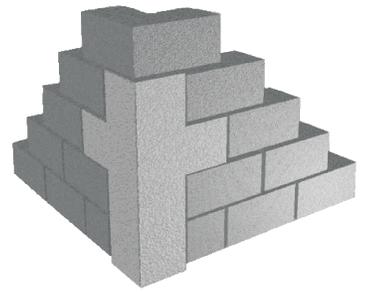




# CORNERSTONES

A news magazine for lay leaders and lay professionals



ONE IN SPIRIT - ALL IN SERVICE

LAITY  
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2017



PROMOTING A CULTURE OF MERCY

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## *Editorial*

In recent times, we have had several initiatives taken up in the 'special' years dedicated to themes chosen by the Universal Church and our archdiocese. Some of these initiatives have continued (e.g. those begun in the Year of Care for Creation) while others have fallen by the wayside. This year, the theme of 'Promoting a Culture of Mercy' draws from the Pope's letter *Misericordia et Misera* (written at the end of the Jubilee Year of Mercy). The idea is to focus on those areas where we need to bring the light of the gospel 'to shine', and for the mercy of Jesus to become a reality.

In our archdiocese, we are focusing on two areas: The plight of undertrials in prisons and anti-human trafficking. It is our hope that awareness of these two areas will galvanise many more people into action. The action may be as small as forwarding the Childline number 1098 to setting aside your mite for the support of the lawyers who will fight the cases of those unjustly imprisoned and secure bail for them.

At the Office for Lay Collaboration in Ministry (OLCM), we have some of our

team who have been volunteers in Prison Ministry for several years; one of them, John Misquitta, shares a glimpse into the life of the prisoners. Other writers in this issue include religious sisters who have made it their life's mission to 'be on the side of the oppressed' and to do more than just 'say a prayer'. I think it will challenge each of us to DO something, as we read about their experiences.

The Catholic Lawyers' Guild Mumbai (one of the several Guilds for professionals that are promoted by OLCM) has been encouraging its members (all lawyers and advocates) to get into the system (as Sr Sagaya has done). If you are an advocate/lawyer, please contact Adv. Walter Lewis (9833396063 or e-mail [president@clgm.olcmbom.org](mailto:president@clgm.olcmbom.org)).

Those who attend the Laity Sunday event in the archdiocese would get a chance to interact and listen to the protagonists who are making efforts to make Mercy tangible. I hope that those who read our collation of articles may experience a similar call - to go out and make a difference!

*Adrian Rosario*

A useful tool is the Childline number **1098** (tollfree). You may spot a child at a railway station, bus stand, etc. who seems to be lost; you have no time to spare, but you can at least call **1098** and inform the NGO's volunteers about the child. They will get the child to a safe place and make every effort to locate his/her family. (You could tell the child to stand near the PCO you call from or a landmark to make it easier for the Childline volunteers.)

# HARNESSING THE CHARISMS OF THE LAY FAITHFUL FOR SPECIFIC WORKS OF MERCY

Pope Francis encourages us to promote a culture of mercy even beyond the Year of Mercy. He said this culture needed to be one where “no one looks to the other with indifference or runs away when he sees the suffering of brothers.” Do not be afraid, he states “to walk the streets of fraternity and to build bridges between peoples...” Through your initiatives, your plans and your actions, he added, you render a poor Church visible, one that empathises with those who are suffering, marginalised and excluded.

In its message for Laity Sunday this year, the CCBI has proposed a reflection of the life of St Thomas More, whose witness bears testimony to the courage and fearlessness which God bestows on lay persons.

**One of the proposed corporal works of Mercy is 'visit the prisoners'.** We have two familiar examples. Samandar Singh (the man who killed Sr Rani Maria) stated that he experienced a rebirth when Sr Selmy (the sister of slain Sr Rani Maria) visited him in prison, and offered words of forgiveness, tying a rakhi, accepting him as her brother. Gladys Staines, widow of the Australian missionary Graham Staines (who was burnt to death along with their two minor sons in Orissa) says she holds no bitterness towards the killers. "Forgiveness and mercy is needed to break the cycle of hatred and violence" even while the rule of law prevails.

The Prison Ministry of our diocese has regularly visited various jails, even prior to the Year of Mercy. The compassion, respect and kindness shown to the inmates through words and actions go a long way towards helping them maintain their dignity. Organising a mass on special occasions, listening to the inmates' woes, organising special events for women/children or

medical camps for all prisoners, providing legal aid to undertrials, does not just bring relief from physical ailments, but also manifests that the community does care, giving them hope.

