

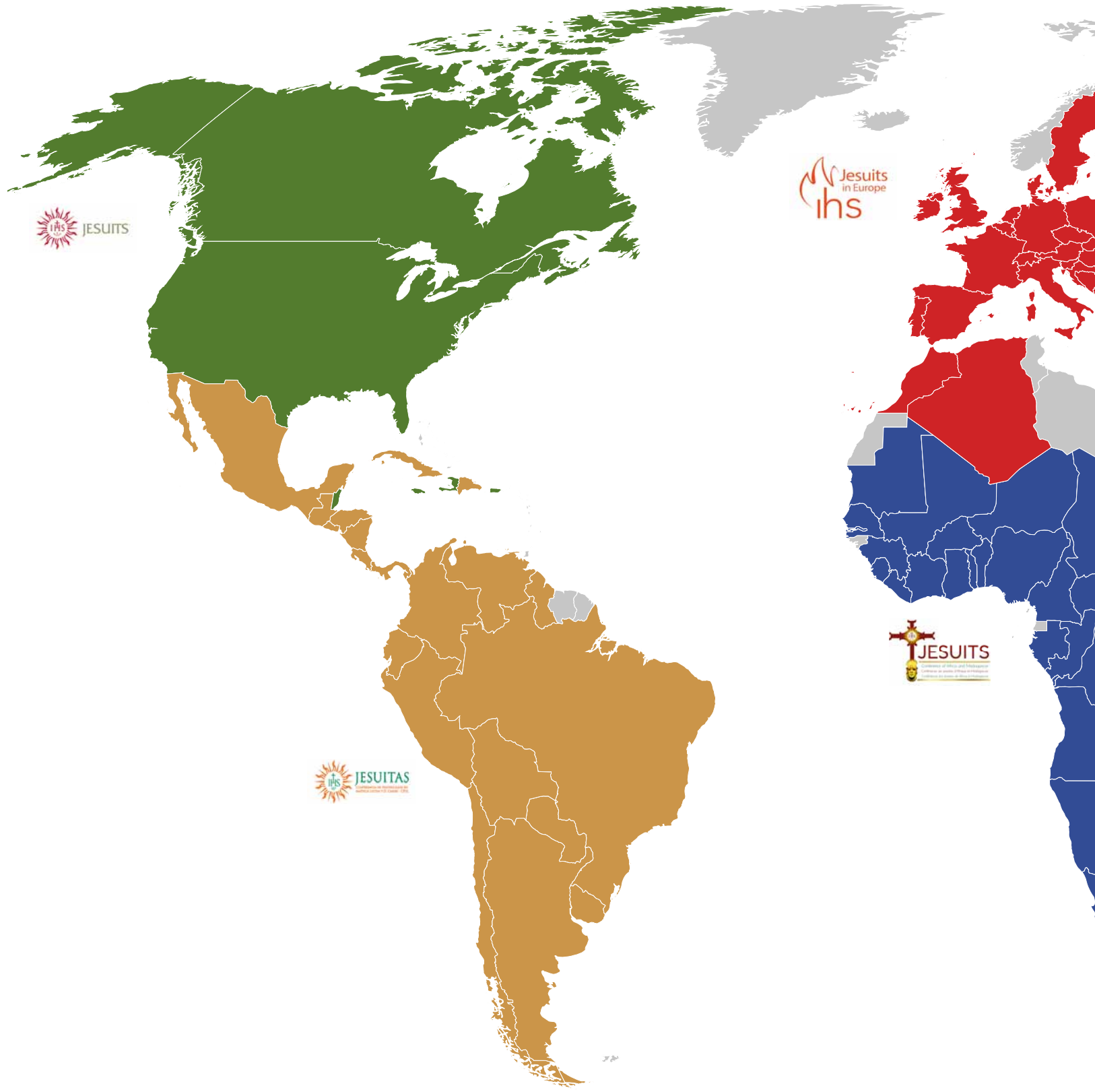
# Jesuits

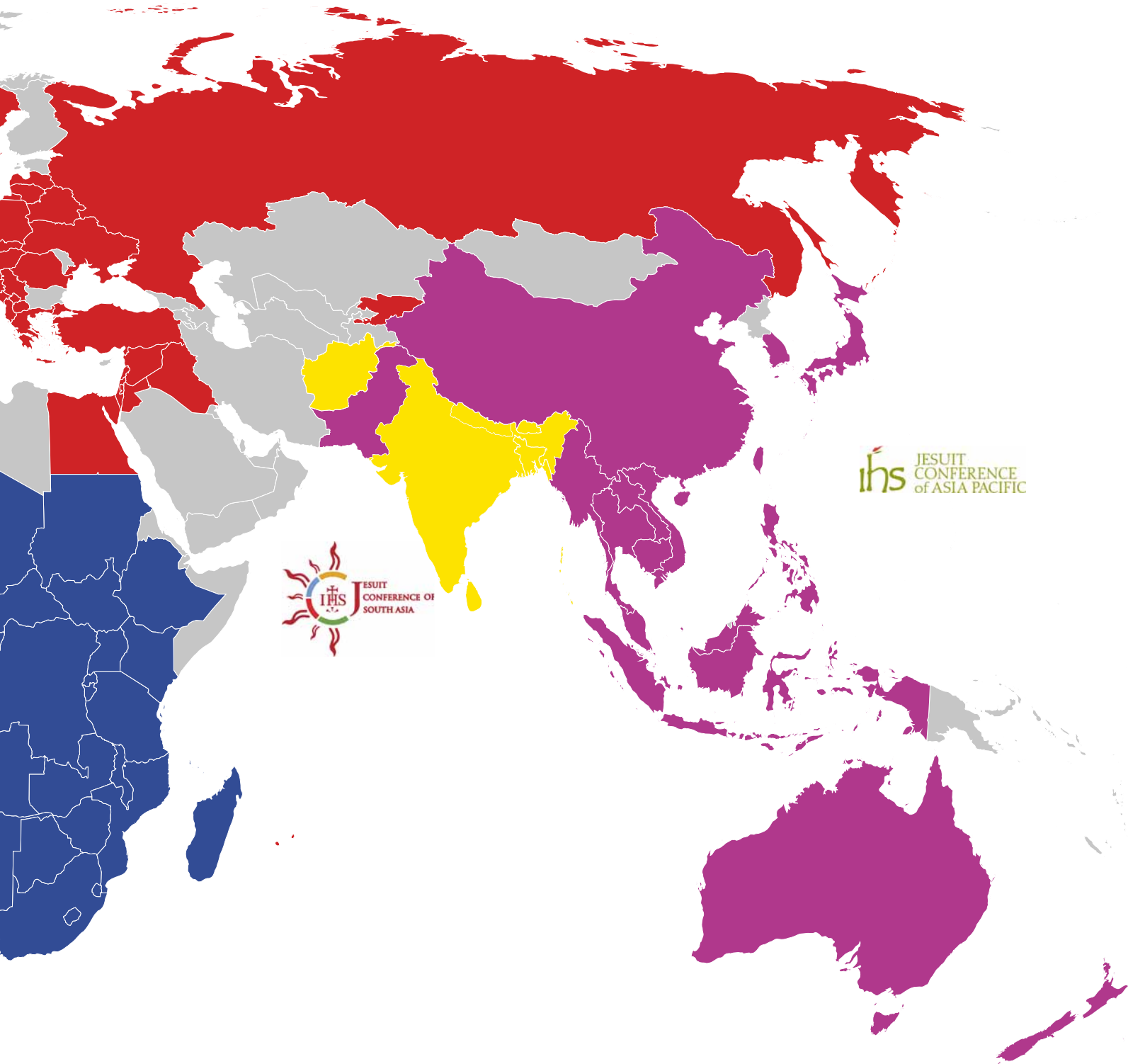
## 2025



With the  
migrants

In search  
of peace





- CPAL – Conference of Provincials of Latin America and the Caribbean
- JCAM – Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar
- JCAP – Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific
- JCCU – Jesuit Conference of Canada and the U.S.A.
- JCEP – Jesuit Conference of European Provincials
- JCSA – Jesuit Conference of South Asia




## Cover

**Photo:** A boat carrying Rohingya refugees arrives in Lampanah, in the Indonesian province of Aceh. Persecuted for ethnic and religious reasons in their country of origin, Myanmar, they had taken refuge in a camp in Bangladesh. But there, too, they suffered discrimination and violence. They set sail for Indonesia. JRS-Indonesia welcomes them and aims to open up a peaceful future for them. (Photo: Maulana Fikri / JRS Indonesia)

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### The Society of Jesus

The Society of Jesus is a religious Order of the Catholic Church. Its mission is to bring to the world – and especially to the poor and vulnerable – the reconciliation, justice and liberation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To support this mission, the Society's commitments are guided by four *Universal Apostolic Preferences*: to show the way to God, to walk with the excluded, to journey with youth and to collaborate in the care of our common home.

Website: [jesuits.global](http://jesuits.global)





# Jesuits

**With the migrants – In search of peace**

**THE SOCIETY OF JESUS IN THE WORLD**

**2025**

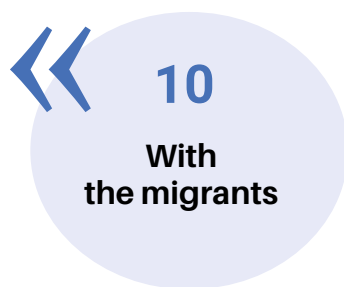
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Illustrations: Benoît Vermander, S.J.



ARTURO SOSA, S.J.  
Superior General



## Our mission of reconciliation leads to Justice and Peace

The Society of Jesus has been sent, along with others, to carry out a mission of reconciliation and justice. Today's world is crying for justice to build peace. The greatest desire of all human beings now is to create a dignified life in a peaceful environment. The Good News of Jesus promises the way to Justice and Peace—with capital letters—through reconciliation in all dimensions of human life.

Humanity must reconcile with cultural diversity and consider it its greatest wealth. Intergenerational reconciliation is also necessary so that older people's experience becomes the legacy of adults and youth in transforming current structures that produce injustice and violence.

The overwhelming increase in the migratory flow of forcibly displaced people is a warning sign of the extent of injustice in today's social relations. Every year, millions of migrants risk lives, traditions, cultural roots, fundamental relationships, and belongings to migrate, leaping into the unknown in pursuit of better lives for themselves and those they left behind.

Worsening poverty, the widening gap between rich and poor, the many faces of daily violence, political repression, war, and the consequences of climate change... all these causes forced migrations and are, at the same time, the consequence of structural injustice that prevents living in Peace.

To contribute to the mission of reconciliation that leads to Justice and Peace, the Society of Jesus accompanies people who directly suffer the consequences of poverty, violence and war each day. Jesuits and hundreds of mission partners (men and women collaborators) are present in places of conflict or where migrants suffer exclusion for various reasons. And on the arduous journey to reach countries searching for better living conditions.

The task of reconciliation, given its intense complexity, is presented in the testimonies we publish. Every migrant has a personal story that calls for reconciliation. Integration in the countries where migrants arrive is also a reconciliation challenge because welcoming the newcomer as a brother or sister requires recognizing and overcoming each culture's countless prejudices. Fraternity allows us to work together towards building the dignified and peaceful life we all aspire to.

The reconciliation required to transform social relations which causes structural injustice and drives the need to migrate or suffer inhuman living conditions is a complex task. The task involves the collaboration of many people; it implies what we call in the Gospel's language, conversion of hearts, which allows us to become aware of the other and welcome him or her as a brother or sister despite differences. This is the path of Peace to which we are all called.

## EDITORIAL

# Topical issues and testimonials that stand the test of time

PIERRE BÉLANGER, S.J.  
Editor

"What are Jesuits doing these days?" In the secularised context in which many of us live nowadays, the word "Jesuit" no longer conjures up the aura of science and tradition associated with great institutions, nor the preaching to the four corners of the world of the valiant missionaries of the past. The answer to this question is in fact more complex, more characterised by versatility and creativity than it has been in other eras.

This wealth of commitment by the Society of Jesus in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is what the publication you have in your hands seeks to reflect, year after year. The magazine defines itself as offering a panorama of "The Society of Jesus in the world". That's an ambitious goal, and we have to admit that fifty or so articles can't cover "everything Jesuits are doing these days".

That's why each issue focuses readers' attention on one or another of the important dimensions of our ministries. This year, we are highlighting our response to two calls from the Lord. Firstly, by showing our solidarity with the millions of refugees and forced migrants around the world; secondly, by crying out our desire for peace in the world, for all peoples, for those who suffer from war and injustice.

Over the last few years, we have taken it in turns to present the unconditional commitment of the Society of Jesus - of Jesuits themselves and of their many partners in mission - called for by our *Universal Apostolic Preferences* 2019-2029. Walking with the excluded, with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Secretariat for Social Justice - 2020; all four *Apostolic Preferences* and their link with Jesuit history and tradition - 2021; the Ignatian Year, which gave prominence to Ignatian spirituality - 2022; accompanying young people - 2023; caring for the common home - 2024.

The backdrop to all these chapters of the Society's activity is Jesus himself, whose name we bear. It is his Gospel, demanding and energising at the same time. It is the heritage of spiritual discernment in the midst of the world's reality, a heritage bequeathed to us by Saint Ignatius. You will notice all this in the testimonials that follow, and then you will have found the answer to the question: "What are Jesuits doing these days?"





*The Displaced.* Denis Meyer, S.J. Lebanon

## Migration

Millions of women, men and children are forced to abandon their homes.

This is the result not only of war, but of every injustice and social inequality caused by poverty. Often, it is also the result of climate change.

The Jesuits and their mission partners are deeply involved in accompanying refugees, mainly through the Jesuit Refugee Service – or JRS – but in countless other ways too.

The words and images you'll find in this section invite you to a deeper understanding of the Society of Jesus's commitment to migrants all over the world.



## Walking with refugees: a “human, educational and spiritual” service

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)  
International headquarters and Regional Offices, Rome

*The mission of JRS and its 11,500 partners in 58 countries is to accompany and serve forcibly displaced peoples, providing advocacy on their behalf. JRS identifies their needs and promotes immediate and long-term initiatives designed to provide them with new opportunities.*

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an apostolic work of the Society of Jesus to accompany forcibly displaced people. The vast majority are victims of persecution, armed conflicts, human rights’ violations, or natural disasters. Today, JRS is present in 58 countries worldwide, and has approximately 11,500 apostolic partners, comprising Jesuits, male and female religious staff members, lay volunteers and refugee staff members. They

hail from different countries, cultures and religious or secular backgrounds yet work together on a shared mission to accompany, serve, and provide advocacy for refugees and forcibly displaced peoples.

The fact their needs are vast is beyond question, whether the cause is globalisation or rapidly multiplying humanitarian crises. Mid-way through 2023, there were an esti-

mated 110 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. Of that number, 36.4 million were refugees, 62.5 million were internally displaced people, and 6.1 million, asylum seekers. Today, the forced displacement of entire peoples and influx of refugees affects every continent on Earth. Regrettably, most refugees are taken in by countries with low or medium national incomes: Ethiopia, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo,



📷 Pierre Ceyrac S.J. with Cambodian refugees in *Site Two* camp, Thai Cambodian border. Photo: JRS

Chad, Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Colombia, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey.

JRS wishes to respond innovatively and pro-actively to this complex global reality by vigorously implementing the *Universal Apostolic Preferences* of the Society of Jesus. In JRS, this takes the specific form of a shared apostolic discernment to identify which groups of forcibly displaced peoples are the most vulnerable, which needs the most urgent, and what can be done immediately and in the long term to promote a greater degree of justice for them. Every apostolic level of JRS is usually involved in this process, including regional teams, national teams,

and people on the ground, as well as representatives of those receiving help including refugees and other displaced people, and of course, our invaluable humanitarian partners. As a result, in 2022, we were able to help one and a half million women, men, and children all over the world by prioritising projects involving reconciliation, mental health, psycho-social support, education, various means of subsistence and types of social impact.

Yet the defining characteristic of JRS at the heart of all our “action” or apostolic activity on behalf of our forcibly displaced brothers and sisters is our primary, common resolve to “be alongside” them. That means

walking alongside the forcibly displaced or refugees on migrant routes, helping them bear heavy, burdensome days, suffering whenever we perceive their frustration or desperation, and simply giving them some love. What nurtures this compassion in action is an awareness that we share the same humanity. We activate that compassion by offering the forcibly displaced and refugees some of our time and energy, by listening to them, and sharing in their hopes and sorrows. It is our ardent hope that through this ministry of accompaniment, consolation and healing, the people we accompany may heal their inner wounds and recover a lost dignity. And we also hope that by becoming reconciled with themselves



📷 JRS provides medical services with a particular focus on the needs of women. Photo: JRS



Some of our JRS partners acquire a personal experience of this growth in humanity and spirituality along the walk they share with refugees.

and that part of humanity which acts as their oppressor, they may re-build their lives on more just, equitable foundations. Over the years, the apostolic workers of JRS have gradually experienced and developed a profound understanding of the vision Fr Pedro Arrupe outlined so clearly in his letter founding the JRS: “The help needed is not only material: in a special way the Society is being called to render a service that is human, educational and spiritual (...) God is calling us through these helpless people. We should consider the chance of

being able to assist them a privilege that will, in turn, bring great blessings to ourselves and our Society.”

Occasionally, some of our JRS partners acquire a personal experience of this growth in humanity and spirituality along the walk they share with refugees, along this two-way accompaniment. Our partners are surprised, while conversing with the refugees, by the depth of their reflections, which, in turn shed light upon their own experiences of sorrow or suffering. In the Other who is by their

side, they find a reflection of their own humanity. Their lives assume fruitful meaning, and they embrace a journey towards God. When they begin to help JRS, our partners often seek to be generous to the forcibly displaced, to offer hospitality and protection to foreigners excluded from society, broken within, and stripped of everything. Yet ultimately, they realise that from the hands of the excluded they themselves are the recipients of a precious gift. And they learn to rebuild their lives on stronger values, and encounter the divine, whichever name they may give it, according to the religious or secular environment they happen to live in.

*By Eric Goeh-Akue, S.J.; María Elena Hernández Lara; Elías López Pérez, S.J.; William R. O’Neill, S.J.; Patrick O. Etamesor, S.J.; Alberto Ares, S.J., and Leo J. O’Donovan, S.J.*



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<https://jrs.net>



## Remembering 200 years of immigration to South Brazil

### An historical view on a missionary adventure

Inácio Spohr, S.J.  
Province of Brazil

*The Jesuit presence in Brazil dates back to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the early Jesuits were Germans expelled from their homeland. The many apostolates they established included pastoral, educational, social, cultural and even financial initiatives.*

German immigration to Brazil began in 1824 in the far south of the country in São Leopoldo. Wars and poverty had driven many families to leave Germany and seek a better fortune in the New World. Two hundred years later, they are still celebrated for their religious, social, cultural and financial contribution to Brazil. However, the first immigrants arrived in an extremely poor region lacking roads, schools and hospitals... As for religion, while the German Lutherans could rely for help on the

pastors who accompanied them as fellow migrants, the Catholics, despite settling in a traditionally Catholic nation, received no spiritual assistance whatsoever.

In 1842, four Spanish Jesuits expelled from Argentina arrived in the São Leopoldo area. While preaching during missionary campaigns for the local community, they realised the German Catholics had no one to help them. So, they wrote to the Superior General, Fr Roothaan, ask-

ing him to send German-speaking Jesuits to the region. In 1849, two priests and a Jesuit brother arrived. Initially, they settled with German immigrants, facing want, hunger and solitude alongside them. Nonetheless, for the good of the settlers, they persevered with their missionary endeavours.

