of the respective State Governments.

Punishing the offenders is the primary function of all civil societies. Prisons are known to have existed throughout the history. Existence of prisons can be traced back to the ancient period. It was believed that rigorous isolation and custodial measures would reform the offenders. The prisoners are deprived of freedom and personal contacts with family and friends. The utility of prison as an institution for rehabilitation of offenders and preparing them for normal life has always been a controversial issue. There are quite a large number of offenders who are otherwise well behaved and are persons of respectable class of society but they fall prey to criminality on account of momentary impulsiveness, provocation or due to situational circumstances. There is yet another class of prisoners who are otherwise innocent but have to bear the rigorous of prison life due to miscarriage of justice. The real purpose of sending criminals to prison is to transform them into honest and law-abiding citizens by inculcating in them distaste for crime and criminality. But in actual practice, the prison authorities try to bring out reformation of inmates by use of force and compulsive methods. Consequently, the change in the inmates is temporary and lasts only till they are in the prison and as soon as they are released they again get attracted towards criminality. It is for this reason that the modern trend is to lay down greater emphasis on the prisoners so that they can be rehabilitated to normal life in the community. This objective can be achieved through probation and parole. The sincerity, devotion and tactfulness of the prison officials also help the in the process of offenders' rehabilitation. In India, prison reforms did not emerge out of the social movement but were necessarily an outcome of the worst conditions of treatment faced by the political sufferers in prisons during the period of their imprisonment. They repeatedly launched protests with the prison authorities and made all possible efforts to see that the rigorous of prison life are mitigated and prisoners are humanly treated.

Research Questions/ Objectives

The purpose of this research report is to shed light upon the rehabilitation and reformation of prisoners. It also focuses upon the innocent prisoners and has to bear the rigorous prison life due to miscarriage of justice.

Research Methodology

The research methodology used in this project is Qualitative in nature as the project includes reviews of the documents of different focus groups. This method is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons and opinions. It provides the insights into the problem and helps to develop ideas for potential research. This project is information based and brings down information from valid and legal sources. The resources are individually acknowledged in each page along with a brief bibliographic representation at the end of this project.

Historical Review

Prison Reform - Prior Independence and Post Independence

The existence of prisons in our society is an ancient phenomenon since Vedic period where the antisocial elements were kept in a place identified by the rulers to protect the society against crime. Prisons were considered as a House of Captives where prisoners were kept for retributory and deterrent punishment. John Locke, the great English political theorist of seventeenth century expressed that men were basically good but laws were still needed to keep down 'the few desperate men in society. The aim of the society as expressed in its criminal law is to safeguard its own existence to maintain order and to make it possible for all citizens to lead a good life, free from molestation of others. The law enforcement agencies have been given the powers by the society to curtail the freedom of its citizens by taking them into custody in

connection with their deviant conduct. The process of review of prison problems in the country, continued even after the enactment of Prisons Act, 1894. The first ever comprehensive study was launched on this subject with the appointment of All India Jail Committee (1919-1920). It is indeed a major landmark in the history of prison reforms in India and is appropriately called the corner stone of modern prison reforms in the country. For the first time, in the history of prison administration, reformation and rehabilitation of offenders were identified as one of the objectives of prison administration.

The committee made following recommendations: - (i) The care of prisoners should be entrusted to the adequately trained staff drawing sufficient salary to render faithful service. (ii) The separation of executive/custodial, ministerial and technical staff in prison service. (iii) The diversification of the prison institutions i.e., separate jail for various categories of prisoners and a minimum area of 675 Sq. Feet (75 Sq. Yards) per prisoner was prescribed within the enclosed walls of the prison. It is ironical that the recommendations made by this Committee could not be implemented due to unconducive political environment. Some of the eminent freedom fighters who had known first-hand the conditions in prisons succeeded in persuading the governments of these progressive States to appoint committees to further enquire into prison conditions and suggest improvements in consonance with their local conditions. Some of the Committees appointed during the period were:- (i) The Mysore Committee on Prison Reforms, 1940-41; (ii) The U.P. Jail Reforms Committee, 1946; and (iii) The Bombay Jail Reforms Committee, 1946-48. It was around this period that such progressive legislations as:- (i) The Bombay Probation of Offenders Act, 1936; (ii) The C.P. and Berar Conditional Release of Prisoners Act, 1936; and (iii) The U.P. First Offenders Probation Act, 1938, was passed. In the late thirties, the U.P. Government appointed a Jail Enquiry Committee and in pursuance of its recommendations, the

first Jail Training School in India was established at Lucknow in 1940 for the training of jail officers and warders. When India gained independence in 1947, the memories of horrible conditions in prisons were still fresh in the minds of political leaders and they, on assumption of power, embarked upon effecting prison reforms.

However, the Constitution of India which came into force in 1950 retained the position of the Government of India Act, 1935 in the matter of prisons and kept Prisons as a State subject by including it in List II - State List, of the Seventh Schedule (Entry 4). The first decade after independence was marked by strenuous efforts for improvements in living conditions in prisons. A number of Jail Reforms Committees were appointed by the State Governments, to achieve a certain measure of humanization of prison conditions and to put the treatment of offenders on a scientific footing. Some of the committees which made notable recommendations on these lines were: - (i) The East Punjab Jail Reforms Committee, 1948-49; (ii) The Madras Jail Reforms Committee, 1950-51; (iii) The Jail Reforms Committee of Orissa, 1952-55; (iv) The Jail Reforms Committee of Travancore and Cochin, 1953-55; (v) The U.P. Jail Industries Inquiry Committee, 1955-56; and (vi) The Maharashtra Jail Industries Reorganization Committee, 1958-59.

Conditions of Prison and Prisoners Overcrowding

It is a known fact that prisons in India are overcrowded. As a result of this there is no separation of offenders of serious offences and minor offences. Hence hardened criminals may spread their influence over minor criminals. Persons who have committed offences for the first time come into contact with hardened criminals and hence are likely to become professional criminals. The methods to reduce the burden of overcrowding of jail are release on bail, impose fine, release on probation or parole. The system of remission, leave and premature release may also be useful in tackling the problem of overcrowding in the prison.

Development of Prisons

Custody, care and treatment are the, three main functions of a modern prison organization. For over 100 years, there was emphasis on custody which, it was believed, depended on good order and discipline. The notion of prison discipline was to make imprisonment deterrent. Consequently, hard punitive labour with no regard for the human personalities and severe punishments were the main basis of prison treatment. More than 40 prison offences have been listed in the jail manuals of many States and any infraction was visited by quite a few barbaric punishments. Gradually, the objective of imprisonment changed from mere deterrence to deterrence and reformation. This led to the abandonment of some of the barbaric punishments and introduction of the system of awards for good work and conduct in the form of remission, review of sentences, wages for prison labour, treatment in open conditions, parole, furlough, canteen facilities etc. Revision has now been made to meet adequately the basic needs of food, clothing, medical care etc. Educational and vocational training programmes along with training in scouting etc, have been introduced in jails. Custodial requirements for individuals are now at some places determined on the basis of their antecedents, conduct and performance etc.

Reform in Prison Labour Scheme

The objectives of 'prison labour' have varied from time to time. The Indian Jail Reforms Committee of 1919-20 recommended that the main objective of prison labour should be the prevention of further crime by the reformation of criminals, for which they were to be given instruction in up-to date methods of work enabling them to earn a living wage on release. The other objectives were to keep the offenders use fully engaged to prevent mental damage and to enable them to contribute to the cost of their maintenance. Work was allotted to prisoners on the basis of their health, length of sentence

prior knowledge of a trade, and the trade which was most likely to provide a living wage on release. After independence, punitive labour such as extraction of oil by manual labour was abolished and more useful programmes were introduced to train offenders as technicians. Initially, payment of wages to prisoners was opposed on the ground that they were already a burden on the State. Gradually, the need for providing some motivation to prisoners was realized and it was considered that some monetary reward would develop interest in work and provide the necessary incentive, more so if the prisoner was allowed to use the earnings on himself or his family. After independence, in some of the open prisons, prisoners are paid wages at market rates out of which they pay to State their cost of maintenance. There is now a growing realization that such liberal system of wages would provide greater incentive for higher and better production. Maharashtra was the first State to introduce in 1949 a very comprehensive system of wages. The Apex Court in *State of Gujarat & another v. Humble High Court of Gujarat* (AIR 1998SC 3164) observed, — Reformation and rehabilitation is basic policy of criminal law hence compulsory manual labour from the prisoner is protected under Art. 23 of the Constitution. Minimum wages must be paid to prisoners for their labour after deducting the expenses incurred on them.

Reformation of Women Prisoners

The women prisoners should be treated more generously and allowed to meet their children frequently. This will keep them mentally fit and respond favorably to the treatment methods. A liberal correctional and educational programme seems necessary in case of women delinquents. Particularly, the women, who fall prey to sex offences, should be treated with sympathy and their illegitimate children should be assured an upright life in the society. The idea of setting up separate jails for women provides the free environment for providing special treatment to them. The first women jail was established in Maharashtra at Yarwada.

Reformation of Juvenile Offenders

For the reformation of juveniles, correctional institutions, like Special homes (under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000), certified schools and borstals are constituted for providing the special treatment, medical care, education, accommodation and vocational training to juveniles. Particularly, the States of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have done a commendable work in direction of encouraging Borstal system through a well-planned strategy. The young offenders in these States are released on license or parole after they have served at least two-thirds of commitment in a certified correctional school. These States have also established After-care Associations and Children Aid Societies to rehabilitate and reform the juvenile offenders

Reformation of Undertrial Prisoner

The undertrial prisoners are rightly not obliged to work under the law but remaining unemployed is not only against their own interest but also a national waste. A policy of persuasion rather than coercion to engage under trial prisoners in work was thus advocated and if they chose to work, they were to be paid wages. But in practice when they opt to work, they are employed on prison services and are in lieu thereof given laboring diet and no wages. Recently, the criminal law has provided that the period of detention as under trial shall be counted towards the sentence of imprisonment. This will mitigate some hardship but will not by itself encourage under trials to volunteer for work. Quite a large number of under trial prisoners are detained in jails for long periods as they are unable to afford fees of lawyers to defend them. In recent years the government has given some attention to this problem and efforts are being made to give free legal aid to the poor. If this facility is extended to a large number of poor persons, it would not only in the long run result in the shortening of the period of detention of under trials but might in some cases result in acquittal also.

Probation

The term - Probation is derived from the Latin word 'probare' which means 'to test' or 'to prove'. Probation offers an opportunity for the probationer to adjust himself to normal society thus avoiding an isolation and dull life in prison. Probation is a conditional release of an offender under supervision. The system of probation involves conditional suspension of punishment. The Central Correctional Bureau observed the year 1971 as - Probation Year all over the country. Probation seeks to socialize the criminal, by training him to take up an earning activity and thus enables him to pick up those life-habits, which are necessary for a law-abiding member of the community. This inculcates a sense of self-sufficiency, self-control and self-confidence in him, which are undoubtedly the essential attributes of a free-life. The Probation Officer would guide the offender to rehabilitate himself and also try and keep him away from such criminal tendencies. The Act provides four different modes of dealing with youthful and other offenders in lieu of sentence subject to certain conditions. These includes:- 1. Release after admonition. 2. Release on entering a bond on probation of good conduct with or without supervision, and on payment by the offender the compensation and costs to the victim if so ordered, the courts being empowered to vary the conditions of the bond and to sentence and impose a fine if he failed to observe the conditions of the bond. 3. Persons under 21 years of age are not to be sentenced imprisonment unless the court calls for a report from the probation officer or records reasons to the contrary in writing. 4. The person released on probation does not suffer a disqualification attached to a conviction under any other law. It would be seen that the provisions of the Probation of Offenders Act are not confined to juveniles alone, but extends to adults also.

Parole

One of the most important but controversial devices for reducing pressure on prison institutions is the selective release of prisoners on parole. Parole has a dual purpose, namely protecting society and at the same time bringing about the rehabilitation of the offenders. The parole system is an excellent way to allow prisoners to rehabilitate and get in touch with the outside world. Parole is a legal sanction that lets a prisoner leave the prison for a short duration, on the condition that she/he behaves appropriately after release and reports back to the prison on termination of the parole period. The conditional release from prison under parole may begin anytime after the inmate has completed at least one- third of the total term of his sentence but before his final discharge. Release on parole is a part of the reformatory process and is expected to provide opportunity for the prisoner to transform himself into useful citizen. Parole is thus a grant of partial liberty or lessening of restrictions to a convict prisoner, but release on parole does not, in any way, change the status of the prisoner. Parole is a penal device which seeks to humanize prison justice. The main object of the parole as stated in the Model Prison Manual are: a) To enable the inmate to maintain continuity with his family life and deal with family matters b) To save the inmate from the evil effects of continuous prison life. c) To enable the inmate to retain self-confidence and active interest in life. It must be noted that a parole is different from a - furlough. While parole is granted to a prisoner detained for any offence irrespective of the duration of imprisonment, a furlough is only granted to prisoners facing long sentences, five years or more. Furlough is matter of right, but parole is not. However, an abuse of the system is a drag on the country. The urgent need of the hour is for police officials to acknowledge that the parole system is being misused and find ways to ensure that parole laws are properly enforced in prisons across the country.

Open Prisons

Taking inspiration from Anglo-American developments in the correctional field of penology, the Indian penologists were convinced that India also cannot tackle its crime problem by putting criminals in prison cells. The institution of open prisons seems to be viable alternative to harsh imprisonment system. The whole thrust in these open-prison institutions is to make sure that after release the prisoners may not relapse into crimes and for this purpose they are given incentives to live a normal life, work on fields or carry on occupation of their choice and participate in games, sports or other recreational facilities. These are the minimum-security prisons. In this liberal remissions are given to extent of 15 days in a month. The State of Uttar Pradesh was first to set up an open-air camp attached to Model Prison at Lucknow in 1949. Other States, like Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Punjab, Kerala etc. are also set up open-air camps.

Remission

Prisoners get remissions periodically for good conduct and work. Special remissions are also given for specific special services. The sentences are reviewed from time to time according to various rules and the prisoners are released before time if they satisfy the prescribed conditions.

Social Change and Rehabilitation

The assumption of rehabilitation is that people are not permanently criminal and that it is possible to restore a criminal to a useful life, to a life in which they contribute to themselves and to society. A goal of rehabilitation is to prevent habitual offending, also known as criminal recidivism. Rather than punishing the harm out of a criminal, rehabilitation would seek, by means of education or therapy, to bring a criminal into a more peaceful state of mind, or into an attitude which would be helpful to society, rather than be harmful to society.

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Conclusion

To ensure good discipline and administration, an initial classification must be made to separate male from females, the young from the adults, convicted from the unconvinced prisoners, civil from criminal prisoners and from casual from habitual prisoners. The main object of prison labour is prevention of crime and reformation of the offenders. And the other main object was to engage them so as to prevent mental damage and to enable them to contribute to the cost of their maintenance. The undertrial prisoners are presumed to be innocent and most of them are discharged or acquitted after immeasurable physical and mental loss caused to them by detention due to delay in investigation and trial. The courts have in recent years been giving serious thought to the of human rights of prisoners and have, on that ground, interfered with the exercise of powers of superintendents of jails in respect of measures for safe custody, good order and discipline. Research into crime and the criminal is still in its infancy. The immediate need of research is to evaluate the existing methods of treatment and to suggest new approaches to the prevention of crime. The value of probation, open prisons, parole and home leave as reformatory measures need to be established. Prisoners constitute important institutions which protects the society from criminals. The obstacles in prison reforms are resource allocation, the deterrent functions of punishment, the notion of rehabilitation, and internal control.

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IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW: BARRIERS TO THE RIGHTS OF ARRESTEES AND CONVICTS IN INDIA

Alrex Romer and Anandita Dulloo

Introduction

Of all the rights available to the people of India, the right to life and personal liberty has been understood to be the ‘most precious right’.¹ While each country has its own penal system and policies it uses to oversee criminal justice, the stages of arrest, processing, sentencing, imprisonment and release of prisoners have similarities globally. This article analyzes the challenges faced by Indian prisoners at each of these stages and why they may prove to be an obstacle to rehabilitation as a sequel to incarceration.

Detention and Arrest

The Code of Criminal Procedure (CRPC, 1973) ensures that arrestees, except in non-bailable cases, are informed of their bail rights and sureties.² Additionally, Article 22(1) of the Indian Constitution guarantees the right to counsel and prompt disclosure of arrest grounds.³ The Constitution also permits preventive detention for individuals posing a threat to national security or the economy, prioritizing public interest

1 Suhrith Parthasarthy quotes Justice Tashi Rabstan in his article, Liberty at the Government's Whim. The hindu, 11 February, 2020, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/liberty-at-the-governments-whim/article30785807.ece> (last visited 1 February, 2021).

2 Section 50 of the CRPC.

3 Article 22(1) of the Constitution.

over personal freedom. It is imperative that clear grounds for arrest must be provided in the detainee's language, as per the Supreme Court's ruling in *Harikishan v. State of Maharashtra*.⁴ More often than not this is not the case. Some judicial interpretations of arrestee rights lack insight and contribute to legislative gaps, such as the right to be informed of arrest grounds and the absence of a demand for counsel during interrogation. The interpretation of the right to be produced before a Magistrate also lacks decisiveness. Article 21 of the Constitution safeguards life and liberty, requiring lawful procedures for any deprivation. It mandates that no legislative, executive, or judicial authority can take these rights without legal justification.⁵ Despite these, various protections against unwarranted arrests and judicial interventions have strengthened these safeguards. However, unjustified arrests remain inevitable in society, necessitating additional checks.⁶

Processing

After the arrest of any individual, the police officer who makes such an arrest whether with or without warrant is bound to produce the accused within 24 hours of his detention before the magistrate excluding the time taken for travel from the place of arrest to the Magistrates court.⁷ However, in cases where there is more than one arrest, there tends to be severe delays in producing the arrested before the magistrate. This was seen in the Delhi Riots Arrests (2020) where there were reports of delays in producing some of the arrested individuals, particularly those from marginalized communities, before magistrates.⁸ Delays such as these raise concerns about

4 1962 Supp (2) S.C.R. 918.

5 Article 21 of the Constitution.

6 Dube, D., & Bedi, S. (n.d.). Arrest and detention in India. https://books.google.co.in/books?id=wsIOEAAAQBAJ&pg=P-P1&ots=PJxkr5rv_E&dq=issues+with+arrest+in+India&lr&pg=PA27#v=onepage&q&f=false.

7 Article 22(2) of the Constitution.

8 Delhi riots 2020: Police files closure report in case against 7 accused, matter handed to chief metropolitan magistrate now. <https://www.outlookindia.>

their rights and access to legal representation. Another area of concern is the failure to inform arrested persons of their rights while processing them during and after arrest. During the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC), there were reports of individuals being arrested without being properly informed of their rights. Some detainees claimed that they were not informed of the charges against them or their right to legal representation.⁹ Many arrested individuals do not have access to legal representation or may not be informed of their right to have a lawyer present during the proceedings. India's per capita lawyer ratio is 1:736 which isn't very bad but representation is affected by affordability. Per Capita legal aid spending in India is less than Rs. 1.¹⁰

Sentencing

Assuming an accused person is found guilty and convicted of his or her crimes, the punishment he or she is to be sentenced to is not merely founded on legal principles but also reflective of moral and social values of the society or community as a whole. Under the Indian Penal Code¹¹ there are 5 types of punishments a convicted individual may be sentenced to: Death, Imprisonment for life; Imprisonment, which is of two descriptions, namely: (I) Rigorous, that is, with hard labour; (II) Simple. Forfeiture of property; Fine. We will not dwell on which crime attracts which punishment as this has been sufficiently covered in the Code of Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 and The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013.

com/. (2023, September 20). <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/delhi-riots-2020-police-files-closure-report-on-chargesheet-filed-against-7-accused-matter-handed-to-chief-metropolitan-magistrate-now-news-319247>.

- 9 Lokaneeta, J. (n.d.). Anti-caa protests reveal torture remains at the heart of Indian policing. *The Wire*. <https://thewire.in/rights/anti-caa-protests-reveal-torture-remains-at-the-heart-of-indian-policing>.
- 10 "per capita spending on legal aid in India is rs 0.75." *The Economic Times*. (n.d.). <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/per-capita-spending-on-legal-aid-in-india-is-rs-0-75/articleshow/65744769.cms?from=mdr>.
- 11 Section 53.

It is, however, worthwhile noting that till date India has no standardized statutory sentencing policy.¹² Many developed countries have issued sentencing guidelines but the same has neither been issued by the legislative or the judiciary in India. The lack of guidelines leads to concerns about fairness, consistency, and justice in the criminal justice system and results in disparities based on factors such as location, socio-economic status, or the discretion of individual judges. Another issue is the frequent delays in the sentencing process, which can cause prolonged uncertainty for the convicted individuals and hinder the rehabilitative aspects of punishment. Notably, the infamous Nirbhaya case, which occurred in 2012, took nearly seven years for the sentencing process to conclude, drawing attention to the slow pace of justice.

