News
Q&As



Sr. Lini Sheeja working in her office in 2020. (Courtesy of Sr. Lini Sheeja)



by Lissy Maruthanakuzhy

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Sr. Lini Sheeja was only 17 when Mother Theresa of Calcutta inspired her to work among the poor. Soon, she joined the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and became a social worker dedicated to serving the most needy.

Now 40 years old, Sheeja writes books in English, Malayalam and Tamil based on her experience of reaching out to people in hospitals, youth centers, impoverished areas and prisons. She also served the Prison Ministry of India, under the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, as its national secretary and the editor of its magazine, Prison Voice.

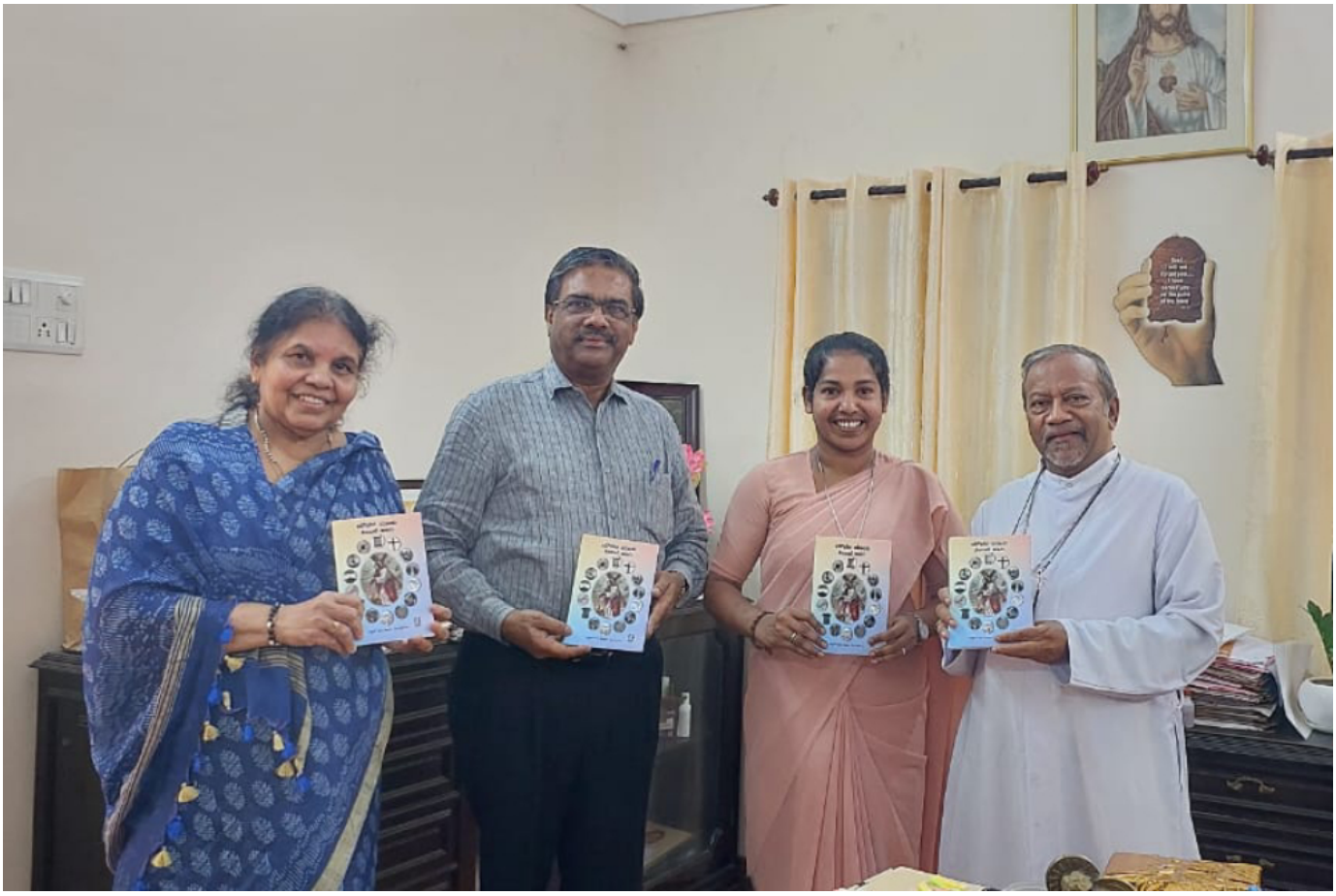
Sheeja's experiences as a social worker convinced her of the importance of the written word. Through her writing and social commentary, she expresses her faith and encourages others to "reach out to the abandoned and the broken."

Sheeja is currently in Germany studying for her master's in social work. She spoke to Global Sisters Report over the phone about her mission of being "the voice of the voiceless."

***GSR*: What prompted you to take up writing as a mission?**

Sheeja: I have always had a passion for writing, which I consider a gift from the Holy Spirit. After completing my Bachelor of Social Work in 2012, I wrote my first book, Sound of Silence: A Way of the Cross, in Tamil. I believe the book was truly inspired by the Holy Spirit. Within six months, 1,000 copies were sold, and the positive feedback encouraged me.

I strive to be [the] voice of the voiceless as a social worker. After my final vows, I worked in Bengaluru [southern India] with BOSCO Mane, a Salesian organization working with at-risk youth, and at St. John's Medical College Hospital as a geriatric medical social worker. I also worked in the slums of Vivek Nagar, Bangalore. During that period, I felt a strong desire to write about social themes and share my experiences of God.