After Bismarck expelled the Society of Jesus from Germany in 1871, more than 300 European Jesuits began to arrive in southern Brazil and





📷 The German Catholic community gathered in Arroio do Meio, Rio Grande do Sul.

work in hospitals, parishes, schools and seminaries, especially in areas settled by the Germans. With horses or mules as their sole mode of transport, Jesuit missionaries would ride for hours along narrow, rough roads to reach their destination. They were frequently asked to anoint the sick and dying, a summons every Jesuit had to be always ready to answer. Many were injured on these journeys, falling off their horses or mules. Some even drowned.

Several bishops asked for Jesuits for their parishes as there was then a shortage of diocesan clergy. And so, the Jesuits began to run parishes in large swathes of Brazil occupied by German immigrants. Some parishes were vast, including dozens of chapels which could take missionaries a whole day's ride to reach. The

priests would take turns to run the parishes and chapels, while Jesuit brothers took charge of the cooking, vegetable gardens and parish farms as well as catechesis and teaching. They would also build parish schools and churches. Some, furnished with exquisite carved wooden altars, were a source of pride for the local community.

The parishes were the hub of Christian life, featuring the Apostleship of prayer and Sodalities of Our Lady (forerunners of Christian Life Communities), missionary outreach and all kinds of Catholic gatherings. Depending on the ethnic bases of the local community, the preaching would be in German or Portuguese, and the Jesuits also helped Italian and Polish-speaking immigrants too. Bishops

would also ask the Jesuits to act as translators during their pastoral visitations.

Deeply mindful of the importance of education, the Jesuits established parish schools and trained teachers, whom they incorporated into teacher training associations. They tried to engage settlers in projects of shared public interest involving the Church, education, health care or farming methods. The Jesuits even founded German-language newspapers.

Another major Jesuit achievement in the region from 1890 onwards was the establishment of seminaries and apostolic colleges for the formation of clergy. To date, these have trained more than 1,000 priests and religious.



The preaching would be in German or Portuguese, and the Jesuits also helped Italian and Polish-speaking immigrants too.



📷 The German immigrants had several children.



new settlements for German families; with large numbers of children, they constantly required new land. This internal migration led to the founding of new communities, which were accompanied by the Jesuits who provided them with any pastoral and social support required. Their generosity towards the settlers led to a notable increase in vocations. Many descendants of German immigrants would end up entering the Society of Jesus.

The Brazilian Jesuit apostolate for migrants is still going strong today via the Jesuit Service for Migrants and Refugees (SJMR). This work accompanies, supports and stands up for the rights of Haitians, Venezuelans, people from Senegal and Afghanistan and many others forced to abandon their homeland and seek new lives elsewhere.

Fr Amstad, a Jesuit highly regarded both by Lutherans and Catholics, who arrived in southern Brazil in 1885, is still remembered to this day. To help settlers, he travelled close to 80,000 km on the back of a mule,

founding agricultural credit co-operatives and rural banks while encouraging families to help each other via *People's Co-Operative Unions*. In 1886, Fr Lassberg arrived in Brazil. He devoted his energies to establishing

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## Becoming a true neighbor to migrant workers in Korea

Ju-chan Albert Kim, S.J.  
Korea Province

*The Korean Jesuits set up Yiutsari to help migrant workers. And then, they realize that these marginalized migrants are helping them to be not only “Good Samaritans” but better disciples of Jesus.*

After the Korean War (1950-1953), the Korean government encouraged Koreans to go overseas looking for work to upgrade their poor economic conditions. In the 1960s and 70s, more than 2 million went to Germany as nurses and miners. Many others joined deep-sea fishing crews and construction worker teams in the Middle East.

Since those days, however, South Korea has gone through a strong and

rapid economic development so that, in 2007, the UN identified it officially as a receiving country for migrant workers. It is currently estimated that there are more than 1.2 million migrant workers in Korea, mainly from East Asian countries. With Korea's rapidly aging population and low birthrate, the number is accelerating.

In 2004, the Korean Jesuit Province launched the Jesuit Center for

Migrant Workers, *Yiutsari* (Accompanying the Neighbor). It is inspired by the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). Moved with compassion, like the Good Samaritan, we seek to provide these marginalized migrants with practical help, such as legal assistance for labor cases, decent shelters, Korean language lessons, accompaniment to the hospital, religious services, and more.

One of the flagship projects of this ministry is an on-line education program providing information for migrant workers in their mother tongues on basic Korean labor law. It deals with issues like wage theft and industrial accidents. In fact, surveys have found that the amount of unpaid wages is huge, exceeding 100 million USD every year; and it is dramatically increasing as the number of migrants is growing. To help the workers protect their rights and interests, we produced videoclips on fifteen topics presenting Korean labor law in the languages of the three major sending countries, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand. We posted online notebooks in these languages as well as in the main languages of the Philippines, Myanmar, and Nepal. Access is made easy on their smartphones through QR codes.

In conjunction with other organizations, we participate in the criminal complaint movement against wage theft. This practice is seen as a social structural matter rather than an employer's personal immoral behavior against employees. Taking advantage of workers' language limitations and

lack of understanding of the Korean social system, employers exploit them; and labor officers tend not to actively investigate the cases from the victim's point of view. The resulting monetary loss and emotional distress fall on the workers and their families. Like Jesus in his dealings with merchants in the Temple (Jn 2:14-17), we seek to break down this corrupt practice and establish sound ways of proceeding based on social justice.

The acceleration of migration from countries of broad language and sociocultural diversity creates barriers that are hard to overcome. Like for the large hungry crowds that Jesus' disciples encountered in the wilderness (Lk 9:10-17), the needs are overwhelming and are not simply humanitarian needs. The migrant workers hunger for true love. Jesus tells his apostles – tells us – “Give them something to eat” (Lk 9:13). So, we try to give them what is best, first of all by caring for them along their road “between Jerusalem and Jericho.”

Through *Yiutsari*, we, the Korean Jesuits, have understood that Jesus

Like for the large hungry crowds that Jesus' disciples encountered in the wilderness (Lk 9:10-17), the needs are overwhelming and are not simply humanitarian needs.

calls us to participate in the mystery of the Incarnation, the mystery of the Son sharing entirely the vulnerability of humanity. Jesus invites us to be like Good Samaritans, to share the difficulties and pains of the migrant workers as our own as we walk with them. In the light of faith, these people come to us not just as people in need but as God's gifts for us. They are mediators who lead us to Jesus' incarnate way of salvation. Journeying with them, we, ourselves, become more truly human. Along the journey, we become part of the Bread.

.....  
 yiutsari@gmail.com



📷 *Good Samaritan*. © AD Images, Alex Dobson, Pixabay



## We are all migrants

Heydi Galarza; Freddy Quilo, S.J.  
Province of Bolivia

***The Fundación SJM Bolivia (SJM Bolivia Foundation) is transforming Bolivia's experience of emigration by welcoming, encouraging and integrating immigrants, mainly Venezuelan forced migrants, and seeking to strengthen their capacity for resilience.***

*José, a Venezuelan citizen arrived in the city of El Alto, Bolivia in 2019. Like many of his fellow Venezuelans, to survive day to day, he sold sweets in one of the city's most traffic-clogged streets. A policeman was there too, trying to organise the chaotic traffic. Day in, day out, both just got on with their jobs. Then, one afternoon, the policeman noticed José had not turned up to sell his sweets. When he eventually re-appeared, he asked José the reason for his absence. Somewhat surprised, José replied and dared to ask why he wasn't*

*behaving like the other policemen, and checking up on his immigration status. The policeman responded by inviting him to share a meal, during the course of which he revealed he had once been a migrant in Spain. The whole time he was there he had not been able to regularise his residency status. That day, the policeman and Jose acknowledged they were both migrants.*

The story above sums up the message *Fundación SJM Bolivia* conveys through its work fostering

inter-cultural co-existence in a nation of migrants. Our activities are a response to forced migration, one of several human dramas without precedent in Latin America.

Just like José, since 2018 many Venezuelan forced migrants, who have been reduced to begging, have filled the main streets of Bolivia's large cities, hoping to obtain a little money for rubbish food and a roof over their head. They hope to reach Chile and find work there so they



We develop a sense of fraternity and justice by acknowledging that we are all migrants, even though only some of us cross borders.



📷 Migrants from Venezuela at Pisiga, on the border between Bolivia and Chile.

can send remittances to family back home.

By mid-2022, according to a SJM Bolivia Foundation report, there were 13,678 Venezuelan migrants in Bolivia. By the end of the year, 15,000 immigrants were living here, mainly in Santa Cruz, La Paz and Cochabamba. In 2023, the UN-Bolivia estimated that by the end of the year their number would have increased to more than 18,200.

Bolivia has a long tradition of emigration and is currently a stopping-off point and final destination for forced migrants. The SJM Foundation and the Society of Jesus have long-standing experience of migration. Yet this scenario presents us with an entirely new apostolic challenge, namely, how do we accompany and welcome migrants while acknowledging Bolivia's own experience of emigration? To promote inter-cultural fraternity via "social friendship" as advocated by Pope Francis, means prioritising

the welcome of migrants and accompanying them. It means encouraging and helping them to integrate while strengthening their own capacity for resilience.

According to all the national and international organisations working with migrants and refugees and figures from our SJM Foundation database, their number is only going to rise. During the pandemic, between January and August 2020 the Foundation recorded the arrival of 183 Venezuelan migrants. In 2021, their number rose to 1,153 migrants and by 2022, it had increased to 1,937. Many more have arrived since then, although, at the time of writing, the official figures have not yet been confirmed.

Another fact worth remembering is that 10 per cent of all the migrants who entered Bolivia between 2015 and 2022 decided to remain. The rest left, mostly heading for Chile. To give specific figures, by the end of 2022,

the Foundation had recorded 43 families living in La Paz and El Alto.

Reading the Book of Exodus in the Old Testament reminds us that we too were once "foreigners in the land of Egypt." This alerts us to the fact that we develop a sense of fraternity and justice by acknowledging that we are all migrants, even though only some of us cross borders.

Bolivia remains a transit country and source of emigrants, but this particular "small remnant of Israel" seeking to settle in lands like our own leads us to question the reasons behind that decision. That obliges us to not only seek to strengthen the economy, but also to create spaces that display more solidarity, greater empathy and less xenophobia, in other words, lands where the atmosphere we breathe is more humane.

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## SJMR and Fé e Alegria: Helping Venezuelan migrants in Brazil

SJMR Brasil; Fundação Fé e Alegria Brasil

*A few examples of the Jesuits' valuable work in Brazil helping Venezuelan migrants with official paperwork and to access healthcare via the SJMR and Fé e Alegria.*

Since 2017, more than 900,000 Venezuelans have arrived in Brazil seeking a new life here, according to data from the Brazilian federal government's *Operación Acogida* (Operation Welcome) scheme. The Jesuits' *Serviço Jesuíta a Migrantes e Refugiados* (Jesuit Service for Migrants and Refugees or SJMR) and *Fundação Fé e Alegria* (Fé e Alegria Foundation) provide advocacy to ensure their human rights and dignity are respected; they help them to rebuild their lives.

The Society of Jesus's work on behalf of Venezuelan migrants in Brazil

began in 2003 via the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR). In 2018, the SJMR and *Fundação Fé e Alegria* arrived in Boa Vista, the capital of Roraima, the state through which most Venezuelan migrants enter Brazil. Both institutions also work together to help the most vulnerable in other Brazilian states.

The SJMR develops initiatives to ensure that migrants and refugees may integrate in a sustainable fashion, both socially and financially. It does so by providing courses particularly aimed

at women that offer professional qualifications and incentives for entrepreneurship. Courses already delivered include day-long workshops on handling official paperwork and community integration, Portuguese classes, and programmes to prevent domestic abuse. Every year, the SJMR helps nearly 20,000 people.

Tania Fernández is one of the many Venezuelan women seeking refuge in Brazil who have been helped by the SJMR. In 2019, she arrived in Boa Vista with her family and stayed in a housing shelter. "There were more



The SJMR develops initiatives to ensure that migrants and refugees may integrate in a sustainable fashion, both socially and financially. It does so by providing courses particularly aimed at women that offer professional qualifications.



📷 A warm welcome at the *Casa de Passagem Pe. José María Vélaz SJ*. Photo: *Fundação Fé e Alegria Brasil*

than 400 families like us there,” she recalled, adding: “The Jesuits did not just help us with our legal papers. They also gave us vital help with obtaining healthcare. Even in 2020 and 2021, they continued to help us with our rent, so we had somewhere to live.”

Afterwards, Tania and a group of 11 families acquired a parcel of land. “The Jesuits were absolutely crucial to the process, helping us with the paperwork,” she told us. “Now we’ve set up a committee for dealing with official paperwork, comprised of migrant women and Jesuits. Our aim is to constantly further our community’s progress by cooperating with state policies.”

*Fé e Alegria* also works in Boa Vista, where it runs initiatives including the *Centro Social Liberdade* (Freedom Social Centre), which between 2018 and 2022 helped hundreds of migrant children and their families. Meanwhile the *Casa de Passagem Pe. José María Vélaz, SJ* (Fr José María Vélaz S.J. Temporary Home) has temporarily housed more

than 400 people, mainly Venezuelans going through “internalisation” – a federal government scheme to encourage migrants to voluntarily re-locate to other Brazilian states. In the *Casa*, migrants receive their meals every day and have all the basic infrastructure they require. Furthermore, they help with the cooking, washing, the vegetable garden and recycling. *Fé e Alegria* also runs an *Oficina de Empreendimento* (entrepreneurship office) which provides help for micro-entrepreneurs and small business-owners, especially women, including support with writing business plans, professional advice, formation, technical supervision, and the provision of any support equipment they may need.

The *Centro Social San Francisco Xavier* helps children aged 6-12 years old, providing them with educational opportunities and ensuring their families can access welfare programmes. It also offers migrants humanitarian support including the delivery of aid and domiciliary vis-

its and advises people about social welfare networks and how to register with them. In addition, the Centre helps migrants get settled and provides advice on their rights.

Maribel Del Valle Lara, a Venezuelan who arrived in Brazil in 2019 with her daughter, had to tackle challenges including the language barrier and a lack of local contacts. The family found help at the *Centro San Francisco Xavier* which provided them with shelter, food aid, and educational opportunities for the girl. Maribel said: “My daughter and I were helped by the centre’s Living in Community and Strengthening Social Bonds service which provides vulnerable children with educational resources, food baskets and toys. And my daughter is happily taking part in the leisure activities provided by *Fé e Alegria*.”

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## Extending a heart-felt, home-like welcome

José Manuel Gómez González, S.J.  
Province of Venezuela  
Student in the Province of Brazil

*The testimony of a young Jesuit working for the SJMR in Belo Horizonte, an emotionally fulfilling form of service that brings up questions and challenges.*

In 2023, the *Serviço Jesuíta a Migrantes y Refugiados-Brasil en Belo Horizonte* (Jesuit Service for Migrants and Refugees-Brazil in Belo Horizonte, SJMR BH for short) helped 1,544 people over the course of 4,244 separate appointments. Most needed help to regularise their migration status, obtain work legally or learn Portuguese. They represented 49 nationalities in total, including Venezuelans, Haitians, Colombians and people from Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Angola and elsewhere.

As a young Jesuit, when I arrived in Belo Horizonte and discovered

SJMR had an office here, I wanted to visit immediately to find out what challenges my Venezuelan brothers and sisters were facing and how I could help them. (At the time I was unaware other nationalities came here too.) Shortly after my arrival, I had a chance to visit the office and become part of the team.

### Helping out in the reception area

I have been asked to help out in reception where I feel called to give visitors a courteous welcome, by greeting new arrivals with a friendly “*Oi, tudo bem?*” or “Hi, how are you?,” followed up by a

polite inquiry, “*Como posso te ajudar?*” or “How can I help you?”

I want to show every new arrival they are coming into a safe space, somewhere they can feel at home. That might sound a bold claim: it is not easy to re-create that feeling of being in the comfort of one’s own home somewhere else. But I hope that at least receiving a warm welcome helps people feel at ease.

During these initial meetings, I work out whether the person I’m speaking to is a Spanish speaker or

not. If they are, I continue the interview in Spanish: their face invariably changes and they start to smile. I've noticed that people relax when I can address them in their mother tongue. If they don't speak Spanish, I'll make a real effort to speak and make myself understood in Portuguese.

If we can offer them the help they need, I'll point them in the right direction by making them an appointment with our team of lawyers, psychologists, and social workers.

But we can't always help, which is frustrating. That's when I feel like my hands are tied. When I explain that, for reasons beyond our control, SJMR BH cannot help them, people's faces change. They look sad and withdrawn. I try to convey this tactfully. But it is not enough. I also let them know how sorry I am we can't help them.

### Surprises in the waiting room

When my responsibilities in reception end for the day, I look for a pretext to chat with people in the waiting room. I'll ask a couple of questions about the climate or the local food which invariably leads to topics relating to friends and family. I'm gradually discovering at the SJMR BH that



Help my Venezuelan brethren has led me to open my heart to people from other nationalities and realise that every human life is a story.

simply by listening to people's stories and memories I'm also able to help heal wounds. That is when the *unexpected* happens in the waiting room and somehow, a space opens up for the rest of life to come in.

### Saying goodbye with concerns and queries

Relating to people in reception also makes me to want to say goodbye to

them with a friendly "*Tchau, até logo!*" or "*Ciao, see you soon!*". But this kind of goodbye leaves me ill at ease. I end up reflecting on the challenges we face in the SJMR BH team such as how can we encourage this many people to form their own support networks? Or how can we motivate them to join institutions or community groups in their local area? And how can we give them opportunities to start up and continue their own initiatives? Mulling over these questions and challenges keeps me on my toes.

My initial concern to help my Venezuelan brethren has led me to open my heart to people from other nationalities and realise that every human life is a story. I have discovered that what really matters is to welcome each individual visitor with love, find out how they are feeling, then do everything I possibly can to give them a helping hand.



📷 Graduates of the Portuguese language school

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## Maryam's journey of hope

Pius Marmanta; Dam Febrianto, S.J.  
JRS Indonesia – Province of Indonesia

*The story of Maryam as a successful example of the community empowerment project, run by JRS Indonesia. A story of hope and resilience: "I don't feel like a foreigner; I'm so much more motivated than before".*

In recent years, JRS Indonesia, aside from meeting basic needs, has been encouraging refugees temporarily residing in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia, to organize themselves for a positive contribution to the refugee and local community. The *community empowerment project*, that consists essentially in collaborative activities with refugees, includes providing basic and extracurricular education for refugee children, language lessons,

and skills training such as basic computers skills, photo and videography, crafts creation, and sewing.

The waiting time for resettlement of a refugee and his or her family can be lengthy, leading to a state of limbo without a clear time limit. This often results in mental health issues among refugees. Simultaneously, JRS has identified that many refugees possess valuable skills to share not only with-

in the refugee community but also with the local community. The JRS empowerment project helps refugees in enhancing their potential, sharing their capacities, and making positive contributions to the community.

### Significant changes

At the end of each year, an evaluation of the services, including of the collaborative programs, is conducted

through the Most Significant Change (MSC) process. Noteworthy outcomes from this process include testimonials like that of Maryam, a female refugee from Ethiopia, revealing the positive impact of her participation in the collaborative program on her life.

Due to instability in her home country, Maryam and her fami-

ly sought refuge in Indonesia in 2015. With dreams of a better life, she never envisioned that her journey would lead her to a new country, Indonesia. She is residing in Cipayung, a hill village in the Bogor area. Leaving behind everything she knew, she struggled in a new world with different customs and language.

Maryam shared her difficult condition with our team before joining the Refugee Tailoring Project (RTP), a learning center established collaboratively by a refugee community and JRS Indonesia in Cipayung. She felt lost and alone, having nothing to do, and the stress of her situation weighed heavily on her. Shy and lacking confidence, she felt trapped in a cycle of

« JRS has identified that many refugees possess valuable skills to share not only within the refugee community but also with the local community.