'Hope' and 'Mercy' are the ingredients that bring about transformation in the lives of prisoners. Pope Francis himself showed the way to be merciful by visiting the prison, and making a choice to wash the feet of prisoners on Maundy Thursday. “Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Like the Good Shepherd pursuing His wayward sheep, and the father running to embrace his prodigal son, God our Father mercifully goes out to find His lost children, so that none should perish.” (Pope Francis, *The Holy Year of Mercy: A faith sharing guide*, p 7)

**Another challenge needing the attention of the laity is to work to prevent and stop trafficking of women and children.** Traffickers are those who coerce people to perform work or sex acts against their will. While the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) has enabled punishment of offenders, the implementation is still lagging behind. Being aware of the modus operandi of traffickers can aid prevention or halt trafficking. Some NGOs and individuals have shown us the way. The laity can choose to support their work in different ways.

*International Justice Mission (IJM)* is an organisation that works with government and grassroots organisations on two forms of human trafficking - bonded labour and sex trafficking of minors - and rescues and rehabilitates victims, prosecutes offenders, and trains public/officials to prevent trafficking. *Justice and Care - Mumbai* rescues and supports victims of trafficking, slavery and other abuse. They work internationally through local governments and

law enforcement agencies focusing on prevention, protection of trafficked victims and prosecution of traffickers. *Prerana*, an NGO, works to end intergenerational prostitution and to protect women and children from the threats of human trafficking by defending their rights and dignity, providing a safe environment, supporting their education and health, and leading major advocacy efforts in Mumbai since 1986.

Reflecting on the two themes presented above, Pope Francis reminds us: "The great river of mercy never runs dry, because it always finds people who give concrete testimony to it in everyday life" (Rino Fisichella, *The Corporal and*

*spiritual works of mercy in Pastoral Resources for Living the Jubilee*, pg 7). Fifty-year-old Anson Thomas works as an officer with Mumbai Customs. When not on duty, Thomas visits the red-light areas in Mumbai to spread the message against trafficking. While some give him brickbats for his guts, others applaud him. The Customs hockey player has made it his mission to fight human trafficking, roping in several sports stars, utilising their iconic status to reach out to all stakeholders, fighting against prostitution, and bringing hope to the victims. Let the laity make greater efforts to reflect on how they can be a part of these issues actively.

+ *Bishop Allwyn D'Silva*

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## MY EXPERIENCE IN PRISON MINISTRY

### My Vision

The mission of Jesus, Luke 4:18: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to proclaim the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and to set the oppressed free..."

At the outset, I wish to share the conditions of the brothers and sisters behind bars who are suffering physically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually, and who are in urgent need of support. Many are weighed down with anxiety and depression. In prison, they lose their names, and are called by numbers; they are treated inhumanly. But God is a loving God; he never looks at our sins and faults, but at our hearts. He gives them a new identity. And His mercy transforms them.

It is only the love and mercy of God that will help us to see them as individuals, beyond their actions. Only God's mercy reigning in our hearts

will help us create an environment of openness and forgiveness, and help these unfortunate ones re-establish themselves and stand up once again to face life.

These brothers and sisters behind bars lose their identity and human dignity from the time they are brought to the prison. They experience extreme loneliness. When I see their faces clouded with shame and guilt, I think of Jesus with His garments stripped. This gives me a new impetus and a fresh vigour to work for them.

To witness to God's love and mercy to our brothers and sisters behind bars is one of my missions - I want to bring the ray of hope and light back into their life. To this end, I work with the "3R" methodology - Release, Renewal and Rehabilitation.

Release from bondages which keep them in the darkness of sin, to a new life by listening to them, and helping them to forgive themselves

and others, thereby enabling them to experience God's love, and come out of their guilt into the grace and fullness of life that God in His mercy has bestowed on us. (Reformation) When I met Mrs Asha from Kolkata in the Kalyan prison, I was shocked to see her back fully scarred with cigarette burns. After listening to her, I learnt that she was cheated by her own husband and accused falsely. A case study was done, and it was found that all she had said was true; but there was need for a lot of inner healing. After a lot of counselling and prayer, we could release her from the prison. Her parents were called from Kolkata, and she was handed into their care. This incident moved me to work even more vigorously to bring justice to those who are most vulnerable.