Release

Once the sentence of the prisoner has been served, there are procedures in place governing how prisoners are to be released and reintegrated. Premature or early release is available in India with the aim of rehabilitation and reintegration. Convicts recommended under this policy are usually released on 26th January, Republic Day, and 15th August, Independence Day. Applying for premature release is a common procedure across India. However, it cannot be demanded as a matter of right; and certain categories of convicts cannot apply. While it should ideally be available to prisoners who show healthy rehabilitation, a host of systemic issues plague the process for convicts. Proceedings to decide premature release often happen behind closed doors, with little to no input from the convicts themselves. There is ambiguity in the procedure and convicts also face lack of access to quality legal representation for the appeals process and are stymied by little knowledge

12 India does not have statutory sentencing policy: Supreme Court. LawBeat. (n.d.). <https://lawbeat.in/supreme-court-judgments/india-does-not-have-statutory-sentencing-policy-supreme-court>.

of the legal system¹³ Additionally, while the Model Prisons Act, 2023 states that the reformation and rehabilitation of offenders is the ultimate objective of prison administration, overcrowding in prisons often mean that prisoners (often petty criminals) are released earlier without adequate rehabilitation as was seen during the Covid-19 pandemic leading to them returning to societies that place a stigma on them and often offer no other alternative than to re-offend.

Conclusion

Indian penal systems have taken many strides forwards both on humanitarian and efficiency fronts over the last 76 years. However, procedural bottlenecks in arrest, awareness issues in processing of convicts, biases and discretion in sentencing, and lack of transparency during release of prisoners continue to plague the criminal justice system. Legal awareness programs and setting up of government backed legal aid clinics will help to solve some part of the issue. More importantly, strong consensus between judiciary, legislative and executive needs to be reached on guidelines concerning proportionality of sentencing and clarity in timelines of imprisonment and release while also ensuring current established procedures in arrest and processing are adhered to. Ordinary citizens will play a key role in advocating for these changes and ensuring a most just and fair society.

13 Doddahatti, B. (n.d.-a). State selectively releases murders, rapists, as thousands languish in prison, revealing India's convict problem. Article 14. <https://article-14.com/post/state-selectively-releases-murders-rapists-as-thousands-languish-in-prison-revealing-india-s-convict-problem-64ae06693d850>

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN BRAZIL: THE EDUCATIONAL METHOD OF APAC PRISONS

Francesco Occhetta, SJ*

In the dark world of prisons, an experience exists in Brazil that is like a ray of light: there, prisoners are not numbers, rather they are referred to by name; they have tasks to carry out; they are imprisoned in places without bars and without guards; they do not wear uniforms. In these “alternative jails” run by prisoners – called *recuperandi* (recovering people) – there have been no riots or cases of corruption, while recidivism has been reduced from 85 percent to 15 percent¹. It does not seem possible, yet experience, data and management costs prove it to be true: the latter have decreased by one third if compared to those run by the State². For the sake of clarification, it is necessary to state that the educational method of APAC prisons (Association of Protection and Assistance to Convicts) does not foresee any reduction in the rate of custodial sanction. It follows the Brazilian legal system and it is part of the penitentiary system. However, it offers the possibility of humane re-education, rooted in a positive anthropological foundation where the mentality of revenge is not used to repay mistakes made. At present in Brazil there are 50 prisons managed by APAC, with about 3,500 inmates³. This method is used in some prison wings

* Courtesy to *La Civiltà Cattolica* 15 May 2023.

1 The average world rate of recidivism is around 70 percent.

2 The minimum cost of a prisoner for the Brazilian Finance Ministry in the ordinary public system is R\$3,000 (around US\$980 per month.); in APAC prisons it is R\$950 (around US\$300).

3 Forty of these APAC prisons are located in the State of Minas Gerais and 10 are in other States: Maranhão, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraná and Espírito Santo. Some 147 APAC associations have been created that are capable of running a new Center of social reintegration.

in 23 other countries – such as the Netherlands, Norway, Hungary, the United States, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Singapore. In particular, in Chile there are 23 APAC prisons with 2,500 inmates. What lesson could be learned from this method to apply to criminal law and the doctrine of international criminal prosecution?

The Birth of APAC Prisons in the Brazilian Context

The first APAC prison was established in the State of Minas Gerais, in the southeast mountain region, thanks to the insight of a lawyer, Mário Ottoboni. It was created in São Paulo in 1972 by a group of volunteers involved in prison pastoral care, forming an association of legal assistance to prisoners; in 1974, it became a civil society organization under private law and an auxiliary justice body. In the 1980s, thanks to Judge Silvio Marques Neto, for the first time, the State entrusted APAC with a prison wing in the São José dos Campos prison in Humaitá, in the State of Amazonas, and then in Itaúna, in the State of Minas Gerais⁴. The choice of the Brazilian judiciary to endorse the APAC was in a way a certification of this method. From that moment, the *partnership* model between the State and a civil society organization was consolidated, and it now represents a “third way of recovery” between the prison facility and the individual inmates. In order to access APAC prisons, inmates with a definitive sentence must submit a written application and must have served a period of detention in a traditional prison. APAC welcomes prisoners who have served several years in prison and who have families in the same district as the prison. Mário Ottoboni expresses his belief as follows: “The human being can be recovered. To make this happen, the inmate must be treated in a human way. Human, but firm.”

4 Under APAC history, it is good to recall the witness of Franz de Castro Holzwarth, a friend of Mário Ottoboni. Both had been called to talk to prisoners during the riot in the Jacarei prison, on February 14, 1981. They were able to free hostages, but Castro Holzwarth was killed, shot 38 times in the confrontation between the police and detainees. In 2009 the process for his canonization was opened.

Spes contra spem, hope against all hope, underlies the project if one considers the situation of prisons in Brazil, which is one of the most dire in the world. In the last 15 years, the prison population has grown by 74 percent. The number of detainees is close to 650,000, while the country holds the fourth place in the world – after the United States, Russia and China – for prison population. Overcrowding has helped to convert Brazilian prisons into “crime universities,” marked by rebellion and repression, corruption of law enforcement agents, poor hygiene and sanitation conditions, lack of the right to defense and a high rate of drug use. The revolt in the Manaus prison on January 2, 2017, in which dozens of prisoners lost their lives, is just one example.

The average Brazilian inmate is a poor, uneducated young man, with a difficult family situation, often sick (skin diseases, tuberculosis or HIV/AIDS) or addicted to drugs; only 1 percent of the detainees worked at the time they committed their crime; 43 percent of the inmates are people of color. The absence of State control inside Brazilians prisons is likely to be filled by two criminal organizations – the CCP (*Primeiro Comando da Capital*, “First Command of the Capital”) of São Paulo, and the *Comando Vermelho* (“Red Command”) of Rio de Janeiro. These organizations offer detainees protection, money, drugs, privileges and economic support to their families. In return, however, inmates are trained during their detention, and they are recruited when they get out. The social drift that we are witnessing is primarily caused by large numbers. According to Ottoboni, “the best thing would be to have small prisons, where a recovery process could really be carried out. Obviously, building prisons does not get votes, and no city wants them⁵.”

Discipline, Work, Family, Education and Spirituality

The APAC experience requires a culture of justice in favor of rehabilitation and reparation. Prison is meant to be a

5 R. Marcoccia, “Il metodo APAC Carceri senza polizia,” interview of Mário Ottoboni, October 10, 2017, in www.terredamerica.com.

community in which each partner – institutions, prison administration, lawyers, family members and volunteers – has an active role⁶. This is why APAC is recognized as an “auxiliary body of the judicial system, and in this capacity various judges entrusted APAC with the authority to manage various prisons independently ... To do this, APAC signs a joint agreement with the judiciary branch and some state governments (Brazil is a federal system), thanks to which judges can send prisoners to its institutions⁷.” Each prison houses about 200 inmates. They spend about eight hours a day in their cells; the rest of the day is used to carry out activities comprising work, study, professional training and prayer. The cells, which are painted blue (the color of the sky), must be kept in order; the time schedule must be respected; every detail contributes to the weekly evaluation. The cell representative monitors behavior and ensures that no episodes of abuse whatsoever take place; a Truth and Solidarity Council, made up only of inmates, meets to examine problems and propose solutions.

Order, cleanliness and what makes for a pleasant environment are cared for in detail. The working dimension is experienced within a caring relationship and is carried out according to the terms of imprisonment of the *recuperando*. “For long sentences much time is devoted to ‘therapeutic work,’ through which we try, above all, to stimulate creativity, thinking and self-esteem of the *recuperando*. In cases of semi-custody arrangements *recuperandi* are offered training toward a specific profession or trade. Open custody ensures that the *recuperandi* carry out a working activity outside the center; in this case, work coincides with exercising an activity during the day under specific contract conditions⁸.” The benefit of

6 AVSI (Associazione volontari servizio internazionale – Association of Volunteers for International Service) has been supporting APAC since 2009 and it has been encouraging its spread to other regions of Brazil, thanks to European Union funding.

7 J. Restán, Dall’amore nessuno fugge. L’esperienza delle APAC in Brasile, Catalogo mostra realizzata per la XXXVI Edizione del Meeting di Rimini, edited by J. Restán – J. de la Morena – F. Pellicelli – J. Sabatiello, in cooperation with AVSI Foundation, 25.

8 Ibid., 44.

the remission of a sentence is calculated on the days of work actually carried out by the inmate: for every three days of work, a day of incarceration is reduced. The relationship with family members is considered therapeutic: this is why inmates are invited to write, have telephone contacts and meet with them on Sunday afternoons.

The APAC pedagogical project can be summarized in 12 points: participation of the local community; the *recuperando* helps the *recuperando*; work as therapy; the care of spiritual life; legal assistance; health and psychological assistance; personal promotion; family involvement; the active role of volunteers; the Center for Social Integration (CSI); consideration of merit; days of spiritual retreat. The APAC model cannot be “transplanted”; they only develop in those cultural backgrounds that are able to welcome them and where there is the political will of local institutions, parish support and a civil society that is actively responsible for the recovery of prisoners.

The judicial culture is against this model. Many judges and politicians are suspicious because they conceive the time spent serving a sentence only as a punishment. Are arrests and detention really enough to heal a society? In the past, in the State of São Paulo there were 30 APACs; then, little by little, they were closed, and prisoners were transferred to larger prisons. However, the numerous testimonies of recovered prisoners counter the skepticism regarding the social and re-educational function of this model. Punishment theories should stem from experience. Ottoboni adds: “A person who has never lived in prison and refuses to humbly learn with prisoners, will always remain a theoretician who is far removed from reality. Either you learn from living together with them, or you live speculating⁹.”

9 J. Restán, Dall'amore nessuno fuggé..., op. cit., 19. Cf. M. Ottoboni, Somos todos recuperandos, Belo Horizonte-MG, 2017, 33.

The Experience of Forgiveness

The writing on APAC walls speaks clearly: “People are not their mistakes.” The aim is to distinguish the people from the crime and give them back the hope they can make a change through the experience of forgiveness that stems from spiritual life and prayer. Forgiveness entails allowing for the *recuperandi* to recover the disordered threads of their lives and to separate the evil that was done from the good. Bitterness, hatred, resentment, guilt, fear and revenge are some elements of the “inner prison” from which one must free oneself, a sort of prison within the prison. The pain caused by what one has done, lived in front of the victims’ faces, is the condition for envisaging one’s wounds in a larger mosaic. We define this anthropological process of inner re-composition and truth as “forgiveness.” For those who believe, without living this experience before God, the evil done will not be recognized as such, and whoever committed it will continue to self-justify. Valdeci Antônio Ferreira, General Manager of the APAC coordination association explains: “Convicts generally do not feel guilty. They say: ‘I stole, but in this country everyone steals! I did not sell drugs; it was the others who bought them! I did not rape a woman; it was she who provoked me!’ This is why, thanks to the work of volunteers and the support of other inmates who have recovered, we try to put in place the ‘therapy of reality’: everyone must be confronted with the evil he has committed, the mistakes he has made¹⁰.”

However, when someone deserves punishment, he is not punished; rather, he is accompanied in an environment of prayer and meditation. Moreover, APAC proposes to *recuperandi* an experience which is similar to the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*, which lasts for four days and allows for “having the experience of Christ.” The next step is the meeting with the victims, who are active parties in the program. “Taking care of a detainee’s

10 A. Tornielli, “Apac, la vita cambiata di Daniel nelle carceri del Brasile,” August 24, 2016, in www.lastampa.it.

life is the beginning of a real change in society. Reconciliation may arise from this act of reparation made to the victim. In any case, the vicious circle of delinquency and evil is thus broken, making it possible to reintegrate these men and women in their families, in the life of their city¹¹.” Here we will only recall the experience of Raimunda, the mother of a murdered boy, who is a volunteer and responsible at an APAC reintegration center. “Since the day my son was killed, I plunged into a deep reflection. I was always thinking of the murderer’s family, especially his mother. It must be really sad to look at your son, being aware that he is a killer. When I understood that that mother’s suffering was greater than mine, I decided to forgive him. One day we met on the street, we hugged each other, and she could not stop crying. ... I feel a great sorrow for my son, but even if I hated his killer, he would not come back to life anyway¹².”

Valdeci Antônio Ferreira says: “APAC is not a factory, nor a machine which produces results in terms of social rehabilitation, as if this long, painful and difficult process were something mechanical, which works regardless of people’s freedom. There is instead a need for a great deal of patience. Everyone needs their time. And time belongs to God¹³.” In fact, “APAC prisons are not just a model of recovery of the detainees, but also a real alternative in terms of the expiation of the sentence¹⁴.” A confirmation of this is the strength of many silent testimonies. During his detention, a murderer who did not find peace was wondering: “How will I repair the crime I committed? How can I give back life?” After deciding to donate a kidney, he showed his scar, saying: “I killed a person, but now I have saved another one.” Also Daniel Luis Da Silva, 32, sentenced to 37 years of prison, said: “In prison I experienced hell on earth; I was begging the guards to kill

11 J. Restán, *Dall’amore nessuno fuggé...*, op. cit., 70.

12 Ibid., 74.

13 Ibid., 72.

14 Fabrizio Pellicelli of AVSI explains: “It is all rooted in self-discipline, trust and respect.”

me, so as not to continue living in that way. I did not ask to be born in the family where I was born; it was not my dream to become like this¹⁵.” Good fruits always come from deep roots such as generosity and competence. Except for administrative staff paid by the State, all APAC employees are volunteers: psychologists, social workers, lawyers, doctors, teachers. It is they who give hope to the prisoners with the slogan: “You are not alone, you are not abandoned to your own destiny.”

The UN has recognized the APAC method at a global level. Renowned people such as Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns, Bishop Ivo Lorscheiter and Archbishop Luciano Mendes de Almeida have supported this method, and the Brazilian Episcopal Conference considers it as the best example of prison pastoral care. In its own small way, APAC makes Pope Francis’ dream come true. He has affirmed that “the mercy of God is able to transform hearts, and is also able to transform prisons into an experience of freedom¹⁶.” Even the media has been studying this model since two famous men served their time in an APAC prison: Bruno Fernandes de Souza, goalkeeper of the popular Flamengo football team, accused of having planned the barbaric murder of his lover, Eliza Samudio; and Marcos Valério, an advertising executive involved in the *Mensalão* political scandal during the Lula government. While filming a video about an APAC prison, a journalist asked one of the inmates: “José, you escaped from all the prisons where there were prison officers, but from here, however, you’ve never tried to do it. How come?” The answer was: “Because no one flees from love¹⁷.”

15 A. Tornielli, “Apac, la vita cambiata di Daniel nelle carceri del Brasile,” op. cit. Cf. G. Meroni, “Apac: il carcere senza chiavi da cui nessuno fugge,” August 23, 2016, in www.vita.it.

16 Francis, Letter according to which an indulgence is granted to the faithful on the occasion of the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, September 1, 2015, in http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2015/documents/pa-pa-francesco_20150901_lettera-indulgenza-giubileo-misericordia.html.

17 J. Restán, Dall’amore nessuno fugge..., op. cit., 77.

Marta Cartabia, vice president of the Constitutional Court, declared: “The most problematic issue of traditional justice from a conceptual point of view, as Paul Ricoeur noted, ‘is that even the most civilized actions of justice, and particularly those made in the criminal sphere, still maintain the visible sign of that original violence that is revenge.’ In the situation that we have inherited, we must push our reflection on justice forward; we must experiment with new forms that integrate and better accomplish the thirst for justice that is always inexhaustible¹⁸.” For criminal law, this model represents a strong process centered on the person. Rehabilitation includes the deepest aspect of the human being, his spiritual life. Civil society takes an active part in this recovery process¹⁹. In Italy, some first timid steps are being taken to establish communities similar to the APAC ones and to establish alternative sentences rooted in restorative justice²⁰.

18 M. Cartabia, “La giustizia riparativa. Prospettive,” August 24, 2017, in www.meetingrimini.org.

19 The Rimini Meetings have the merit of presenting the APAC model in Italy, during two conferences, on August 23, 2016 and August 24, 2017, chaired by Marta Cartabia.

20 The Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII in Rimini is using this method in working with some inmates in the last period of their sentence, before their social rehabilitation.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING - FACTS AND FIGURES

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

Little Diana

Diana (name changed) was standing at the school gate, waiting for her father to pick her up. Suddenly, two men appeared there and started a conversation with her. They told her, that her father had asked them to pick her up today as he got busy with some official work. Diana didn't have a mobile as she is studying in 5th STD, but her senior who was also at the school gate waiting to be picked up had a mobile. Diana approached her senior and asked if she could lend her mobile to call her mother. As soon as Diana dialled her mother, these strangers left the spot. Diana immediately understood that they were kidnappers. Noticing those men who came to pick Diana up, leaving the spot, Diana's senior asked her, "What happened, why did those men not pick you up?" Diana said, "See! My mother had told me, other than your parents, if someone else comes to pick you immediately dial me and I will tell you if I have asked them to pick you up! So, as soon as I took the mobile to call my mother, these men escaped. They are kidnappers, my mother had told that many children are being kidnapped and we should be careful with these strangers". This true story is a clear indication that the need of the hour is to educate children and others on the issues related to trafficking.

Facts about Trafficking

1. India is a source, destination, and transit country for human trafficking. 2. The majority of trafficking in India is

for the purpose of forced labor and sexual exploitation. 3. Children, women and men are all vulnerable to trafficking, with children being particularly at risk of being trafficked for forced labor, domestic servitude, and sexual exploitation. 4. Many of the children that are trafficked are from rural, poor, and marginalized communities. 5. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the vulnerability of children and families to trafficking, as economic instability and school closures have left many children without access to education or support. 6. The lack of proper documentation and identity papers puts people, especially migrants and refugees, at risk of trafficking. 7. Corruption is a major issue that hinders the fight against human trafficking in India, as traffickers often bribe officials to avoid detection and prosecution. 8. India has laws in place to combat trafficking, such as the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, but enforcement and implementation of these laws remains a challenge. 9. NGOs and civil society organizations play an important role in raising awareness about trafficking and providing support to survivors and at-risk communities. 10. Community-based efforts are important in preventing trafficking and protecting vulnerable communities. 11. The latest 2021 *Trafficking in Persons Report: India*, by the US Department of State notes that traffickers kidnap and force Indian and Nepali women and girls to work as “orchestra dancers” in India, where girls perform with dance groups until they have repaid fabricated debts. Traffickers exploit women and children in sex trafficking in religious pilgrimage centers and in tourist destinations. Some traffickers kidnap children from public places, including railway stations, entice girls with drugs, and force girls as young as 5 years old in sex trafficking to take hormone injections to appear older.

Figures

The latest estimates by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), states that at least 18 million Indians suffer under

slavelike conditions. In India, the incidents of child trafficking continue to increase. According to National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), 2,834, 2,914 and 2,222 children were trafficked in 2018, 2019 and 2020 respectively. Over 4,700 people were trafficked in 2020, of which 1,377 were minor boys and 845 were minor girls. Moreover, the pandemic has amplified the menace of trafficking. An increase in poverty, loss of jobs by parents and closure of schools has increased the number of vulnerable children—especially in rural areas—who remain susceptible to trafficking. In terms of sheer numbers, India is reckoned to have the worst problem in the world.

Response of the Church

India is a prime example of where women religious have networked to rescue and resettle thousands of survivors. AMRAT (Asian Movement of Religious Against Trafficking) is the organisation that brings together more than 100 Catholic nuns from across India. Founded in 2009, it has established a network of civil and social groups. AMRAT networks with government agencies to support safe immigration, and collects relevant data on human trafficking from reliable sources to counter the problem. It also organises campaigns to raise awareness about the risks of trafficking in schools and other places of interest.

Tips to Educators/Parents

1. Educate yourself and your children about the dangers of trafficking, including common tactics used by traffickers and ways to recognize and report suspicious behavior.
2. Monitor your children's online activity and educate them about online safety, including the risks of sharing personal information and connecting with strangers online.
3. Keep open communication with your children and encourage them to share any concerns or experiences they may have.
4. Be aware of the risks and warning signs of trafficking, such

as a child suddenly dropping out of school, or changes in behaviour or communication patterns. 5. Be aware of the potential risks of sending children to work or study in other areas, particularly if they will be living away from home and without direct supervision. 6. Support organizations working to combat trafficking and exploitation, and advocate for stronger laws and enforcement efforts. 7. Be aware of local and national resources available to help prevent trafficking, including hotline facilities, counselling services, and legal assistance. 8. Keep an eye on children who are vulnerable such as children of single parents or children from lower-income backgrounds, as they are more at risk of being trafficked. 9. Inform local police and government officials about any suspected trafficking activity. 10. Spread awareness in your community about human trafficking and encourage others to take action to prevent it.