📷 Maryam, well integrated into the Bogor community, takes part in a birthday party.

sleeping and eating all day, yearning for a purpose, a reason to get up in the morning that seemingly were out of reach.

Her situation gradually changed after joining the learning center. Maryam stated, “Teaching English for children in the learning center made my stress slowly disappear. I had the chance to talk to people, get to know new faces, and work as an administrator and teacher. The transport support from JRS, though modest, helps me, at least for occasional outings. If unused, I can contribute it to my mom for food.”

Expressing her positive impression of JRS Indonesia staff and students, Maryam said, “JRS officers always smiled, treating me as a human being. We became friends. Smiles give hope. I feel comfortable, and my stress is reduced because I’m busy. I am with people. I also meet JRS staff, attend discussions, and go to class, staying with the kids. We sit together like a family. I don’t feel like a foreigner; I’m so much more motivated than before.”

Joining the learning center opened opportunities for Maryam to meet people, share her skills, and

significantly transformed her life, providing newfound comfort and confidence. No longer feeling alone or overwhelmed, she was embraced as part of a family, finding strength and motivation in her work and community. Maryam’s refugee journey in Indonesia became a story of hope, resilience, and an example of the transformative power of support and opportunity. She knows that challenges still lay ahead but is ready to face them with the support of friends, family, and JRS.

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<https://jrs.net/en/country/indonesia/>



## Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries: Finding Christ in migrants

Therese Fink Meyerhoff  
Province UCS (USA Central and Southern)

*The pastoral and sacramental service provided by Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries along the U.S.-Mexico border provides a space of relief and care for people who have endured difficult experiences on their journey toward hope.*

Saint Oscar Romero is never far from the thoughts of Flavio Bravo. Flavio is a Jesuit priest who serves on the United States-Mexico border, helping to meet the sacramental and pastoral needs of migrants who have gathered there. Many have traveled long distances through dangerous territories controlled by drug cartels who prey on the defenseless. They have fled conditions so unbearable that their only option

was an unknown future in another country, only to arrive at the border to find they must wait, and wait, and wait to enter. They live in shelters or in makeshift camps with other migrants. They wait, and they try to retain hope in deplorable conditions.

Flavio Bravo is one of three Jesuits in Brownsville, Texas, one of the poorest areas of the United States.

Along with Fr. Brian Strassburger, and Scholastic Joseph Nolla, he is part of a new initiative called *Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries*, named for *Nuestra Señora del Camino* – Our Lady of the Way. Each day, Flavio recalls Archbishop Romero’s words about being a shepherd to a suffering people.

“Whenever we go to the shelters or to the migrant camps, I pray the



« I have been amazed to see that there is no climate that will stop people from emerging from their tents and celebrating the Eucharist together.»

Psalm: The Lord is my Shepherd,” Fr. Bravo says. “It is not my agenda that I follow. The journey is marked by the people we walk with. They tell us stories of darkness. We try to bring green pastures and healing.”

*Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries* began with the missioning of three Jesuits of the USA Central and Southern Province to the Diocese of Brownsville in June 2021. This was a different kind of assignment, especially for the newly ordained priests Brian Strassburger and Louis Hotop. They were not assigned to a Jesuit apostolate. Instead, they received a broader mission directly from Bishop Daniel Flores: to read the reality of the migrant situation and respond to it.

The reality they encountered was a migrant community in great need. In addition to squalid living conditions, there was a nearly complete absence of pastoral and sacramental care. They recognized that, as Jesuits, this was what they were called to provide. So, they started visiting shelters and camps on both sides of the border to celebrate Mass, offer the sacraments, listen to people’s stories and recognize their humanity.

“I have now been blessed to accompany so many migrants,” Brian Strassburger said. “I’ve listened to stories of pain and fear and loss, and I bring the people home in my heart and share them with God in my prayer. They will remain with

me throughout the rest of my life. Like Claudia, who ran a kitchen while staying in a migrant camp in Reynosa, and now sends me photos from her home in St. Louis, Missouri, when she makes an elaborate meal from her home country of Honduras. Or Ashley, a twelve-year-old girl who was the altar server at our Masses at her shelter, whose mom sends me photos of her learning the violin at her elementary school in Wisconsin.”

Mass is simple in a migrant camp or shelter, with an altar cloth draped over a folding table. People sit in folding chairs or stand. There is no escape from the extreme temperatures in summer or winter, and yet migrants continue to come. They find a respite

from their haunted past and unstable present; they find a font of fresh water to renew the hope that keeps them going.

“I have been amazed to see that there is no climate that will stop people from emerging from their tents and celebrating the Eucharist together,” Fr. Strassburger said. “I witness time and again how the faith of migrants is a source of hope and strength during a dangerous journey and an uncertain wait – the strength

to endure, and the hope that they will one day reach a destination of safety.”

The Jesuits of *Del Camino* also provide humanitarian aid, supported by donations made through their Jesuit Province and a wish list on Amazon.com. And they share the stories of the people they meet through *The Jesuit Border Podcast*, which tries to humanize the migrant experience and showcase some of the work being done by immigrant advocates on the border and throughout the United States.

Many migrants bear physical and emotional scars that attest to the trauma and violence they have endured. But what the Jesuits of *Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries* see transcends this pain.

“Every time we walk into a migrant shelter, we see the face of Christ,” Fr. Brian says.

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📷 After a long and difficult journey, an indeterminate wait in large shelters







## Closure, canal, repatriation, voluntary returns: key words in the humanitarian crisis afflicting Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic

Germain Clerveau, S.J.  
Haiti – Province of Canada

*Haiti must tackle a number of crises. Few people now mention the latent crisis affecting relations between the two nations which share the Island of Hispaniola. Nonetheless, it is the source of a great deal of the suffering which the Jesuit Migrant Service tries to alleviate.*

The border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic bears witness to a shared and complex history. Today, it is the scene of major crises which profoundly affect the local populace on either side of the border. This complex web of driving social, financial, and political forces has been exposed once more by the Dominican

authorities' decision to close the border on 13 September 2023. This resulted from a controversial plan to build a canal along the Massacre River but was also due to the challenges posed by repatriation and the fears prompting some migrants to voluntarily return home. Some attempt at co-operating is needed to

prevent possible future conflicts and minimise their consequences.

Le Service Jésuite aux Migrants / Solidarité Fwontalye-Haïti (The Jesuit Service for Migrants / Solidarity Fwontalye-Haiti – SJM/SFw-Haiti or SJM-Haiti) was established in 1999 as a social apostolate of the Society of

Jesus. For the past 25 years, it has had a mission to “accompany, serve and stand up for the rights and dignity of migrants, internally displaced and repatriated people, victims of aggression, abuse and violence as well as vulnerable people anywhere in Haiti.” SJM-Haiti, as a member of the Jesuit Migrant network in Latin America and the Caribbean (SJM-LAC), is also involved in projects aiming to prevent and find solutions to forced and irregular migration on the Haitian-Dominican Republic border.

The plan to build a canal along this border is a source of environmental, social, diplomatic, and political concern. While some regard the project as an opportunity for economic development, others fear its impact on the local ecosystem and neighbouring communities. According to data from the canal’s project management committee, for local farmers, the canal would increase the value of approximately 12,000 hectares of very fertile land.



Migrants including people like Adams Blanc and his wife Lucerne and Jovenel F. truly deserve the kind of accompaniment that empowers them to fully exercise their human rights.



Temperatures are running extremely high especially concerning the redistribution of land ownership in the *zona franca* (duty free zone). This reflects Haitians’ determination to take charge of their own destiny.

Dramatic scenes prevail at the border because of forcible repatriations. At the same time, the flagrant violation of the bi-lateral Préval-Fernandez Agreement, signed on 2 December 1999 to regulate repatriation procedures in both countries is a major, outrageous abuse of human rights. We should also remember the

enormous humanitarian challenges faced by migrant workers and refugees. Due to the danger afflicting Haiti – which forces many families to become internally displaced – some repatriated Haitians refuse to return to a homeland that local authorities describe as “lost territory.” In Ouanaminthe, where we are working now, there have been several recorded cases of violations and abuse.

Adams Blanc, for example, was repatriated on Monday, 25 September 2023, along with his wife and three young children. Due to the danger in their home city, they left Haiti and cannot return. In a separate incident, on 4 December 2023, Jovenel F. was repatriated at the northern border after reporting an assault by a

Dominican migration agent. He said that the agent had struck him three times on his left foot with an iron bar in the patio of his home in Mao in front of his family. Afterwards, he was arrested and repatriated to Haiti. Our SJM-Haiti human rights officer on the northern border confirmed his injuries. Migrants including people like Adams Blanc and his wife Lucerne and Jovenel F. truly deserve the kind of accompaniment that empowers them to fully exercise their human rights.

Regrettably, despite our resolve to fulfil our mission to accompany, to take side for them and serve the migrants, SJM-Haiti lacks the financial resources it would require to fully meet its goals.

The prevailing climate of violence and fear in the Dominican Republic, whether due to the lack of safety, difficult living conditions or threats, is driving some migrants to return voluntarily to their homeland. At the SJM-Haiti we believe this pattern highlights the urgent need to understand the underlying causes of migration and implement policies to solve these issues at their source. Faced with this kind of humanitarian crisis and given the Dominican Republic’s inhumane policy towards Haitian migrants, the Jesuits and their partners have launched an urgent, on-going appeal for international co-operation to find humane solutions to this issue.

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📷 The *Massacre* River, which marks the northern border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.



## Human faces in the dark homeless night

Innocent G. Kalulu, S.J.  
Southern Africa Province  
JRS South Africa

*A perceptive human and compassionate look at the reality of homeless migrants in Johannesburg. And the care JRS offers them, particularly to the sick.*

A youthful Sudanese couple arrives in Johannesburg, to be greeted with homelessness. It is getting late, the first of many chilly nights on the pavements, the nights that may gradually become a way of life. What safety does one get on the street corners? Foreseeable attacks and the nothing they had is robbed from them. The mother of two kids gets stabbed in the abdomen; she needs emergency care for worsening internal bleeding. The husband must find food for the two little fac-

es, the ones inheriting homelessness, starvation and confusion.

Observe the masses of passers-by: individuals, institutions, the international bodies; will this woman find care? Does anybody care anymore about the experiences of migrants and refugees? Is anyone really feeling with them?

“Johannesburg used to be a clean city, foreigners make our streets dirty,

they urinate anywhere,” says an elderly woman, wearing neatly-ironed church attire.

Such are the sobering encounters of JRS South Africa and, surely, of others who dare to care, to bear the load. The health project has databases of sick asylum seekers and refugees needing primary health care. Chronic illnesses and cancers advancing, day by day, into terminal illness for lack of access to attention. Yes, attention: hospitality is too



📷 JRS South Africa donates a wheelchair for a disabled child.

Their waiting often exceeds the limits of hopeful patience, a deafening insulting silence seeping from locked doors. The loud muteness: “beware of dogs,” “trespassers shall be prosecuted,” “beware of guns,” “protected area,” “warning! barbed wire,” and “danger! electric fence.” The human face, universal fraternity, obscured by concrete and sensory barriers, noxious indifference.

Yet, little candles, somewhat dim and not so loved, flicker still, jolting the dark homeless night. JRS, other organizations, churches and individuals pull together against weights of internal and external frustration. They need efforts multiplied, a renewed recognition of human faces; faces so remote from what would have been home, but their odysseys had to be undertaken. So remote, so late in their night, where is our compassion to feed them?

There is joy in the human face affirmed, “Oh, you people and what your organization is doing; God bless you, I am so grateful,” says an elderly Ethiopian during a home-visit, having undergone an orthopedic procedure.

“I see JRS on this car; I just want to say ‘thank you,’ this is the organization that sent me to school,” says a gentleman by the car park. Such words he could not repress, but let them overflow, a man of peace. “We are all one people, I believe we are all one people,” says the Nigerian human face, bedridden but so thankful, and so wise.

strong an ideal, attention is expensive enough. Behold the cost of attention on earth, not the cost of care or accompaniment; not the cost of dignity or recognition; not the cost of service; bare fragments of attention.

“Brother, look at me; my tummy keeps swelling, they will not help me. I don’t have money,” the abdomen bulges out as she lifts her hand, “brother, just tell me I’m dying,” says the human face of a Congolese woman, shedding tears.

Lifting one’s eyes to the eyes of the other human face in the forlorn flat, a Rwandan woman, totally blind from diabetes, faces eviction for lack of rent - the kind of rent the privileged spend on ice-cream. Have you

ever paid attention to blind eyes when they shed tears? What do they not see that makes their tears overflow? Have you any tears to shed with them? The inner vision of blind eyes sheds tears, the inner hunger of a stabbed abdomen spills blood, pleading for peace on earth.

The refugees and asylum seekers know it well. Beyond the rhetoric and theorized roundtables, the world has abandoned them. They are on their own. They must survive, whatever they can do, sometimes simply ‘whatever’. They were not born like that, hopeless, captive, exiled; “I am old, my life is damaged; if I die, I die like a chicken.” Someone needs to help them out of their situations, to listen to their stories with dedicated attention.

“My brother, he has abandoned me, but I still love him,” the message of a woman with advanced disease. “No caregiver,” the JRS database records, since people scarcely pay attention in a busy, sightless world. Evicted several times, nobody wants her for a tenant; she may die, her remains will be an inconvenience. There the human face still languishes in the dark, homeless night

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<https://jrs.net/en/country/south-africa/>



Brother, look at me; my tummy keeps swelling, they will not help me. I don't have money.”





## Arrupe Migrant Center in Beirut: to gather, to pray, to play

Michael Petro, S.J.  
USA East Province  
Serving in the Near East Province

*When sport helps to create opportunities of gatherings, recreation, promotion of women, friendship and interreligious links, all-in-one at Arrupe Migrant Center at the Jesuit St. Joseph Church in Beirut.*

On any Sunday at the Jesuit St. Joseph Church in Beirut, it is easy to forget exactly where you are. Migrant workers from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and all over Africa join South Sudanese refugees and Lebanese neighbors to spend their day at the *Arrupe Migrant Center* (AMC), housed on the first floor of the church.

Migrants face serious challenges in Lebanon, stemming from a system that excludes them from basic rights under labor and immigration law and relies on private enforcement. Nevertheless, the creativity, courage, and fortitude of migrant communities continue to be a source of grace. Building on this, Jesuits developed the AMC as a community of

communities, offering space and support to migrant-led organizations and providing services and pastoral accompaniment to migrants and refugees. Two leaders from the Sri Lankan community, Fernando and Chandrani, offer a window into this grace filled environment and the diversity of migrant experiences in Lebanon.

« Fernando and Chandrani have been agents of grace amid the difficulties of migrant life in Lebanon.



📷 The Sri Lankan Buddhist community has found a home at the *Arrupe Migrant Center*.

Although Fernando Sugath is an active parishioner, for him Sunday means mostly one thing: cricket. Fernando is a Sri Lankan migrant worker and the driving force behind the cricket league now based at the AMC. The community began over a decade ago when Fernando and some friends gathered in empty parking lots to play. Made up of migrants, the league often found itself on the move. With no space of their own and little public space available in Lebanon, migrant workers struggle to find places to gather, pray, or play together. In each new lot, they met property owners and authorities that would expel, harass, and even arrest players. The league always had to move again. Finally, after sorting out initial legal challenges, the AMC began sponsoring the league in 2022 with a permanent space in the church lot.

The cricket is important on its own - free time and recreation are vital in a labor system that overworks, isolates, and erodes the agenda of migrants. But other things are starting to

happen on and off the pitch. While the league began with only men, Fernando quickly began pushing for women's teams. Now, half a dozen women's teams compete regularly, including a group of Filipina domestic workers who discovered the sport in Lebanon. For many women, it is the first time in their lives that they have been able to join in the traditionally male-dominated sport. Amazingly, teams have also emerged across national and ethnic conflicts. Here in Lebanon, united Indian-Pakistani and Sinhala-Tamil teams bridge divides from feuds and wars back home. Cricket goes a long way in Lebanon. Now, the league's model is inspiring new JRS planning for sports-based and community-led programming - offering a truly mutual relationship with the Jesuits.

Across the church parking lot, another unlikely gathering also takes place every Sunday. Several dozen members of the Sri Lankan Buddhist community gather for prayer in their own temple space, nestled in the

church beneath a set of JRS offices. Chandrani Varnasingha, a domestic worker and the community's leader, spent over a decade searching for a place to pray - from apartments to libraries - before meeting the AMC. Chandrani fondly recounts each of the Jesuit priests - Martin McDermott, Theo Vlugt, and more - who welcomed the group and made the church an unlikely home for the Buddhist community. Now members describe the prayer rooms as their home, giving back by hosting monthly over 200 Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike to share a meal. Welcomed by Jesuits, the Buddhist community is empowered to build its own spaces of encounter in the AMC.

Collaborating with the Jesuits and staff of the AMC, Fernando and Chandrani have been agents of grace amid the difficulties of migrant life in Lebanon.

.....  
<https://jrs.net/en/country/lebanon/>





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## Hospitality nurtures friendship

Olivier Dewavrin, S.J.; Carine Gauthier  
JRS France – French-speaking Western European Province

***In France, a network of volunteer families is hosting asylum seekers while they wait for their applications to be assessed.***

Before reaching France, asylum seekers go through several countries during frequently traumatising journeys that may last anything from a few months to several years. Once in France, that journey continues: they must find food and accommodation, understand the asylum process and learn the language. And, on top of all that, what is absolutely vital for their survival is having a chance to make new friends. You have no life whatsoever without a support network.

In France, asylum seekers are banned from working while their applications are being processed. In return, the State must provide them with housing and basic resources. However, the Third World War fought piecemeal and recurring economic recessions have created a situation where the number of asylum seekers is continually increasing to the point where the State is unable to supply them with enough accommodation. And that is how people granted permission to live in France end up on the street, with-

out any legitimate means of providing for themselves.

In response to this situation, a group of Jesuits and their friends has created a network of families to take in asylum seekers while their applications are being processed. The network, which has gradually developed by word of mouth, consists today of 4,000 volunteer-partners in 40 cities. It enables around 400 asylum seekers to live with host families every year.



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So much is this the case that ultimately what matters now is not so much getting people off the streets per se, but the actual encounters themselves. They are life-changing because they are changing our hearts.

In this context, French people meet asylum seekers because they host them in their homes. And likewise, by living with French people, asylum seekers learn about our culture. Strong friendships emerge from these encounters and the joy they bring has enabled us to discover something completely unexpected: welcoming the stranger is transforming us just as much as it transforms the asylum seekers. So much is this the case that ultimately what matters now is not so much getting people off the streets per se, but the actual encounters themselves. They are life-changing because they are changing our hearts. That is why we prefer to describe hospitality as a two-way street.

In fact, when you live with foreigners, the cultural differences are not apparent on the intellectual level but crop up first when you are cooking together, washing up, or washing clothes. They also appear in the way you communicate with each other, etc. These small daily commonplace events are where you experience different ways of thinking or relating to the outside world. All of us, whether

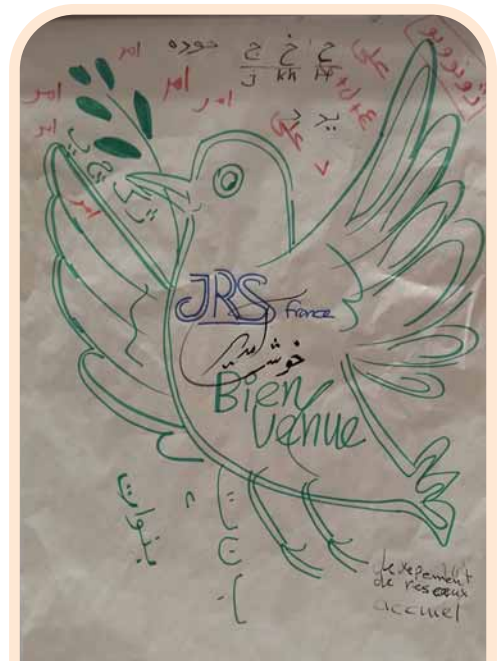
we are people in exile or French citizens should be constantly learning to talk about the surprises (good and bad) that come up as we live together. And to do so and handle them well, we need to jointly discern ways to become more aware of our differences.

