

What do you do while imprisoned in solitary confinement for more than two years? The answer for one Pakistani Christian is “pray.” Asia Bibi has spent almost three years in prison on charges that she blasphemed Islam’s prophet Muhammad. She was convicted and sentenced to death, and she now awaits the ruling on her appeal. To protect her from other inmates, she has been kept in solitary confinement. She cooks her own food to ensure that no one tries to poison her.

VOM has supported Asia’s family during her long imprisonment and has stayed in touch with Asia through her faithful husband, Ashiq. In January, a VOM staff member was able to visit Asia in prison for the first time since she received the death penalty. Ashiq and the VOM worker spent 25 minutes with Asia, but they were separated by a tight metal screen.

“She had a smiley face full of joy and thanksgiving,” said the VOM worker. Asia said she was thankful for the visit and that she was happy and fine. She reported that jail officials were taking good care of her and that the superintendent, sympathetic to her extreme loneliness, promised to bring her any books she wanted. A female guard is with her at all times.

Asia told the VOM worker about another way she has been blessed. “There is a beautiful thing that happens every day in my cell. Two days after they announced my death penalty, I was brought into the death cell [death row]. Every morning around 3:30 or 4, a brown bird with a long beak appears and sits on the boundary wall. This bird also comes every evening around 5. He sits there for 10 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes in the evening. Later on he became my friend. I talk to him and he also talks to me.

“As I watched this bird every day, I tried to understand the meaning of him coming day after day. I think this is a messenger from God giving me his message. When the bird comes, I feel encouraged and peaceful. I feel comforted after his visit. I think this is very significant sign from God.”

Asia is allowed to walk in the courtyard every day for a few minutes, but she is always accompanied by guards. Other prisoners attend religious services in the jail every week, but Asia is not allowed to attend. So in her loneliness, she prays.

“I am praying every day,” she said. “I am strong in my faith. I know that this is a test of my faith and I know to make gold, it must be purified; it has to be put in the fire.

“I am not worried about myself, but I am worried about the VOM workers who are helping me, which is very dangerous. I pray for them every day.

“I don’t know the names, but I know the people from USA are helping me; I pray for them also. I pray for the people around the world who are praying for me.” Asia also prays for the families of two men, Punjab Governor Salman Taseer and Minority Affairs Minister Shahbaz Bhatti, both of whom were killed for their support of Asia.

“I am very thankful to them that they sacrificed their lives for me,” Asia said. She is also thankful for the financial support provided to her family. “I know you are the people helping me and my family and fighting my case in the court. I am very thankful to Lord for this.”

Asia asked how her two young daughters are doing. She wanted to make sure they are going to school and church, concerned they might stray from what she wants for them. Ashiq assured her that the girls are attending school and church. “I am thankful they are doing this,” she said.

Asia, Ashiq and the VOM worker finished their time together with prayer. They prayed for the court, the judge, the attorneys and the jail’s staff. And Asia prayed that God would bless her and make her life an example to the other prisoners.

She ended with, “I pray that God will forgive the people who blamed me. ... I know God helps his people and he will release me. I want to appeal to the world to pray for a miracle to release me from jail and that I stand strong in my faith.”

Please join Asia in her appeal for release by signing the petition at [www.CallForMercy.com](http://www.CallForMercy.com).  
And above all, pray.