Tips to Children

1. Teach children about their rights, and the importance of staying safe and being aware of potential dangers, including trafficking. 2. Teach children about the common tactics used by traffickers, such as false promises, deception, and manipulation. 3. Teach children how to recognize and report suspicious behavior, and how to access help if they feel unsafe. 4. Emphasize the importance of healthy relationships and boundaries, and teach children how to identify and avoid unhealthy or exploitative relationships. 5. Educate children about online safety, including the dangers of sharing personal information and connecting with strangers online. 6. Encourage children to share any concerns or experiences they may have, and offer them support and guidance. 7. Discuss with children the dangers of migrating or traveling to other areas without proper documentation or supervision, and the risks of being trafficked. 8. Encourage children to be vigilant about their surroundings and to report any suspicious activity to the authorities. 9. Educate children about the importance

of community awareness, and encourage them to share information about trafficking and exploitation with their peers and families. 10. Provide children with age-appropriate resources such as books, brochures or videos that will help them understand the dangers of trafficking and ways to stay safe.

The Cry of a Trafficked Girl

“My parents were finding it hard to feed us as we were extremely poor! All our neighbours knew that we were very poor and a particular man in our village had a special eye on us. I used to call him uncle without knowing his hidden intention regarding me. On a particular day, he told my parents that he could get a job for me in Mumbai city. My parents hesitated as they didn’t want to send their only daughter to a far place for their survival. He tried to convince them and finally they agreed to send me with that uncle. After some time, I slept off in the train and when I woke up we were already in Mumbai city. This uncle who brought me from my village handed me over to an old man who took me to a beauty parlour. They didn’t give me breakfast, but I was directly taken to a beauty parlour. After I was done with a lot of make-up, this old man took me to an apartment and handed me over to another man who was his partner. There was no one to rescue me. I woke up next morning and found myself naked. As I looked down, I was bleeding all over. No one had the heart to take me to the hospital. I was kept locked in their apartment and after a few days I was shifted to another place where I was forced to work in the sex trade. In a day 10-12 men came to my room and I was only 15 years old. So many men came to my room as they wanted a young girl and I was broken to pieces.” Such true stories are not mere isolated incidents. These are the experiences of millions of children in our country. Each of us must contribute in whatever way we can to help our children live and grow in safe environments.

FROM DEATH TO A NEW LIFE

Sr Adele Korah SCCG

Jenny's Predicament

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

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

Incarceration

The friends lifted the wounded man and rushed him to the hospital where he was declared as brought dead. Subsequently the police were informed and Jenny was taken hand cuffed to the station and kept under custody. Later he was shifted to the local sub jail. Jenny's wife and children were crestfallen and dejected as Jenny was the breadwinner of the family. His wife along with her relatives assisted them in employing an advocate to plead his case. The advocate assured that he would help him to obtain a bail and later get him released. But the victim's family and friends were over smart to see that his bail application got rejected. They were able to pay large amount to their advocate and succeeded in seeing that Jenny was given a very severe judgment in the Sessions court, so that he would never return to the family or town. He was punished to undergo imprisonment until death. Jenny was shifted to the central prison Bangalore and was admitted in the convicts' section. One can guess the feelings of a prisoner who receives a judgment that meant that he has to be in prison till the end of his life without any ray of hope for returning to his family. He felt totally cut off from all those whom he held close to him and was deprived of the presence of all who loved him, wife, children and friends and he missed them all. In such a situation he felt frustrated and disheartened. He felt that God alone can be close to him. He came to the prison chapel for

getting some consolation in prayer. That was the time I met Jenny in the chapel. During the prayer meeting he was able to raise his heart to the Lord seeking forgiveness from the merciful Lord. I gave him assurance that I will be in touch with his wife and children and will help them in accepting their situation and offer them the help that they need. He was not in depression, but the thought of living in the prison for his whole life, kept haunting him.

Prayer Meeting in Prison

I had started weekly prayer meetings as a spiritual help for the inmates of the prison who came to the prison chapel. I believed that besides counseling, spirituality can give strength to the suffering brethren apart from prayer and meditation on God's personal, unconditional love could lead persons out of despair. It is in the presence of a loving and forgiving God that people languishing within the prison can find consolation. Or else having been deprived of human help from their dear ones who are their main support, there is every possibility of persons going into depression and despair. In such circumstances, the presence of a person of compassion and understanding who can lead them in prayer can be of great help. In the deep experience of the love of a living God, they receive the needed strength to face the loneliness and deprivation. God assures, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you, for I am the Lord your God the Holy One of Israel, your Savior" (Isaiah 43:1).

A Ray of Hope in Jenny's Life in Prison

At every prayer meeting Jenny was the first person to start his prayer. I recall the times when I started the prayer meeting with one single person and that was Jenny. On some days,

it was when Jenny started singing praises of God that the others joined in prayer one by one. His faith was deepened in prayer. Gradually he was drawn to repentance for the crime he had committed. In the counselling sessions he realized his weakness which led him to the heinous crime of murder. He recalled the many occasions in his life when he caused pain and hurt to his own wife and children by his angry words and unruly, defiant actions. He came to an understanding that he had not made any serious effort to control his anger. He got convinced of the necessity for getting control over his temper. It was when his anger got the better of him at the wrong time, he ended up stabbing his opponent, committing a grievous crime, facing serious legal consequences and criminal charges. When he became angry, resentfulness and irritation followed that caused him to strike out verbally and physically. “Refrain from strife and your sins will be fewer for the hot-tempered kindle strife.” “In proportion to the fuel, so will the fire burn and in proportion to the obstinacy, so will strife increase” (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 can bring peace and joy in his life. He borrowed my book on the Holy Spirit and got a photo copy of it as it was not available on sale. So firm was his determination to begin a new life led by the Holy Spirit. He was strengthened and with the reception of Holy Communion, he received a new anointing of the Holy Spirit. Jenny placed his hope firmly believing in God’s promises and started reciting the Creed, ‘I believe in God the Father Almighty’ 33 times a day. He believed in the words spoken by Moses to Israelites, “The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still” (Exodus 14:14). Trusting

in God, I approached a good advocate to help him to appeal in the High Court, as he was the only bread winner for his family. Jenny's judgment copy was submitted to him. I agreed to arrange for the expenses of his court case with the help of his relatives and other benefactors. The advocate studied scrupulously the judgment meted out to him by the Sessions court and consented to do his best.

Prayers Answered

The Lord said to Hezekiah who prayed to him with faith, "I have answered your prayer" (2 Kings 20:5) Jenny's prayer too was answered. Jenny who called out to the lord in his distress was consoled by the Lord through the revision of his judgment. The judgment given to Jenny by the Sessions Court was to undergo imprisonment until his death. The Lord in his mercy granted him reduction of his punishment. He received the happy news that his punishment was reduced to just seven years as per the judgment of the High Court. Great was his joy when the Lord rewarded his faith in His mercy and forgiving love. The Lord who brought his people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, was merciful to Jenny, and brought him out of prison as he had already completed seven years by then. Jenny returned to his family as a new man. He was no more the man who once burst out in anger at any one who thwarted his path. As one strengthened by the Holy Spirit, he entered his family and the society as one specially blessed by the Lord. Jenny believed and felt that Jesus who welcomes every stray sheep back into his fold had accepted him as his son and blessed him with His own Spirit. He began a new life relying on God who alone can strengthen him in his weakness.

A New Life in Christ

Jenny had to face the people in his surroundings being aware that he had on him the stigma of a criminal, who had come back from prison. But in his behavior every on looker could

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

CHILDREN: WOUNDED AND BROKEN

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

“I really can’t understand how my life turned out thus and how I landed up here. We were 4 children – 3 daughters and a son; and I was the youngest child in the family. A capable little girl loved by everybody. Others used to say that I was a pretty girl with a charming personality. Life was a blessing and I enjoyed all the opportunities I was provided with. I completed the 10th Std., and my parents wanted me to marry my uncle’s son. He was an alcoholic and my parents said that after the marriage he would become better. With lot of hope I got married to him. But things turned out to be contrary to my hopes; he became worse and started to borrow money for drinking. Every evening he would return home fully drunk and he would beat me mercilessly. I would report this to my parents, and they would talk to him, but he was not receptive to any advice. He continued on and I was in utter confusion as to what to do with life. When my son was born, I decided to keep aside all my worries and I wanted to live for my son. Every time he called me ‘Amma’, he brightened my life.

But things didn’t get any better with my husband. He was neither looking after our son nor me. Many times, I thought of ending both our lives, but my conscience would not permit me every time I looked at his face. As time went on, he started to beat me more and more. One evening as I was feeding my child, my husband returned home and started to argue with me. He started beating me and I couldn’t bear the pain. When he was beating me, I pushed him down with all my strength, he fell down and collapsed at once. Seeing him thus

I ran to my neighbours and informed them of this. They took me to the police station and reported to them, but they were engaged with other cases. By the time the police came to our house, my husband was found dead. I was arrested with my son and sent to prison.

Is this the life that I wanted? Confusion arose in my mind. My charming son growing up in prison, I couldn't accept that. He was loved by everybody in prison. There were a few other children in the prison, and he would play with them. But I being a mother, couldn't accept seeing my son behind bars. I spent sleepless nights in the prison. But thinking of my son's future gave me the courage and I decided to live for my son, said Rohini (all names in these true stories have been changed) during my interview with her in 2019 at Bangalore Central Prison. We often hear mothers saying that even if they had to beg to take care of their child they would do so, rather than giving them over to somebody else to take care of them. If this is how mothers who are at home think, what would be the thoughts of mothers in jail, who have lost their hope and trust in humanity? Will she take one more chance to entrust her baby to somebody who is miles away from her. A mother in the jail does not wish to deprive her child of her love. 'She motivates me and makes my time in here go faster', said a mother from jail. 'This smiling baby girl has brought much relief to this cell, where her mother and her adoptive aunties like to spend time playing with her', said the jailor. 'I would not hide away from him, because he is living here, but he is not a prisoner', said another mother whose child was with her in the prison.

Is it Children's Fault?

Now, my question is: This child that spends these years in prison, what would her/his future be? Will this child be normal like other children or is she/he mentally, psychologically and spiritually going to be troubled? Is this experience going

to be like medicine to the child, or will it harm her/him permanently? Everybody feels affection and responsibility for these children who are in prison. Is that going to make these children optimists or pessimists? What impact is it going to make on her/him as the child grows? What are the remedies taken by the government to provide growth and developmental opportunities for these children as they are the citizens of our country? What are our concerns when we come across a 2-year-old child in the prison? Do these children behind bars get the privileges that other children outside the bars enjoy? Children are the same wherever they are. Are their basic needs being met behind bars? Every child who is born is a gift. Why do some children become threat to the society? Every child has a story to narrate. In what environment the child grows matters. Families and societies have all power to bring up heroes and villains. How many children grow mentally and psychologically healthy? Are we bringing up heroes or villains?

Continued Tears from Prison

Anuj was 3 years old, when his parents were arrested in a murder case. Anuj had a younger brother of 2-years-old and all four of them were put behind bars. Anuj and his brother were cute children and they were pampered by all the women in prison. Children grew in prison and they adapted all unwanted habits being with other inmates of their mother. Anuj was shifted to a rehabilitation centre (Kolbe Home, Bangalore, run by Prison Ministry, India) at his age 6 and he took few weeks to get adjusted into the new environment with other children there. If any child scolds or corrects Anuj, he would beat them and even spit on their faces as he had adapted it from prison cells. One day Anuj had an argument with another child in the rehabilitation centre which led into a fight in which both were beating each other. Jeevan, another child from the centre seeing their fight told them that there is a CCTV which records everything. Anuj gave a smile to

Jeevan and said, “I’ve already disconnected the CCTV and nothing will be recorded”. Yes, this is some of the realities of children growing in prison cells. Children do not know to distinguish between good and bad unless they are guided. One day, his mother said to me, ‘my son turned naughty and uncontrollable in the prison as he was honeypot in prison cell’.

What are Our Concerns?

“History will judge us by the difference we make in the everyday lives of children”, said Nelson Mandela. Every child is born to make history; they need to be guided, led to achieve their dreams, need to be given ample of opportunities for growth and development. If Anuj continues to be what he is, what will be the future of this little boy? There are so many Anuj growing behind prison walls and what their future is going to be? What are our responsibilities? Are we busy in taking care of our children and their needs alone? If all of us are busy into our concerns what will be the future of children like Anuj?

Child from Street

In 2012, as I worked in Child-line, in which we used to rescue the children who are in need of care and protection from the streets, bus stands, railway stations and calls from 1098. One day, I was in Shivaji Nagar, Bangalore where I saw a child sleeping with bandaged legs. I went close to the child and woke him up; after my initial conversation I asked about his parents. He said he has a mother and he would take me to her. He took me to the Church Gate and showed his mother, who was a leprosy patient sitting and begging. She saw me with her son, got up from her place and greeted me. As I spend some time with her, I came to know that her husband had abandoned her due to her sickness; she has no one and she was pushed to the streets to beg with her son. I explained on the need of placing her son in the school and I found her very receptive. She came along with me to BOSCO Mane, Bangalore, placed the child in the centre and went happily from there. Appu, the

name which I call very lovingly even to this day, was crying as his mother said bye to him. His mother came back and told him which still echoes in my ears, “I’m pushed to the street for survival, I want you to have a bright future. You should become a doctor and treat patients like your mother”. After uttering those words she left the place. Appu got admission in English Medium School and he is topper in his class, also a class leader today. Walk through the streets and you will see many more Appu sleeping with bandaged legs. If Appu continued to grow on streets, he would have been a 15-years-old boy wandering through the streets.

Child from Slum

Few years back, in a scorching sun, as I was walking through the slums, I saw an aged woman with two children to her both hands holding and walking. Angel aged 5 and Stephen aged 7 were going with their grandmother to a marriage hall as she was going for work. I gave all three of them a broad smile and went close to the children and held them closely knowing completely that they were in a desperate situation. I asked grandmother about children and for my surprise I came to know that their mother committed suicide and father who went in rescue got partially burned and under treatment. These two tiny ones are cared by grandmother who goes to clean the marriage halls and earns something as their livelihood. As I had explained the need of education of these two little ones and their future, grandmother was receptive and she agreed to place the children in a school. Today, Angel and Stephen are studying in CBSE syllabus (supported by priests and sisters), doing excellent in their academic and co-curricular activities. Thanks to Dream India Network for their service, through them I got these children into CBSE.

The Cry Continues

“I hate her. She doesn’t look like me. She is not my child”, said Usha’s father to her mother when Usha was beside her

mother. Usha's parents married 13 years ago and they had two children. Usha's father developed a new relationship with a woman from his office and that's how he started using these abusive words to his wife and children. He did not want to look at his wife neither speak to her as his heart longed for something else. He was in affair with this woman for past 6 months and he planned to divorce his wife. Having this intention behind, he started to torture verbally, physically and psychologically his wife and children every evening as he returned home drunk. What's the mental agony that these children would go through living with such a father? Finally, these two children were placed in an orphanage and mother was a Warden in that same orphanage. The elder girl had the feeling of rejection as she heard repeatedly these words from her father, *"I hate her. She doesn't look like me. She is not my child"*.

What Crime have they Committed?

There are so many Appu in the streets in which we walk daily, so many Angels and Stephens in slums where we need to reach out more, so many Anuj behind the prison walls with their incarcerated parents and there are so many Usha in broken families, who need embracing hands, encouraging words, loving touch and generous hearts to reach them out in humble service. So many children are broken today and the brokenness continues in every nook and corner of our world. Why do the children made to suffer? What crime have they committed? If these children are not taken care of today, tomorrow they would have the same fate of their parents. Their brokenness need to be healed. They are wounded, they need to be treated. They need our love and our service. If they are not healed, then they become threat to the society. A farmer, a fisherman, a construction worker, a painter, a coolie who didn't get educated much, wants their children to be educated in English Medium Schools. They admire their children when they speak English with twinkling eyes.

Conclusion

Every parent wants to give best to their children. Will the incarcerated parent, a mother from slum, a father from street have the same desire? Yes, they too are parents! Can we all join hands in educating these children and providing them a better future? If you and I don't reach out who else will reach out? I believe in, *"My God provides and so no child should go uneducated"*. This motto of mine strengthens me to pick the vulnerable and educate them. Thanks to all *Samagra Education Initiative* benefactors who support our children financially and spiritually. God has blessed us in abundance, in-order for us to become a blessing in the life of marginalized, vulnerable and broken ones. *"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'take and eat; this is my body'"* (Mt 26:26). Jesus has taken us in His hands, gave thanks for the gift of each of us, broke us and gave it to the world, so that we be a blessing to these wounded, broken and vulnerable children. Let us come out of our conveniences and embrace inconveniences for the broken world.

THE STORY OF MY CONVERSION: LOOKING LOVE IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES¹

Dale S. Recinella

In the spring of 1986, my wife, Susan, and I hand the builder a \$50,000 check to break ground on our new dream home in Tallahassee's then poshest neighbourhood, Highgrove. It is a natural next step in our life of upwardly mobile progress in the American dream. Afterwards we attend the Saturday evening vigil Mass where we hear the Gospel reading of the rich, young man (Mk 10:17-25). Although the story has been read at Mass many times before, we *hear* it that night for the very first time. At a restaurant dinner after Mass (the dinner which is to celebrate our new house) we discuss a new question: *Did Jesus mean what He said?* The issue is so important to us and so challenging that we decide not to discuss the question for six months. Instead, we agree to each pray and study Scripture separately, searching for an answer. At the end of six months, we have independently arrived at our answer: *Yes, Jesus meant what He said.* Thus begins a new journey that takes us down the ladder of possessions and social status, and into the mystery of His Kingdom. In May of 1987, we and our children start helping at an inner-city soup kitchen, and in September we abandon our dream house and make that first step downward on the socio-economic ladder.

In the spring of 1988, Susan and I receive the release of the Holy Spirit. For me it is a megaton explosion of repentance,

1 <https://www.osservatoreromano.va/en/news/2023-05/ing-021/looking-for-love-in-all-the-wrong-places.html>

healing, and tears. Susan, who stems from an Irish/German/English heritage, experiences a much quieter but equally profound pouring down of the Holy Spirit. The very ground under our feet is moving. The Kingdom of God is breaking in. In February of 1988 I attend a *Christ Renews His Parish* weekend at Good Shepherd Catholic Church of Tallahassee. My reasons seem obvious: as career has waned in importance, so have business-based acquaintances. This leaves a void that is craving fellowship. I attend the weekend retreat simply to meet men from my church. But God has more in mind.

The emphasis of the weekend retreat is Holy Scripture. One passage in particular snares my attention. *So do not worry, saying 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' for the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well* (Mt 6:31-33). At that time, my legal career requires me to draft or review financial guaranties and warranties all the time. Some are for a half billion dollars or more. I know where to look for loopholes. The guaranty of Jesus in Mt 6 of the Gospel is iron clad. No loopholes. All that is necessary to seal the deal is for us to accept it. All that is necessary to accept it is to seek the Kingdom - not just any kingdom, His Kingdom.

I want to pick up that deal! So, I begin asking, "How do I seek the Kingdom?" Our pastor, Father Michael Foley, has an answer for me: pray to see the world as God sees it and to see yourself as God sees you. I pray for that and ask others to pray for that for me. The second week of May 1988 finds me in Baltimore speaking at a national conference of investment bankers - the bankers of Wall Street. As Thursday evening approaches, I have a full schedule: 5:30pm meet potential clients at the lounge of the Harbor Court to discuss a project financing at Kennedy Space Center; 6:30pm cocktail party; 7:30pm dinner party. I am walking the two blocks from my

room at the Hyatt to the conference at the Harbor Court when a derelict approaches the man in front of me and asks him for a dollar. His tack in my direction tips me off. That derelict will hit me up next. While reaching into my coat pocket for my billfold, I realize that two investment bankers from the conference are walking behind me. Shame and embarrassment strike me like a punch. They will see me giving money to this filthy beggar. What will they think of me? What will they say to other bankers about me?

I stuff the billfold back into its sheath and slide by the stinking bum without a word, looking the other way as though he is not even there. Later, while my 5:30pm business appointment drones on over drinks at the lounge in the Harbor Court, I find myself thinking about that derelict. I know what Jesus told us to do! I read the Scriptures on the weekend retreat at my parish. *Give to everyone who asks you* (Luke 6:30). I know God's instructions, yet I deliberately disobeyed. Now, I cannot get any peace. The potential clients and I wrap up late and head for the cocktail hour. But I slip away in the crowd and exit the Harbor Court through a back door. Everyone that I know in Baltimore is going to be attending that cocktail party. It should be safe now to look for that street bum. No one will see me.

After searching the Inner Harbor area, I find him lying face down behind some bushes. When I turn him by his shoulder, my eyes meet open sores on his face, neck, and lips. I shove two singles in his hand and turn to leave, but he doubles over in pain. I stay. His name is Dennis. No, he has nowhere to stay. Yes, he is very sick. I dare not take him into the Hyatt where I am staying, so, I maneuver him to a park bench near the harbor and tell him to wait until I return for him. He promises to wait. I dash to the Hyatt and into my room, simultaneously hunting for the phone book and shooting off a quick prayer for God's help. My first few phone calls go unheeded. Someone finally answers the phone at the rectory

of the downtown church of *St. Vincent de Paul*. They direct me to *Christopher House*, a rescue mission of some sort. *Christopher House* is full, but they direct me to the *Baltimore Mission*.