Sr. Lini Sheeja’s book, Sound of Silence, written in Malayalam, was released in 2025 by Archbishop Peter Machado of Bangalore (right). Sr. Lini Sheeja is pictured second from right. (Courtesy of Sr. Lini Sheeja)

During these years, I had few opportunities to write for magazines or other platforms. However, each time I came across magazines, I felt a strong desire to write about social themes and share my personal experiences of God with religious and young audiences. In 2018, I joined the Prison Ministry of India and became the Chief Editor of Prison Voice, a national monthly magazine. In this role, I made it my mission to highlight the real-life stories of prisoners through interviews after recognizing the importance of giving them a voice. I understood that this magazine needed to be a platform for the voiceless.

Gradually, I began contributing to various magazines. To date, I have written approximately 350 articles and published six books, including *Sound of Silence*, in five different languages.

Tell us about your books and writings.

They are based on my experiences with God and my professional journey. My fifth book, *O Justice, Where Are You*, highlights various social issues I have seen. The book asks readers to respond to the question, "O Justice, where are you?" They are expected to respond, "Here, I am," to show that each person has the power to change the world.

My sixth book, *Is There a GPS to Heaven?*, calls readers to respond to Jesus' invitation to reach out to the abandoned and the broken.



Sr. Lini Sheeja's books, O Justice, Where Are You, Is There a GPS to Heaven? and Sound of Silence, written in Kannada, were released in 2025 by the Asian Trading Corporation in Bengaluru, southern India. Sr. Lini Sheeja (center in sari) with the publishing team. (Courtesy of Sr. Lini Sheeja)

Do your superiors and community support you?

Absolutely. My community has supported my social work and writing. Without their support and God's grace, I would not have been able to do what I have done in

various fields. My superiors and companions recognize my passion for helping the poor. My former provincial once called me a "little lioness," which encouraged me to be more courageous.

In 2022, I came to Germany as a missionary. The sisters here encourage me to explore my inner self. I have many opportunities for growth here.

What led you to social work?

In 2017, two of us novices were sent to BOSCO Mane for a 15-day exposure program. One evening, we received a call about a woman lying on the street. Accompanied by my companion and driver, I reached the place and found the woman. No one wanted to help her. Onlookers told us that she had been a beggar, living on the streets.

We took her to the police station to complete the formalities. We arrived at the Mother Teresa Old Age Home around 11 p.m., where we bathed and fed her. She thanked us and left.



Sr. Lini Sheeja with a disabled child in Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu. Sheeja writes books in English, Malayalam and Tamil based on her experiences of reaching out to people in hospitals, youth centers, impoverished areas and prisons. (Courtesy of Sr. Lini Sheeja)

I had a sleepless night as the woman’s plight disturbed me. I decided to study social work. That sleepless night inspired me to work in slums and to see God’s face in the suffering people. It also motivated me to set up self-help groups for slum women to help them live with dignity.

For me, human dignity and justice are the two sides of the same coin.

Why did you join the prison ministry?

In 2018, my provincial asked me to find a place to work. I always turn to the Blessed Sacrament whenever I have to make a decision in life. In the chapel, I heard the Lord say, "A gun cannot change a prisoner, but a nun can!"

I heard the same words in a sermon on prison ministry 16 years ago. I believe God has been preparing me for this ministry since then. During the past 16 years, I have dedicated a decade of the rosary to the prisoners.

The prison ministry was my response to Jesus' invitation: "I was in prison, and you visited me" (Matthew 25:36). That sleepless night inspired me to bring hope to prisoners. That ministry taught me that no one is born a criminal.

I stress the need to listen to prisoners with a non-judgmental attitude. Most prisoners need justice, and all of them long to have a second chance in life. We give them the message of God’s forgiveness. We also care for their children and strive to find them jobs after release. Our volunteers stand at church doors with buckets, seeking funds to rehabilitate prisoners and care for their children. This work has always brought me satisfaction and joy.



At the Tumkur District Prison, Karnataka, during the height of COVID-19 in 2020. (Left to right) Discalced Carmelite Fr. Alphonse, Claretian Fr. Antony D'Souza, Tumkur jail superintendent, Blessed Sacrament Fr. Francis Kodiyan and Sr. Lini Sheeja. (Courtesy of Sr. Lini Sheeja)

Tell us about your family. Did they contribute to your calling?

I am from Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu [southernmost Indian state]. My father is a fisherman, and my mother [is] a housewife. I have seen my father battling the sea to provide for us. I have never seen him sit idle. My father instilled in us the importance of never giving up and fighting until the end.

When my father went fishing at night, we feared for him, especially during thunderstorms and lightning. My mother taught us to pray for the safe return of all fishermen.

For us, fisherfolk, God is our great refuge. We move forward with faith, daily Eucharist and family prayers. While my father went to work, my mother took us children to the daily Eucharist. She instilled a strong faith in us and taught us that

God is our provider.

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I learned from my mother to be kind to the poor and needy. She often shares food with those coming to our door.

The world is rapidly changing, and technology is playing a greater role in evangelization. What message do you have for young people who want to enter "the media mission?"

The 21st century presents numerous challenges, and we need young people who are passionate about making a positive impact in society. To enter the media mission, they have to be convinced that they are the voice of the youth and the voiceless.

They should follow the example of Blessed Carlo Acutis, who had profound devotion to the Catholic faith and used technology to disseminate religious content.



Bishop Joseph Pulickal of Kanjirapally honors Sr. Lini Sheeja for her service to the Prison Ministry of India in 2019 during their silver jubilee celebrations at its national office in Bengaluru. (Courtesy of Sr. Lini Sheeja)

Those entering the media mission should nurture their creativity and engage with their audience authentically. Use the platform to inspire and uplift others. Their role is vital in advocating for justice and fostering understanding in today's world. All they need is an unwavering faith in God and a passionate commitment to Him; He will pave the way for you.

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