Ignatian spirituality is a great help on this journey, even for those further away from the Christian faith, since what we seek is a way of relating to each other inspired by Christ. In other words, what we seek are ways of relating suffused with gentleness and the patience to accompany people in their life experiences and to help them to grow in freedom. Undertaking this as a network allows both the accompanied guests and their hosts to savour the joy of the encounter but also to interpret and discern their experience together. The end goal of the whole process is to continually improve the quality of the accompaniment and help we offer to the most vulnerable. In a sense, you could say JRS France offers a framework that enables everyone to share their generosity and talents. Those who host discover they are not just offering a roof over some-

one's head but can give of themselves too. And the guests discover they are recovering their own capacity to be generous. Thus, friendship springs from hospitality, and the joy is shared by all as our lives reveal the truth of the words of this hymn:

“Knock on my door,  
You, who come to pester me,  
Knock on my door,  
For you come to resurrect me.”

<https://www.jrsfrance.org/>





## In Croatia, strategies to foster a culture of encounter

Stanko Perica, S.J.  
Croatian Province  
JRS South-East Europe Director

*The activities of JRS Croatia in favour of migrants, mainly foreign seasonal workers, are many and the Sunday Eucharist in Zagreb has become a space for reflection, bonding and friendship.*

Croatia has traditionally been an emigrant country. During the communist period, many people left for economic and political reasons. The Croatian chaplaincies around the world played a pivotal role in gathering those people and helping their integration in their new environment. The emigration process intensified when Croatia joined the European Union in 2013. The census

in 2021 showed that the country had lost 10 % of its population during the previous 10 years, and the overall population fell to 3.87 million. This decline has been partly compensated for by the phenomenon of migrant workers. These newcomers have rapidly become a significant reality in Croatia, with their numbers skyrocketing from a mere 8,000 in 2017 to a staggering nearly 200,000 in 2023.

Projections suggest that this trajectory will continue, with estimates reaching 500,000 by 2030, constituting a quarter of the total workforce in the country. While the number of those arriving from regional countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and North Macedonia is stable, the major increase comes from countries like Nepal, India, and the Philippines.

Migrants primarily engage in two main sectors: tourism and construction. Despite their crucial economic contributions, their social situation is fraught with numerous challenges. Many find themselves working in locations overlooked by local workers, contending with low salaries, substandard working conditions, and often residing in cramped living quarters. A significant number have incurred debts to fund their journey to Croatia, imposing an additional burden on their shoulders. The seasonal nature of their employment, compounded by the restrictive one-year validity of work permits tied to specific employers, exacerbates their vulnerability and isolation. Consequently, they often work long hours, frequently taking on more than one job, and may even endure injustices just to receive their salary, which is then sent to their families. Lacking the opportunity to learn the language, and often not being proficient in English either, the majority has minimal contact with local people and culture, resulting in their ghettoization and the formation of a parallel society.

Amidst these challenges of isolation, initiatives led by the Jesuits stand out as rare endeavors striving to foster a culture of encounter and offer a glimmer of hope. The Sunday English Mass at the Jesuit parish in the Croatian capital Zagreb serves as a spiritual anchor for Catholic migrants, primarily Filipinos. This weekly gathering provides a sense of community and belonging, offering solace and support. Confronting the uncertainties inherent in their social and economic landscape, the Eucharistic celebration provides a sanctuary for reflection, support, and communal bonding. Given that there is also a fair number of locals eager to improve their English and engage

socially, the Mass has evolved into a space for encounter where locals and migrants pray and sing together, dismantling stereotypes and cultivating empathy in the process. Once a month, the entire community gathers for “caring and sharing,” during which many Croatians and migrants bring their typical food and drinks to be shared.



Arcely Sescon confirms: “Thanks to this initiative, we are able to encounter one another and enrich each other both physically and spiritually. Spreading God’s love means letting Christ in you be visible to others.”

JRS Croatia provides integration activities for newcomers, including language courses, legal support, and a spectrum of assistance tailored to address the diverse needs of migrants. With over 30 years of active presence, JRS has become well-known in Croatia for its strong advocacy and engagement in promoting human rights and dignity. By involving many local volunteers in our activities, we aim to foster meaningful connections, fellowships, and friendships. Volunteers often testify to the positive impact of

Amidst these challenges of isolation, initiatives led by the Jesuits stand out as rare endeavors striving to foster a culture of encounter and offer a glimmer of hope.

embracing the richness and diversity that migrants bring to society’s fabric. “Through volunteering, I can efficiently help those in need. Along the way, I’ve made friends with people from other countries and gained a deeper understanding of our diverse world,” says Jakov Kasun. This embrace holds the promise of a future characterized by inclusivity and compassion, aligning with our ongoing journey of nurturing the culture of encounter.

[https://hrv.jrs.net/  
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## Becoming a “better version” of ourselves: Accompaniment of migrants by the CLC

CLC Migration Team, Spain

*A testimony from CLC Spain members who welcome migrants and have been accompanying a group of families evacuated from Afghanistan to Spain, following the seizure of power by the Taliban.*

The Spanish Migration Team of the CLC (Christian Life Communities) consists of a small group tasked with devising a community response to the social difficulties of migration in Spain. In November 2021, we were invited to accompany Afghan families who had arrived here three months earlier after being evacuated from Afghanistan by the Spanish government when the Taliban seized power. Essentially, they were the families of former staff members of the *Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo* (the Spanish International Co-operation Development Agency)

hired while Spain had a presence in Afghanistan. We were asked to approach the families, introduce ourselves, chat with them, take them around town and meet up with them for coffee, etc.

After discerning as a community whether we felt called to do this and if we had the necessary resources, our answer was a resounding “yes.” We felt inspired to get involved as much as possible. CLC groups in Madrid, Seville, Zaragoza, Barcelona and Gijón made the first moves, followed later by groups in Pamplona, Valladolid, Manresa and

A Coruña. To witness to this journey as lay people, who, as Pope Francis says, have feet of clay, we thought it vital for the CLC members accompanying the families to know they had the backing of their local groups and the national migration team. We had a heart for connecting to a people we knew absolutely nothing about, including their language, culture and religion... All of them had arrived in Spain with only the clothes they were wearing when they had left, desperately trying to save their lives. Some came with loved ones. Others left them behind, hoping to be reunited with them in the future. At no

A profound joy prevails despite the difficulties and, as CLC, we still feel called to welcome the many people still forced to abandon their homes.



point did we really grasp what a huge experience this was. Yet what was soon apparent was that this experience was life-giving, and a constant source of encounters, learning and affection.

Getting involved in the families' daily lives has meant dealing with representatives from the NGOs responsible for their accommodation, maintenance and integration into society and the workplace. We find ourselves constantly coming up against the inner workings of a state bureaucracy which has no template for handling a group that, due to the circumstances of their arrival and basic needs, is fairly complex. There is no denying we have had our fair share of frustration, disappointments, and confrontations. There have been some clashes with the State too, both on an administrative level and with institutions responsible for settling migrants. At times, the bureaucrats have even regarded us with suspicion, although our intention has only ever been to facilitate the families' integration.

In regard to relating to the families we are accompanying, well, they tend

to be very reserved. While we still find this unsettling, this is exactly where our respect for them is growing ever stronger. We are called to safeguard the freedom of those we accompany. Above and beyond their qualities, flaws, or decisions, we have to accept every person just as they are and appear to be, even when their behaviour does not meet our expectations. But we do not need to judge individuals, only preserve the dignity of anyone who suffers. What do they feel? Are they ashamed of themselves? Does their culture ban them from opening up to outsiders? Do they misunderstand our reactions? How does what they have been through and any anxiety regarding the future affect them? Every single one of them is sacred ground, a place we can only enter with awe after removing our shoes.

We are finding it difficult to keep a balance between accompanying them in the most mundane daily matters and avoiding adopting roles which, technically, are not our responsibility, including teaching Spanish, helping them with paperwork, or to apply

for state benefits, etc. But neither do we avoid making official complaints when necessary. Being so close to the families we accompany makes us want to shout from the rooftops about how unfairly they are treated. Over time we have formed remarkably close bonds with them, but there have also been relationship breakdowns because the families make unexpected decisions or cannot work with the support we offer.

And yet a profound joy prevails despite the difficulties and, as CLC, we still feel called to welcome the many people still forced to abandon their homes nowadays. We are conscious that by accompanying others, we are fulfilling Francis's dream of us growing into "a better version of ourselves."

<https://cvx-e.es/hacemos/migraciones/migraciones@cvx-e.es>





## People who flee and need to be welcomed: the Jesuit experience in Trentino

Andreas Fernandez - Fondazione Sant' Ignazio  
Giuseppe Marino - Centro Astalli Trento (JRS)  
Euromediterranean Province

*The Centro Astalli (JRS Italy) in Trent has found a way to welcome forced migrants with help from several other religious congregations and the local Church.*

For several years now, the border region of Trentino, nestled in the eastern Alps has been a destination all forced migrants to Italy reach on foot, either in small groups or individually. That is quite unlike the rest of Italy, where for years migrants have only arrived by boat, or else been rescued on the south coast.

Those who reach Trentino arrive here after an exhausting journey which begins in Asia or Africa, crosses the Middle East and Turkey, then

involves clambering over numerous walls and barbed wire frontiers in this northern part of Europe, which is not yet part of the Union. This is the icy and violent “Balkan route.” Today, it is a crossroads for people fleeing war, discrimination, violence, poverty, and extreme weather conditions. In other words, people who are seeking peace and safety in Europe, the end of the “game” as migrants dub that final kilometre from Bosnia to Croatia, from outside the European Union to within.

Yet what is at stake here is human life itself. And [for migrants] the queues at the border do not mark the finishing line, but just one more hurdle to clear. This is a place of rejection from so-called “Fortress Europe” where rules and regulations morph into police deployments, threats, and blows. Fortunately, there are gaps in the fence too, where people, hopes and solidarity occasionally slip through.

The Balkan way is the main route bringing forced migrants to Europe

and Trentino. That is why the slogans parroted by a certain Italian female politician such as “We are the refugee camp of Europe,” “Everyone comes to us,” or “We are managing this phenomenon alone,” have not caught on elsewhere on the continent. Furthermore, for most people who leave sub-Saharan Africa, cross north Africa and later the Mediterranean, Italy is still only one piece in the jigsaw of forced migration: a transit country en route to France, Germany, and the Nordic countries.

Amid this clash of true stories and propaganda, Trentino is absent from the national statistics. The Italian Interior Ministry insists on relaying in official statistics only the numbers of migrants in the south, failing to even mention the approximately 12,000 people who enter north-eastern Italy annually via the “Balkan route.”

The complex nature of this scenario is the starting point for our mission. It began in Villa Sant’Ignazio. Built by the Jesuits as a house for Spiritu-

al Exercises in 1929, it became from 1970 onwards a housing shelter used for the Society’s social, cultural, and spiritual initiatives. That is the background which led to the founding of the Astalli Centre in Trent and JRS Italy. In 1999, the JRS began a modest, pioneering hostel for forced mi-

« This is the icy and violent “Balkan route.” Today, it is a crossroads for people fleeing war, discrimination, violence, poverty, and extreme weather conditions.



📷 Sad memory of his former home

grants on the outskirts of Trent. This helped the first refugees who arrived from Rome seeking work and a way to integrate in society. From that initial spark, the organisation has been sustained by a partnership with the international Astalli Centre network and the Church, which has re-discovered its mission by helping those on the social margins. Along with the archdiocese of Trent, religious orders including the Capuchin Fathers, Dehonian Sacred Heart Fathers, Comboni Fathers and Franciscans, the Canossian Daughters of Charity and Handmaids of Mary, convents and monasteries have opened their doors to forced migrants. They have filled these religious houses with life and meaning, rendering them a welcoming space for mutual encounters.

Seeing ourselves reflected in the eyes of the Other has made it clear which path we should follow, and what kind of brotherhood and fraternity we should keep building so our communities become a sanctuary for all.

.....  
<https://www.centroastallitrento.it/?lang=en>





## Ignatian attentiveness healing wounds of war

Olena Tkachuk  
Province of Southern Poland

***An unexpected fruit of the Spiritual Exercises, the Spiritual Attentiveness as way to speechless amazement in the life of Olena during war time.***

*Olena Tkachuk is Ukrainian. Her strong experience of the Spiritual Exercises at the Jesuit spiritual centre in her home town of Khmelnytskyi influenced her decision to serve her compatriots from the east of the country who were fleeing the bombs. She supported the spiritual centre's mission during this period. Polish Jesuits were running the centre; they recognised in Olena a valuable person in communications who could share her talents with the Jesuit Provinces of Poland. So they offered her the responsibility of running the Jesuit website. It was a dream opportunity. It led her to*

*Krakow, from where she continues to support refugees in her country. Here is her testimony.*

For me, the war in Ukraine was not the reason to escape. It was the reason to stay.

In the first several months after the full-scale war broke out in Ukraine on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022, I experienced more mental states than in the previous 34 years of my life. The psyche turned on defense mechanisms one by one, one of which was that my senses got extremely sharp-

ened. Suddenly, it turned out to be an unexpected blessing.

Attentiveness was, on the one hand, my innate trait. On the other hand, it was one of the most precious things I learned during my Spiritual Exercises. Combined with the heightened senses, my innate attentiveness empowered by the Ignatian experience made me browse around like a newborn, as if I was seeing the world for the first time.

Within the first year of the war, I experienced the most beautiful



📷 Carcass of a Russian tank in a Ukrainian town square

spring, summer, autumn and winter of my life. Everything aroused astonishment inside me. Ordinary things, such as apple blossom, a bee buzzing over a flower, a pigeon jumping down the stairs absorbed me in a speechless amazement for long minutes. It was then that I discovered the healing power of attentiveness, which comes from noticing the beauty and goodness of the world even through the horrors of war. Despite fear and uncertainty about the future, despite large-scale destructions and non-stop news of deaths in the feed, the world was still awesome. And this world, created by the almighty and loving God, pulsed with life and beauty, strengthening the belief that life is stronger than death, good triumphs over evil, and beauty surpasses ugliness.

From the very first day when Russian troops brutally invaded Ukraine, I was involved as a volunteer in helping the internally displaced persons as well as in humanitarian aid delivery from abroad. My hometown Khmelnytskyi was situated in a so called relatively safe region of the country, which meant that, though

the air raid alerts occurred every day, direct missile attacks were not frequent and civilian casualties were quite rare. At that time, Khmelnytskyi turned into a huge humanitarian aid hub and a refugee collection point. During the first month of the war, my city, which had 270,000 inhabitants, accepted nearly 150,000 internally displaced persons, who were fleeing to the West from the military action zones. Some of them stayed for a very short time, maybe the length of the train stop. Some stayed for a few days or weeks. Nearly 30,000 people chose Khmelnytskyi as their new home.

Eager to share the hope I discovered, and the joy which stemmed from it, I soon noticed how important it was “to rejoice with those who are rejoicing and cry with those who are crying” (Romans 12:15-18). It was Ignatian attentiveness which taught me how fragile a human being is, how careful one should be approaching those who suffer, how much sensitivity one ought to possess to choose the proper means of communication.

Born to an unbelieving Orthodox family, I had not had much chance to

« And this world, created by the almighty and loving God, pulsed with life and beauty, strengthening the belief that life is stronger than death.

get to know God. Being converted to Catholicism as an adult, the Spiritual Exercises became my way to discover God working in my life. In May 2023, I became the editor of the main Jesuit website in Poland [jezuici.pl](http://jezuici.pl). Now, I proceed to discover the meaning of attentiveness in media work, listening to the world with one ear and to the Holy Spirit with the other, striving to be tuned to the Truth and see everything in its light.

.....  
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## Protection in the place of worship

Dieter Müller, S.J.  
Central European Province

*Church asylum provided by the Ukama Center in Bavaria helps refugees to handle their status before the law. Jesuits live together with the asylum seekers in the community and start their integration into German society.*

Inspired by the sanctuary movement in the United States, the idea of church asylum was established in Germany in the 1980s. However, it was only some 30 years later that it spread rapidly - prompted by the eviction of a church asylum in Augsburg, Bavaria, on 18 February 2014. A Chechen woman with her four kids was transferred back to Poland, where she had previously traveled through - a typical so-called Dublin case. The furor was huge and the press covered the issue

for days. Since then, I have been working for the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) as a counselor and supporter of parishes and congregations in Bavaria on this politically and legally controversial topic. In my community at the *Ukama - Center for Socio-Ecological Transformation* in Nuremberg, church asylum is practiced continuously in three rooms.

“We were beaten, imprisoned in cramped conditions with terrible san-

itary conditions and they gave us only little to eat. The nightmare did not end until we gave our fingerprints for registration. Then they shouted at us: Away you go!” Many refugees coming via Bulgaria tell stories like this. In some other European Union member states, conditions are just as questionable in terms of human rights, either through mistreatment or complete neglect.

The European Dublin Regulation stipulates that the member state of

first entry is responsible for the asylum procedure. Registration by taking fingerprints is mandatory. When refugees move on to another member state, the authorities there have six months to organize the transfer back, otherwise they become responsible for the asylum procedure. This is where church asylum comes in. It bridges the period in order to provide refugees coming from difficult situations in another member state a fair asylum procedure in Germany.

The process of church asylum is as follows: on the day of arrival of a refugee at a church, it must be reported to the relevant authorities. And within the following four weeks, a dossier must be submitted explaining the hardships the refugee was exposed to

in the other member state. The migration office examines the dossier and decides whether Germany will voluntarily take over the asylum procedure. In the vast majority of cases, however, the dossier is rejected. Church asylum must then continue until the end of the six-month period.

It is also important to look at the country of origin when accepting someone into church asylum. The chances of a successful asylum procedure in Germany should be considered in advance. Syrians and Afghans have a very good prospect of staying, which is why they make up the largest number of those in church asylum. Between 1,000 and 2,000 church asylums have been granted annually in recent years. However, the number of

requests – whether from the refugees themselves, from lawyers or from supporters – far exceeds the number of available slots.

What does the everyday life of a refugee in church asylum look like? At the Ukama Center the refugees are not living separately from us Jesuits. They are temporary members of the house community. It is from there that they start to integrate into German society, practice German as best as they can, learn about our Christian way of life, just as we learn about their mostly Islamic origins and about their families in Afghanistan, Syria or elsewhere. If and when their church asylum situation would end, they would no longer be such strangers in Germany.





📷 The Ukama Centre offers protection to asylum seekers awaiting status.