The day I arrived in Baltimore, I asked the hotel concierge for a map of the downtown area. He handed me a walking guide and circled in red the areas that I should avoid. As I trace the directions to the *Baltimore Mission* on my little hotel map, I realize that the mission is located about six blocks into the forbidden red circle. Well, it is not dark yet and we will not be walking. I retrieve my rental car from the valet park and go to pick up Dennis from where I left him. He is gone. After almost twenty minutes of cruising back streets and alleys in my rental car, I find him. He is quite busy at that moment - busy getting rolled by two very large teenagers in an obscure alley. While laying on the horn, I screech the car to within two feet of the underage linebackers. I jump out quickly, pulling my billfold from my suit pocket and flashing it like a badge while yelling some gibberish authoritatively. For all I know, I may have been speaking in tongues. The assailants throw Dennis against the back wall of a garage and, holding their hands in the air, yell, "It's cool man. Hey, it's cool." They disappear. I run around to the other side of the car and partially lift, shove, and pour Dennis into the passenger seat. He is a mess.

When we arrive at the *Baltimore Mission*, a staff member escorts Dennis inside for an intake interview. And then Dennis stumbles abruptly back out the front door of the *Mission*. Dennis had left the detox at the mission just three weeks ago and the minimum return time is 30 days. He is not allowed to stay. What am I supposed to do with him? The staff direct me to a public hospital. As I trace their directions on my little hotel map, I realize we will be going many blocks further into the forbidden area that I have been warned about. I begin to feel deeply afraid. As soon as I can see the parking lot at *Church Hospital* from the street, I know it is too far from the hospital entrance. I pull up behind an ambulance at the

entrance, use a fireman's carry-type maneuver to pry Dennis out of the car and steer his dogleg limp into the emergency room.

The city policeman at the entrance watches us with amusement: the overweight, prosperous attorney decked out for cocktails and the filthy, longhaired derelict in tatters. The receptionist is not at all amused. She is all delivery. With her nose tilted back just enough, she assesses Dennis and me with a curt glare and a cursory sniff. "I need his insurance card." She is not the only one with airs. My juices are starting to flow, too. "Dennis, do you have insurance?" My voice betrays more than a tinge of sarcasm as I resort to passive-aggressive assertiveness. He has none of course. I tell the receptionist and anyone else present that I will pay for his bill, whatever it is. I present three American Express Gold Cards and two VISA Cards and a signed blank check. This is not charity. I am in a bind and willing to buy my way out. "I am sorry," she smirks, "We cannot take private pay. We can only accept patients with insurance."

I know the logic without asking. Once the hospital takes Dennis as a patient, it will be responsible to fix whatever is broken — whether my money covers it or not. So, the high-priced hospital lawyers have told the staff not to accept any patients unless they have insurance. That way the hospital will be paid for whatever unforeseen medical care is required. With tail between my legs, I gather up my \$150,000 in plastic available credit and throw myself on the mercy of the cop. "What am I supposed to do with him?" He has no idea. He calls dispatch and they give me directions to North Gay Street, to an indigent detox facility. I half-lead, half-drag Dennis back to the car. In all my worldly wanderings I never contemplated what kind of neighborhood an indigent detox facility would be in.

After Dennis is strapped into the car with his head leaning against the side window, I pull out my little hotel map and

trace the new directions. The map is blank for the area we are headed into. We are going way past the forbidden zone. We are bound for the *do not even think about it* zone. As we work our way up Broadway, it feels like all the people standing on the curbs and sitting on their porches are staring at us. When I make the turn at North Gay Street, with many blocks still to go, I know I have never been in a neighborhood like this before in my life. My teeth are banging together. This is a new depth of fear. Dennis, even in his stupor, is aware enough to be scared. He keeps asking for assurances that I will not leave him here on the street. I assure him that he has nothing to worry about. Surely, the indigent detox facility will accept him. They do not.

I stand at the door turning fifteen shades of red and purple as a lowly bureaucrat explains that they do not accept people who just show up at the door. They cannot even tell us if they have a bed available for him. Their rules require an advance phone call from the prospective patient. Dennis will have to go to a phone, call and request a bed. Then they will tell us if a bed is available. “What am I supposed to do with him?” “That is your problem, buddy” is the answer as the door slams shut. We climb back into the car and pick our way back down North Gay Street. Dennis begins to cry about his life and about what will become of him; about how he has sunk so low that no one will take him. I promise Dennis I will not leave him until we find a place for him to spend the night. That is when I remember the church of *Saint Vincent de Paul*. They must have a phone.

While balancing Dennis on the edge of the broken concrete step with one arm, I lean on the rectory buzzer with the other. Father is not there but the fellow that answers the door takes us to the phone. I dial the detox facility and hand the phone to Dennis. His request is barely intelligible, so when he looks up and mutters, “They said yeah,” I grab the phone and ask the lady to confirm it to me. It is true. They can take

him, but not until 10:00p.m. It is only 9:00p.m. I hang up the phone wondering how to spend an hour. Dennis answers my unspoken question. He starts heaving. We steer him into the bathroom and then the fellow from the parish excuses himself. As I am holding Dennis upright over the toilet by the back belt loop of his pants, I realize how dirty and sickly he is. My mind floods with thoughts of aids or typhus or hepatitis or other diseases. My stomach tightens with revulsion.

During the brief interludes between business over the bowl, Dennis talks about God abandoning him. I ask if he wants to pray. He nods. I help wash his face and we pass through the rectory entrance into the 150-year-old church of *St. Vincent de Paul*. It is pitch-dark except for the candles in the sanctuary. We are alone. I steer Dennis to the front row pews where we kneel together in the light of the blue votive candles. I stand next to him with my hand on his shoulder - mostly to ensure a safe distance between us. I start to lead him through the words of the *Our Father* but it feels empty, flat, meaningless. In my head I think, "Lord, where are you? This is not working." In the next moment Dennis breaks into hysterical tears, sobbing uncontrollably and crying loudly over and over again, "God, don't let me die like this! Please, God, don't let me die like this!" In the midst of his sobbing, he wraps his arms around me and buries his face against my shoulder and my neck. I freeze in horror, filled with panic. He is filthy and diseased. He reeks and is drooling all over me. His tears and saliva are running down my neck. As I am about to pull his arms from around me and shove him away, in the back of my mind I hear myself whisper, "Jesus, help me." It all vanishes: The fear. The panic. The terror. It all disappears.

Without my thinking it, my arms are holding Dennis, and my hand is on his head. I pray out loud for him and for his healing, and I cry with him. I am too broken, too full of fear, too worried about my survival, to hug Dennis. But Jesus can hug Dennis with my arms if I allow it. We stay together in the

church for the rest of our time. I drive Dennis back to the indigent detox facility at 10:00pm. As the big guy is walking him down the hall, Dennis stops, turns, and comes back to me. "Thanks for caring about me," he hugs me one last time. At 10:25pm I am back in the Harbor Court Hotel. The professional entertainment, a Ronald Reagan impersonator, is just finishing and the crowd is gravitating into the ballroom for cocktails. Everyone is decked out nicely and the conversation is familiar: vacations to New Zealand and Europe. Best places to shop. Big deals and big profits. It is all very familiar to me, but I feel like a stranger in a strange land. This is the world that I have treated as reality for years. But only 15 minutes away is Dennis. I realize that this is the world as God sees it. All this hoopla that I have treated as reality is only an illusion. All my material trappings are invisible. God sees my spirit - a troubled, broken spirit that is just as sick to God's eyes as Dennis' body is to mine. As I look around at the gowns, jewellery, and champagne, I hear my own voice in the back of my thoughts screaming out, "God, don't let me die like this! Please, God, don't let me die like this!" All those prayers have been answered. Like a thief in the night, the Kingdom of God has broken in.

TRANSFORM PRISON LIFE IN 2 SIMPLE STEPS

Benedict Savarimuthu

The Great Commandment

If you had a chance to transform your life, both in prison and hereafter, in just 2 simple steps, would you do it? Read Mt 22: 34-40 and find out how easy God has made it for us and why we should take advantage of it, while in prison! “When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. One of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the Law?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.”

Simple Exercise

We are going to do a simple exercise now to analyse how intimate our relationship with God is. I invite all of you to please close your eyes and answer the following questions. The idea is for us to analyse ourselves personally, without focusing on those around us. a) How many percent do you really, really love God? 10%... 30%... 50%... 70%... 90% or 100%? b) Do you love God with all your heart? 10%... 30%,... 50%... 70%... 90% or 100%? c) Do you love God with all your soul? 10%... 30%... 50%... 70%... 90% or 100%? d) Do you love God with all your mind? 10%... 30%... 50%, ...70%... 90% or 100%?

You can open your eyes now. Would a few of you like to share what's preventing you from loving Him 100%? After listening to the feedback from a few inmates, let us kindly move on to the next question. Before we move on, could I ask you all, once again to kindly close your eyes and put up your hands for the following questions. a) Do you have one or more persons who still remain unforgiven in your life? b) Are the people who are unforgiven outside prison? Kindly raise your hands. c) Kindly keep your eyes closed! Are there people who are unforgiven inside prison? Continue to keep your eyes closed and answer these questions: 4) a) How many of you want to be 100% loved by God? Kindly raise your hands. b) How many of you want to be 100% blessed by God? c) How many of you want to be 100% forgiven by God?

Deepen our Relationship with God and Neighbour

Let us deepen our relationship with God and neighbour. Let us reflect on these 2 important guidelines: 1) You can either love God because you have to or love to? There is a world of difference between the two!!! If you love God because you have to, then you won't love Him Whole-heartedly! You're forced to love Him out of fear and see God as powerful enough to punish you and use force, pain, suffering and misery to bring you to Him! If that's how you see God, you're mistaken! God doesn't take pleasure in your misery and pain. He wants us to use the freedom and choice He gave us and the trust He placed in us wisely and responsibly. Often, we abuse it ourselves and then suffer and then think He is to blame for it. These are yet other excuses that blind us! But if you love God because you love to, then you'll find it much easier to freely relate to Him, like a close friend and a loving, caring Father. You can tell Him all your ups and downs, joys and frustrations, fears and plans and keep moving forward daily, knowing He's with you, all the way! Go ahead, start a new, more intimate bond with God by loving Him, because you love to!

Better, Brighter and Blessed

How many of you want to be Blessed all your life? How many of you want your loved ones to be blessed while you are in prison? How many want to see miracles in prison and beyond? How many of you want a better, brighter future, starting from today and hereafter? Then, it is time to let go of the past and focus on making life in prison more pleasing to God. And you can do it in just 2 steps. As stated in verse 37 and verse 39, step one is to first love God with all your heart, soul and mind! Step two is to love every person, as yourself! So, you need God's mercy for all your past sins. That mercy is yours, if you in turn will forgive those who remain unforgiven in your life, both in this prison and out there, if any! So, let's put all the past behind and move on to deepen that intimate relationship with God within ourselves, even while in prison! Nobody can stop you from enjoying that, even within these prison walls. So, get out of that inner prison of living in the past which you have put yourself in! Stop clinging on to the past and stop allowing doubts and fears and negativity keep you in bondage! It is time to break free and claim that freedom that Jesus has won for you! Live it! Rise because of it, from today! Keep your mind focused on positive thoughts! Make sure they are uplifting your own spirit and of those around you. There are enough challenges in prison! Why make things worse, for yourself and others! Become and be the one who is always positive and life-giving, because of your own intimate relationship with God through prayer, the Word of God and your deep relationship with the Holy Spirit. If it's not deep enough, ask God for it and it will be yours according to the level and percentage of your surrender, obedience and trust in Him! The more you open up, the greater the benefits! That's it! That's all!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, I want to love you more and more! I want to love you with more of my heart, my soul and mind. Teach

me how. Help me on this journey back to a deeper intimacy with you, each day in prison. I want to feel you so close to me that nothing or no one can come between us and that love you want to give me today and every day. Thank you for that love and make me more and more worthy of receiving even more love from you and to share that love with those who need it around me in prison. Jesus, my loving Lord and precious Saviour, how deep was your love for me, to go through all that suffering and pain to redeem me and all souls, including every soul in this prison! So, make me show my gratefulness to you by changing me from within. Help me give up all attitudes, habits, thoughts, words and lifestyle that's offensive and ungrateful. Help me in turn to become and be a better follower and witness within these prison walls. O Holy Spirit, help me appreciate your promptings and guidance. Help me differentiate, what's right and pleasing to God and what's offensive and sinful. I want to be more loving to God and others, but it's so challenging at times within prison, particularly with so much 'difference of opinions and clashing of attitudes and egos'. Give me the wisdom to handle my own weaknesses and the Challenges others bring into my life, while serving this prison sentence. I ask all these, for the sake of all those who are in this prison, especially those who are going through similar challenges, in Jesus most powerful and precious name, Amen".

Decisions

Spend special time in private prayer, recalling the times you have not loved God 100% in heart, soul and mind?! Look for ways to plan to love God more and glorify Him more, while in prison. Can you become His special positive prayer warrior, faithful wounded healer and life-giving witness? Remember, to receive forgiveness from God, you need to forgive, those who still remain unforgiven in your life! Reflect on how to remove all barriers that are stopping you from giving mercy and receiving mercy!

AFSHIN JAVID: STRANGE ENCOUNTER IN PRISON

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

“The God who forgave me, Jesus who redeemed me from the clutches of my sins can also set you free from the clutches of your sins” says Afshin Javid, a former Hezbollah (an Islamic Militant Group) soldier who encountered Jesus while he was caught and put in jail in Malaysia. Afshin was born in 1972 in southern Iran in a city called Abadan. His earliest childhood memories were the Islamic revolution in 1979. When he was about eight years old he remembers a plane flying about 40 feet above his head and a few seconds later there was a loud sound and the ground shook. This was the first bomb dropped by the Iraqi Airforce. At this point they got into a car and left everything they owned and went to a city about an hour away. When the Iraqi’s advanced they had to move four more times before they had to leave the country in 1987.

Faithful to His Religion

Since childhood he followed all commandments of Islam including fasting and praying. His grandfather was a devout Muslim, his father was a leader for Islamic revolution in Iran. He studied Quran intensively. As a 15 year old he crossed the dessert walking into Pakistan and witnessed poverty in Pakistan. He wanted to involve himself into more of Islamic works and so he joined Hezbollah and served as a soldier with them for 2 years in Pakistan. From 1990-1992 he spent time in Bangladesh as a missionary while waiting to move to Canada.

Arrest in Malaysia

Later he moved to Malaysia, but was caught by Malaysian police because of his illegal passport. He was put in Jail and he taught Islam in jail, telling co-prisoners of what they must do and what are their duties towards Allah. In prison, he did his routine every day, prayed obviously five times a day with the intention of spending more time with God. Apart from these five times intensive prayers he also spent more time at the day end in prayers and prayed many extra prayers. He had the habit of reading Quran, page to page once every 10 days. There are many words in Quran repeated continually which had no meaning, but are the secrets of Quran. One night, as he was meditating on these words, a spirit entered his room and it was much more powerful than he could handle or overcome. He was filled with fear and so he tried using the words from Quran in the name of Allah and prayed in the name of Allah.

Encountering Jesus in the Dark Cell of Prison

But nothing helped him at that moment, was totally desperate and he felt like something choking him. He felt like he was dying in the cell. He cried out to the heavens and he heard a clear voice saying, *Bring the name of Jesus*. He didn't give a second thought. Afshin Javid says in his words, *if someone is drowning and sees a rope, he would never question about the colour of the rope, but rather he will just grab the rope*. And, so he did saying, *Jesus, if you are truth, show me yourself*. And to this day, he cannot comprehend why he said these words at that moment instead of saying, *Jesus, help me*. Before he could finish saying *Jesus, if you are truth, show me yourself*, everything was back to normal.

Moment: Not Conversion, but Confusion

And this was not his conversion, rather beginning of confusion. Why would Jesus help a Muslim was his question. All his life, he had done his best to be a good Muslim, he

did everything in the ways of Allah and even to be a martyr for Allah. He didn't find answer for two weeks of why Jesus came to help him. And finally, he decided to fast and pray and ask God to reveal His ways to him. Now, he sat down in prison cell and prayed for hours together! But, did he find an answer? He found no answer even after two weeks. The greatest sin one can commit in Islam which is unforgivable is doubting Allah, doubting his teaching. And he did this now. But, suddenly a bright light filled his room and he covered his head in his arms and cried out asking Allah to forgive him.

Afshin Javid in His Words

Afshin Javid testifies in his words, "As I was crying out to the Lord asking me to forgive me, I felt the touch of someone on my shoulders and saying to me *I forgive you*. The very instant those words were spoken, I physically felt forgiven and I couldn't understand. *Who is this God, saying to me I forgive you and I feel forgiven?* With much perplexity when I asked, *who are you?* I heard the voice saying, *I am the way, the truth and the life*. The moment I heard these words, I understood it as something special, but I had no idea what those words meant and had no clue who this God is! I asked Him, *what's your name* and I heard the answer, *Jesus Christ the living God*. The moment Jesus spoke these words; I just fell on my face to the ground weeping in His presence. I just wept and wept!

Send Me O Lord!

I was taught in my religion to kill in the way of Allah, but today I hear from Jesus to love in the way of Jesus, to forgive in the way of Jesus. Jesus revealed to me that God is all about forgiveness and love. After weeping for two hours in the prison cell, I stood at Jesus' feet. Jesus asked me to look up and the moment I looked up, I saw people from all different generations, nationalities and backgrounds. Every single person I saw, I could see every single wrong they have done and I said to Jesus, *God, I live among all these people, all sinners,*

I am a sinner. Jesus made me to realize how easily I am been forgiven by Him and He conveyed a powerful message to me that *He is a God who forgives every sinner the way He forgave me.* And, He asked me, *who will convey this message of my forgiveness to the people?* And I said, *Send me O Lord!* And Jesus said, *Go!* That's how I became a Christian.

Jesus, the Provider

I asked Jesus to give me a Bible and in the jail someone from other section walked up to me, giving a book to me saying, *Take it! This is what you asked for!* I was shook at once. The man who gave me the Bible was an Indian and I spoke Urdu and Hindi with him. When he gave it me, I knew its Bible! I said to the Lord, *Lord, last night I asked for the Bible and this morning you send it for me. You are a mighty God. You are a provider that you provide so quickly.*

Jesus: A God of Love and Forgiveness

I don't expect anybody to become a Christian because of my testimony; my testimony is only good for me. I only want people to know that the Almighty God who is all able, who is searching for all seeking hearts and who loves all humanity with all His strength and power is Jesus. If you are reading my testimony, I only want you to know, the God who forgave me, Jesus who redeemed me from the clutches of my sins and assured me that I can be in heaven with Him, can also assure you the same and make you to taste the same forgiveness and love. May glory be to Him today and forever! Afshin Javid is the founding member of *I AM Thirsty Ministries in Vancouver.*

**HE WAS A TEEN WHEN COPS BRANDED HIM ‘THE
DEVIL’ DECADES LATER, HE WAS BAPTIZED TO A
STANDING OVATION¹.**

Nicole O’Reilly

Leon Robert Blais was a notorious child criminal. Today, he’s entrusted with the keys to a downtown church. Has he redeemed himself? Leon Robert Blais’ hands shake as he pulls a .45-calibre semi-automatic handgun out of his backpack. He fires into the air, a warning for everyone to stay back. The look on his face is hard, but his hands shake so much he has to put the gun on the ground, so he can rummage in his backpack for the key he’s taken. At 15, the small, red-haired Hamilton teen known as Robbie already has a record for stealing cars, escaping custody and running from police. But this latest crime streak is a turning point; he has a gun. It’s 1995 and Blais and his buddy are at Arrell Youth Centre to break out Blais’ girlfriend. They weren’t planning to bring a gun, but Blais stole one from a rural Flamborough property “just in case.” It was easy and it won’t be the last gun. It was also the beginning of a public persona he would eventually embrace. He was called a “bad kid” and later the “devil.” He would go on to rack up hundreds of charges and become one of Hamilton’s most notorious criminals. But his crimes are only part of his story.

Back in 1995, Blais had already been detained at that youth detention centre several times himself. By that point he’d escaped at least twice, including a couple of months before

1 Courtesy: *The Hamilton Spectator*, June 20, 2023

when he broke a lock and replaced it with dollar-store variety so he could sneak out. During his stays at Arrell, friends would often promise they'd come break him out, but they never showed. So, when he promised his girlfriend he would come for her, he was determined to keep his word, no matter the consequences. The trio - Blais, his girlfriend, and the friend - fled in a stolen car and made their way to Woodstock, Ont., where they holed up in a place Blais liked to crash. But police traced a phone call and Blais woke to the place surrounded. He ran through the building, opening a sliding-glass door on someone's balcony and charging through their apartment. It was no use, Blais and his accomplices were arrested, and police seized the .45, a shotgun and stolen vehicles.

The Sept. 23, 1995, headline in *The Spectator* about Leon Blais reads: "Bad kid' behind breakout only 15." "This is a one-kid crime wave," an unnamed Hamilton police officer was quoted as saying. "He's not like other child criminals - not even close. He's a bad kid." Blais did not have a typical childhood. He didn't spend a single day in a regular high school because he was in and out of jail. He jokes that the stories of his crimes in *The Spectator* are "kind like my high-school yearbook." He says the way he was spoken and written about shaped how he thought of himself and his future. He was later called "the devil himself" by another cop, a moniker Blais learned to believe and eventually embody with pride. He built himself up into a character, "kind of John Dillinger complex," stealing cars, orchestrating sophisticated break-ins, stealing guns and running from the law. "I think adrenalin is actually the worst addiction I had in my life," he says. "Far more than any other drug I've ever done."