On September 01, 2015, Pope Francis wrote about the Promotion of New Evangelisation and the details of the opening of the Holy Doors in the Jubilee Year of Mercy that "the imprisoned may obtain the indulgence in the chapel of the prisons; may they all be touched in a tangible way by the mercy of the Father who wants to be close to those who have the greatest need of His forgiveness; may the gesture of directing their thoughts and prayers to the Father each time they cross the threshold of their cell signify for them their passage through the Holy Door, because the mercy of God is able to transform hearts, and is also able to transform the bars into an experience of freedom."

So during the Holy Year of Mercy, we have participated in the various programmes of Prison Ministry India, such as in the release of innocent prisoners, participating in victim-offender reconciliation programmes, visiting the families of victims, helping prisoners' children, helping rehabilitation of prisoners, arranging visits of family members in prisons, and so on.

Rehabilitation of the prisoners is not easy. Mr Richard spent 14 years in the prison. When he was released, he could not find a job because of his prison background. After searching for a job for over a year, the Justice and Peace Trust financially supported him to put up a shop. So too was the case of Mrs Kalpana Waghe, a tribal widow with five children who, after spending a year in the prison, was found innocent. Like these, many innocent victims are in the prison who need our help. Prison Ministry India tries to obtain the release of such innocent prisoners through the volunteers, and especially Sr Sagaya Mary who, as an advocate, enables them to get bail.

Compassion is a core virtue of our Christian faith and as a volunteer, it is my pillar of strength. The spirituality of the Prison Ministry is based on this Faith. Faith helps us to be listeners and doers. Faith illumines us and helps us to see the reality as God sees, and to be His hands and feet. Faith helps us to be merciful to the prisoners and reach out to them in love - enabling them to experience His touch.

We, at the Prison Ministry, work on four principles:

1. Prayer is our powerhouse
2. Inconvenience is our convenience
3. God's providence is our bank account
4. Begging is our lifestyle.

These four principles help us be the light to those in bondage, and the salt that renews the flavour of life to enable them to look forward in hope.

**Sr. Dhanam** is the Central Regional Coordinator of Prison Ministry India. She won the BCS' Fr. Salvador Rodrigues Memorial Award in April 2017 for her work at Sanjeevani CCO, Kalyan.

## MY EXPERIENCE WITH UNDER-TRIALS

St Alberto Hurtado would say, "Charity begins where justice ends." In other words, we cannot even talk of love unless we have been just. We read in the scriptures that in the beginning "God created humankind in His image; in the image of God, He created them." (Gen 1: 27) Unfortunately, this image of God is distorted in uncountable ways. In today's world, Human Rights are increasingly violated in all spheres of life. In a world torn by division, power struggles, selfishness and narrow mindedness, the Judiciary is the last resort. Behind every case filed in a court, there is a human person in flesh and blood. We may label them as 'criminal', 'innocent', 'victim' or 'aggressor', but we need to remember that all of them are broken images of God.

In our country, the prisons are overcrowded. Many of the prisoners are under-trials, and their cases are pending in the court for many years. Moreover, the pre-trial detention (when the trial has not even begun) is grave because the accused, who is supposed to be innocent until proven guilty, is subjected to inexplicable psychological pain and physical deprivation in a jail.

Justice Krishnaiyar in one of his judgments (1978 AIR 1594) stated: "The bail system causes discrimination against the poor, because the poor are not able to furnish bail on account of their poverty, while the wealthier (similarly situated) are able to secure their release, because they can afford the money to furnish bail. The discrimination arises even if the amount of the bail fixed by the Magistrate is not high, for a large majority of those who are brought before the courts in criminal cases are so poor that they would find it difficult to furnish bail, even if it is a small amount."

Once, a poor young man approached me with a case. His sister was in the prison. He tried every

possible way he could find in order to secure bail for her. He ran from one lawyer to another, exhausted all his money, and yet could not release her. When he met me, he was heart-broken. I was his last straw. Within a short duration, he met me a number of times. One evening, he came to me and shared his plight, the inhuman treatment he faced as the advocates did not listen to him because he had no money, his utter helplessness to release his sister. I was moved and promised to do my best. I promised him that I would release his sister, and that too, without the usual fee. He could not believe his ears that an advocate was willing to release his sister, and that too without a charge. He seemed convinced and returned home. But, later that night, I was informed that he committed suicide. His frustration was so deep that it was too late to restore his hope. The news shook me. Here I was face to face with the raw reality of our judicial system. Here began my resolve to serve the under-trials.