Let's hear from some refugees who wrote to the community after their stay with us:

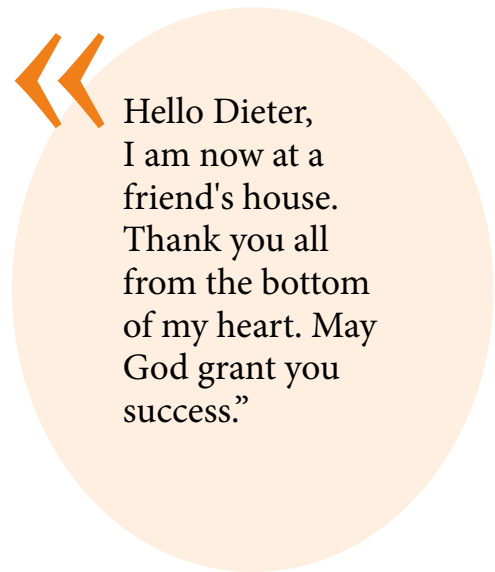
“Dear all, how are you? I am doing well, and I have some news. I took an assessment test and then got confirmation. This means that I can now take the German test straight away. And last week I received the decision from the migration office. I have been granted refugee status! I am so happy! Fayaz and Mustafa are happy too. Fayaz got the decision: “deportation forbidden”, and Mustafa is still waiting for decision about his case.”

“Hello Dieter, I am now at a friend's house. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart. May God

grant you success. May Jesus protect you from all evil. For the sake of our Master Muhammad, may God bless you and grant you peace.”

“Dear family, on the occasion of the birth of Jesus Christ - may God bless him - and at the beginning of a new year, I extend my warmest congratulations and blessings. I ask Allah to make you happy and that he will never end to fill your hearts. Christmas brings with it a message from heaven that embodies love and peace. I wish you days full of blessings and goodness.”

.....  
<https://ukamazentrum.net/dieter.muller@jesuiten.org>



« Hello Dieter, I am now at a friend's house. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart. May God grant you success.”



## Going where no one goes A presence among migrants in detention

Pieter-Paul Lembrechts, S.J.  
JRS Belgium

*JRS Belgium takes care of migrants in detention centres before their forced return to the country of origin; the importance of “being-with” and of listening to foster hope and resilience.*

In the Constitutions, Saint Ignatius states that Jesuits should give the preference to those places where the need is greater and where others do not go. True to this criterion, for more than twenty years JRS Belgium focuses on the most neglected group of migrants: those detained in detention centres with a view to a forced return to their country of origin.

If an asylum seeker is denied refugee status, he is ordered to leave the territory. If he does not, he is illegally in the country. He may be arrested and placed in a detention centre. In these centres, which look like prisons, all kinds of other undocumented people are held. They are locked up as criminals and expelled from the country as unwelcome.

Detention and repatriation are an emotional shock for these men and women. Their migration project is brutally cut off, their dreams of a better future shattered. Every week, JRS Belgium visits these people in the country's various detention centres. We usually cannot change their situation: most of them are repatriated – sometimes violently. More important



📷 The JRS Belgium team of volunteers at the gates of the migrant detention centre



First and foremost, that means: listening. Listening, listening, and listening again. Detainees feel the need to be heard.

than results, however, is our presence, “being-with” more than “doing-for.” We visit these centres to accompany the detainees, to become their companions.

First and foremost, that means: listening. Listening, listening, and listening again. Detainees feel the need to be heard. Officials do not have time to listen to their stories. We are there to listen – to listen to those who are not being listened to.

As a visitor, you face a lot of desolation: uncertainty, fear, frustration, sadness, rebellion, despair; sometimes hunger strikes, self-mutilation or attempted suicide. We try to give people some courage, help them not to lose hope completely.

Alusine, a detainee from Guinea who has been in Europe for twenty years, has made great efforts to integrate. He has obtained a diploma but is not allowed to work because he has no documents. He prays Psalm 102: “Hear my prayer, o Lord; let my cry come to you. Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress... For my days pass away like smoke, and my bones burn like a furnace. My heart is stricken and withered like grass; I am too wasted to eat my bread... I lie awake; I am like a lonely bird on the housetop.”

We can inform people about legal procedures, discern with them what decision to take, call their lawyer and so on. But most cases are hopeless. A spiritual conversation often brings

more consolation. We also see resilience in the detention centres, perseverance, solidarity. And a lot of faith. The Bible and the Koran are the most read books (actually the only ones,



tory in organizing transformative educational experiences in prisons. Its course on the lived experience of imprisonment brings twelve regular university students and twelve prison-based students together for an entire semester, to reflect on the carceral system and the ethics and meaning of punishment.

In collaboration with JRS, the Chair was able to transfer the format of its service-learning course to a new carceral setting: that of the detention of migrants. In a truly immersive experience, twelve university students remained overnight in one of the Belgian detention centres, living together for two days with people detained there. This mixed group reflected on the realities of migration and the detention of migrants by attending lectures and engaging in small-group discussions. The overnight stay in an empty wing of the centre facilitated broad interpersonal exchange, allowing participants not only to learn together, but also to eat, relax and play sports with each other. In this way academic formation, personal reflection and community went hand-in-hand. This example shows how collaboration between Jesuit-inspired projects on the social and intellectual level can converge towards new possibilities and spaces of learning and encounter.



because people are too restless to read other books).

However, visiting these people is not all. In line with the JRS tradition, we also advocate the rights of detainees to the authorities. We explore alternatives to detention. We try to influence public opinion and make pupils and students aware of the issue of migration detention.

This is how JRS Belgium participated in an educational project initiated by the Chair for Detention, Meaning and Society at the Catholic University of Leuven. The Chair was founded in close collaboration with the Jesuits and embodies the commitment to engage at the intersection of intellectual and social apostolate. As part of the university's service-learning program, it has a substantial his-

*With the collaboration of Geertjan Zuijdwegt and Pieter De Witte, Catholic University of Leuven*

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<https://jrbelgium.org/?lang=en>  
<https://vrijplaats.net/>





## JRS South Asia: Nurturing hope and resilience amidst displacement

Stephen Raj, S.J.  
JRS South Asia

*JRS South Asia offers a wide range of services to both refugees and internally displaced people, with a particular focus on facilitating reconciliation and providing mental health support.*

“Peace, to me, means providing food and education for my children to live to see tomorrow,” expressed Razia, an Afghan refugee widow and tailoring student. Javed, another Afghan student of JRS’s Global English class, shared, “For me, peace is having an opportunity for education and employment to live with dignity.” A student from Marquette University added, “Peace building, to me, is cultivating compassion

and unlocking one’s potential to foster right relationships with one another.” These conversations between Afghan refugees and Marquette University students during a recent visit to JRS Urban project centre in New Delhi, highlights diverse worldviews and aspirations shaped by distinct contexts.

**The South Asian context.** It is characterized by religious and ethnic plural-

ism, with displacement experiences. The region acts as both a source and host for refugees. Millions of displaced individuals in Afghanistan, India, and Bangladesh urgently await sustainable solutions for their humanitarian needs. In war-torn Afghanistan, internally displaced people and returnees live in fear, facing food insecurity and mental health issues. Overcrowded camps in Bangladesh host around a



📷 Afghan women benefit from JRS educational services.

million Rohingya refugees, limiting the future prospects of a generation without formal education. In India, tens of thousands of asylum seekers and refugees from various countries, including Sri Lanka, Tibet, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Syria, reside in government camps and informal settlements waiting anxiously for resettlement.

**JRS-South Asia's response.** Reconciliation and Mental Health & Psychosocial support stand as two key program priorities for JRS-South Asia. Through peace education and psychosocial skills training, JRS empowers refugee children, women, and youth to establish safe spaces and foster positive relationships within the refugee community and with host communities. This mission gains heightened significance in the face of ongoing global tragedies resulting in the loss of thousands of lives and the displacement of millions.

**A story of resilience.** Zari, 17, escaped Myanmar's military violence in 2021, finding refuge in Mizoram. Her cousin, a People's Defence Force member, assisted her but tragically lost his life. Filled with remorse, she withdrew from social life, fearing judgment.



📷 Rohingya children find joy and peace thanks to JRS South Asia.

Joining JRS Learning Centre in February 2023, Zari found a supportive community of fellow Myanmar nationals; she felt revitalized through classes and activities. JRS's psychosocial support and reconciliation sessions alleviated daily stressors and depression symptoms, helping her overcome remorse and accept that her cousin's death was not her fault. Zari is grateful to JRS for

providing a listening ear and a space for healing.

**Empowering lives through education and livelihood.** JRS South Asia, concretely, offers education for children, job-oriented training, and livelihood support for women and youth. Emergency assistance and community-based psychological aid are given



Despite facing death, destruction, and displacement, there are signs of vocations to religious life.

to camp-bound refugees. Socioeconomic initiatives aim at fostering sustainable livelihoods. All this aims at their self-sustainability.

Tor Pekai, a Chin refugee and skilling circle member, received a micro-grant from JRS and has since launched a successful small business after completing JRS training. She now trains her younger siblings in embroidery, expanding her enterprise. Tor Pekai expresses a sense of accomplishment and pride, stating, “JRS gave me wings to fly and reach my potential.”

**Accompanied to answer the call amidst adversity.** From the ashes of debris, noble souls emerge. Despite facing death, destruction, and displacement, there are signs of vocations to religious life. In Tamil Nadu’s Sri Lankan refugee camps, nine individu-

als have answered the call, joining various congregations and dioceses. Inspired by the dedication of Jesuits and JRS staff, a refugee child in a Chennai camp responded to the call of God and was nurtured to become a Jesuit priest, Fr. Robert, S.J., now serving in Sri Lanka. Figures like Fr. Pakkiyanadhan, Sr. Devakala, Fr. Jeni, Sr. Disha, Sr. Stella Mary, Sr. Kalista Glory, and Deacon Michael, who found their calling amid tragic experiences and challenging camp conditions, continue to serve as models for others. Fuelled by faith in God and love for humanity, their journey remains marked by resilience and determination. Today, they serve as beacons of hope among the poor and marginalized.

**Advocating for change amidst challenges.** In the face of indiscriminate conflict and violence, marked by a bla-

tant disregard for human life and international governance principles, the rising culture of impunity is alarming, necessitating decisive action globally. JRS prioritizes advocacy for the rights of forcibly displaced individuals, focusing on promoting favourable practices, policies, and legislation.

The spirit of resilience and courage of refugees and IDPs inspire the mostly refugee-based JRS South Asia team to nurture and secure compassionate environment for them to reconstruct their lives and foster aspirations for a hopeful future. JRS continues to accompany them in their journey, overcoming challenges, towards building a world where they find protection, equal opportunity, and meaningful participation.

[https://jrs.net/en/jrs\\_offices/jrs-south-asia/](https://jrs.net/en/jrs_offices/jrs-south-asia/)



## Migrant Assistance and Information Network

Martin Puthussery, S.J.  
 Director, MAIN, Jesuit Conference of South Asia

*The Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA) has set up a national helpline to respond to the needs and urgent dire situations of migrants in distress in India.*

Migrant Assistance and Information Network (MAIN) is a collaborative venture initiated in the post COVID-19 scenario by the Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA) to accompany and serve the migrants in distress across India, and to advocate for them. It is the outcome of the felt-need for a collective and innovative response to reach out to the distressed migrants.

### **A national helpline accompanying migrants in distress in India**

MAIN primarily operates through a national helpline (toll free number 18008912995) system wherein a distress migrant, his or her family member or close associate calls to seek critical assistance, information and guidance. The team at the central hub in Delhi assesses the call received and

routes the information to the respective zones and hubs for further action and follow up. It is operationalised through 21 hubs in 15 Jesuit Provinces (Andhra, Chennai, Karnataka, Kerala, Goa, Bombay, Pune, Gujarat, Dumka, Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Hazaribagh, Madhya Pradesh, Patna, Calcutta & Darjeeling) covering 15 Indian states, and through two zonal hubs in *Indian Social Institute Bangalore* and *Bagaicha, Ranchi*.

From May 2022 to January 2024, MAIN received some 555 distress calls. These calls included events linked with accidental deaths of 59 migrants, 23 cases of wage theft, missing cases of 16 migrants, and 32 cases of bonded labour, child labour or human trafficking. Through the partners of MAIN, 75% of the calls were addressed successfully, 936 persons benefitted from the Network, and facilitated recovery of the equivalent of 200,000 USD to the migrants and their families.

### Some cases

Sonot Tudu, a Santhal tribal man from Dumka, Jharkhand, travelling to Kerala, was found dead beside the railway track in Erode, Tamil Nadu, on 24 August 2022. Based on the information received, MAIN zonal hub in *Indian Social Institute Bangalore* with the collaboration of a local organization found out that body was in mortuary at Government Hospital in Perundurai. The Network helped to bring Sonot's son Seven Tudu to claim the body. His body was cremated and the ashes in an urn were taken to his

native place for the rituals as per the Santhal tradition.

Anesha Soreng, a tribal girl from Sundergarh, Odisha, was trafficked and forced to work as a domestic worker in Hyderabad. Based on her distress call to the MAIN helpline, our team in Telangana, with the help of local police, reached the house, released her and facilitated her return to her native place as per her desire.

Asni Pahadin, a minor girl from Pakur in Jharkhand was forced to work as a domestic worker in Delhi. MAIN central hub in Delhi filed a case with Child Welfare Committee in Delhi. The MAIN Dumka team reached out to her parents to give a police complaint at the local police station. On 3 September 2023, Asni was traced and brought to the MAIN office in Delhi. Our network facilitated her accompanied return to her native place in Jharkhand by train.

Vinay Ekka, a tribal man from Gumla, Jharkhand, was travelling on a train to Nagercoil and accident-



From May 2022 to January 2024, MAIN received some 555 distress calls.

ly got separated from the group after Ernakulam station. Later he was found near the railway track in Kollam, Kerala. Finding Vinay mentally and physically not well, the local people informed the police. Based on the information from Fr. Sushil from Arouse-Gumla of MAIN Ranchi, Fr. P.S. Antony took Vinay to Trivandrum by ambulance where he was admitted in a medical college hospital in Trivandrum. The MAIN Kerala team facilitated Vinay's return with his relatives to his native place in Jharkhand.

### Future plans

MAIN is planning to increase inter-province collaboration through exchanging Jesuit personnel between source and destination provinces of migration. The network will expand to new states, new districts and remote villages with new partners and associates in the coming years. MAIN is a pertinent response from the Jesuits to the internal migrants needs in India.

.....  
<https://mainindia.org/director@mainindia.org>



📷 MAIN volunteers recovered the body of Sonot Tudu and handed it over to his family.



## Distressed migration and its impact on Tribal (Adivasis) of Gujarat

Kanchan Bharti; James C. Dabhi, S.J.  
Gujarat Province

*The living conditions of the Adivasis in Gujarat (India) are very harsh and the need to seek work in the cities exposes men, women and children to further fragility. During the pandemic, conditions for urban workers became dramatic.*

Migration, though a human phenomenon across the world, could be forced on people, especially the poor and marginalized. It can become “distress migration” and it is almost a way of life for millions of Adivasis in India including in the state of Gujarat. They are like the *Anawim* in the Bible.

The Jesuit-inspired social research, through the *Centre for Culture and Development*, Gujarat, India, has

carried out a number of studies concerning the Adivasis. One of them was initiated in 2021 by the Jesuit Province of Gujarat, aiming to help Jesuits understand the socio-economic and political situation of Adivasi migrants. The study involved 5,284 Adivasi families from two districts, Dang and Valasad, including 788 families practising Christianity in south Gujarat, western India. The Adivasis of Dang, with the highest proportion of the Christian

population, have been suffering violence due to their faith in Christ.

Gujarat, a leading state in India in terms of urbanisation (42.5 %), attracts migrants across the country and absorbs them into unorganised labour sector. Gujarat itself has a high rate of internal migration due to poor employment in the villages and the development induced displacement of Adivasis to carry out mega devel-



The cry of the migrants moved the heart of God (Ex 3:8), but the cry of the Adivasi migrants today seems to fall on deaf ears of the authorities.

opment projects in their traditional lands under the garb of 'national interest'. The Adivasis are not only largely poor but suffer lack of quality education and health care. The Church and the Jesuits in particular have contributed immensely in these fields. The Church among the Adivasis of Gujarat is comparatively young and is blessed with a number of Adivasi women and men who have committed their lives to their people.

The Adivasis largely reside in rural areas of Gujarat and heavily depend on agriculture for their livelihood. The research showed that 92 % of the families had cultivated only one harvest from their land during the monsoon to sustain themselves. Lack of water retention in the soil and irrigation facilities as well as low wages in the villages have pushed the Adivasis to migrate to destinations where comparatively better and longer sustained wages were available. Seasonal migration thus provides extra income to cover some expenses and pay back debts.

Children often migrate with parents and relatives resulting in poor condition for their health and education. The women, beside harsh working and living conditions resulting in poor health and hygiene, face sexual harassment and exploitation in workplaces. The elderly remain at home relying on remittances of migrated family members and look after the children who have not accompanied their parents.

In their search for work and revenue, the journey to the areas of employment is hazardous and often inhuman. Often, they travel in trucks or hired vehicles "packed like sardines." There have been accidents in which a number of these Adivasi migrants have been killed or seriously injured. When they reach their destination, these migrants live in shanties near polluted water sources and open spaces where open defecation is possible at night. Their stay in these places in towns and cities depends on the good will of local inhabitants, the police and authorities. A number

of them fall victim to crime in urban slums.

Listening to the migrants' experience during the pandemic was disturbing. With the enforcement of the lockdown, their livelihood came to a complete standstill with abrupt cessation of their daily income. While returning to their villages, they were treated as "lepers" and were chased away even without offering them water. However, the Jesuits of Gujarat and other Jesuit Provinces acted as "Good Samaritans" alongside these helpless migrants, to lighten their yoke and help them to keep hope alive.

Migration for millions of Adivasis has become a necessity and coping strategy to live a dignified life. The cry of the migrants moved the heart of God (Ex 3:8), but the cry of the Adivasi migrants today seems to fall on deaf ears of the authorities.

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## Reverse migration: A reality through watershed development

Siju Varghese, S.J.  
Pune Province

*A long history of commitment and creativity from Social Centre of Ahmednagar to face social critical issues perpetuated by perennial drought, to protect land and to foster the development of every individual. Through all this, going back home is possible.*

Balashiram Ananda Datir, 70, is a farmer and landowner from the village of Kasare in Maharashtra, India. In this drought-prone region, his rain-fed land proved an inadequate source of livelihood, and he was forced to migrate to Mumbai to find sustenance.

His story is like many others from the semi-arid regions of Ahmednagar and Marathwada in Maharashtra. In

these areas, famine, poverty, unemployment, health issues, child marriage, and child labour have all been perpetuated by perennial drought. As the government could not provide an effective long-term solution to this problem, men and youth had no option but to migrate to metropolitan regions in search of livelihood. Meanwhile, in the villages, women had to trudge long distances to fetch water,

and children had to graze animals at the expense of their education.

Amidst these challenging conditions, Fr. Hermann Bacher and a team of Jesuit missionaries pitched their tent among the people of Ahmednagar district. Informed by insight from the local communities, they expanded their mission to address water scarcity in the region, and Fr. Bacher





consequently established the *Social Centre* of Ahmednagar in 1967.

In 1971–72, the state of Maharashtra experienced a severe drought, which escalated the challenges the people of Kasare had been facing. Many farmers, like Balashiram, could not afford to feed their livestock and had to sell them at throwaway prices. Some abandoned their cattle to graze in search of dry fodder and lost many of their herd to starvation. These harsh circumstances caused people to migrate *en masse*.

At the Social Centre, Fr. Bacher and his team undertook numerous experiments and trials before developing the *Ridge to Valley Watershed Development Programme* as a sustainable solution to the water crisis in central Maharashtra. A people-centred model, focused on inclusive and integrated development, it encourages active community participation at every stage, fostering a sense of ownership and belonging. The involvement of women and marginalised groups ensures no one is left behind. Further, the programme helps curb unhealthy traditional and superstitious practices in these areas. Thus, the model not only aids in water and soil conservation but also supports the holistic de-

velopment of every individual in the project area. Following its early success, the government of India adopted it as a key strategy in addressing recurrent drought.