Standing with Police

Fast-forward nearly three decades and Blais, who goes more by Leon these days, stands outside St. Patrick Roman Catholic Church in downtown Hamilton. It's Friday, barbecue day at

the De Mazenod Door Outreach, where volunteers hand out more than 500 meals a day to Hamilton's most needy. "Hello, brother," he says as he hands out food to a regular. Many in the line have known Blais for decades, both from his life of crime and his life of addiction that followed. That the 43-year-old is well - and not in prison, which is likely a surprise to some; perhaps most of all to him. On this recent Friday, instead of running from Hamilton police, he stands shoulder to shoulder with them and a paramedic team that makes up the social navigator unit, handing out burgers, sausages and drinks. Among the officers is Sgt. Pete Wiesner, who leads the crisis response branch that includes social navigator, a team that works with vulnerable people to connect them with resources and divert them away from the criminal justice system. Wiesner was a fresh-faced, 21-year-old correctional officer at the Barton Street jail when he first met Blais, who was 18 and had just been transferred to adult detention.

Sgt. Pete Wiesner, who leads a team of police that works with vulnerable people to connect them with resources and divert them away from the criminal justice system, has witnessed a transformation in career criminal Leon Blais and now counts himself as an ally. A few years later, Wiesner became a police officer and, like every cop in Hamilton, he knew the name Robbie Blais. So it was surprising when several years ago Blais unexpectedly went looking for Wiesner. Word got around to Wiesner and the two reconnected. Wiesner was the type of correctional officer - and later cop - who always spoke with everyone, and Blais was looking for a good listener. He was looking for a way out of addiction and his lifestyle. Wiesner sees this often in his work. Guys who have lived through jail, addiction, homelessness and other struggles reach a certain age and realize all they've been missing. Wiesner has witnessed this transformation in Blais and now counts himself as an ally. Blais first came to the church high on crystal meth and in need of a meal. Later he started volunteering. That turned into a full-time job, where today he can be found doing everything

from picking up food deliveries, to mowing the lawn, to giving Narcan to someone who has overdosed. His dog Christina is always with him.

Leon Blais first came to St. Patrick church high on crystal meth and in need of a meal. Later he started volunteering. That turned into a full-time job, where today he can be found doing everything from picking up food deliveries, to mowing the lawn. His dog Christina is always with him. If he was addicted to adrenalin in his youth and crystal meth in his 30s, in this third act he says he's found God and the power of kindness. "I never realized how personally fulfilling being kind is. Like, if only everyone could feel that and everyone would do it, you know?" Blais says. "And it's not that I wasn't kind before, but now every morning I was waking up with the intention: Who can I help today?" Perhaps no one has more insight into that than Father Tony O'Dell, who calls Blais "my greatest success in many ways."

Father Tony O'Dell, who calls Leon Blais "my greatest success in many ways," says Blais is trusted by the guests of St. Patrick church. That's because Blais can reach the guests in a way O'Dell and others at the church cannot. Blais knows what life is like for many guests of the outreach ministry. He's been where they are. The church previously hired private security to help keep peace, but they were afraid of some the guests - many who are in active addiction or suffer from mental illness - and police were being called frequently. When Blais was hired, he was a natural. There are still disruptions at the church at times, but O'Dell says Blais is trusted by the guests. "He brings the earthiness. He brings the sense of realness. He understands people," O'Dell says. That is not to say there haven't been missteps, or that there won't be struggles ahead. Blais' work at the church is as much about helping others as it is about helping himself. That work is continuous. How does a boy become a notorious criminal before reaching adulthood? Why would a man, having already been through so

much trouble, turn to drugs in his 30s? And is it possible for someone to ever fully recover from that? To redeem himself?

Addicts and Mob Hitmen

Blais was maybe age six or seven when he poked himself on a needle at home. His eyes turned yellow and he ended up at McMaster Children's Hospital with hepatitis C. The little red-haired boy got better and returned home. It didn't occur to him to question where the needle came from. Leon Blais, right, was born in May 1980, the second of four boys, to Kathryn and Leon Blais. Blais was born in May 1980, the second of four boys, to Kathryn and Leon Blais. He didn't notice the drugs in his house until he was older. "I have lots of good memories from when I was a kid, and I have lots of bad memories," Blais says. Police raided his home on Tindale Court, near Quigley Road, when his mom was pregnant with a younger brother. He didn't question why police were there. All he saw were officers being mean to his pregnant mom. When he was nine years old, Blais' dad died from a heroin overdose. To protect them, his mom told her boys he died in a car crash. Blais grew up abhorring drunk drivers before his world was turned upside down when he learned the truth as a young man. After his dad died, his mom's drug use skyrocketed. The family had been living with her mom and stepdad on the Mountain, but things fell apart. "It wasn't long after my dad passed that the fight erupted between my mom and my grandparents," Blais says. She packed her boys into the van and brought them down the Mountain, where they crashed on people's couches for about a month before she found her own place on Lottridge Street.

The irony, as Blais realized when he got older, was that his grandmother was an addict too. But she hid it well. She was an amputee, and her drug use was hidden as medicine. His grandmother Mary's second husband worked, so there was always food on the table. That stability shielded the kids from

noticing the drugs. Blais didn't know much about his biological grandfather, George Joseph Hasler, who died before he was born. It was only as an adult that he came to understand that he was essentially a hitman for the Mob. After one of Blais' many arrests, he happened to find himself on the same Barton jail range as the now dead Hamilton mobster Pat Musitano. Hamilton's criminal underworld can be a small community, especially behind bars, and Blais knew everybody. When he got to the range Musitano approached and handed Blais a book. They shook hands. "I didn't know your grandfather was George Hassler?" Musitano said, handing over a copy of "The Enforcer" by Adrian Humphreys, about the life and death of crime boss Johnny "Pops" Papalia. On Page 77, the book talks of Papalia expanding his organization. This included moving "the much-feared Joe Hasler" to "designated enforcer." It was through this book and later conversations that Blais learned who his grandfather was. His mom later told him stories about her dad, who spent much of her life in prison. He would come to understand his grandmother more, including her own struggles and time in prison, as well as his mom, who was surrounded by crime and death from an early age. "It explains a lot because the one thing that my mom always instilled in me was that I didn't have a right to take another person's life," he says. "Like, my mom always discouraged doing drugs, stealing, all of that stuff; even though she did it, she still discouraged it." After moving to the lower city, drug use became more obvious in the home and life became less stable. His mother had bank-robbing boyfriends whose crews would stay at the house.

"So there was lots of money around, lots of drugs and lots of craziness," Blais says. At times there were bags of money in the house, other times police would kick in the doors and drag guys off to jail. One-time Blais asked for money to go to the store and his mom's boyfriend threw a Ziploc bag of cash at him. Blais' mom was "freaking out" but the boyfriend wanted to see what he would do. "I splurged in the variety store," he

says. He bought lots of candy and magazines. "Like, as a poor kid, that was kind of cool to get to go to the store and just splurge like that." Blais went to Prince of Wales Elementary School, where he was bullied. One kid stole his shoes. But Blais says he had nowhere to turn. He couldn't tell anyone at home - his mom's boyfriend would just tell him to confront his bully who would no doubt pummel him. He didn't want to tell anyone at school out of fear he'd be a bigger target. So Blais started to skip class. He met kids downtown, where they'd hang out. One day, while standing with his friends, his bully walked by. The boy didn't dare look at Blais, who in that moment understood the protection of having a crew. He would run with a gang for the next 20 years. "Kids don't start bad though, they are developed," Blais says. "Of course, I wasn't born a bad kid." Nor was his mom a bad mom, he says. She was broken, over the death of her husband and other traumas. A scared kid will "do anything." And that's dangerous.

The First Arrest

Around age 12 or 13, Blais decided it would be a good idea to break into the home of a classmate. He knew the boy's father was a cop. It would be cool to get a badge and a gun, he thought. He could show it off to his friends. But it didn't go to plan.

"I didn't get the badge or gun," he says. "And I got arrested." Blais broke in through the "smallest window ever." He didn't find what he was looking for and ran home. Police already knew Blais well - he had been causing problems for a few years - and the size of the window narrowed the suspect pool. It was so small, only a child could fit through. Police came to his house immediately. He confessed instantly, hoping to avoid stiff punishment. This was his first criminal charge. He got bail initially, but didn't show in court. And so began his cycle of incarceration.

Blais started stealing cars - at first, he'd grab ones stashed by his older brother - and go for joyrides. Around 14, he drove with friends to Ottawa and back. "I was five-foot-nothing' and I've looked so young all my life," he says, adding you'd think it would have been obvious a kid was behind the wheel. But more often, as long as he stayed between the lines and didn't speed, he wouldn't be pulled over. "I'm amazed that I made it that far because I just jumped in a car and started driving for the first time ... you know, bump into a tree here," he says. With practice he became a skilled driver and would lead police on chases. Blais was never arrested quietly. That was part of his notoriety. Police knew he was volatile, unpredictable — and that was dangerous. "Every time I'd get out, I'd just go steal more cars or they'd put me in open custody (halfway house)," he says. "And I ran." Blais thinks he escaped from custody 11 times over the years. It was while he was in Arrell that Blais and friends started his gang the Little Devils - initially for protection inside.

On the outside, the gang worked together to steal stuff. They cut holes in rooftops, disabled alarms and made off with stolen cars chock full of stolen goods. Blais insists they were never as organized as police and media reports made them out to be. As a teen, Blais could not be named because he was a young offender. As his notoriety grew, *The Spectator* gave him the nickname Rudy.

As a teen, Leon Blais could not be named because he was a young offender. As his notoriety grew, *The Spectator* gave him the nickname Rudy. An August 1997 story recounts how police arrested the 17-year-old after a month on the run. The teen - angry and dishevelled from a police chase and a struggle with a homeowner on Fullerton Avenue - suddenly perks up and sticks his tongue out when he spots a *Spectator* photographer. "Rudy, the punk prince of Hamilton's young criminals, has done it again. Stuck his tongue out at the whole darn world, something he's been doing with astounding regularity since he was 12 years old," the story reads.

While he was in custody that year, Blais recalls a correctional officer finding poems of his that referenced killing cops. He insists he was just venting and had no intention of hurting anyone, but the poems were alarming and led to a high-risk threat assessment that would stay on his file.

In November 1999, when Blais was 19, he was wanted for breaching probation. The Spectator published his entire record, including his juvenile record, with the intention of showing the community how dangerous he was. The move led to four Spectator employees to be charged with violating the Young Offenders Act. Eventually the former editor-in-chief pleaded guilty and was granted an absolute discharge. The charges against three other employees were dropped. In court the judge noted the “honourable intentions” of the editor but, “unfortunately ... you ran afoul of the law.” This saga only further entrenched Blais in his beliefs about a world set against him. Today, The Spectator is writing about Blais and his youth record with his permission. He agreed to share his story and not to downplay his criminal past in an effort to show he has learned from those mistakes. Over recent years, he’s also made amends with some of the victims of his crimes. People have often assumed that given all his time in custody, from such a young age, that he would have received counselling and other support, but Blais says that wasn’t the case. The only time he had psychological testing was when he spent some time in jail in Quebec after being arrested at a bar there in his 20s. He was diagnosed with mild depression and anxiety.

Blais said every time he went to court it “built me up.” Judges would tell him he’s smart and should be doing something else with his life. Instead of using this as fuel to turn his life around, it motivated him to become a smarter criminal. As a kid, he hung around bank robbers and learned skills. “I was exposed to older people doing things that the kids aren’t exposed to,” he says. “So I was absorbing that stuff and just

kind of moving more like a like a career criminal instead of a kid.” As a teen, he used those skills to survive. Although, he also recognizes that he is responsible for his actions; that he didn’t become a criminal by accident. “It definitely was a choice, though,” he adds.

A Police Shooting

Blais and a friend are standing on the on-train tracks near Congress Crescent, off Mount Albion Road in Hamilton. It’s September 2009 and the 29-year-old was once again on the run. He had long ago seamlessly transferred from the youth to adult prison system, continuing his pattern of crime and running from the law. His buddy had a shotgun stashed in some bushes. As the two spoke, Blais spotted two guys walking up to the tracks. They weren’t in uniform, but Blais could tell by the distinct bulge in their clothes from their guns that they were police. “That’s cops,” Blais whispered to his friend. Without hesitating, his friend reached into the bushes and grabbed the shotgun. He pointed it at the cops. Blais ran. “I knew I wanted no part of it,” he says. One of the officers chased him and Blais threw his backpack when the officer nearly caught him. As he climbed up the hill to the Red Hill Valley Parkway, he heard four shots ring out. The cop who was chasing him ran toward the gunfire.

Blais didn’t know if his friend had just shot police or if police shot his friend. It turned out to be the latter. The friend survived, only to die many years later in prison. Inside the backpack, police found Blais’ parole identity card. He was soon named the “No. 1 priority” for the repeat offender parole enforcement squad - a provincial team led by the OPP who chase down wanted federal offenders.

He was arrested in Ottawa three months later. Despite his history with the paper, Blais would call The Spectator newsroom unsolicited from jail. He once wrote a letter to the editor musing about the conditions in jail and the lack of

programming to help prisoners. "A person gets 10 years for an armed robbery and is put in a facility that offers no education or self-help programs," he wrote. "He is locked in an eight-by-12 cell (for) 23 hours a day until he is released. What kind of behaviour does the public expect when he is released? He's likely a very angry, bitter person with no knowledge on how to act or how to live a normal life." Blais still stands by those words. He also recalls that there isn't a lot to do in jail, but there are always newspapers to read. Blais guesses he read the paper every day from the age 14 to 22. He would call the newsroom because he was bored.

Life Changing Toke

Blais is at a New Year's Eve party at a mansion in Dundas. He's about 30 and had a falling out with friends just before Christmas. Alone, he found himself talking to a woman who offered him "a toke." In the past he had always said no to hard drugs, but angry at his friends, he agreed. He blew out that first taste of crystal meth and turned to the woman. "My life will never be the same," he says. He tried it only a few more times that first year, he claims. But "the horrible drug" had a hold on him. By the second year he was an addict. Where the crimes of his youth were organized, in this new phase of his life they were desperate. Breaking into cars, stealing out of sheds. His mind was never clear enough to organize the types of crimes he had in the past. The drug made him act erratically. He spent hundreds of hours collecting rocks and other items, and going through garbage. He would spend hours in parks and fields and forests looking for treasure. During his treasure hunts he found two arrowheads and a rock that appears to have amethyst. The discoveries fuelled conspiratorial thoughts about what the treasures meant. "This is what crystal meth does to your brain," he says. "I really believed I was hunting hidden Templar, hidden Nazi treasure."

There was a time he stopped believing his mom was his biological mom. In August 2018, high on crystal meth, Blais was riding a motorcycle along Lakeshore in the west end of Burlington looking for cars to break into. It was daylight and he had no regard for cameras or witnesses when he happened upon a home with a “fancy” Rolls-Royce and Tesla in the garage. He could tell by the look of the home that there was no one there at the time. He had no idea it was the home of billionaire and entrepreneur Ron Joyce. “Brazen and totally stupid” he stole the cars in broad daylight. He took the Tesla first and then went back for the Rolls-Royce, which he drove to Dundurn Castle. “I was a dirty, grubby, drug-addicted guy,” he says, adding that he stood out and everyone stared. He was caught later that day with the Tesla going to pick up his welfare cheque. Given his extensive record, Blais feared a lengthy sentence, but for the first time in a very long time he got a break. The charges were withdrawn over low probability of conviction.

While he was out bail for those car thefts in April 2019, he was found sleeping a stolen Ford Taurus in Stoney Creek. He spent five months in jail before pleading guilty. “Your honour, clearly my record is horrendous ... but you can see there has been a serious decrease in my criminal behaviour,” he told the judge. During his addiction, his crimes had decreased both in frequency and severity. He was sentenced to three years’ probation. “The only one that can help you is yourself,” Ontario Court Justice Tony Leitch told Blais, according to a story on CHCH. “I was very well aware of how lucky I was ... not lucky, blessed,” he says now, particularly about the Burlington charges being withdrawn. When he left the Barton jail that last time he just started walking. By the time he got to Cannon Street East, somebody was offering him a crystal meth pipe. “I don’t know why I said no,” he says, adding he felt “disgusted.” A few months later - and clean - he decided to search for a daughter he’d learned about a few years earlier. No longer deep in his addiction, he was able to make contact

with the mother. For a short time, he had contact with the girl he believes is his daughter, but the relationship with the family dissolved. For the girl’s sake and for the sake of his own mental health, he says he walked away. But Blais says the little girl inspired him to change his life. It was his hope of getting someone at the church to put in a good word for him that first led him to want to volunteer there. But he soon realized that wasn’t going to happen. What made him stay? Turns out, occupying his time “in a positive way” was a good way to keep busy. “I don’t have the time to screw up,” he says, adding that it didn’t take long before he realized how fulfilling it could be. It started when O’Dell asked him to pick up some trash.

Leon Blais got his start volunteering at St. Patrick church by picking up trash. Then he asked him to help at the doors during church service, greeting people and making sure there weren’t disruptions. Blais wouldn’t go in the church at first. But about 15 minutes into the service most people had already arrived, so he’d step just inside the doorway and listen to the music. O’Dell would notice him singing along.

To Blais, the music “would be like taking an antidepressant pill.” Then the music pulled him right into the church. For the first several months he volunteered, a staff member worked with him, keeping an eye out. Eventually O’Dell, impressed by his work ethic, offered him a job.

The Baptism

Blais had been working maybe six months when O’Dell handed him the full set of keys to the church. Blais hesitated. “Like, these people trust me more than I trust myself at that point in time,” he thought. “Are you sure you’re doing the right thing?” Blais asked. “Yeah, I work with a lot of people Leon and I am a pretty good judge of character ... I know you’re going to make this something that’s going to give you the next step to get up on your feet again and start believing

in yourself,” O’Dell replied. It was both uplifting and scary to have that responsibility.

“I’ll never forget that,” Blais says. Over time, Blais saw the responsibility in a new light. Now he sees himself as a “strong protector of this block,” he says about the area around the church bound by King and Main streets, Victoria and East avenues. If the alarm goes off in the middle of the night, he’s the one responding. He’s found bodies, responded to overdoses and stopped fights. He’s confiscated weapons, including a dirty machete and bats, and administered Narcan to at least seven people to prevent them from dying of an opioid overdose. At the same time that the church gave him keys, O’Dell also found him an apartment. It was painted and furnished. The fridge was stocked. O’Dell and Blais walked over together and O’Dell handed over the key. “I just stayed inside door and let him go in and look,” O’Dell says. After a few minutes, he walked in and found Blais crying. No one had ever done such a kind thing for him before. While Blais was initially resistant to becoming a parishioner, that changed too. After being drawn in by the music, he found faith.

While Leon Blais was initially resistant to becoming a parishioner at St. Patrick church, that changed too. After being drawn in by the music, he found faith. After becoming a staff member, Blais went through the Catholic initiation program, which runs from September to Easter. O’Dell was worried about whether Blais was prepared for the commitment. But he ended up having the best attendance of anyone taking the class. He would even stop by after to speak with O’Dell and ask questions. Blais was baptized Holy Saturday night in 2022. He got a standing ovation. The De Mazenod Door Outreach keeps its doors open 365 days a year - they didn’t close one day during pandemic lockdowns and stay open every holiday. Last year, they served 122,000 meals and now they’re serving 500-plus meals a day.

Leon Blais is seen here packing up bagged lunches for the De Mazenod Door Outreach. Last year, they served 122,000 meals and now they're serving 500-plus meals a day. They have a farm and have helped house a small group of men and women, including Blais. Sherri Ramirez, director of community and guest relations, says it is hard work. She's been punched and had coffee thrown in her face. But she knows the work is important and sees it as a mix of charity and social justice.

"I have watched Leon grow into his role and struggle with things because life has struggles for all of us," she says. But she believes he shows humility in learning from any missteps. And he doesn't hide his faith in God. She says she has seen so many people over the years, broken and in darkness; some make it out and others don't. She believes that Blais shows others that there is hope. "It's empowering them, that there's hope for them, that they can get out of their addiction too," she says.

Chalk Butterflies

A couple years ago, after Blais last got out of jail and had gone searching for Pete Wiesner, he unexpectedly showed up at the central police station on King William Street. Another cop who spotted the notorious criminal couldn't believe what he saw. Robbie Blais was colouring with chalk outside. He went to fetch Wiesner. He's just chalking? He's drawing a butterfly? Wiesner asked. Wiesner headed down to meet Blais. The other cop asked him if he needed backup. Wiesner didn't but the other cop tagged along out of sheer curiosity. What's going on? Wiesner asked. Blais told him about his daughter. The chalk drawings were for her. Wiesner said his heart broke for Blais. Since then, the two have grown close. If there is a problem at St. Patrick, it's Wiesner who Blais calls. The social navigator team works closely with the outreach ministry, including working at the Friday barbecues and organizing a

coat drive. Wiesner believes people need a purpose to stay on a good path.

“This is what keeps him going now. It gives him purpose,” Wiesner says. Blais turned that chalk art into an entire program, including a chalk-art festival and art classes once a month at the ministry’s gift-shop, humankind: Gifts That Matter, at 398 Main St. E. The art classes for kids have included everything from cookie decorating, to Easter crafts, to printing shirts and woodwork. Leon Blais turned an interest in chalk art into an entire program, including art classes once a month at the ministry’s gift-shop, humankind. On Blais’ 43rd birthday on May 22, for the second year, he held a chalk-art festival in front of city hall, attracting more than 100 people. Hamilton police - his former enemies - were there helping, including an officer who did face-painting.

