



In Metro Manila jails, children in conflict with the law (CICL) are held illegally in adult prisons while awaiting trial. In the overcrowded prisons skin diseases run rampant and the detained children do not receive enough food or water.

Billy*

We each have our own great hopes and dreams for next year. But, for many victims of injustice and oppression hopes and dreams are more than elusive. How do we give them hope for their future in the face of such painful circumstances?

Billy is the eldest of 11 children. His mother, a laundry woman whose earnings are not even enough to support one child, placed on Billy's tiny shoulders the responsibility of putting food on the table. His family had not had anything to eat for days. Billy is only 13 years old; barely four feet tall.

For a small can of luncheon meat taken in the height of desperation, 13-year-old Billy was detained in municipal jail for several days. He shared a crowded prison cell with over 120 adult criminals, many of whom had been accused of rape and murder. The jail's filthy condition is unbearable even for the most hardened criminal.

Christmas came early to Billy. In September of last year, IJM intervened on his behalf. We visited Billy in his prison cell and listened to his pleas. We searched for the person who filed the case against him and explained Billy's situation. And then the miracle happened - the complainant dropped the charges and Billy was set free!

There are many children like Billy who are thrown and forgotten in a squalid prison cell. They are children. They should be playing in the warmth of a loving home. Let us pray that this year will bring them the greatest gift - the joy of childhood, which had been so harshly taken away from them.

It is a profound pleasure to be a part of the International Justice Mission family and to bring hope to the hopeless.



*In order to protect the individuals IJM serves and those who carry out the work, faces of sex abuse victims and particular IJM investigators have been blurred. To further conceal the identities of victims and safeguard ongoing IJM casework, pseudonyms have been used though the accounts are real. Actual names and casework documentation are on file with IJM.