In 1985, the Social Centre introduced and implemented the watershed programme in Kasare, following numerous consultations with the village community. Locals volunteered to dig contour trenches, raise bunds, and build water conservation and harvesting structures on their land and streams. The results of these efforts became evident after the rains, when previously barren land turned green and agricultural yields improved. Women and children no longer needed to walk long distances to fetch water or graze cattle. Parents were able to send their children to school, and most of these children are now well educated and gainfully employed.

The Social Centre's watershed development work made it possible for Balashiram to return to Kasare in 2007. For 35 years, he had struggled to make ends meet in Mumbai, working as a porter on a daily wage basis, while his land in Kasare remained fallow. Upon returning, he repaired a communal well, invested in a cross-bred dairy cow, and began cultivating

A people-centred model, focused on inclusive and integrated development.

his land. The replenished groundwater supply provided him with sufficient water to run his farm successfully. He currently grows green fodder for his cow and sends an average of 14 litres of milk to the dairy daily. He also cultivates onion and grain crops, which sustain his family throughout the year. Balashiram reports that he is now content living in his native village.

Like its resilient people, Kasare has come a long way. Supported by the availability of water throughout the year, sustainable agriculture, dairy farming, and entrepreneurship activities in the region have sparked a trend of reverse migration, transforming a barren land into an oasis of life.

<https://socialcentre.in/>



## Media for change: empowering communities and mitigating migrations

Ignacy Arockiasamy, S.J.  
Chennai Province

*“Climate change is a problem which can no longer be left to a future generation.” Pope Francis*

Embarking on a journey as a Jesuit Scholastic, my path unexpectedly converged with the realm of media studies. This serendipitous intersection of academia and community engagement revealed the transformative power of media, catalyzing change among marginalized communities nestled in the Kodai hills. Representing India on a global stage at the Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE) World Cup in New York further underscored the potential of media technology in fostering entrepreneurship and social upliftment, gar-

nering a bronze medal for pioneering initiatives among the downtrodden. Yet, it was a pivotal moment when my gaze shifted towards Tiruvannamalai District in Tamil Nadu, where the tapestry of environmental degradation and socioeconomic vulnerabilities loomed large.

### **Significance of collaboration and networking**

Through collaboration and dialogue, the Society of Jesus promotes justice, reconciliation, and the greater good,

guided by its Ignatian values and dedication to serving the marginalized and promoting the Kingdom of God. Here, amidst the backdrop of rampant migrations, predominantly of marginalized farmers, I witnessed firsthand the pressing need for media campaigns to raise environmental awareness and prompt climate-resilient actions. Thus began a journey of advocacy, aiming to harness the transformative potential of media to nurture sustainable livelihoods and empower communities grappling with adversity.



Thus began a journey of advocacy, aiming to harness the transformative potential of media to nurture sustainable livelihoods and empower communities grappling with adversity.

### Media campaigns targeting migration and climate change challenges

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis encourages environmental education and awareness to foster a culture of stewardship and care for the planet. Recognizing the potency of media, I designed an 8-week media intervention integrating climate-resilient measures including 1. *Nursery development*, 2. *Greening of hillocks*, 3. *Silvi-pasture development*, 4. *Massive tree plantation*, and 5. *Medicinal plants cultivation*. Two media campaigns targeted the workers of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), a Government social programme, utilizing diverse channels such as the Eco India television series, radio, posters, communication technology, and social media to bolster climate resilience education and awareness.

### Real life stories and community voices

The following community testimonies, attributing the success of the five distinct climate-resilient initiatives bolstered by the media campaigns, echo

the sentiment of Pope Francis, “Climate change is a problem which can no longer be left to a future generation.”

“As a beneficiary of *Nursery development*, our small nursery has grown into a major sapling supplier for our district, helping us combat migration. Media campaigns taught us to integrate activities like farm ponds and check-dams.”

“As the village head benefiting from the *Greening of hillocks* initiative, I’m astonished by the transformation of our barren hill into lush green cover. Media campaigns played a vital role in visualizing and conveying this idea to our community.”

“As a beneficiary of *Silvi-pasture development*, the local fodder growth has been transformative for reclaiming our livelihoods. Media campaigns introduced us to indigenous fodder varieties, enabling sustainable land management.”

“As a beneficiary of *Massive tree plantation*, I’ve witnessed its transformative impact firsthand. Media campaigns played a crucial role, visually

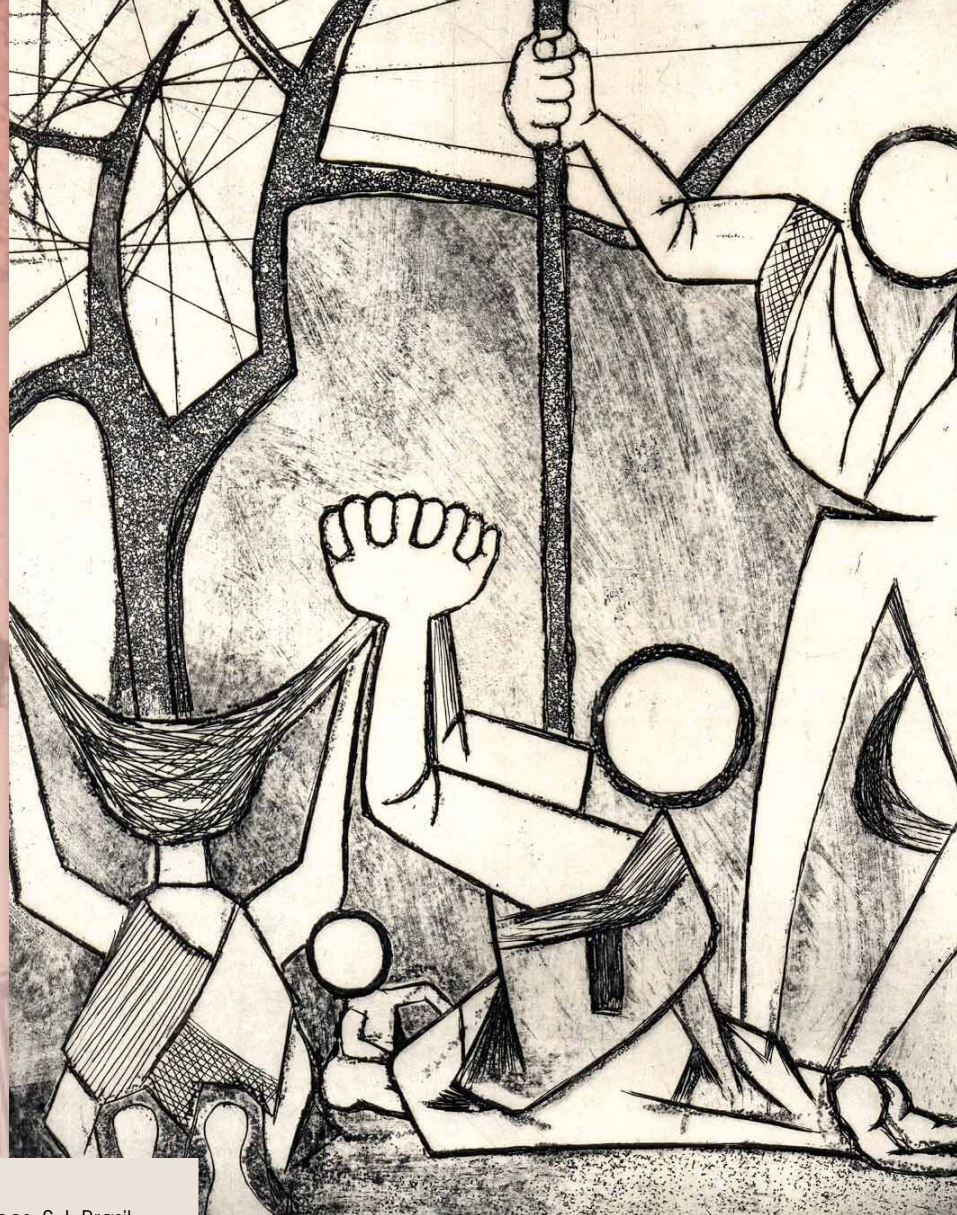
illustrating the future benefits of our green surroundings.”

“As a beneficiary of *Medicinal plants cultivation*, I was initially skeptical. Yet, witnessing the healthy growth of these herbs completely changed my perspective. Now, I plan to establish personal herbal gardens, fostering economic growth and promoting healthier lives.”

### No more need for migration

In conclusion, media interventions have served as vital catalysts in advancing climate resilience and alleviating forced and livelihood migrations within rural communities of Tiruvannamalai District. Internal forced migration has been largely reduced. Through the synergy of sustainable practices and interdisciplinary collaboration, we can effectively address climate-related risks and uplift vulnerable populations. In doing so, we heed the call of the Lord of the Universe, paving the path towards sustainable development and the betterment of humanity.

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Those who leave. Nelson Lopes, S.J. Brasil

## Testimonies

In this drawing, the artist is remembering all those who find themselves forced to leave their homelands in north and north-eastern Brazil to seek their fortune in the megapolises further south. They pray, get together and rise up. This is just one of many examples of forced migration in today's world where the human person counts for less than the diktats of the market economy or the political ambitions of tyrants.

May you be touched by these brief testimonies from seven Jesuits who have themselves been refugees or stateless. This tough experience has nonetheless led them to enter the Society of Jesus! You will also read the testimony of a man and a woman, who, having experienced exile, chose to commit to working with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS).



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## From Vietnam, to a Malaysian refugee camp, to being a Jesuit Provincial

The testimony of Quyen Vu, S.J.  
Australian Province

In 1969, the ten-year-old Vietnamese boy became a refugee. Separated unexpectedly from his parents at night, he and a younger brother were among 67 people crammed into a fishing boat. They ran out of food and water and pirates came aboard twice. Two weeks later, after another lad his own age died of dehydration, the boy thought he and his brother might be next. After 19 days, the fishing boat arrived in Malaysia and the siblings were taken to a refugee camp.

Yet that trauma was actually the conduit to inner peace.

The boy and his brother moved to Australia and were reunited with their family. Later, he graduated from the University of New South Wales and began working in the IT

field. “I worked weekdays, sitting in front of a computer with very limited human contact. Each Saturday, I went out with my friends but every Sunday I went to church because I was a member of the Bankstown choir.”

“And then each Monday I would go back to work. After a couple of months I realised, ‘My life needs to be more meaningful than this.’”

Having spent time observing some religious orders, he attended a Jesuit “come and see weekend” in Sydney in 1993 and instantly recognised the Society’s “very interesting balance of contemplation and action.”

Looking back, he says, “That philosophy really made a con-

nection with me. More than anything else, I wanted to give back to humanity and to serve the poor, to be a missionary and to do something that was meaningful and purposeful. Joining the Jesuits meant that I could do something that gives me life and purpose.”

He became a Jesuit in 1994. Today, Fr Quyen Vu is the Australian Provincial. Prior to taking on this role, he spent twelve years overseas, first building a new Jesuit school in Timor-Leste and then doing the same in Cambodia. He says: “For me, education is a way to help poor people, young people, not only for the individual to transform his or her life, but for the family as well, and for the community and the country.”



## “If I wanted to make a difference, I should become a Jesuit”

Patrick Consantino Taban, S.J.  
Eastern Africa Province

My first name, “Taban”, summarizes my life story. Taban means suffering or fatigue in Arabic. That was the context of my life as a teenager. I was born in a grim situation in Sudan — now called the Republic of South Sudan after secession — when there was a civil war. My parents had to face the reality, and when it became unbearable (in 1989, after I had been weaned) they had to flee to the Magburu Refugee Settlement in northern Uganda. We lived in this difficult environment for nineteen years. After we returned to South Sudan in 2008, my parents and siblings were again displaced to northern Uganda by the

2016 conflict. They are now refugees again.

I received my Jesuit vocation from the Jesuit priests working for the Jesuit Refugee Service in refugee settlements. I was impressed by their pastoral services and humanitarian interventions. I was one of the JRS beneficiaries and I volunteered to work with them. It was then that I discovered my passion for social justice. I told myself that, if I wanted to make a difference for people, I should become a Jesuit.

In 2010, I entered the novitiate in Arusha, Tanzania. I completed my phi-

losophy studies in India, did regency in Ethiopia, my first theological studies in Kenya, and a Licentiate in Social Sciences in Rome, Italy. I am currently pursuing a Master Degree in Film and Television Production in Los Angeles, California, USA. My experiences as a refugee, a volunteer with JRS, an administrative council member, and a Jesuit priest have prepared me to advocate for social justice and to become a voice for the marginalized. Even more, studying film and television production will give me the opportunity to produce documentaries and feature films that relate to a real story, that of those whose stories are otherwise hidden or never told.



## My exodus in the South China Sea

Tuân Nguyen, S.J.

French-speaking Western European Province

My name is Tuân Nguyen. By origin, I'm Vietnamese. By naturalisation, I have become a citizen of France and by vocation, I am a Jesuit.

I was born in Saigon in the middle of the Vietnamese war, in a country blighted by two opposing ideologies imported from the West: Communism on the one hand, Capitalism on the other. My father was a high-ranking civil servant in the Republic of South Vietnam. When the regime collapsed in April 1975, my family had no option but to flee the country. And that was how my story of Exodus and as one of the 'boat people' refugees began.

My family fled very early in the morning, at 3am to be precise on 2 May 1975. I can still remember

this: I was six years old at the time. What I did not know then was that there would be no return from this journey. In a fishing port in the south, my parents found a fisherman who agreed to take us out to sea along with other families. Sixty-three of us crammed into a boat barely 10 metres long. After five days at sea, without a thing to eat or drink, a Norwegian merchant ship spotted us and came to our rescue, bringing us to Bergen. Had I been in that boat one more day, I would not be here now to tell you this story.

And thus, in that dramatic context of anguish and want, refugee camps for Vietnamese boat people began to emerge in different countries. Many children and women were raped by

pirates. And there were many boats that sank or vanished.

Years later, in the light of the Hebrew people's exodus through the Red Sea, I was able to re-interpret my own exodus over the South China Sea as a personal death and resurrection, guided by the breath of the Holy Spirit. In 2003, inspired by the Spirit, I decided to ask for admission to the Society of Jesus. For a number of years, I worked with students unsure about their future or chances of success. Today, I am more involved with terminally ill patients in the hospital, who dread that final journey from which there is no return. This leads them back to the existential questions they have pushed away for years but which now become pressing in the face of that final journey to the other side.



## Once a refugee myself I later accompanied other refugees

Eric Goeh-Akue, S.J.  
Western Africa Province

One fine morning in February 1992, I fled Togo along with my whole family to seek refuge in Benin where the UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees) had welcomed about 110,000 Togolese refugees. It was a time of social-political and military crisis in Togo, where a bloody repression had led to hundreds of deaths.

We were categorised as urban refugees and lived with host families. The UNCHR provided us with daily meals and medical care. Regrettably, like most refugees, we felt frustrated and humiliated by the staff who comprised Religious and lay people working in partnership with the UN. Our daily routine involved being

shouted at, insults, scorn and abuse and we had no opportunity whatsoever to complain. I was profoundly traumatised by this humiliating and dehumanising experience and felt too ashamed to talk about this for years.

A year earlier, I had begun my candidacy with the Jesuits in Benin. As a refugee in Benin, I was able to meet up on a more regular basis with Fr Jean-Noël Crespel, the director of candidacy. When I shared my troubles with him, he introduced me to the mission of the JRS (Jesuit Refugee Service) saying, “One day you will work with the JRS and your experience right now will prove to be an asset.”

After becoming a Jesuit, I was sent on mission to the JRS where I felt I was among my own people, in communion with them. I completely understood their hopes and problems. I worked to ensure that JRS partners grasped that what really matters is not helping refugees per se but how you do this: by treating them as people of value and respecting their dignity. This mission has been a path of healing from the shame I felt about my past. I now understand that being a refugee was a grace, an opportunity from the Lord so I could learn how to accompany refugees later on myself as a member of the Society of Jesus.





Alaska 2022



Seattle (USA) 1993



Hong Kong 1981



Kakuma (Kenya) 2023

## Full Circle: A JRS Story

Dan Mai, S.J.

Province UMI (USA Midwest)

*Christmas 2022: Hooper Bay, Alaska, USA. Temperature: -35° C.*

Having spent most of the past decade in university ministry, I chose to spend Christmas and Easter where the sacramental needs in my Province were the greatest - the Alaska mission. The frozen banks of the Yukon were a far cry from where my journey started, though...

*May 1981: South China Sea*

Forty-two years previously, my family and I, along with 55 others, fled Saigon by boat, hoping to reach Thailand. Due to typhoons, however, we were driven into the South China Sea, helplessly adrift for 30 days. Nine children, including my nephew, perished of starvation. We were rescued by the

Chinese navy, and brought to a refugee camp in Hong Kong.

Just a year before, Fr. Arrupe founded the *Jesuit Refugee Service* to help people like me - people who are forced out of their country due to persecution and despair. In Hong Kong, Catholic groups helped our family - it may have even been JRS (I was too young to remember clearly), and helped set us on a path to eventually resettle in the United States.

*1992-1993: Seattle, Washington, USA*

While teaching catechism in the Vietnamese community, I reported the story of Jesuit priest Alexandre de Rhodes, who created the Romanized *Nôm* script for the Vietnamese language, making education accessible to millions. Rhodes' story inspired me to

join the Jesuits, where I might also use my knowledge and skills to improve the lives of others.

*Christmas 2023: Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya. Temperature: 38° C.*

One year after the ice of Hooper Bay, I found myself celebrating Christmas Mass with several hundred refugees at my new ministry with JRS Kenya. And though the circumstances were different, somehow I felt at home here, a refugee serving refugees. These people, too, have fled their homes and endured great hardship. These people, too, have lost loved ones to war and starvation. And these people, too, have turned to JRS in their time of need, as my family did over 40 years ago. May God continue to guide us all in this essential ministry.



## A refugee and a Jesuit: loving and serving from a lived experience

Don Remy Niyitegeka, S.J.  
Eastern Africa Province

I am a Jesuit and have lived most of my life as a refugee. I was born in Rwanda, a small country in Eastern Africa, and became a refugee at a tender age in Democratic Republic of Congo; later I fled to Kenya. When we arrived in Kenya, my mom was alone with four kids. Undocumented and with no stable work, she managed to raise us the best she could. This journey bears the mark of divine grace in a unique *Journey* that has equipped me with resilience, faith, love, courage, and the pursuit of a better future for all as I dedicated my life to serving as a Jesuit.

Growing up, I never thought I could be eligible to join any religious congregation because of my status;

nonetheless, the desire to serve God through the Church persisted. When I met the Jesuits in Nairobi, I was moved by their work and approached them to see if I could be admitted. After almost three years of discernment and accompaniment, I was accepted into the Eastern Africa Province of the Society of Jesus in 2016. This admission was my confirmation that God's will finds us wherever we are and transcends borders, cultures, and civil status.

My upbringing developed in me a burning love to accompany displaced persons, migrants, and refugees because of my lived experience and knowledge of their plight. I also became aware of how rampant the

problem of migration and displacement is around me. This awareness intensified my desire to journey with the marginalized, convinced that this would be my offering to God through the Society. After my first studies in Zimbabwe, I was missioned to do my regency in the USA to teach at *Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory*, Indianapolis, in 2021. Nonetheless, I create time to serve and advocate for migrants and refugees guided by our Ignatian charism of encountering people where they are in their lives.

My advice to young people, especially refugees, immigrants, and undocumented: never give up in life; God works in mysterious ways. Persevere in Hope, for God is with you.