PRISON MINISTRY INDIA: REPORT 2022-2023

Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

Secretary to CBCI Desk for Prison Ministry India

1. Introduction

Holy Father Pope Francis who gives high priority to prison ministry recently stated “Let us not forget that for the punishment to be fruitful, it must have a horizon of hope. Otherwise, it is enclosed within itself and is only an instrument of torture, it’s not fruitful”. Since 1981 Prison Ministry India (PMI) has been conveying hope, faith and love to prisoners in India by their reach-outs, reformation strategies, rehabilitation centres and reintegration process. Since 2000 under the umbrella of justice, peace and development commission of CBCI around 8000 PMI volunteers from 175 dioceses in India have been searching, serving and saving the brethren behind bars. This report on PMI activities of 2022-2023 reveals how Prison Ministry India Volunteers have become redemptive channels of forgiving and caring love to the innumerable incarcerated.

2. Indian Prisons and Prisoners

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) as per 31st December 2021 there were 1,319 prisons and 5,54,034 prisoners in India. There were 564 sub jails, 424 district jails, 148 central jails, 88 open jails, 41 special jails, 32 women’s jails, 19 borstal schools and 3 other jails. There were 1,22,852 convicts, 4,27,165 undertrials, 3,470 detenues, 547 other inmates. There were 22,923 female prisoners, 1867 children, 5,565 foreign prisoners and 1,650 women prisoners

with children. There were 472 death row prisoners and 73,508 life sentence prisoners.

3. Prison Ministry India (PMI)

Prison Ministry India is a Catholic Spiritual Movement for the release, reformation, rehabilitation, reintegration and redemption of prisoners under the justice, peace and development commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India with its headquarters in Bangalore. PMI was born on 8th December 1981 at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam by the initiative of two brothers – Bro Varghese Karippery and Bro Francis Kodiyan MCBS. In 1989 Kerala Catholic Bishops Conference recognised this ministry and welcomed it under its justice, peace and development commission giving an office at its headquarters at Pastoral Orientation Centre, Palarivattom, Kochi. On 24 August 2000 CBCI recognized PMI under its justice, peace and development commission. Most Rev Mar Jose Pulickal, bishop of Kanjirappally is the present PMI Chairperson. Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, PMI cofounder is its secretary to CBCI and the national coordinator.

3.1 Administration

PMI has 8000 volunteers who visit more than 950 prisons. We have 4 regional coordinators, 28 state coordinators, 150 diocesan coordinators, 15 seminary coordinators, and 950-unit coordinators. In every state we would like to have a bishop as chairperson representing the state bishops' conference. He in collaboration with the state coordinator in the state executive body takes the major decisions in the state. The national coordinator under the guidance of the PMI Chairperson in the national executive body takes the major decisions at national level.

3.2 National Office Staff

Chairperson

Mar Jose Pulickal

CBCI Secretary to Prison Ministry India	Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS
National Secretary	Sr Amala DC
Assistant National Coordinator	Fr Benny Pachanal
Kolbe Home Superior	Sr Pushpa SCS
Kolbe Home Assistant	Sr Mercelline SCS

3.3 Lifestyle

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

3.4 Methodology

1. Reach-out, 2. Release, 3. Repentance, 4. Reconciliation, 5. Reformation, 6. Rehabilitation, 7. Reintegration and 8. Redemption. The Redeemer is Jesus Christ.

3.5 Spirituality

PMI spirituality was from the very outset overwhelmed by the Love of God, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, led by the Holy Spirit, empowered by the Word of God, nourished by the sacraments, enlightened by spiritual exercises, fortified by ascetical practices, adorned by virtues, enriched by fraternity and continues to be enthralled by seeking and saving the lost.

4. Ministries Inside Prisons

Our ministries consisted basically of celebrating Sacraments for Catholic prisoners, conducting spiritual discourses, entertainment programs, sports competitions, counselling and moral instructions; writing letters of personal concern and healing to the broken hearts; setting-up of a good library for mental growth; providing job-oriented skill training programs, recreational and vocational facilities; conducting literary, arts and sports competitions; preparing prisoners to write school and university exams; providing free legal aid; helping prisoners to obtain advocates of District Legal Services Authority; helping out by giving cash surety to those who are financially poor; organizing de-addiction camps by arranging de-addiction counselling experts from reputed de-addiction centres and providing medicines to help them overcome smoking addiction; meeting the prison resident doctor and briefing him about the progress of the de-addiction camp and cases which need psychiatric treatment which are identified during the counselling sessions; paying the fine amount for the pre-mature release of prisoners by the Government for good conduct and other prisoners who have completed their imprisonment term but are financially unable to pay the fine; conduct medical camps like general health checkup, skin camp, eye camp, gynae camp for women prisoners distributing wheel chairs, sewing machines, amplifiers, sound systems, indoor games equipments etc.

5. Ministries Outside Prisons

Outside prisons our ministries centered around establishing rehabilitation centers for released men and women prisoners and homes for prisoners' children (boys and girls); conducting counselling and moral instructions in rehabilitation centers, visiting prisoners and victim's family and facilitating reconciliation, providing family assistance and treatment to the sick, Helping the children of prisoners for their

education, arranging marriage settlements, vocational training and job settlements, conducting awareness programs for the general public, printing literature like books, magazines, etc. contacting family members who do not meet prisoners in prison; contacting advocates and informing the prisoners the status of their case; providing groceries to the families, paying fees for prisoners' children, leading prisoners' children to Kolbe Homes and helping prisoners' families with required medical help.

6. Celebrations

6.1 Christmas and Easter Celebrations

PMI celebrated Christmas solemnly in most of the Indian prisons and reminded the incarcerated about the significance of the birth of Jesus to prisoners for Jesus was born to seek and save the lost. Lots of programs were organized inside the various types of prisons. PMI national office celebrated Christmas in the various prisons of Bengaluru such as central prison, women's prison, open jail, juvenile home, observation home, sub-jail, district jail, home for the differently abled and so on. We distributed bathing towels, track suits, t-shirts etc to the inmates. On Maundy Thursday bishops and priests washed the feet of prisoners in many prisons. On Good Friday there were special prayers in several prisons. Easter was celebrated very solemnly in many prisons.

6.2 Prison Ministry Sunday

Prison Ministry Sunday 2022 was celebrated on 14 August 2022 with the theme Integral Human Development of Prisoners. The pastoral letter prepared by Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva was translated into major languages and distributed to all dioceses. On 13 August 2023 Prison Ministry Sunday was celebrated with the theme "Today you will be with me in Paradise". The pastoral letter prepared by Most Rev Mar Jose Pulickal the PMI Chairperson was translated into major

languages and distributed to all dioceses. In many parishes PMI volunteers celebrated Prison Ministry Sunday with special homilies, dump box collection, awareness programs and visiting of prisons.

6.3 St Maximillian Kolbe Day Celebration

All PMI units celebrated the novena of St Maximillian Kolbe, the patron saint of PMI and celebrated the Kolbe day on 14 August meaningfully by conducting special services to prisoners and convening awareness programs to the public.

6.4 Other Celebrations

PMI members celebrated with prisoners Women's Day, Constitution Day, Independence Day, Republic Day, Gandhi Jayanthi and festivals like Rakhi, Ugadi, Rajyotsava, Rakshabandhan, Bakrid, Deepavali, etc. On most occasions, food, sweets and Cakes are distributed to all the prisoners and the prison authorities.

7. Conventions, Conferences & Training Programs

7.1 Volunteers Training Program

On 28 April to 9 May 2022 PMI convened a Volunteers Training Program at PMI Training Centre, Bangalore in which 25 volunteers participated. On 11-24 April 2023 PMI organised a volunteers training program with the theme search, serve and save the lost in which 30 members participated. Historical and Biblical foundations, PMI spirituality, lifestyle, major guiding principles, national, regional, state and unit level ministries, ministries inside and outside the prisons, counselling skills, types of prison and prisoners, PMI best practices, prisoners' life testimony, etc were incorporated in the syllabus and all those who participated in them had enriching experiences. PMI convenes national conventions once in four years and State conventions once in two years.

7.2 National Convention

13th PMI National Convention was held at St Joseph Vaz Spirituality Centre, Goa from November 15-18, 2022. More than 500 members from 20 states participated in it. The central theme of the convention was “Reform to Reintegrate.” Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, PMI National Coordinator welcomed the participants. Hon Desmond D’Costa, Former District Judge & Member, Human Rights Commission, Goa inaugurated the convention. His Eminence Philip Neri Cardinal Ferrao, Archbishop of Goa delivered presidential address and Most Rev Allwyn D’Silva, PMI Chairperson presented the keynote address. Most Rev Gerald Almeida, President of Justice, Peace and Development Commission of CBCI, Most Rev Peter Remigius, PMI Former Chairperson, Fr Varghese Karipperry, PMI Cofounder, and Sr Amala DC, PMI National Secretary were felicitated. Mr David Fernandes, PMI Goa State Coordinator proposed the vote of thanks. This national convention rejuvenated the members with a powerful spiritual outlook and instilled in them new insights, inspiration and information about PMI. Free visits to holy shrines and beautiful hotspots thrilled the participants.

7.3 National Executive Meetings

On 28 March 2022 PMI convened its National Executive meeting and discussed the details of the forthcoming national convention. Accounts for the year 2021-2022 and the budget for the year 2022-2023 were presented and passed. The national executive meeting held on 15th November 2022 at St Joseph Vaz Spirituality Centre examined the detailed programme of the 13th national convention and approved it. The national executive meeting held on 12 April 2023 presented and passed the audit report for the year 2022-2023 and the budget for the year 2023-2024. It was decided to sell the land at Karjat and purchase a flat in Delhi for the regional coordinator’s office and to use it as a halfway home for released prisoners.

7.4 Chhattisgarh State Conference

PMI Chhattisgarh organised a special meeting and appointed Fr Alexander Ekka SJ as the state coordinator. On 17 July 2022 there was another state level meeting under the leadership of Fr Alexander Ekka SJ. Archbishop Victor Henry Thakur inaugurated the meeting and Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, PMI National coordinator delivered the keynote address.

7.5 Delhi State Meeting

On 24 July 2022 PMI Delhi state gathered together to bid farewell to Fr George Peter Kachirayil MST. Fr Jose Thannippara MST took charge as the new PMI North regional as well as the Delhi coordinator.

7.6. Kerala State Gathering and Training Program

The 22nd PMI Kerala State Conference and the 42nd anniversary of Jesus Fraternity were celebrated on 27-29 April 2023 at Vimalagiri Cathedral, Kottayam. Sri. G. Padmakumar, the Honorable first-class Judicial Magistrate, Pala, presided over the meeting. His Excellency Mar Jose Pulickal, PMI Chairperson inaugurated the conference. Fr. Martin Thattil, PMI Kerala State coordinator, welcomed the distinguished guests. The state report was presented by Sr. Shiny SMMP, the state secretary. In May 2023 the PMI Kerala convened a one-week volunteers' training program which was well participated. Fr Shaji Stephen O de M who served as Kerala state coordinator for the last 6 years was replaced by Fr Martin Thattil from Palakkad diocese.

7.7 Karnataka Meeting

The Sixth PMI Karnataka State Conference was held on Oct 4th 2022 at Sannidhi, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Shimoga. The conference commenced with the Eucharistic celebration presided over by Most Rev Dr Bernard Blasius Moras, Archbishop Emeritus of Bangalore. Justice Michael John

D'Cunha, Former Judge, of Karnataka High Court gave the inaugural address. Rev Fr Dr Francis Kodiyan, National Coordinator, PMI and CBCI secretary for PMI desk spoke on the vision and mission of PMI. Most Rev Dr Francis Serrao SJ, Bishop of Shivamogga and Episcopal Advisor to the PMI, Karnataka spoke on Retributive Justice & Death Penalty.

7.8 Tamil Nadu Meeting

The PMI Tamil Nadu State gathering took place on 7-9 June 2023 at Palayamkottai in which Most Rev Antonysamy, Bishop of Palayamkottai and Most Rev George Antony Samy Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore presented papers.

7.9 MP State Gathering

The 8th PMI Madhya Pradesh State Conference was held in Indore on August 20, 2023. Bro. Sunnyslal Avarappattu, MMB, the state coordinator welcomed the august gathering, Most Rev Dr Sebastian Durairaj, archbishop of Bhopal inaugurated the conference and Most Rev Chacko Thottumarickal SVD, Bishop of Indore presided over the meeting.

7.10 Odisha Meeting

The PMI Odisha gathering will be held on 29 October 2023 at Sambalpur bishop's house. Fr Victor Pinto SVD who served many years as the PMI Odisha state coordinator is substituted by Fr Rijo.

7.11 North East Meeting

PMI North East Regional gathering will be held on 16 November 2023 at Social Forum, Karguli, Guwahati, Sr Jobina UFS is substituted by Sr Irene D'Souza UFS. Most Rev Joachim Walder, Auxiliary bishop of Aizawl, Mizoram will be presiding over the meeting.

7.12 Training Programs for the Religious & Seminarians

Every year PMI National team takes a one-day class on prison ministry to the deacons at St Peter's Pontifical Seminary,

Bangalore. The theoretical and practical aspects of prison ministry were taught in many religious formation houses, major and minor seminaries.

8 New Initiatives

PMI launched many new initiatives such as special task forces, incessant intercessory invocation for the incarcerated, the Contemplative wing etc.

8.1 PMI Special Task Forces

On 22nd December 2019 PMI launched the Special task forces such as Death Row commandoes, Terrorist Saving Quad, Anti-human trafficking, Anti-drug trafficking squads etc. Every last Saturday of the month, PMI organises a conference of the PMI special task forces. There are 40 PMI special task forces and in each group there are about 40 volunteers who dedicate themselves to pray and fast for their respective group of prisoners.

8.2 Incessant Intercessory Invocation for the Incarcerated

To empower and sanctify prisoners spiritually worldwide, PMI launched incessant intercessory invocation for the incarcerated on 9th October 2020. For prayer, especially the Holy Mass plays the most significant role in the reformation and reintegration of prisoners worldwide. With this we extended our ministry to the whole world by interceding 24 hours of the day, 7 days of the week and 365 days of the year for the renewal and redemption of prisoners worldwide.

8.3 PMI Contemplative Wing

On 22 July 2023 PMI launched its contemplative wing to intercede before the Blessed Sacrament for the reformation and redemption of prisoners worldwide. Those who have time and interest to pray for prisoners' reformation are welcome to stay at PMI RRDC at Carmelaram, Bangalore.

They can spend whole days/weeks and months in Eucharistic adoration and intercession.

8.4 Chain Holy Mass, Fasting, Rosary & Divine Mercy

For the renewal and rehabilitation of prisoners worldwide PMI launched chain Holy Mass, chain fasting, rosary and divine mercy prayer. PMI Volunteers from all over India join in this spiritual combat of redeeming the lost.

9. Rehabilitation Centers

One of the major goals of Prison Ministry India is the rehabilitation of released prisoners. PMI has many such centers in different Indian states. Find below some of the PMI rehabilitation centers for released prisoners.

9.1 Rehabilitation Centers for Men Prisoners

Snehashramam, Thrissur

Snehashramam – the first renewal centre for released men prisoners at Thrissur, Kerala was renovated and blessed by Mar Jose Pulickal the KCBC chairperson for Justice, Peace and Development. Fr Varghese Karippey was replaced by Fr Alexander Kureekattil CMF. There are 20 inmates there who undergo intense renewal program.

Shanthinivas, Edappally

Shantinivas at Edappally, Kochi was established in 1995 as the second stage of rehabilitation of men prisoners under the leadership of Claretian Fathers. Fr Jose Kidangayil CMF is its director.

Kolbe Home, Chennai

Kolbe Home Chennai was established in 2017 by the initiative of PMI Chennai. Fr Thomas from the Society of St Eugene De Mazenod (SDM) is its director.

Van Thuan Home, Bengaluru

On 29 February 2020 PMI launched Van Thuan Home – a rehabilitation center for released men prisoners at Carmelaram, Bengaluru. 28 released prisoners came here, reformed and rehabilitated with job facilities.

9.2 Rehabilitation Centers for Women Prisoners

Snehashramam, Trivandrum

Snehashramam Trivandrum – the first renewal centre for released women prisoners established in 1992 was damaged in a storm and was renovated this year. There are 8 girls residing here at present and more than 900 women have been reformed, rehabilitated and reintegrated through this institute.

Jeevodaya, Bengaluru

Jeevodaya is a home for released women prisoners established in 1995 under the care of Holy Cross Sisters. At present there are 15 women undergoing reformation. Altogether more than 800 women were reformed, rehabilitated, and reintegrated through this institution.

9.3 Homes for Prisoners' Children - Boys

Snehadeepam, Inchiyani, Kanjirappilly Kottayam 686512, Kerala. Director – Sr Beena, Holy Spirit Congregation, Tel. 94479 33675, Estd. 3 July 1994.

Kolbe Home, Bengaluru, 52 Thomas Layout, Sarjapur Road, Carmelaram, Bangalore -560035, Karnataka. Director – Sr Gertrude, Satya Seva Catechist Sisters (SCS) Tel 8296304931, Estd 2016.

St Antony's Home, Kankavali

On 1 May 2021 St Antony's Home for Prisoners' children at Kankavali was blessed by Most Rev Anthony Alwyn Fernandes Barreto, bishop of Sindhudurg.

9.4 Homes for Prisoners' Children – Girls

Asha Sadan, A 43, Sector 33, Noida, UP 201 303, Franciscan Clarist Congregation, Estd 3 May 1977.

Karunyashram, Thoppil, Thrikkakkara PO, Kochi 682021, Kerala, Director – Sr Anne Maria from Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (SABS) Tel. 04842 425270; Estd 8 January 1999.

Premodaya, Bengaluru, St Francis Xavier's Cathedral, St John's Church Road, Bangalore 560 005, Karnataka; Director – Sr Raji, Sisters of St Anne's, Tel. 080 555 4683.

Jeevan Jyothy, St Joseph's Convent, Anavilasam PO, Idukki – 685535, Kerala, Director – Sr Savio, Augustinian Congregation, Tel 9747627889.

Bonal Bhavan, Kadumeni PO, Kasargod – 670511, Kerala, Director – Sr Tresa Chacko, Sisters of Charity of St Anne, Tel 8606350100.

Marie Pushpan's, Ranchi, Jharkand, Director – Sr Jini, Order of Dominicans (OP), Tel 7254043957, Estd 2017.

Ashakiran, Ranji, Jharkhand by Charity Sisters.

Kolbe Home, Patan

A new Kolbe Home for girls commenced at Patan in Gujarat in the archdiocese of Gandhinagar under the leadership of Most Rev Thomas Macwan and initiative of Fr Dominic. SMMI sisters take care of the children.

10. PMI Projects

10.1 Prisoners' Release Scheme

PMI released many prisoners with legal and financial assistance. By our constant visits, meetings and legal aid, we could release many innocent incarcerated brethren. There are many

among prisoners who are caught in petty cases and remain in prison having nobody to assist them. PMI releases these poor brethren by providing them financial assistance. With the assistance of PMI legal clinics, we release many prisoners before the completion of their confinement. This is possible primarily by their good behaviour, secondly by legal assistance and thirdly by financial settlements. PMI released more than 500 prisoners from prisons all over India, providing financial assistance for their fines and compensation.

10.2 Scholarships to Prisoners' Children

Many PMI units established scholarships for prisoners' children. Through this scheme more than 500 children go to school and many do Degree studies and one is even doing PH.D.

10.3 PMI Housing Scheme for Released Prisoners

This we launched in connection with the PMI Ruby Jubilee celebrations. We have already assisted 36 released and reformed prisoners by providing them with financial assistance to construct their houses for the settlement of their families.

10.4 Employment Scheme

PMI launched employment scheme for released prisoners and assisted many a prisoner by providing autorickshaws, fruit-stall, small-scale business and jobs in different companies.

10.5 Ambulance for Central Prison

Recently when I visited Varanasi Central Prison the superintendent asked for an ambulance saying that due to the lack of an ambulance two prisoners died as they could not be taken to the hospital in the right time. PMI agreed to donate it through the generosity of CRI especially through SRA sisters.

10.6 Driving License for Open Prisoners

In Devanhalli open prison PMI is organising driving license to prisoners through driving schools. PMI pays Rs 8000/- to the driving school for every person trained.

11. Reformatory Research and Documentation Centre (RRDC)

11.1 Prison Voice

We published *Prison Voice*, our monthly news magazine regularly. Due to financial constraints, we publish its digital version only and distribute its soft copy to our members.

11.2 Reformatory Explorations

We published Reformatory Explorations regularly. Due to financial constraints, we publish only its digital version and distribute its soft copy version.

11.3 New Books

During the year 2022-2023 PMI published the following Books:

1. Kodiyan, Francis, *Charles de Foucauld: Herald of Third Millennium Spirituality*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2022.
2. Kodiyan, Francis, *The Lost: An Eightfold Path for Prisoners' Reformation*, Second Edition, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2019.
3. Kodiyan, Francis, *Prison Voice*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2022.
4. Sheeja, Lini, *Holy Warriors from Prison*, PMI Publications 2022.
5. Puthenpurackal Dominic, *Prison Ministry India: Special Task Forces*, PMI Publications, Bangalore – 2022.

6. Kodiyan, Francis, *Love Bomb – Prisoners’ Reformation Trajectory*, PMI Publications, Bangalore – 2023.
7. *PMI 13th National Convention Souvenir*, PMI Publications 2023.

12. Audit Report and Budget

Accounts of the financial years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 were audited and submitted to CBCI secretariate. Budgets for the financial years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 were also submitted to the CBCI secretariate.

