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Bambina Sr. Adele Korah, third from left, stands with Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Susainathan of Bangalore and Fr. Francis Kodiyan, Prison Ministry India national coordinator, and nun volunteers, for the release of Korah's book *My Journey With Brethren Behind Bars*. (Courtesy of Sr. Adele Korah)



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The large iron gates of the central prison in Bengaluru, southern India, opened for an 85-year-old Catholic nun. The guard saluted her and said, "Your people have been waiting for you."

"More than they, I am longing to see them," said Sr. Adele Korah, who has visited the prison often since June 2004 after joining Prison Ministry India as a volunteer.

A month before that, in October, the member of the Sisters of Charity of Sts. Bartholomea Capitanio and Vincenza Gerosa, known as Bambina sisters, and three other nuns joined five other volunteers to publish books narrating their encounters with prisoners in various parts of India.

Korah's book, *My Journey With Brethren Behind Bars*, tells the stories of 27 prisoners she has helped convert "internally" — instilling hope after their pasts.



From left: Charity of Nazareth Sr. Blanch Correa and Bambina Srs. Adele Korah and Angeline Lobo visit the central prison in Bengaluru, southern India. (Courtesy of Sr. Adele Korah)

Similarly, Benedictine Sr. Shirly Kidangan's book, *Chains to Wings - Stories of Grace From Prison Ministry*, recounts her decade-long prison service in Bhopal and Sagar, in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

Another author, Sr. Marina Gulati of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambery congregation, published *An Inner Spiritual Journey Through Prison Walls*, on her experience in Pune, a western Indian city.

Sisters of Our Lady of Fatima Sr. Santan Nago, who serves as the prison ministry's secretariat in Bengaluru, wrote *Rehoboth* ["broad space"] **-** *From Prison to Purpose*, which highlights the repentance and redemption of a man convicted of murder.

The books were released on Oct. 29 at the international convention of the prison ministry, organized by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, in Muvattupuzha, a town north of Kottayam in Kerala, southwestern India, where the ministry began after two seminarians started visiting jails more than four decades ago.

Fr. Francis Kodiyan, the ministry's co-founder and the current national coordinator, says half of their 8,000 volunteers are Catholic religious, mostly nuns from various congregations.

The religious volunteers are "the living witnesses of Christ's compassion," said the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament priest, who was a philosophy student when he first visited a jail with another seminarian Dec. 8, 1981.

"It is through their spiritual strength that countless broken lives are released from despair, reformed by love, rehabilitated with dignity, reintegrated into society, and ultimately redeemed in the light of God's mercy," Kodiyan told Global Sisters Report on Nov. 29.



The participants of the international convention of Prison Ministry India attended a book release ceremony on Oct 29 at Muvattupuzha, a town in the southwestern Indian state of Kerala. (Courtesy of Sr. Melania D'Souza)

The nuns' silent sacrifices, prayers and fast are the bedrock of the ministry, he said.

This view was shared by Bishop Jose Pulickal of Kanjirapally, chairperson of the bishops' office for prison ministry. He acknowledged that "the unwavering commitment" of the religious, especially nuns, continues to transform prisons into sanctuaries of renewal.

Kodiyan said the bishops' conference officially recognized the prison ministry in 1989. It now supports prisoners' release, reformation and rehabilitation through spiritual and practical assistance.

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Korah said she finds the real meaning of her vocation when she is with the prisoners. "They keep me active and alive even at this age," she told GSR as she returned from the latest prison visit on Nov. 28.

She continues to counsel some people found in her book even after their release from the prison.

Korah, who had earlier spent decades in teaching, won a national award for "excellence in teacher education" in 1975 and a Kerala state award for "best innovations in teaching" three years later.



Bambina Sr. Adele Korah poses with those who came to thank nuns who serve as volunteers of Prison Ministry India in Bengaluru, southern India. (Courtesy of Sr. Adele Korah)

"But my best ministry is in prisons, and not in schools," said the nun who received a special award from the Karnataka government in 2010 for her outstanding service to the prisoners in Bengaluru, the state capital.

Unlike Korah, who became a volunteer on her own, Kidangan's entry came as "a small step of obedience" to her superiors. But it soon became a "path that I can no longer turn away from," she said.

Her book narrates her success stories. "Since I am a lawyer, I could appear for the prisoners, get them bail or their release," the nun, who is in her 60s and has a master's degree in social work, told GSR.

Her biggest success was her entry to a federal prison in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh capital. "Its doors opened only after constant prayers, persistence and above all God's grace," she said.



The Prison Ministry India volunteers, mostly sisters, pose during the 25th year of the Karnataka chapter in Mysuru, India, in June 2025. (Courtesy of Sr. Adele Korah)

Kidangan has launched vocational skills training for both men and women in the prison.

"These are not just activities, but lifelines of dignity, hope and rediscovery. Each skill learned, each conversation, each prayer became a tiny seed of healing," she said.

Like Korah, Kidangan too finds prisoners eager for her visits. "I too miss them," said the nun who considers the prison her second home.

"Behind those locked gates, I have found not only guilt or punishment, but tears, repentance, courage and a longing for dignity and a second chance," she said.



The nun volunteers of the Prison Ministry India with co-founder Fr. Francis Kodiyan, second from left, sing carols at Devanahalli open prison near Bengaluru, the capital of the southwestern Indian state of Karnataka. (Courtesy of Sr. Adele Korah)

The prison ministry has convinced Gulati that "God's mercy flows even through the thickest prison walls."

The nurse-turned musician, who now directs Pune's St. Cecilia's School of Music, has written another book, A *Journey of Grace: Music, Mercy, and Transformation in Prison Ministry*, that explains how she introduced music therapy for healing in prison.

She told GSR that she has encountered several stories of transformation after she used music as a healing platform in the prison, especially among juveniles.

Music, she added, awakens compassion in humans and heals their wounds. "Even the most wounded hearts can feel safe with music," said the 61-year-old nun, who has conducted concerts to support the education of prisoners' children, especially girls.

Nago's book speaks of Reny George, who was convicted of murder in 1980, but became a preacher of God's mercy after the prison ministry volunteers visited him.

"It was his openness, humility and willingness to share his journey that made this book possible," said the 75-year-old nun who was her congregation's superior general for two terms.

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Nago clarifies that the book is not George's biography, but "a broader mission of mercy and restoration that surrounds it."

George's talks explain the prison reality, the challenges of rehabilitation, and the possibilities that unfold when faith, prayer and community converge.

Pulickal found Nago's book "a spiritual journey of hope, a story that shows how God redeems even the most broken people."

Sr. Fidelis Nedumpara of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, a volunteer in Bengaluru for 30 years, published *Jeevodaya - A Gift of God* in 2020.

The 77-year-old nun is involved in the rehabilitation of the female prisoners at Jeevodaya, a home for women released from prison.

"Freedom is a fundamental right for everyone, but a woman prisoner experiences bondage not only in prison but in society," she said.

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