## Stateless within a fallen world

Sami Helewa, S.J.  
Province of Canada

My story of a stateless Palestinian background binds Palestine to Canada. I was born and raised in Beirut for twenty years before I immigrated to Canada. Several of my relatives were refugees longing for freedom, self-determination and justice; some lost their lives in a refugee camp during a civil war that stormed Lebanon in the 1970s. Their deaths shaped my outlook that education is an ally to peace, and made me realize that the world promises little to the stateless and refugees. Displacement and immigration became, at the time, the consequences to the adversity that overwhelmed our Palestinian history.

Refugees are never without the power of their narratives that entail

themes of belonging and becoming. When in Canada, my entry to religious life of the Society of Jesus was marked by the struggle of belonging and by the hopeful vision of what God dreams for me. The Society of Jesus was instrumental in helping me find myself in the friendship of Christ whose words of self-disclosure remains relevant “Foxes have holes, birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay down his head” (Luke 9:58). With the environmental crises, even non-human living species are belonging less and less to their habitats.

My divine mentor, by his chosen statelessness of his Cross, reminds

me that unless you are in someone’s heart, you remain a refugee. If the Word of God is my promised land, then it is in the Heart of Jesus where I find my spiritual Galilee worth embracing.

Sadly, I may never see, in my lifetime, a “Palestine” based on justice; but education, forgiveness and reconciliation are long term salvific processes. My hope lies in my Palestinian experience as one recited example, rooted in education and spirituality, to remind the world that greed, violent domination, lack of forgiveness are root causes for the displacement and loss of millions of God’s people.



## From Colombia, a journey both intimidating and beautiful

Daniela Alba

JRS International Office – Rome

There are many instances where the fear of losing, once again, my home, more family and the comforts of a stable life prevent me from speaking. Although it has been over two decades, there are many moments where I vacillate between gratitude and sorrow. As the years pass, I often wonder if telling this story adds a tone to voice even an ounce of the pain my homeland has experienced for the last sixty years.

I was almost seven years old when I packed my favourite toys and left Colombia. Under the impression that we were going to Disneyland, I kept asking my mother for reassurance that we would come back as I was deeply attached to my grandpar-

ents. Little did I know that I would spend the next decade cut off from them. I could have never imagined the nuances of this risky journey, since nothing can prepare you for a life of continuous loss.

Living in five different states, over ten different cities and integrating into resistant host communities for close to 25 years has made this journey both intimidating and beautiful. From experiencing homelessness and domestic violence to discovering the divergent cultures in every city and making lifelong friendships with incredible people, this journey has become one of gratitude for community. Both the community that makes up my converging indigenous and Spanish eth-

nicities and the community that this journey of displacement has gifted.

Currently, the world is realizing that the “American dream” is actually only accessible to a chosen few. As a woman in my thirties, now serving, accompanying and advocating with the Jesuit Refugee Service in Rome, my wish is to give back in honour of those lost and those still taking on journeys filled with risk and unspeakable suffering in search of survival. In gratitude for the resilience my ancestors and family have bestowed me with and the sacrifices that those who have aided us on this path have granted with no expectations. So that one day, there may truly be “liberty and justice for all.”



## From Aleppo to Italy, without forgetting those who are still over there

Wael Hulou

JRS International Office – Rome

Blessed with a hardworking, thriving, and dedicated family and surrounded by the comfort of friends and relatives in the stability of a large industrial city, could have never prepared me for the upheaval of war and displacement. Aleppo is now a distant memory for me. Whereas in 2011 we had once dared to dream of freedom, striving for a dignified and equitable life for all.

Having successfully established several businesses in the textile industry, my personal network could have helped me escape the violence early on. But my conscience wouldn't allow me to leave, as I watched the mass influx of people into Aleppo, displaced from all over.

Rather than leaving, I started collecting essential items for humanitari-

an support, sending them to the worst affected areas. The population density in Aleppo City itself doubled and the network we set up, known as the *Aleppo Family of Volunteers*, was struggling to keep up with demand.

The Jesuit Refugee Service took our organisation under its wing, training our staff, and funding our expanding operations. We then set up emergency shelters, a field kitchen, and a medical centre, plus providing educational and psychosocial support.

The threat to my own life eventually became unbearable, so I escaped to Beirut to continue my humanitarian journey with JRS Middle East. I loved Lebanon but life there was unsustainable for a Syrian, so I moved

again, this time to Italy. I was extremely lucky to arrive by air travel in 2016, rather than seeking refuge via the dangerous sea routes. I now consider Italy my home, having learned the language in Perugia, worked in Parma, and currently back working with JRS in Rome.

Unfortunately, dreams do not always come true. Over 40 % of Aleppo is destroyed. The suffering remains unimaginable for those still living in Syria. Personally, this is compounded by the recent loss of my own father, uncle and aunt, to whom I did not have the opportunity to bid farewell. However, I will always look back proudly at what we attempted to achieve and remain hopeful that justice will prevail in the end.

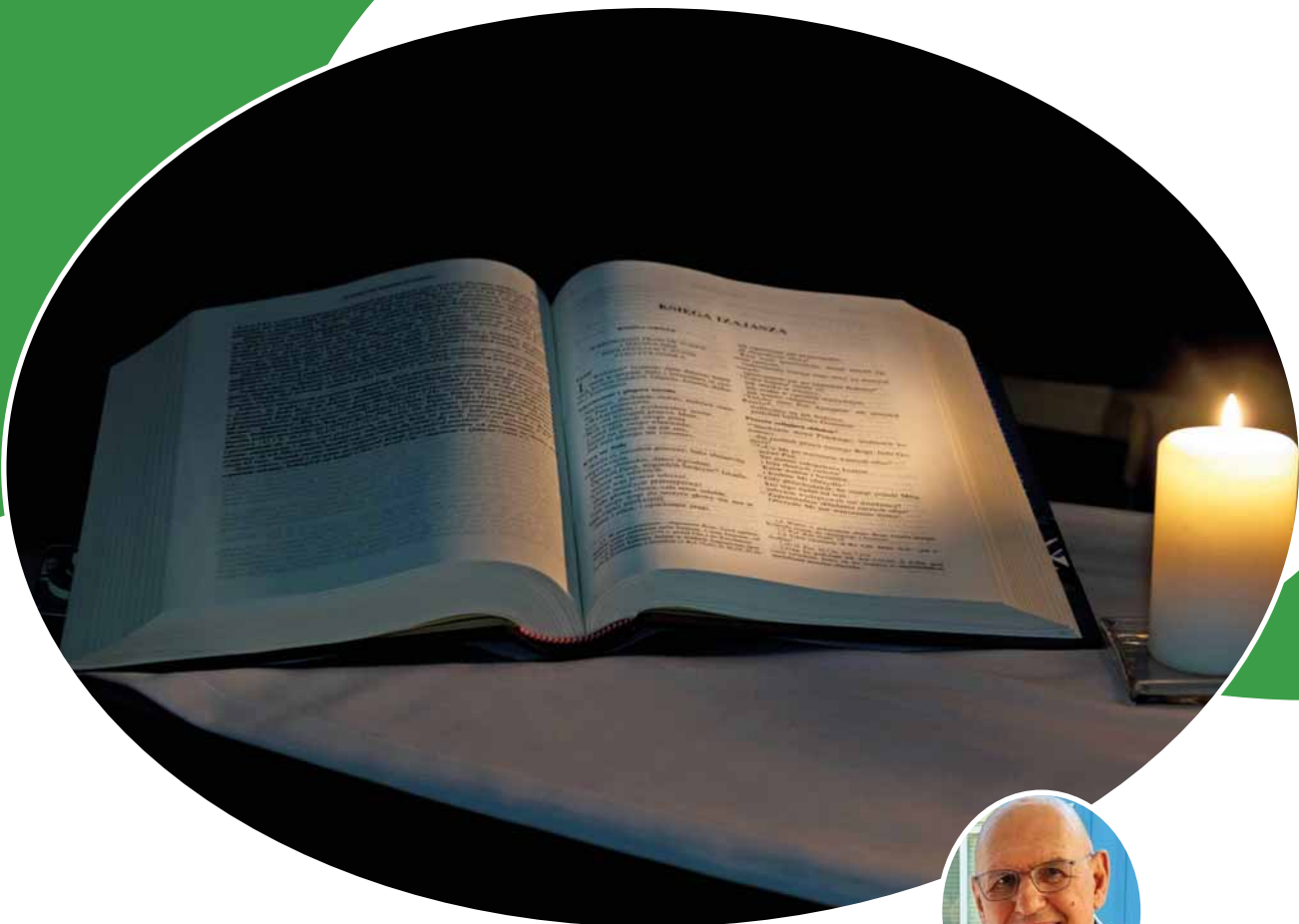


*Peace be with you.*  
Roy M. Thottam, S.J. India

## In search of peace

The artist, an Indian Jesuit, was inspired by several sayings of Christ. The first message of the risen Jesus to his disciples concerned a desire for peace. It was just what his apostles, Mary Magdalene and the disciples on the road to Emmaus needed to hear, while feeling lost and insecure in a hostile world. We need this same peace of Christ today.

The articles in this section point to a common ground between the challenge of migration and the search for peace. Jesuits search for paths towards peace in societies that barely manage to extend a welcome to migrants, in countries stricken by war, and also for young people and spouses facing difficulties. The Jesuits go back to the source, to the Scripture, to gain an understanding of the true nature of peace.



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## From the Bible: Visions of Peace in Isaiah, Justice for peace in Wisdom

Michael Kolarcik, S.J.  
Pontifical Biblical Institute – Rome

God's gift of peace for humans and all creation shines in the very first pages of Genesis. God rested on the seventh day from the labor of creation (Gen 2:3). The Shalom of the sabbath is the celebration of peace. After the resurrection, Jesus greeted the disciples with 'Peace be to you!' (Lk 24:36; Jn 20:19-20). But what kind of peace is this that we also celebrate at the beginning of every eucharistic celebration? It is not just peace without war and conflict. Essentially it is a peace of justice, like the Shalom of the Sabbath.

The prophet Isaiah is famous for oracles of hope in times of crisis and oracles of judgment in times of complacency. Both kinds of oracles form a whole. These oracles in fact became the genre of the writing prophets. The oracles of judgment essentially were directed against injustice and unfaithfulness to the Lord. The oracles of hope expressed the desire for justice and peace in times of conflict and crisis.

When Jerusalem faced the threat from the Assyrian King, Sennacherib, Isaiah offered an extraordinary vision

of peace. And this after so many oracles of judgment.

“For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa 2:3-4).

In a remarkable oracle of hope, where Isaiah speaks of the shoot that

shall come out from the stump of Jesse (Isa 11:2), the prophet describes the transformation of creation itself into a habitation of peace.

“Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them... They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isa 11:5-9).

Both oracles of hope for Isaiah are built on the desire for justice and the gift of God’s peace.

The Wisdom of Solomon, written just before the time of Christ, was inspired by the prophet Isaiah with both oracles of hope and oracles of judgment. The book opens with an exhortation to love justice.

“Love righteousness, you rulers of the earth, think of the Lord in goodness and seek him with sincerity of heart” (Wis 1:1).

For the Wisdom of Solomon, justice leads to immortality, whereas injustice leads to death (Wis 1:12-15).

Parallel to the oracles of hope in Isaiah, the Wisdom of Solomon presents a vision of hope for all those who live a life of justice. Even if calamity befalls

them, they are assured of life due to the virtue of justice.

“But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, And their going from us to be their destruction; But they are at peace” (Wis 3:1-3).

This reading from the Wisdom of Solomon is a favorite choice at funerals, for it unambiguously sets forth the value of justice in the face of loss and crisis.

Finally, not only oracles of hope place before our imagination a vision



 *Allegory of Justice and Peace*. Corrado Giaquinto, 18th century. © Wikimedia, *Creative Commons*



of peace but even divine judgment gives hope to the just. The Wisdom of Solomon concludes the section exhorting the practice of justice with an apocalyptic judgment where the just are rewarded with divine life and injustice is thoroughly abolished.

“But the righteous live forever, and their reward is with the Lord; the Most High takes care of them. Therefore, they will receive a glorious crown and a beautiful diadem from the hand of the Lord...” (Wis 5:15-16).

Injustice and lawlessness will be abolished forever by the Lord.

“The Lord will take his zeal as his whole armor, And will arm all creation to repel his enemies;



📷 Solomon. © Gordon Johnson, Pixabay



📷 They will beat their swords into plowshares (Is 2:4).  
© Wikimedia, Evgeniy Vichetich, United Nations Art Collection

He will put on righteousness as a breastplate, a peace free from war. It is a peace founded on justice like the Shalom of the Sabbath.  
And wear impartial justice as a helmet...” (Wis 5:17-23).

The peace which we deeply desire, and which God grants is more than

.....  
mkolarcik@biblico.it



## Jesuits in the Holy Land Community as witness to reconciliation

David Neuhaus, S.J.  
Near East Province

***A Jesuit presence in the Holy Land, something that Saint Ignatius had fervently desired, is now a reality. Today, Jesuits are doing their utmost to bear witness to a potential reconciliation in a political and social context that is in turmoil.***

*“Jesuit community is not just for mission: it is itself mission” (Decree 3, n. 41). These words of the 35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation that took place in 2008 are particularly resonant in the Jesuit community of the Holy Land, where a group of Jesuits from around the globe live community life as a witness to reconciliation in a land torn apart by war. Then, the words of the 36<sup>th</sup> General Congregation inspire this witness: “In our world, in which there is so much di-*

*vision, we ask God to help our communities become foyers for the Kingdom of God. We hear the appeal to overcome whatever might separate us one from the other. Simplicity of life and openness of heart reinforce this mutual attentiveness” (Decree 1, n. 13).*

Saint Ignatius of Loyola sensed a call to the Holy Land, but no mission materialized during his lifetime or for centuries after. It was only in 1913

that Jesuits from the *Pontifical Biblical Institute (PBI)* established a presence in Jerusalem. The foundation stone of the Jerusalem PBI was laid in 1925. By then the country was in the throes of a conflict between Jewish and Palestinian nationalists that intensified with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Jerusalem became a divided city, and the Jesuit house was on the border between the two sides, in Israel. In 1967, Israel militarily occupied the



the Jesuit calling, but also situated in the midst of one of the world's most intractable conflicts. At the heart of the conflict are complex issues of justice and peace, equality, and human rights. Jesuits are not beyond the conflict. Individual members of the community have their own opinions and positions; however, these differences must not become sources of division among them. Sharing and reflecting critically together about the conflict and its consequences are essential to the community's wellbeing, identity, and mission.

Until 2016, the Delegate for the Roman Houses was the Major Superior of all Jesuits in the Holy Land. But today, the community and its apostolic planning are part of the Near East Province all the while safeguarding

the work of the PBI. This helps Jesuits from various backgrounds integrate into the broader region, developing a sensitivity to Middle Eastern realities and the ability to communicate across the diversity of languages, religions and cultures.

Reconciliation is a central theme in community life in the Holy Land. This reconciliation is founded on the ongoing process of personal reconciliation, each man, each Jesuit, with whatever he carries within him, working towards integration of experiences, formation and struggles, towards becoming a witness to the joy of the resurrection, to the hope that marks our Christian lives.

.....  
<https://jesuitsholyland.wordpress.com/>

### SAMSON AGONISTES

Jesuits in Jerusalem are eating  
 linoleum,  
 Fools for God to the third degree,  
 In response to a call.  
 Others in Bethlehem, even more  
 foolish men,  
 Sit in a cage with birds in a rage,  
 Behind the Wall.  
 Eyeless in Gaza Samson dreams  
 Of shame and glory  
 In this unfinished story.

*By Peter Du Brul, S.J., an 88 year old  
 member of the Jesuit community in the  
 Holy Land.  
 This poem is "From 7 October 2023 and  
 into 2024..."*



Sharing and reflecting critically together about the conflict and its consequences are essential to the community's wellbeing, identity, and mission.



The Pontifical Biblical Institute in Jerusalem



## Peace through reconciliation: another part of the JRS mission

Danielle Vella

Reconciliation & Social Cohesion, JRS International, Rome

*Three common ingredients of the JRS commitment for reconciliation throughout the world, for instance in Cambodia, Uganda, Syria, Ethiopia, India. Not only seeking justice, but also healing the wounds of injustice.*

Angry scars crisscrossed his back. He got them when pro-government militia illegally arrested and tortured him. The context was the Sri Lankan civil war, in the late 90s, but such stories echo pervasively through space and time. For me, what made this one remarkable were the young man's unprompted words: "I forgive, because if I don't, the cycle of violence will continue."

Antonia, another Sri Lankan, witnessed the rape and murder of her daughter Aida by soldiers. Despite frustratingly futile attempts to see justice done, she says serenely: "I have no use for vengeance. Let God judge." These encounters taught me that seeking justice is not enough, certainly not its human application. More is needed to heal the wounds of injustice.

This realisation pushed me to get involved when JRS opted to make reconciliation an intentional, integral part of its mission. During a meeting in Cambodia in 2013, we made our own the Jesuit vision of reconciliation to "establish right relationships" (GC35). We explored the experience of JRS thus far and realised that the topic naturally came into focus when accompanying refugees, who are the

“product” of division and violence, which they often experience on their journeys and in host countries, too.

A decade later, JRS continues to journey towards the horizon of reconciliation. While differing from place to place to adapt to context, our approach has critical common ingredients. First, reconciliation starts from each one of us. Second, we build the capacity of JRS teams and community partners to foster reconciliation, including teachers and students, community and religious leaders, women’s and youth associations. Third, we facilitate safe spaces where people from divided groups may get to know and listen to one another, gradually building trust and relationship.

For example, in northern Uganda, JRS gathered a group of South Sudanese and local youth who were divided both by troubled refugee/host dynamics and by tribal histories. At first, they averted eye contact and were silent during meetings. After a year, they had grown so close that they would warn each other if intercommunal trouble was brewing.

The values of truth, mercy, justice and peace steer our actions for reconciliation around the world.

Sadly, discrimination and hostility remain pervasive. Our teams are not spared. As microcosms of their societies, they sometimes mirror prevailing tensions. “If I remember which ethnic group you come from, I won’t even be able to look at you,” said one JRS teacher to another during a reconciliation workshop. We do not ignore such tensions. Instead, we try to create spaces safe enough for them to be articulated and reconciled.

We are not short of inspiration. One bubbling source is our local rec-



conciliation coordinators. Million was forced to flee Ethiopia’s northern region of Tigray in 2020 when war erupted. His simple advice to “give everyone the benefit of the doubt” is essential for reconciliation: don’t assume someone is bad just because

they come from this or that group you have branded as your enemy.

Kim was orphaned by conflict in Manipur in northeast India. She says: “I really want to tell people that forgiveness is possible and freeing. I



When I understood how Jesus died for people who hated him, I knew I should do the same.”



struggled with hatred of those who killed my mother. When I understood how Jesus died for people who hated him, I knew I should do the same.”

Daniel also struggled with forgiveness. He was displaced from his hometown in Colombia where his family faced threats from both guerrillas and paramilitaries. He recalls: “At 20, I learned that my father had been forced to collaborate with the paramilitaries. This filled me with anger and disappointment. Yet, I came to understand that sometimes people

have no choice. We embraced and asked for forgiveness, recognizing the complexities of our circumstances.”

Other Jesuit ministries inspire us, too. In 2023, Fr Fouad Nakhla invited me to facilitate a storytelling workshop at the Jesuit cultural centre in Jaramana, Damascus. The centre is a brilliant meeting space for people from diverse groups in Syrian society. Although they had lived through the war, the workshop participants preferred to focus on the possibilities of the safe space they had created at the centre. They found power in the

shared experience of moving forward and writing the next chapter of their stories together.

There is much potential in spaces of encounter, where each one becomes an agent of transformation, making new meaning for their lives through sharing and renewing their hope. As one youth said in Jaramana: “My story is not fixed. The past is fixed but how we remember and how we tell the story can influence the future.”