If you want to do something, the whole universe conspires with you. In no time, I got special permission as a 'Jail Panel Advocate' along with other five advocates. It is a privilege to serve men and women who are under-trials, because I see in them the image of our Lord and Master who was a prisoner, condemned and executed. Moreover, in 1804, the founders and early sisters of my congregation (Sisters of Charity of St Anne) would accompany prisoners to the gallows; they collected money through begging and released the prisoners. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I began to release the prisoners from the jail, one by one. Many generous people are also rendering their time, money and service.

The Grace of God is greater than the greatest sin in the world. When a prisoner approaches me, I make a choice not to judge her or him. As a religious as well as a lawyer, I am learning to approach a prisoner with a positive attitude. In

the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis repeatedly announced that every door in the prison is a Mercy Door. It is often true that the one who goes to visit a prison gets converted when he or she returns.

In the past few years, I have met a number of prisoners. I have heard their stories: some of them innocent, some have committed the offence in the spur of the moment, some have planned and committed the crimes, some are political prisoners - the list goes on. Whatever may be the reason, their freedom is curtailed behind the four walls in a prison. We, as Christians, are called to ease their pain.

Sometimes, I encounter prisoners who do not understand. They shout and put everyone down. With compassionate eyes, one can see the pain, depression and harassment they are

subjected to, and their desperate attempt to survive. Many young prisoners do not have any identity proof; they have migrated from one state to another and they are looked upon as aliens in their own homeland. Pope Francis said in his Mexico visit that “prisoners can become the prophets to society.” As I look back at the forty-odd prisoners who were released in the past few years, there is a sense of joy and satisfaction. Every time I see someone walking out of the confining walls, I see a human being rising above their hurdles and obstacles. When I look at the joy in their eyes, I cannot help but see behind the brokenness that invisible but omnipresent “I”.

*Sr Sagaya Mary, SchSA is a High Court Advocate who has been spearheading the efforts to release under-trials.*

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## **MAKING HUMAN TRAFFICKING A RARITY, ONE LIFE AT A TIME**

According to the 2016 Global Slavery Index, an estimated 45.8 million people are affected by human trafficking worldwide. India is among the few countries with the highest absolute numbers of people in slavery, including domestic servitude, forced labour, sex trade, illegal adoption, forced marriages and other kinds of slavery. The country is also one of the few nations with the highest estimated prevalence of modern slavery by proportion of its population.

At Justice and Care (Mumbai), we are inspired to carry on the fight against this unspeakable injustice, working with the Government and law enforcement agencies to liberate and support victims of human trafficking and other

unimaginable abuses. In the last eight years since our inception, we have grown to become one of the leading organisations that, in true partnership with the state, tackles this complex and largely invisible issue.

Since inception, we have worked with governments and law enforcement agencies to save more than 4500 trafficked women and children, ensured the arrest of 950+ accused and achieved close to 120 convictions.

Whilst making human trafficking a rarity is Justice and Care's core objective, we continue to care for every child and young person whom we save. Our Aftercare team ensures individual care plans are implemented for each survivor.

At present, we are looking after 3133 women and children that are supported in our Care and Protection Programme.

One of them is Renuka\*, whose family lived in a very deprived village in South Asia. Her parents were forcing Renuka to beg (as they did) in order to provide for the family. In 2014, when Renuka was barely sixteen, a job opportunity provided by Suresh\*, a young man in her village, seemed to be a way out from a very desperate situation. Suresh had promised her employment in a beauty parlour. Little did she realise that accepting his offer meant that she was to travel thousands of miles, crossing international borders to finally find herself in a brothel.

Renuka was locked up in isolation and kept hungry. She was badly beaten, traumatised and raped repeatedly by Suresh and Pratap\*, the man who managed the brothel. She was then forced to have sex with 10-12 men every single day. She was never paid any money and did not possess any documentation.

Three months after she was brought to the brothel, Renuka was rescued in an operation conducted by the police and Justice and Care. When attended to by our Aftercare team, Renuka was weeping inconsolably. Her entire body was covered in bruises, cuts and scratches. She was placed in a shelter home, where she received counselling for her trauma and treatment for her injuries. After ensuring her well-being and supporting her through the legal process, our teams arranged for Renuka to be

repatriated to her home country, where she continues to be supported by Justice and Care.