13. Challenges

The greatest challenges that prisoners face today are: overcrowding, large number of undertrials, inadequacy of prison staff, lack of health and hygiene, insufficient food and clothing, lack of classification and correctional methods, and inefficient vocational training. In many states such as Kerala, Delhi, Andhra, Telangana, and Bihar we are not given permission to visit prisons. However, thanks to our good rapport with the superintendents, in many prisons we conduct programs on special occasions such as Christmas, Easter and other national festivals. More non-Christian agencies and NGOs are invited and promoted to conduct yoga, vipassana, meditation, prayer sessions etc. We notice that large numbers of prisoners are youngsters and most of them are either drug addicts or drug traffickers or are caught as sex related offenders. This situation demands for more de-addiction and counselling centers in the country.

14. Future Plans

To strengthen the ministry in those states where there are less volunteers such as Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, etc. Reaching out to prisons where we have not yet reached and forming PMI groups near to them. Extending the ministry to parish-level by involving the Vincent de Paul

members in the ministry. Continuing the PMI projects such as: housing and employment schemes for released prisoners, educational scholarships to prisoners' children and prisoners' releasing scheme. Animating the PMI volunteers to its original charism and lifestyle. Having an office and residence in Delhi for the PMI regional and state coordinator.

15. Conclusion

Most Rev Mar Jose Pulickal the Chairperson for Prison Ministry India Desk of CBCI expresses his immense gratitude to all Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, CBCI Secretaries, Priests, Religious, and lay faithful for their blessing, guidance and cooperation. We thank wholeheartedly all the benefactors for their big-heartedness. Thanks to their generosity we could reach out to our incarcerated brethren and their families. Prison Ministry does not end with visits to prisons; it goes beyond the prison walls, to their families, their children as well as victims. Anointed by the Holy Spirit, we serve the incarcerated Lord and thereby renew the face of the earth. Every city, diocese, and parish has its lost – prisoners, prostitutes, and criminals – those who do not come to the Church. Let's join our hands in sanctifying and saving them. "There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (Lk 15, 7).

RIGHTS OF PRISONERS HANDBOOK ON PRISONER FILE MANAGEMENT

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

In addition to the non-derogable rights mentioned in the previous section, people deprived of their liberty have additional rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. There are also specific non-treaty standards applicable to prisoners, notably the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners [the “Standard Minimum Rules”], the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under any form of Detention or Imprisonment [the “Body of Principles”], and the Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners [the “Basic Principles”]. In essence, compliance with these rights depends on systems that record information about prisoners and their treatment whilst in detention. Effective prisoner file management is as much about awareness of these rights as it is having functioning systems and procedures in place. The sections below illustrate the standards that should be met by detaining authorities.

Admission and Registration

The Body of Principles applies to all persons, juvenile or adult. It states: 2. Arrest, detention or imprisonment shall only be carried out strictly in accordance with the provisions of the law and by competent officials or persons authorized for that purpose. In order to meet the provisions of the law,

relevant documentation must record and demonstrate that arrest, detention or imprisonment is lawful. There shall be duly recorded: (a) The reasons for the arrest; (b) The time of the arrest and the taking of the arrested person to a place of custody as well as that of his first appearance before a judicial or other authority; (c) The identity of the law enforcement officials concerned; (d) Precise information concerning the place of custody. Such records shall be communicated to the detained person, or his counsel, if any, in the form prescribed by law. Any person shall, at the moment of arrest and at the commencement of detention or imprisonment, or promptly thereafter, be provided by the authority responsible for his arrest, detention or imprisonment, respectively with information on and an explanation of his rights and how to avail himself of such rights.

These principles not only require that information pertaining to an individual's arrest, detention or imprisonment is recorded, but also that this information is made available to the individual, including an explanation of their rights and how to access them. These requirements are supported by the Standard Minimum Rules, which state: (1) In every place where persons are imprisoned there shall be kept a bound registration book with numbered pages in which shall be entered in respect of each prisoner received: (a) Information concerning his identity; (b) The reasons for his commitment and the authority therefore; (c) The day and hour of his admission and release. (2) No person shall be received in an institution without a valid commitment order of which the details shall have been previously entered in the register. These provisions militate against the practice of arbitrary arrest and detention as enshrined in Articles 3 and 9 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948): 3. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. 9. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile. These are reinforced by Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Access to Justice

The presence of detainee files can also assist in bringing the individual before a judge in a timely manner and record the decision to either grant bail or remand in custody. Articles 9 and 14 of the ICCPR make provisions to ensure fair and timely access to justice: 9(3) Anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge shall be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorized by law to exercise judicial power and shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or to release. It shall not be the general rule that persons awaiting trial shall be detained in custody, but release may be subject to guarantees to appear for trial, at any other stage of the judicial proceedings, and, should occasion arise, for execution of the judgement. 9(4) Anyone who is deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings before a court, in order that that court may decide without delay on the lawfulness of his detention and order his release if the detention is not lawful. 9(5) Anyone who has been the victim of unlawful arrest or detention shall have an enforceable right to compensation. 14(2) Everyone charged with a criminal offence shall have the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law. We cannot guarantee that justice is administered lawfully unless there is clear written information about an individual's imprisonment. For example, if there is no record of a detainee's arrival at a place of custody, then it may be that they have been detained for longer than the law permits. A single register of information for each detainee must record not only when the individual arrived and left, but also who arrested them, who warranted the arrest, who questioned them, and when these events took place. It should also record who is in charge of the investigation. This will help ensure detainees' protection under the rule of law.

In the determination of any criminal charge against him, everyone shall be entitled to the following minimum

guarantees, in full equality: (a) To be informed promptly and in detail in a language which he understands of the nature and cause of the charge against him; ... (e) To examine, or have examined, the witnesses against him and to obtain the attendance and examination of witnesses on his behalf under the same conditions as witnesses against him; (f) To have the free assistance of an interpreter if he cannot understand or speak the language used in court... 14(6)

When a person has by a final decision been convicted of a criminal offence and when subsequently his conviction has been reversed or he has been pardoned on the ground that a new or newly discovered fact shows conclusively that there has been a miscarriage of justice, the person who has suffered punishment as a result of such conviction shall be compensated according to law, unless it is proved that the non-disclosure of the unknown fact in time is wholly or partly attributable to him. 14(7) No one shall be liable to be tried or punished again for an offence for which he has already been finally convicted or acquitted in accordance with the law and penal procedure of each country. These provisions require, among other things: that defendants will have access to an interpreter if they do not speak the language spoken in court; that acquittals will be recorded, thereby preventing defendants from being tried for the same offence again; that unlawful arrests will be recorded and individuals duly compensated; and that reversals of convictions or pardons will similarly be recorded, allowing for the release of the prisoner and provision of compensation.

Additionally, the Body of Principles states, 18(1) A detained or imprisoned person shall be entitled to communicate and consult with his legal counsel. (2) A detained or imprisoned person shall be allowed adequate time and facilities for consultation with his legal counsel. (3) The right of a detained or imprisoned person to be visited by and to consult and communicate, without delay or censorship and in full

confidentiality, with his legal counsel may not be suspended or restricted save in exceptional circumstances, to be specified by law or lawful regulations, when it is considered indispensable by a judicial or other authority in order to maintain security and good order. The documentation of the procedures contained in Principle 18 is the only way that a State can demonstrate compliance with the standard. Visiting records should form a part of the detainee/prisoner file, in particular when the visit is an “official” visit, such as that of a foreign consulate, or defence counsel.

Classification and Placement

The Standard Minimum Rules require that different categories of prisoner are separated, and in some cases, are held in different institutions: 8. The different categories of prisoners shall be kept in separate institutions or parts of institutions taking account of their sex, age, criminal record, the legal reason for their detention and the necessities of their treatment. Thus, (a) Men and women shall so far as possible be detained in separate institutions; in an institution which receives both men and women, the whole of the premises allocated to women shall be entirely separate; (b) Untried prisoners shall be kept separate from convicted prisoners; (c) Persons imprisoned for debt and other civil prisoners shall be kept separate from persons imprisoned by reason of a criminal offence; (d) Young prisoners shall be kept separate from adults. The classification and placement of prisoners is dependent on accurate and accessible files that record their sex and age, their criminal record, the legal basis for their detention and their programme of rehabilitation. It follows reasonably that re-classification decisions would also need to be recorded on a file as time passes during a sentence.

Discipline

Section 30 of the Standard Minimum Rules establishes the requirement for a disciplinary file for any prisoner on whom

disciplinary action is imposed. Files should contain the details of the transgression, and also the sanction imposed. chapter 2 Rights of prisoners 16 30(1) No prisoner shall be punished except in accordance with the terms of such law or regulation, and never twice for the same offence. (2) No prisoner shall be punished unless he has been informed of the offence alleged against him and given a proper opportunity of presenting his defence. The competent authority shall conduct a thorough examination of the case. (3) Where necessary and practicable the prisoner shall be allowed to make his defence through an interpreter.

Rehabilitation

The Standard Minimum Rules underline the rehabilitative purpose of imprisonment and the need for every prisoner to receive an appropriate programme of treatment: 65. The treatment of persons sentenced to imprisonment or a similar measure shall have as its purpose, so far as the length of the sentence permits, to establish in them the will to lead law-abiding and self-supporting lives after their release and to fit them to do so. The treatment shall be such as will encourage their self-respect and develop their sense of responsibility. This is dependent on assessing and recording the individual needs of a prisoner and their programme of treatment. This information should be kept in the prisoner's file. 66(1) To these ends, all appropriate means shall be used, including religious care in the countries where this is possible, education, vocational guidance and training, social casework, employment counselling, physical development and strengthening of moral character, in accordance with the individual needs of each prisoner, taking account of his social and criminal history, his physical and mental capacities and aptitudes, his personal temperament, the length of his sentence and his prospects after release.

For every prisoner with a sentence of suitable length, the director shall receive, as soon as possible after his admission,

full reports on all the matters referred to in the foregoing paragraph. Such reports shall always include a report by a medical officer, wherever possible qualified in psychiatry, on the physical and mental condition of the prisoner. (3) The reports and other relevant documents shall be placed in an individual file. This file shall be kept up to date and classified in such a way that it can be consulted by the responsible personnel whenever the need arises. As soon as possible after admission and after a study of the personality of each prisoner with a sentence of suitable length, a programme of treatment shall be prepared for him in the light of the knowledge obtained about his individual needs, his capacities and dispositions.

Employment

The Standard Minimum Rules also contain requirements about employment. Section 76 stresses the importance of recording earnings within a prisoner's file, along with transactions: 76(1) There shall be a system of equitable remuneration of the work of prisoners. (2) Under the system prisoners shall be allowed to spend at least a part of their earnings on approved articles for their own use and to send a part of their earnings to their family. (3) The system should also provide that a part of the earnings should be set aside by the administration so as to constitute a savings fund to be handed over to the prisoner on his release.

Health and Well-being

Section 24 of the Standard Minimum Rules requires the existence of a medical file on every prisoner which documents their condition upon arrival and any medical interventions that may occur thereafter: The medical officer shall see and examine every prisoner as soon as possible after his admission and thereafter as necessary, with a view particularly to the discovery of physical or mental illness and the taking of all necessary measures; the segregation of prisoners suspected

of infectious or contagious conditions; the noting of physical or mental defects which might hamper rehabilitation, and the determination of the physical capacity of every prisoner for work. The Body of Principles similarly outlines requirements for the documentation of medical examinational results, and the care and treatment that follow: A proper medical examination shall be offered to a detained or imprisoned person as promptly as possible after his admission to the place of detention or imprisonment, and thereafter medical care and treatment shall be provided whenever necessary. This care and treatment shall be provided free of charge. The fact that a detained or imprisoned person underwent a medical examination, the name of the physician and the results of such an examination shall be duly recorded.

Access to such records shall be ensured. Modalities therefore shall be in accordance with relevant rules of domestic law. Not only does this demonstrate compliance with the standard to provide proper treatment, it also serves to address allegations of physical or mental torture. The Standard Minimum Rules make the following recommendations for prisoners' accommodation, clothing, food and water: All accommodation provided for the use of prisoners and in particular all sleeping accommodation shall meet all requirements of health, due regard being made to climatic conditions and particularly to cubic content of air, minimum floor space, lighting, heat and ventilation. 17(1) Every prisoner ... shall be provided with an outfit of clothing suitable for the climate and adequate to keep him in good health. Such clothing shall in no manner be degrading or humiliating ... 20(1) Every prisoner shall be provided by the administration at the usual hours with food of nutritional value adequate for health and strength, of wholesome quality and well prepared and served. (2) Drinking water shall be available to every prisoner whenever he needs it. Adherence to these standards will ensure prisons are compliant with Articles 11 and 12 of the ICCPR, which recognize the rights to and adequate standard of living,

including adequate food, clothing and housing, the right to be free from hunger and the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

Belongings and Personal Effects

Section 43 of the Standard Minimum Rules establishes the requirement to carefully record all items belonging to the prisoner, information which is to be included in the prisoner file: 43(1) All money, valuables, clothing and other effects belonging to a prisoner which under the regulations of the institution he is not allowed to retain shall on his admission to the institution be placed in safe custody. An inventory thereof shall be signed by the prisoner. Steps shall be taken to keep them in good condition. (2) On the release of the prisoner all such articles and money shall be returned to him except in so far as he has been authorized to spend money or send any such property out of the institution, or it has been found necessary on hygienic grounds to destroy any article of clothing. The prisoner shall sign a receipt for the articles and money returned to him. This record will ensure that all personal effects are returned to the prisoner on release.

External Contact

Prisoners have certain rights to have contact with the outside world. As such, visits and correspondence should be recorded to confirm these rights are respected by the detaining authorities. The Standard Minimum Rules state that Prisoners shall be allowed under necessary supervision to communicate with their family and reputable friends at regular intervals, both by correspondence and by receiving visits 38(1) Prisoners who are foreign nationals shall be allowed reasonable facilities to communicate with the diplomatic and consular representatives of the State to which they belong. Prisoners who are nationals of States without diplomatic or consular representation in the country and refugees or stateless person shall be allowed similar facilities to communicate with the

diplomatic representative of the State which takes charge of their interest or any national or international authority whose task it is to protect such persons. Section 44 establishes the requirement for communication with the prisoner and/or family in the event of a death or illness, or the transfer of the prisoner to another institution. Records should be kept to confirm that the prisoner and/or the family have been notified of these circumstances. Upon the death or serious illness of, or serious injury to a prisoner, or his removal to an institution for the treatment of mental affections, the director shall at once inform the spouse, if the prisoner is married, or the nearest relative and shall in any event inform any other person previously designated by the prisoner. (2) A prisoner shall be informed at once of the death or serious illness of any near relative ... (3) Every prisoner shall have the right to inform at once his family of his imprisonment or his transfer to another institution.

Inspection, Complaints and Grievances

The documentation of the complaint and grievance procedures in the place of imprisonment, and the use of such procedures by any particular prisoner is critical, not only to the individual person, but also in a more general way, to those external observers who visit the prison from time to time. Information contained in the prisoner file will be of considerable value to any person reviewing the situation. Where authorities have clearly chosen to not document procedures, external authorities may well draw inferences about their intent in failing to do so. Principle 33 of the Body of Principles states: 33(1) A detained or imprisoned person or his counsel shall have the right to make a request or complaint regarding his treatment, in particular in case of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, to the authorities responsible for the administration of the place of detention and to higher authorities and, when necessary, to appropriate authorities vested with reviewing or remedial powers. In those

cases where neither the detained or imprisoned person nor his counsel has the possibility to exercise his rights under paragraph 1 of the present principle, a member of the family of the detained or imprisoned person or any other person who has knowledge of the case may exercise such rights.

Whenever the death or disappearance of a detained or imprisoned person occurs during his detention or imprisonment, an inquiry into the cause of death or disappearance shall be held by a judicial or other authority, either on its own motion or at the instance of a member of the family of such a person or any person who has knowledge of the case. When circumstances so warrant, such an inquiry shall be held on the same procedural basis whenever the death or disappearance occurs shortly after the termination of the detention or imprisonment. The findings of such an inquiry or report thereon shall be made available upon request, unless doing so would jeopardize an ongoing criminal investigation. The choice by authorities to maintain accurate, complete, dependable and accessible prisoner files enables external review to occur in a manner that is professional and proper. The failure of authorities to do so as a matter of choice, can often be seen as an indictment, because they have failed to ensure that their actions can be reviewed by higher authority. In doing so, it is most often the case that their actions will be viewed with great suspicion and distrust, even where it may not be entirely deserved. It is always the responsibility of those in authority to ensure accountability and transparency.

Transfer and Release

In relation to the transfer of detainees or prisoners, the Body of Principles contains the following requirements: Principle 16.1. Promptly after arrest and after each transfer from one place of detention or imprisonment to another, a detained or imprisoned person shall be entitled to notify or to require the competent authority to notify members of his family or other

appropriate persons of his choice of his arrest, detention or imprisonment or of the transfer and of the place where he is kept in custody. Transfer details of prisoners should be duly recorded to ensure these rights are exercised and to ensure against disappearances. Accurate records should also contain parole eligibility and/or release dates. In order to strengthen human rights protection, it is essential that civil society has access to places of detention. NGOs should have the opportunity to see and read prison procedures, along with register information. As long as prisoner files are withheld from public access, the risk of human rights violations will remain.

Protection of Children

The Convention on the Rights of the Child includes provisions for children who are detained for any reason. Article 37 requires State parties to ensure that: (a) No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age; (b) No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time; (c) Every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, and in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of his or her age. In particular, every child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults unless it is considered in the child's best interest not to do so and shall have the right to maintain contact with his or her family through correspondence and visits, save in exceptional circumstances; (d) Every child deprived of his or her liberty shall have the right to prompt access to legal and other appropriate assistance, as well as the right to

challenge the legality of the deprivation of his or her liberty before a court or other competent, independent and impartial authority, and to a prompt decision on any such action. The existence of an accurate, complete and accessible prisoner file system assures that the age and sex of the detained person is recorded, and consequently, that the juveniles (under the treaty, those under 18 years of age) are detained in accordance with law, separate from adults. Principles and procedures to demonstrate respect for and compliance with the Convention of the Rights of the Child, are contained within the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (also known as the Beijing Rules) and more recently, the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty.

Records

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules) (1985) clearly establishes a strong duty of care on the part of the State in the case of any child in conflict with the law. The wellbeing of the child is in fact the predominant State responsibility throughout any proceedings. 7(1) Basic procedural safeguards such as the presumption of innocence, the right to be notified of the charges, the right to remain silent, the right to counsel, the right to the presence of a parent or guardian, the right to confront and cross-examine witnesses and the right to appeal to a higher authority shall be guaranteed at all stages of proceedings. 8(1) The juvenile's right to privacy shall be respected at all stages in order to avoid harm being caused to her or him by undue publicity or by the process of labelling. 8(2) In principle, no information that may lead to the identification of a juvenile offender shall be published 21(1) Records of juvenile offenders shall be kept strictly confidential and closed to third parties. Access to such records shall be limited to persons directly concerned with the disposition of the case at hand or other duly authorized persons. 21(2) Records of

juvenile offenders shall not be used in adult proceedings in subsequent cases involving the same offender. Accurate and accessible files are essential to demonstrate the existence of these safeguards and compliance by the detaining authorities.

The United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (1990) also identifies the need for proper prisoner file systems: All reports, including legal records, medical records and records of disciplinary proceedings, and all other documents relating to the form, content and details of treatment, should be placed in a confidential individual file, which should be kept up to date, accessible only to authorized persons and classified in such a way as to be easily understood. Where possible, every juvenile should have the right to contest any fact or opinion contained in his or her file so as to permit rectification of inaccurate, unfounded or unfair statements. In order to exercise this right, there should be procedures that allow an appropriate third party to have access to and to consult the file on request. Upon release, the records of juveniles shall be sealed, and, at an appropriate time, expunged. No juvenile should be received in any detention facility without a valid commitment order of a judicial, administrative or other public authority. The details of this order should be immediately entered in the register. No juvenile should be detained in any facility where there is no such register.

Admission, Registration, Movement and Transfer

In every place where juveniles are detained, a complete and secure record of the following information should be kept concerning each juvenile received: (a) Information on the identity of the juvenile; (b) The fact of and reasons for commitment and the authority therefore; (c) The day and hour of admission, transfer and release; (d) Details of the notifications to parents and guardians on every admission, transfer or release of the juvenile in their care at the time

of commitment; (e) Details of known physical and mental health problems, including drug and alcohol abuse. 22. The information on admission, place, transfer and release should be provided without delay to the parents and guardians or closest relative of the juvenile concerned. 23. As soon as possible after reception, full reports and relevant information on the personal situation and circumstances of each juvenile should be drawn up and submitted to the administration. 24. On admission, all juveniles shall be given a copy of the rules governing the detention facility and a written description of their rights and obligations in a language they can understand, together with the address of the authorities competent to receive complaints, as well as the address of public or private agencies and organizations which provide legal assistance. For those juveniles who are illiterate or who cannot understand the language in the written form, the information should be conveyed in a manner enabling full comprehension.

Classification and Placement

As soon as possible after the moment of admission, each juvenile should be interviewed, and a psychological and social report identifying any factors relevant to the specific type and level of care and programme required by the juvenile should be prepared. This report, together with the report prepared by a medical officer who has examined the juvenile upon admission, should be forwarded to the director for purposes of determining the most appropriate placement for the juvenile within the chapter 2 Rights of prisoners 26 facility and the specific type and level of care and programme required and to be pursued. When special rehabilitative treatment is required, and the length of stay in the facility permits, trained personnel of the facility should prepare a written, individualized treatment plan specifying treatment objectives and time-frame and the means, stages and delays with which the objectives should be approached. Sections 20 through 27 further define the material that one should be

able to find on a proper file about a juvenile person who is a detainee/prisoner in an institution. These sections also define a number of processes that require documentation in a file so that compliance can be demonstrated.

Medical Care

Sections 49 through 55 detail the requirement for medical care for juvenile prisoners. The concurrent requirement to document the provision of such care, the results of such care and any treatment required going into the future is obvious. 49. Every juvenile shall receive adequate medical care, both preventive and remedial, including dental, ophthalmologic and mental health care, as well as pharmaceutical products and special diets as medically indicated. All such medical care should, where possible, be provided to detained juveniles through the appropriate health facilities and services of the community in which the detention facility is located, in order to prevent stigmatization of the juvenile and promote self-respect and integration into the community. Where detention is used, the State has a greater responsibility to the juvenile than to the adult person. The documentation necessary to demonstrate the appropriate level of care must be complete and accurate. Without the file system, the State cannot demonstrate that it meets this standard. The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice state: 13(5) While in custody, juveniles shall receive care, protection and all necessary individual assistance - social, educational, vocational, psychological, medical and physical - that they may require in view of their age, sex and personality.

Discipline

Section 70 of the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty clearly identifies the requirement to document disciplinary offences, procedures and outcomes: No juvenile should be disciplinarily sanctioned except in strict accordance with the terms of the law and

regulations in force. No juvenile should be sanctioned unless he or she has been informed of the alleged infraction in a manner appropriate to the full understanding of the juvenile, and given a proper opportunity of presenting his or her defence, including the right of appeal to a competent impartial authority. Complete records should be kept of all disciplinary proceedings.

Inspection and Complaints

The United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty state: Qualified inspectors or an equivalent duly constituted authority not belonging to the administration of the facility should be empowered to conduct inspections on a regular basis and to undertake unannounced inspections on their own initiative, and should enjoy full guarantees of independence in the exercise of this function. Inspectors should have unrestricted access to all persons employed by or working in any facility where juveniles are or may be deprived of their liberty, to all juveniles and to all records of such facilities. 73. Qualified medical officers attached to the inspecting authority or the public health service should participate in the inspections, evaluating compliance with the rules concerning the physical environment, hygiene, accommodation, food, exercise and medical services, as well as any other aspect or conditions of institutional life that affect the physical and mental health of juveniles. Every juvenile should have the right to talk in confidence to any inspecting officer. Sections 72 and 73 address the issue of external inspection. While speaking with persons is a significant part of any inspection, the examination of prisoner records is critical to the process. The importance of accurate, complete, dependable and accessible prisoner files to any process of inspection cannot be overstated.

Release

Conditional release is entirely based upon an assessment of the person's risk and needs, including what progress may

have occurred during incarceration. The existence of this kind of documentation requires the maintenance of an accurate, complete, dependable and accessible prisoner file system. The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration for Juvenile Justice state: chapter 2 Rights of prisoners 28 28(1) Conditional release from an institution shall be used by the appropriate authority to the greatest possible extent, and shall be granted at the earliest possible time. (2) Juveniles released conditionally from an institution shall be assisted and supervised by an appropriate authority and shall receive full support by the community.

Protection against Discrimination

Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners state: 1. All prisoners shall be treated with the respect due to their inherent dignity and value as human beings. 2. There shall be no discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. The presence of complete, accurate and accessible prisoner files can provide an effective measure to prevent or investigate cases of discrimination in places of detention.

Discrimination against Women

While all the above standards apply equally to women and men, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women requires that: States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake: (a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle; (b) To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where

appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women; (c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination; (d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation; (e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise; (f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women; (g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women. Specifically, the Standard Minimum Rules state that: 8(a) Men and women shall so far as possible be detained in separate institutions; in an institution which receives both men and women the whole of the premises allocated to women shall be entirely separate. 53(1) In an institution for both men and women, the part of the institution set aside for women shall be under the authority of a responsible woman officer who shall have the custody of the keys of all that part of the institution.

No male member of the staff shall enter the part of the institution set aside for women unless accompanied by a woman officer. chapter 2 Rights of prisoners Article 10, paragraph 1, imposes on States parties a positive obligation towards persons who are particularly vulnerable because of their status as person deprived of their liberty, and complements for them the ban on torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment contained in article 7 of the Covenant. Thus, not only may persons deprived of their liberty not be subjected to treatment that is contrary to article 7, including medical or scientific experimentation, but neither may they be subjected to any hardship or constraint other than that resulting from the deprivation of liberty; respect for the dignity of such

persons must be guaranteed under the same conditions as for that of free persons. Human Rights Committee CCPR General Comment No. 21 concerning humane treatment of persons deprived of liberty (Art. 10) (1992) 30 (3) Women prisoners shall be attended and supervised only by women officers. This does not, however, preclude male members of the staff, particularly doctors and teachers, from carrying out their professional duties in institutions or parts of institutions set aside for women. Women in prison are made vulnerable in a number of ways, particularly to violence and this will often constitute a violation of the non-derogable right not to be subjected to torture or ill-treatment.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women requires that State parties act to protect women against violence of any kind occurring within the family, at the work place or in any other area of social life. In addition, the Declaration on Violence against Women states that 1. For the purposes of this Declaration, the term “violence against women” means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. 2. Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following: ... (c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs. Women who are pregnant or who have recently given birth are afforded special protection under Article 10(2) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In addition, the Standard Minimum Rules state that: 23(1) In women’s institutions there shall be special accommodation for all necessary pre-natal and post-natal care and treatment. Arrangements shall be made wherever practicable for children to be born in a hospital outside the institution.

If a child is born in prison, this fact shall not be mentioned in the birth certificate. (2) Where nursing infants are allowed to remain in the institution with their mothers, provision shall be made for a nursery staffed by qualified persons, where the infants shall be placed when they are not in the care of their mothers. In addition, the Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that: 24(1) States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services. The presence of complete, accurate and accessible prisoner files can provide an effective measure to prevent or investigate cases of discrimination against women in places of detention. In the case of pregnant women or those who have recently given birth, prisoner files can provide a formal record that they have received appropriate pre- and post-natal care and treatment. Prisoner files can also document the care arrangements provided for their children.

Racial Discrimination

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination contains the following provisions: Article 2: 1. States Parties condemn racial discrimination and undertake to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms and promoting understanding among all races, and, to this end: (a) Each State Party undertakes to engage in no act or practice of racial discrimination against persons, groups of persons or institutions and to ensure that all public authorities and public institutions, national and local, shall act in conformity with this obligation; (b) Each State Party undertakes not to sponsor, defend or support racial discrimination by any persons or organizations; (c) Each State Party shall take effective measures to review governmental, national and local policies, and to amend, rescind or nullify

any laws and regulations which have the effect of creating or perpetuating racial discrimination wherever it exists. Article 2 requires nations to not only not act in or tolerate any form of racial discrimination, but also to take effective measures to change any law, policy, regulation or local procedure that has the effect of perpetuating racial discrimination. The existence of an accurate, complete, dependable and accessible prisoner file system is a prerequisite to enabling any nation to meet this requirement. If a State does not know the impact of its law, policy, regulation or local procedures on the prisoner population, how can it know whether or not it is in fact promoting racial discrimination? The short answer, of course, is that it cannot. Thus, again, the file system is crucial to support of this international law.

Article 5: In compliance with the fundamental obligations laid down in article 2 of this Convention, States Parties undertake to prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law, notably in the enjoyment of the following rights: (a) The right to equal treatment before the tribunals and all other organs administering justice; (b) The right to security of person and protection by the State against violence or bodily harm, whether inflicted by government officials or by any individual group or institution. The requirements of this convention apply equally to all persons, including those who are considered detainees or prisoners. Consequently, there is an assumption that a State will have and maintain a prisoner file system that would enable that State to demonstrate that its treatment of individual prisoners was not differentiated on the basis of race. Examination of not only individual records, but of large numbers of detainee and prisoner records is a requirement for any State to understand if, and to what extent, racial discrimination exists within the population for which it is legally responsible. The presence of such records enables the kind of research that can establish the presence

or absence of racially motivated decisions about sentencing, classification, length of time spent in remanded custody, and various forms of alternative sentencing or conditional release.

Disabled Persons

The Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons clearly emphasizes the following points: 5. Disabled persons are entitled to the measures designed to enable them to become as self-reliant as possible. 8. Disabled persons are entitled to have their special needs taken into consideration at all stages of economic and social planning. 10. Disabled persons shall be protected against all exploitation, all regulations and all treatment of a discriminatory, abusive or degrading nature. All of the sections in this law are relevant, however sections 5, 8 and 10 in particular depend upon the existence of an accurate, complete and accessible prisoner file system to enable a State to demonstrate, first of all, the extent to which mentally and/or physically disabled people are incarcerated, and secondly, what measures are taken to ensure that their rights are fully protected.

Foreign Nationals

Under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, consular officials have the right to seek access to nationals of their State who are in custody, prison or detention.¹³ Article 36 states the following: (a) Consular officers shall be free to communicate with nationals of the sending State and to have access to them ...; (b) If he so requests, the competent authorities of the receiving State shall, without delay, inform the consular post of the sending State if, within its consular district, a national of that State is arrested or committed to prison or to custody pending trial or is detained in any other manner. Any communications addressed to the consular post by the person arrested, in prison, custody or detention shall be forwarded by the said authorities without delay. The said authorities shall inform the person concerned

without delay of his rights under this said subparagraph; (c) Consular officers shall have the right to visit a national of the sending State who is in prison, custody or detention, to converse and correspond with him, and to arrange for his legal representation ... The Body of Principles similarly states the rights of foreign nationals who are in custody, prison or detention to seek access to consular assistance, and for prisoners who do not speak the language of the authorities, to receive information in a language that they understand: 14. A person who does not adequately understand or speak the language used by the authorities responsible for his arrest, detention or imprisonment is entitled to receive promptly in a language which he understands the information referred to in principle 10, principle 11, paragraph 2, principle 12, paragraph 1 and principle 13 and to have assistance, free of charge, if necessary, of an interpreter in connection with legal proceedings subsequent to his arrest. 16(2) If a detained or imprisoned person is a foreigner, he shall also be promptly informed of his right to communicate by appropriate chapter 2 Rights of prisoners 13 See, for example, the 2004 ruling of the International Court of Justice in the case of *Mexico v. United States of America*, where the court found that the USA had breached its obligations to Mr Avena and 50 other Mexican nationals, and to Mexico, under Article 36 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. 34 means with a consular post or the diplomatic mission of the State of which he is a national or which is otherwise entitled to receive such communication in accordance with international law or with the representative of the competent international organization, if he is a refugee or is otherwise under the protection of an intergovernmental organization. Prisoner files provide a formal record to confirm that contact with consular officers has been offered to the prisoner, along with details of such contact. They can also record whether interpreters are required for legal proceedings and whether the prisoner has received information about their detention in a language they understand.

LEFT TO TELL: DISCOVERING GOD AMIDST THE RWANDAN HOLOCAUST

Immaculee Ilibagiza and Steve Erwin

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Dr Jaison Kunnell MCBS

Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust is an inspirational story of faith, hope, and forgiveness by Immaculee Ilibagiza, a Rwandan-American writer and motivational speaker. This profound memoir and life-changing autobiographical account was published in 2006, 12 years after the 1994 *Rwandan* genocide that claimed one million lives in 100 days. The author, Immaculée Ilibagiza, is a Tutsi Rwandan who hides in the bathroom of a Hutu pastor with seven other Tutsi women for three months while their Hutu neighbours and once-friends murdered their husbands, fathers, and brothers. “*Left to Tell*” narrates the story of Immaculée’s experiences before, during, and after the Rwandan holocaust, focusing on how the strength of her faith allowed her not merely to survive but to use her experiences to help her nation heal. The story, which has every right to have a bitter and angry undertone, is one of the most spiritually rooted stories that has transformed her personal tragedy into a lesson for the entire world. It was one of the most uplifting books I have encountered. It is a beautiful testament that peace is not the absence of pain but the presence of God. Immaculée is such an inspiration.

The book is divided into three sections, each containing themes that engage with an overarching theme. The first section, *The Gathering Storm* Immaculée, describes her life

until the genocide. She grew up in a middle-class Tutsi family that valued education, and she had three brothers. She also describes the tensions with the Hutu ethnic group, the majority, which were present throughout her life but rarely made her feel unsafe. She and the rest of her family had Hutu friends and relatives. Immaculée details her life in elementary, high school, and eventually the university; it is when she is home for Easter from university that the genocide begins. The second section, *In Hiding*, tells the story of her hiding in the bathroom of Pastor Murinzi. She survived hidden for 91 days with seven other women in a small bathroom no larger than 3 feet by 4 feet, an area of 12 square feet. During this time, Immaculée connected with God and she turned to prayer and meditation as she had no idea how long this ordeal would last. It was during those endless hours of unspeakable terror that Immaculée discovered the power of prayer, eventually shedding her fear of death and forging a profound and lasting relationship with God.

The third section of the book, *A New Path*, narrates how she rebuilds her life, getting a job at the UN and meeting her future husband, John, an American working for the UN. Finally, Immaculée moved to the US and became an author and motivational speaker. Her main message throughout the book is that anyone can learn to forgive, no matter how horribly they have suffered and been wronged. For her, the path to forgiveness was through God. Several important themes are dealt with in this book, such as God, forgiveness, family, prayer, faith, perseverance, freedom, temptation toward hatred, etc. Here, I want to mention two quotes from the book to substantiate the struggle with forgiveness. “It was no use - my prayers felt hollow. A war had started in my soul, and I could no longer pray to a God of love with a heart full of hatred. I tried again, praying that He forgives the killers, but deep down, I couldn’t believe that they deserved it at all. It tormented me... I tried to pray for them myself, but I felt like I was praying for the devil.”

Here, Immaculée struggles with forgiving the killers. She hates them, wishes them all to be dead, and only wants to pray for their victims. But she realizes that she is being hypocritical and asking for God to help and save her and her family while she is full of hatred for many others of his human creations. These doubts let Satan creep into her mind, which she describes as a “dark voice.” This dilemma was the central one that Immaculée had to overcome in her time in captivity. “I held on to my father’s rosary and asked God to help me, and again I heard his voice: Forgive them; they know not what they do. I took a crucial step toward forgiving the killers that day. My anger was draining from me – I’d opened my heart to God, and He’d touched it with His infinite love. For the first time, I pitied the killers. I asked God to forgive their sins and turn their souls toward His beautiful light. That night, I prayed with a clear conscience and a clean heart. For the first time since I entered the bathroom, I slept in peace.”

In this passage, Immaculée realizes that the killers are not evil. They have done evil deeds, but they do not understand them; this makes them children. After hearing God speak to her, saying that all humans are his children, she realizes that she cannot harbour anger towards the killers because they are unaware of the terribleness of their actions. This realization sparks her revelation in this quote, changing her life. Forgiveness is the most important theme of the memoir, and this quote highlights when it first becomes a part of Immaculée’s life. In a nutshell, this is a story of the love of God, of the power of prayer, and of what can happen when someone chooses forgiveness instead of hate. This heart-wrenching, true story of a woman who survived the horrific Rwandan genocide would definitely give a real-life example of how God is always there watching over everyone. *Left to Tell* is a very touching book that I would highly recommend. More specifically, I recommend this book to someone struggling to turn to God in times of hardship. It might even help the reader become closer to God. *Left to Tell* should be an inspiration for all.

PRISON MINISTRY INDIA PUBLICATIONS

Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

This article is an introspective investigation into the PMI publications. Let's be glad to know that PMI published 64 books and 2 periodicals in the past 42 years. These books and periodicals shed light into the spirituality, history, theology, and the methodology of prisoners' reformation, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Meditative reading of these books would certainly elevate our thoughts to divine providence, to do impossible things with the assistance of God, and would help us understand how God who sent His only begotten son in search of the lost. In the past 42 years God took care of PMI on eagle's wings. Let's make and write history of prisoners' reformation for the next 40 years by writing our prison ministry experiences.

First Decade of PMI 1980-1989

1. First Brochure with the Picture of St John Paul II visiting Rabibbia Prison Rome, going to the cell of Mehmet Ali Agca and catching hold of his hands saying "I forgive You", Jesus Fraternity Publications, Kottayam 1986.
2. First Booklet with songs and prayers for the first All Kerala Prison Pilgrimage, Jesus Fraternity Publications, Kottayam 1986.
3. *Pulari – The Dawn*, quarterly (Malayalam), Jesus Fraternity Publications, Kottayam 1987.

4. *Thadavarayile Sangheetham – Prison Melody* (Malayalam) Jesus Fraternity Publications, Kottayam 1987.
5. Karipperry, Varghese, *Camp Kalikal - Group Dynamics* (Malayalam) Jesus Fraternity Publications Kottayam 1988.

Second Decade of PMI 1990-1999

6. *The Echo – Quarterly*, Jesus Fraternity Publications, Kochi 1991.
7. *The Echo Souvenir*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 1995.
8. Kodiyan, Francis, *Religious Conversion Trajectory*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 1998.
9. Kodiyan, Francis, *Conversion Trajectory of Charles de Foucauld*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 1998.
10. Karipperry, Varghese – Latika, *Prisoners our Own Brethren*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 1998.

Third Decade of PMI 2000-2009

11. Karipperry, Varghese, *Star of Hope in Dark Cells*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2000.
12. Kodiyan, Francis, *Saga of Divine Providence: The History of Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2000.
13. Karipperry, Varghese, *Mochanayatra* (Malayalam), PMI Publications, Bangalore 2000.
14. *PMI 6th National Convention Souvenir*, PMI Publications, Bangalore – 2000.
15. Karipperry, Varghese, *Aantharika Saukyathinte Suvarnna Thakkol* (Malayalam), PMI Publications, Bangalore 2000.

16. Pazhukaran, Latika, *Jewels in the Dustbin*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2001.
17. Kodiyan, Francis, *My Lord and My God. The Ecclesial Identity of the Syromalabar Church*, Kalyan Diocese 2002.
18. *Reformative Explorations: A Psycho-Spiritual and Crimino-Social Quarterly on Reformation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration*, PMI Publications, Thrissur 2005.
19. Kochupurackal, Sebastian, *O Sweet Suffering*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2003.
20. Pulickal, Jose, *Jesus the Dynamic Way: Towards the Ministry for the Least, the Last and the Lost*, Claretian Publications, Bangalore 2004.
21. Theckanath, Sebastian, *Beyond the Iron Bars*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2004.
22. Teresia, Joyce, *The Sparkling Diamond*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2005.
23. George, Jemma, *Let Prison Walls Fall*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2005.
24. *PMI National Level Ministry 10th Anniversary Souvenir*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2005.
25. Vadakumpadan, Sebastian, *Prison Ministry India: Volunteers' Guide*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2006.
26. *Vimochanam* (Malayalam) Jesus Fraternity Publications, Kochi 2006.
27. Kodiyan, Francis, *Rainbow: Theological Foundations of Prison Ministry India*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2007.
28. *PMI 7th National Convention Souvenir*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2007.

29. Kodiyan, Francis, (Ed), *The Eucharist: An Antidote to Death Culture*, Sanathana Publications Thamarassery 2007.
30. Vadakumpadan, Sebastian, *Prison Ministry India: Volunteers Handbook*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2007.
31. *PMI 9th National Convention Souvenir*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2007.
32. Vadakumpadan, Sebastian, *The Justice that Heals not that Kills*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2008.
33. Vadakumpadan, Sebastian, *Create Homes Not Cells*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2008.
34. Vadakumpadan, Sebastian, *Undertrials in Criminal justice System of India*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2009.

Fourth Decade of PMI 2010-2019

35. Vadakumpadan, Sebastian, *I Read Not Books but Prisoners*, PMI Publications Bangalore 2010.
36. George, Jemma, *Can Any Good Come from Prisons*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2010.
37. *PMI 10th National Convention Souvenir*, Jesus Fraternity Publications, Kottayam 2010.
38. Karipperry, Varghese, *Nalla Idayante Vazhitharayilude*, (Malayalam) Sarathi Publications Angamaly 2013.
39. *Prison Voice*, Monthly, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2014.
40. *PMI 11 National Convention Souvenir*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2014.
41. Vadakumpadan, Sebastian, *Best Practices of Prison Ministry India*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2015.

42. *PMI Karnataka 5th State Convention Souvenir*, PMI Publications, Mysore 2016.
43. *Snehasbaram Trivandrum Silver Jubilee Souvenir*, Jesus Fraternity Publications, Trivandrum 2017.
44. Kodiyan, Francis, *Love Bomb: Prisoners' Reformation Trajectory*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2018.
45. Karippery, Varghese, *Prabbatha Bhakshanam Vachanathilude* (Malayalam), Santi Samaj, Thrissur 2018.
46. Theckanath, Sebastian, *Petals of Life*, Cochin 2018.
47. *PMI 12 National Convention Souvenir*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2018.
48. Kodiyan, Francis, *The Lost: An Eightfold Path for Prisoners' Reformation*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2019.
49. *PMI National Office Silver Jubilee Souvenir*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2019.

Fifth Decade of PMI 2020-2029

50. Fidelis, *Jeevodaya – A Gift of God: Glimpses of 25 Years*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2020.
51. Sheeja, Lini, *Sound of Silence; Way of the Cross*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2020.
52. Kodiyan, Francis, *Warriors of Prison Ministry India*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2020.
53. Sheeja, Lini, *Redeemed Prisoner*, PMI Publications, Bangalore 2021.
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65. *PMI 13th National Convention Souvenir*, PMI Publications 2023.
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