Sadly, Renuka's case is not atypical. Once recruited, the women and young girls usually find themselves in situations with severely curtailed freedoms. Many times, they suffer extreme physical and mental abuse, including rape, imprisonment and physical brutality at the hands of their so-called "owners". To exacerbate their trauma, they are often isolated in their situations, with no means of escaping the violence or returning to their families. This is why it is important that we continue our efforts to save girls like Renuka.

As an organisation, we are also focusing on social change initiatives at a systemic level, and using our relationships with government authorities to bring about some significant breakthroughs. We believe that together, social change and initiatives at a systemic level will equip Governments, and the public in general, to save millions more from the clutches of this crime.

Day after day, our teams work tirelessly to help our brave survivors like Renuka overcome darkness and dream again, until they become contributing members of society.

For more information about our work, vacancies at Justice and Care, or to make a donation that will change life for one of our survivors, please visit [www.justiceandcare.org](http://www.justiceandcare.org)

*\*Names changed to protect identities*

## LAY COLLABORATORS: A PILLAR OF HOPE

In the fight against human trafficking, cross-sector collaboration is vital, as we see in today's world. Human trafficking is a devastating crime that threatens society's most vulnerable members, exploiting them for sex, labour, and servitude of all kinds. It destroys families, shatters lives, and undermines our most fundamental beliefs about the dignity of all people. **AMRAT (Asian Movement of Women Religious Against Human Trafficking)** along with lay collaborators as well as through the networks of different non-government organisations (NGOs) and the police force are deeply committed to combating the scourge of human trafficking. They support survivors with every tool and facility. The members of AMRAT (all over Asia) believe in a preventive approach, which is victim-centred, and trauma-informed to prosecute these crimes. Nothing is more important than helping victims to regain the sense of control that their assailants have tried to steal from them.

As Pope Francis says, ***“Human Trafficking is an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ. It is a crime against humanity.”*** Such a big challenge is placed before us by Pope Francis to develop a multi-disciplinary approach in human trafficking which is a collaborative approach to combat all forms of human trafficking within our country. That is what we do; our lay collaborators are the pillars of hope, an extended hand in reaching out to the victims of human trafficking.



Recently, Sr Rita Mascarenhas FMA and I delivered a session on human trafficking for the children of St Michael's parish, Mahim. We received a great response from the lay people (SCC groups) through this awareness programme. They supported the different NGOs, both financially and materially. The lay collaborators were ever ready to support us in our mission to reach out to these brothers and sisters who have been wounded by the inhumanity of selfish people.

“Rise, Brothers, rise! Extend your hand, dear Sisters!” is the call of the members of AMRAT. It's a call to collaborate in this movement to help the victims of human trafficking and thus uphold human dignity. Many people across the globe have been the pillars of hope to these young and tender victims of trafficking.

On February 8, the Feast Day of St Josephine Bakhita, AMRAT members (in collaboration with lay people) were involved in various activities and programmes like celebrating Orange Day, sessions in schools and colleges, training programmes for the police officials, celebrating Girl Child victim day, rallies, street plays, rescue operations, awareness on sex crime to the youth and so on. On the same day, the students and professors of New Law College, Matunga, visited the children of commercial sex workers at Navjeevan NGO, Mumbai Central and entertained the children with various programmes. Although it was only for a few

hours, the time was spent qualitatively with the children, and it generated great joy in all of us.

At the Vatican, the international police chiefs and religious figures pledged to work together to fight against this modern-day slavery. Hence it is a call for the laity to work together with greater coordination and collaboration to fight against this flesh trade. Let us become aware of the fact that every minute, a child is trafficked and abused. Recently, our encounter with 11-year-old Guddi was another invitation to work at the grassroots level, in supporting the rescued victims for a holistic development. Guddi was trafficked and lured directly from the protection of her parents. She hailed from a poor village near Kolkata. Her trafficker was her mother's friend, who had lived next door to her family. She promised Guddi well-paid domestic work in Mumbai that would help feed her struggling family. Guddi's life dramatically changed, as soon as she arrived in Mumbai. She was taken to Kamathipura, where she was dragged into a brothel on 14th Lane, and raped by a pedophile customer, while the madam and her daughter held her down by her arms and legs to restrain her. The customer raped her so violently that she was hospitalised for three months. They raped her to break her. She was then held, not knowing if it was day or night, in a caged room in a brothel house on 14th Lane. Guddi, a survivor, is now doing her computer course in a home, that is supported by a couple from Bandra.

Human trafficking is a crime; it is a new form of slavery imposed by criminal organisations, which buy and sell men, women and children.” **Pope Francis** in his Message for the 2017 World Day



We hear the harrowing experiences of human trafficking survivors, as well as their stories of hope, thanks to the work of grassroots organisations helping the victims of this despicable trade. Pope Francis strongly underlines these observations as "the most powerful force driving the exploitation and abuse of children. If more rigorous and effective action is not taken against those who profit from such abuse, we will not be able to stop the multiple forms of slavery where children are the victims." Demand and supply, in turn, are deeply rooted in the three great issues of conflicts and wars, economic privation and natural disasters, or what the victims experience as extreme poverty, underdevelopment, exclusion, unemployment and lack of access to education. Therefore, the members of AMRAT feel that our awareness must expand on the issue of human trafficking and extend to the very depths of this evil; it must reach from awareness to prayer, from prayer to solidarity, and from solidarity to concrete action, until slavery and trafficking are terminated.

As we remember our Universal Sister, Josephine Bakhita, the patron saint of the victims of human trafficking, we humbly pray to our Lord:

*O God, when we hear of children and adults being deceived and taken to unknown places for purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labour, and organ 'harvesting', our hearts are saddened and our spirits angry, that their dignity and rights are ignored through threats, lies and force. We cry out against the evil practice of this modern slavery, and pray with St Bakhita for it to end. Give us wisdom and courage to reach out and stand with those whose bodies, hearts and spirits have been so wounded, so that together we may make real your promises to fill these sisters and brothers with a love that is tender and good. Send the exploiters away empty-handed to be converted from this wickedness, and help us all to claim the freedom that is your gift to your children. Amen*

**Sr Grace Rodrigues, FdCC** is involved with AMRAT.

## A GLIMPSE OF PRISONERS' PLIGHT

All Prison Ministry personnel are supposed to work in the jails allotted to them. If somebody has been allotted Tihar jail in Delhi, then he or she cannot visit a jail in Gujarat or Goa. This is because thorough background checks of every individual is done before he/she is granted permission to enter any prison. (With written permission from the authorities, you can be granted entry into any jail.) Otherwise, thugs and dacoits may enter the prisons as 'volunteers'. And violence will take place both inside and outside the jails.

As I am from Kalyan, our Head of the Prison Ministry Cell in Kalyan, Rev. Sr. Dhanam Mary took special permission for me to act as a volunteer (approximately four years ago) for a skin check-up for prisoners.

For conducting any check-ups for skin, eyes, teeth, etc. for prisoners, the respective jail authorities have to take permissions from their

higher-ups. Without permissions, there is a restriction on entry.

We are now counselling adolescents (boys between the ages of 18 to 21 years). We (volunteers) are allotted a particular day and time to enter the prisons. We cannot go to any barrack when we feel like. The male volunteers go only to the male barracks; in this case, the barracks for the adolescents are separate from the adult prisoners' barracks. The female volunteers go to the ladies' barrack which is meant for women of all ages.

Earlier, in the British period, the rice provided to the prisoners contained gravel and worms. Today, that has changed. The food is prepared by the prisoners themselves. However, you may not get a full quota of your requirements. Two fat chapattis with a saucer full of rice is what you are provided at every meal.





The food comes in by 10.00 am. You are supposed to eat around 12.00 noon, as the barrack doors get closed for the meal and a siesta. In the evening, food will come by 5.00 pm and must be consumed by 8.00 pm. This is because the Jail Manual (written during the British era) says so; it was written much before electricity could reach the country. Bananas are served occasionally, with each prisoner getting two each.

This prison is supposed to hold 1,100 prisoners. But at any given point of time, there are more than that, even touching 1,500.

Earlier, things in prisons were worse. Today, they are far better. The Supreme Court of India has insisted that CCTV cameras should be installed in every barrack, which is being done.

Many women in prisons have their young children staying with them. Some NGOs take



these children out of the jail occasionally for a whiff of fresh air and a glimpse of the outside world.

On Christmas Day 2016, we celebrated Holy Mass for the Catholic and Christian prisoners. Marathi hymns were sung, and the homily was preached in Hindi. After Mass, housie was conducted, and prizes (mostly new clothes) were given to the winners.

**John A. Misquitta** is an active volunteer with the Prison Ministry; he belongs to Our Lady of Lourdes parish, Kalyan (West).