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<https://jrs.net/en/programme/reconciliation/>



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## Ways of peace and the capitalist crisis

Fernando Franco, S.J.  
Gujarat Province

*As globalization has increased worldwide social differences and military spending has increased, capitalism and political democracy are increasingly at odds. Political democracy and social democracy must walk together.*

Addressing the universal Society of Jesus on several occasions, Fr Arturo Sosa, Superior General, points out the “epochal changes” taking place, and that “all the efforts that we do to end conflicts ... are necessary.” He acknowledges the spread of populism, polarisation and post-truth, the three Ps undermining democracy and ulti-

mately peace. We seem, however, to be ignoring the primary role played by the crisis of democratic (Western countries) and autocratic (China, and Asia) capitalism in fostering violence and conflict in the divorce between democracy and capitalism that provides a fertile ground for the three Ps to grow.

### The Facts

Globalisation is in question because of its effects. The increase of inequalities has multiple dimensions. Studies like Milanovic’s *A New Approach for the Age of Globalisation*, in 2018, show that in the distribution of real income from 1988 to 2008:





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Efforts to strengthen democracy must become an apostolic option, linked to practical policies that control capital, especially financial.

The “middle classes” of China (and India, Indonesia and Vietnam) have shown an increase of 80 %.

The low-middle classes of the US and other rich countries have stagnated.

The richest 10 % of the people in the world have experienced an unprecedented 80 % rise.

A fierce contest between the working classes of rich countries and their Asian counterparts has emerged. Subcontracting production from the West to Asia underlines this phenomenon.

Globalisation has worsened the inequality within countries around the world. While from 1900 to 1980, according to UNDP, the inequality within countries declined from 75 % to 45 % of total inequality, from 1980 to 2020, it has increased to 70 %.

In addition, the financial crisis of 2007-2008 has shown the fragility of

the capitalist system and underlines the development of a “capitalism” de-linked from the means of production. A broad range of indicators suggests that on an average, concentration of industrial power is increasing especially in Asia.

Last but not the least, as Pope Francis indicates, the “technocratic paradigm,” sustained by capitalism, continues to wreak havoc on the planet, and it “monstrously feeds upon itself.”

### Capitalism & the arms race

Both forms of capitalism have found ways of sustenance in raising the defence expenditure across the globe. Between 2018 and 2022, the world spent an estimated 112 billion US dollars annually, even as 9,000 people die each day from hunger driven primarily by conflict. The top democratic and autocratic lead the way. According to Oxfam (22 May 2023), “USA, Russia, France, China

and Germany – which account for over three-quarters of the global arms trade – together sold an estimated \$85 billion worth of arms yearly.”

### The Jesuit response

There have been numerous interventions to bring peace, supported by Jesuits, including through the International Association of Jesuit Universities (IAJU) and the network on Peace and Reconciliation. Efforts to strengthen democracy must become an apostolic option, linked to practical policies that control capital, especially financial. The contradictions of capitalism apply also to the case of China, where market capitalism and political autocracy have come into conflict with each other.

The strengthening of democracy shows that inequalities can be reversed. A highly unequal country until 1911, Sweden has reversed this trend and turned out to be one of the

most equal in Thomas Piketty's view, because of strong civic mobilisation.

The time has come to incorporate into our peace and democracy narratives a perspective from Asia. The core of this approach underlines that democracy must be social and rooted at the grassroots level because as Dr. Ambedkar put it, "There cannot be democratic Government unless the society for which it functions is democratic in its form and structure." Democracy, argues Sundar Sarukkai (*The Social Life of Democracy*, Seagull

Books, 2022) must be defined as "an experience ... that can be part of our everyday lives ... A political life of democracy is not only incomplete but also impossible without a social life of democracy." The generation of social democracy starts from the self, family, community and moves to the larger sphere of the nation. Bringing peace and reconciliation requires the involvement of all apostolic sectors.

There is a need for the Society of Jesus to also invest in the academic study of the economic aspects and

consequences of this crisis of capitalism. The crisis in capitalism comes from the divorce between market capitalism and political democracy, which are in constant confrontation. It is not enough to speak about the three Ps, we must engage in analysing the economic causes of this rise of the 3 Ps, because in all the countries where there is a relative increase of the three Ps, there has been an attempt to link capitalism to autocracy.

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📷 Buenaventura resists. © CINEP, Bogotá, Programa por la paz



## “Peace studies” as pathways to peace in Africa

Emmanuel Bueya, S.J.  
Central Africa Province

*The Society of Jesus has an established tradition of promoting the intellectual apostolate which is by no means detached from the real world. That is why, in Nairobi, a Jesuit university is offering courses which combine research and practical training to foster peace, for instance in East Congo.*

Many people, including some 30 million displaced people, refugees, and asylum seekers in Africa, do not feel at all welcome in the world today. According to 2022 statistics from the UNHCR, that figure represents a third of the world's total refugee population. How is the Society of Jesus responding in Africa to this human tragedy? The answer varies, tending to reflect the

local environment and institutions on the ground, including of course, the renowned and well-established Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). In academic circles, specific Jesuit responses to this tragedy also exist. One example is the *Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations* (HIPSIR), part of Hekima College, the Jesuit university in Kenya.

### **The pilgrim context of refugees and displaced people**

More than 100 million people worldwide had been displaced by the end of June 2022, due to persecution, violent conflict, and human rights violations, etc. According to the UNHCR, by the end of 2022 there were 35.3 million refugees worldwide.

Our courses seek solutions to conflicts, and champion the rights of refugees, helping with their quest for asylum and prospects for resettlement.



More than two million refugees from my own country, the Democratic Republic of Congo, have dispersed through neighbouring countries. And millions of internally displaced people, some from towns in the Masisi or Rutshuru regions, roam the mountains of East Congo. The UN report from 30 October 2023 quotes a figure of 6.9 million. What these figures don't reveal is the human suffering behind them: the faces of anguished children or painful stories of female victims of violence which testify to the precarity of human existence. In fact, all these people are fleeing danger, passing like shadows through jungles infested with rebel groups. And yet we also witness acts of courage and signs of people's hope to keep on living.

#### **HIPSIR: a response from a Jesuit university in Nairobi**

That is just the kind of hope that HIPSIR conveys through its university programme, which explores issues fundamental to peace. A solid theoretical foundation is contextualised by practical training, where students

meet refugees living in camps. At the same time, the programme openly welcomes the displaced, ensuring that their voices are heard throughout the curriculum.

In fact, studying the status of refugees and displaced people as the direct consequence of violence is part of the programme. From this etiological standpoint, our courses seek solutions to conflicts, and champion the rights of refugees, helping with their quest for asylum and prospects for resettlement.

Factors relating to climate change and natural disasters are among the causes of migration and forced displacement. That is why we run a course on "Environment and disaster management" which explores methods for solving environmental issues. It covers the risks involved, the management of natural disasters and strategies for how to prevent and adapt to disasters and minimise their impact.

One of the root causes of migration is conflict. These are some of the courses HIPSIR offers on the subject:

"Identity and Conflicts" explores identity theories, helping students gain an understanding of ethnic conflicts and the right to self-determination claimed by groups who engage in conflict as justification for violence.

"Communication for conflict resolution and cultural dialogue" analyses the nature, social circumstances and causes of conflictive and dialogic communication at an interethnic and intercultural level in African contexts. It spells out the role played by the media in promoting dialogue and the role of dialogue for peaceful conflict resolution.

"African culture and conflicts" explores the use of violence in different societies, images of the enemy, strategies for conflict resolution and the role of women in conflict and conflict resolution.

The Institute also offers students practical courses on conflict resolution, international relations, and diplomacy. Students analyse the theory and practice of conflict resolution and study different methods for consolidating world peace, fostering pre-



📷 Internally displaced people in Goma, RDC. © JRS

ventative diplomacy and international mediation.

**The Society of Jesus accompanies refugees**

Beyond the spiritual reflections prompted by the reality of migration, this phenomenon invites us to con-

sider the pathways to peace which the refugees themselves aspire to. And beyond the pastoral ministry the Catholic Church is providing for people on the move, HIPSIR, out of a desire to respond to the Jesuits' invitation to help migrants, is supporting education programmes for refugees in camps. It is also guiding the aca-

demical world towards a more global understanding of the contemporary challenges raised by peace. This is a road map that is a pretty much perfect fit with the Jesuits' intellectual apostolate.

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<https://hipsir.hekima.ac.ke/>



## End the war; save lives!

Eustace Chukwudi Ezenagu, S.J.  
North-West Africa Province

*The plight of millions of people in Congo after years of war and violence urges the search for peace, amid international indifference. JRS Congo makes its contribution to pave the way for peace.*

The dense tropical rain forest and wooden savannah of the Congo Basin pant with sorrow and exude a pungent smell of blood, denser than air and thicker than water. For many years, the jungles and hilltops of the eastern Congo have become a battlefield where a cycle of violence and killings continues to emerge, thereby affecting the lives of the people of eastern Congo who have lived under the clouds of gunshots, missiles, bombs. In over two decades of fighting, nearly six

million lives have suffered, for many have died and many have become homeless in their own country, a place they can no longer call their *home*. Has the world forgotten them? Is there hope for a stop to this threat? Is there a purpose and compass on the pathway to peace? These are among the questions I ponder as the ordeal of survivors is heard as tales by moonlight.

Enough is enough! Warfare has become a culture, and violence is now

a way of life. Countries bordered by the Great Lakes have shown compassion to these homeless people who have become migrants. Moreover, the massive increase in populations of internally displaced persons has become alarming and requires a clarification call for its end. In the Eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, refugee settlements are filled to the brim. Makeshift camps lacking adequate food, healthcare, and education have asphyxiated the breath of



keeping organisations and child-girl protection groups are amongst those who are actively involved, but additional resources are needed to relieve the pressure on refugee camps and settlements. Infrastructural projects, psychosocial support, education and entrepreneurial training can create hope, determination and enthusiasm for a better future. In all this JRS does its share and so contributes to the journey towards peace.

Ethical values like those promoted by JRS are the basis to the noble adventure that could reverse the present conundrum that is a stain to the Gospel words “Blessed are the peacemakers”. Truly, we cannot remain indifferent to the nightmares of the displaced people in Congo; we cannot be deaf to their loud cry for peace and respect for human lives. We are among those who can get involved and testify to the splendour of peace. We can end the war and save lives.

humanity, suffocating family bonds, and weakening the dignity of the human person.

The JRS Congo, embedded with the Principles and Foundation of St. Ignatius, has brought great assistance to these displaced persons over the recent decade and sought means of dialogue towards a lasting peace. With *Magis* in their heart and in the spirit of *cura personalis*, the particular attention to each person, the work of JRS workers seems to be endless, as pressure mounts to offer health care, human empowerment, education, and food.

The call for peace is a beeping reminder that resonates with the screams for help, the tears of a child and the fright in the voices of teenage girls raped at gunpoint and

then killed. Indeed, it is not easy to make this call heard because of the geopolitical games and the hunger for profit which have built a wall of indifference to the voice of peace. Consequently, with the gaze of the world drifting elsewhere and the dialogues for ceasefire inefficacious, more idle youth risk being used by armed groups as shields or fighters.

Is there a space for peace in all this? Here are some pathways. While this cyclic process may seem unending and political solutions remain elusive, one avenue of resolution is by countering the flow of arms and imposing sanctions that forge a cooperative framework in easing the tension in the affected zones. If a future where peace can reign seems dwindling, grassroots cooperation could help towards reconciliation. Peace-

*With the collaboration of  
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Enough is enough!  
Warfare has  
become a culture,  
and violence is  
now a way of life.



## The Peace Mission

Joseph Kalathil, S.J.  
Jamshedpur Province

***Sending letters to anonymous recipients to build peace. The experiment that began 13 years ago on the Pakistani-Indian border continues to bear fruit; with God peace is possible.***

Mahatma Gandhiji, with his spiritual powers of non-violence, not only kept his companions of diverse mentality and background together but even silenced the guns of the British, making India independent on 15 August 1947. His ambitious companions sowed seeds of hostility in the minds of erstwhile Hindu-Muslim friends, dividing the country into India and Pakistan. Sixteen million people were displaced; two million people were killed: Muslims killing Hindus and Hindus kill-

ing Muslims. Christians were neutral. Thousands of non-Christians wore a cross on their necks to attest that they were Christians. The Cross, then, was an effective means of life for the people. "But now in Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far off have been brought close, by the blood of Christ" (Eph.2:13). Cries for 'PEACE' arise from millions of peace-loving people from both sides: "Who shall I send? Who will go for us?" (Is.6:8) is the Clarion call.

If we want to have lasting peace in South Asia, we should have peace between India and Pakistan. Realizing this truth, Bishop Peter Celestine and Bishop Ignatius Loyola Mascarenhas together founded the 'PEACE MISSION', entrusting it on me in 2011.

With regular fighting across the border for the past 75 years, people gave up all hope of having peace between India and Pakistan, dumping peace as 'impossible'. 'Nothing is impossible





📷 Muslim migrants leaving India for Pakistan in 1947



Lots of creative thinking is required to bring people of two hostile nations together on one platform.

to God' (Lk.1:37). Through the Peace Mission, God has been converting the 'impossible to possible' rekindling the 'hope' through school students writing 'Peace Letters' addressed to 'Unknown Friends' across the border for the past 12 years. Napoleon Bonaparte once said, "Today we suffer, not from the violence of bad people, but from the silence of good people." The Peace Mission is succeeding to inflame the 'HOPE' by awakening the silent majority of peace-loving good people, to collectively demand their right to live in Peace, with a strong conviction: "PEACE IS POSSIBLE".

The Peace Mission promotes mutual love and trust among the people across the border through the students from both countries. With much persuasion, 32 students from three big schools of Jammu wrote a letter each addressed to 'an unknown friend of Pakistan'; 92 students from one school of Lahore responded writing a letter each: 32 replies and 60 more letters, each addressed to 'an unknown friend of India' in 2012. By 2018, 35 schools



from Pakistan and 30 schools from India enabled the Peace Mission to carry more than 1000 peace letters across the border. Many of the letters were co-written by the parents or grandparents of the students. The Peace Mission naturally overflowed school boundaries into families.

Lots of creative thinking is required to bring people of two hostile nations together on one platform. By 2015 the Peace Mission succeeded to form groups of people like: 'Youth for Peace', 'Lawyers for Peace', 'Teachers for Peace', 'Writers for Peace', 'Business-people for Peace', 'Association of People

praying for Peace’ (APPP), ‘Women for Peace’ etc.

‘Women for Peace’ was started with three Muslim women and three Christian women. One of them was a medical doctor who gathered 30 women on the roof of her house to form a group of ‘Women for Peace’. One of them, being a member of the constituent assembly of the Punjab State of Pakistan, promised support to the Peace Mission. Whenever the Peace Mission took one step forward, the Lord took the Mission ten steps ahead. Such a challenging work is possible only with the conviction that the Lord is there to help. He will give courage to face difficulties, opposi-

tions and hardships with patience, hope, trust, and perseverance.

Bishop Joseph Karikasery added a new dimension of bringing closer the two CHURCHES of India and Pakistan, both founded by the same Apostle, St.Thomas – in 40 A.D in Taxela, in Pakistan, and in 52 A.D, in Kodungallur, in India – by praying and offering Eucharist in Taxela on 4 October 2015.

Peace across the border can be established only when peace is established locally. In Jamshedpur, a day-long workshop on ‘Human Ecology’ was inaugurated by Bishop Telesphore Bilung SVD, the Bishop of Jamshedpur,

on 17 December 2023. All the participants resolved to bring non-Christians to the group. Three participants were trained to conduct such programmes which will include non-Christians.

To be effective, the Peace Mission needs support from likeminded organizations. *Henry Martyn Institute* of Hyderabad, *International Sikh Confederation* and *Kenderi Sri Guru Singh Sabha*, both based in Punjab, have promised their support to the Peace Mission, which is making steady progress with the encouragement and blessing it receives from Father General Arturo Sosa.

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📷 Little Flower Secondary School in India takes part in the Peace Mission project.



## Synodality and Reconciliation with young victims of organised crime

Elías López, S.J.  
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International Coordinator - Peace and Reconciliation of UNIJES

*The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius as spiritual anchors to help young victims of suburban gangs find reconciliation: a six-step pathway.*

Twenty-three-year-old Pedro told us the following story: “One of the criminal gangs in my neighbourhood killed two of my little nephews. I was so angry that I rushed into the street like a madman, clutching a knife. I wanted to kill the assassins. However, thanks to some neighbours who grabbed hold of me and stopped me, I avoided becoming another murderer myself.” As the gang also wanted to kill Pedro for trying to avenge the murders, he

had to leave the neighbourhood for over a year until things calmed down. Now, Pedro is back, but so afraid he hardly ever leaves the house. That same terror also preys upon the minds of the 20 young Afro-Colombians we work with in neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the Colombian city of Buenaventura. Fear of catching a bullet confines them to their homes as if they were in prison. Being teenagers and young adults, they need to socialise

but simply cannot. For some, the anxiety and depression are chronic, leading them to contemplate suicide repeatedly. To compound their fragile state, the State is absent, failing to offer them the psycho-social help they so desperately need. Their families, being victims of social exclusion and poverty, cannot afford to pay for private help.

In a workshop we call in Church terms «Synodality and Reconciliation,»

we work first on creating a safe space where they can name and analyse their personal conflicts. Then, using tools including the spiritual examen, spiritual conversation and discernment and group work, we discern as a group the next possible step towards «*re-establishing fair and equal relationships*» in the neighbourhood via:

1. *Co-existence* i.e., ensuring their physical and emotional safety.
2. *Living together* i.e., ensuring there is justice, that people have equal rights.
3. *Communion* i.e., inviting them to accept forgiveness, which re-humanises all parties, heals the root of unequal relationships and reconciles.

We know that healing this amount of pain and death is impossible unless we connect to each individual on a spiritual level – and share that connection. That is why our work is grounded in the Spiritual Exercises

through what we call “the six spiritual anchors of Ignatian reconciliation.”

1. What is your personal “Source of Life?” capable of healing this amount of death? The first day is focussed on getting in touch with the *Principle and Foundation* of each young adult, their Source of Life, where they can find the power of love in the midst of violence. This creates a space for care, trust and tenderness where they feel safe enough to map out their conflicts. This first anchor connects to the first *Universal Apostolic Preference* – Showing the way to God, or our personal reconciliation with God, as the source of all reconciliation.
2. Will you let your Source of Life forgive you? The *first week* involves growing in awareness that – albeit to a lesser degree – each individual also causes conflict through their own violent

behaviour. Therefore, they also need forgiveness and personal transformation. Starting with themselves, acknowledging their own personal shadows and letting their Source of Life forgive them helps them to empathise with their aggressors. They understand that by sheer good luck, despite their personal weaknesses and living in the same violent setting as the gangs, they have not joined them. That leads to self-forgiveness and gratitude.

3. What choices are you making amidst the violence? In the *second week* they enter «the school of discernment,» where they learn, with clear-eyed humility, to choose freely. That involves a choice to not only be as *gentle as doves* (i.e. not reacting to violence with more violence) but also to be as *cunning as serpents* to prevent the bad spirit from trapping them in the cycle of violence.



We know that healing this amount of pain and death is impossible unless we connect to each individual on a spiritual level – and share that connection.



4. Do I forgive others' violence towards me? After returning to their neighbourhoods, they go through the *third week*, the passion of the structural violence that preys upon them. What is offered here is Jesus' «subversive meekness» displayed in his passion. The most radical sign of this is the forgiveness he offers from the cross. This part corresponds to the second *Apostolic Preference*: walking with the excluded.
5. Is hope possible amid so much violence? That is what we con-

- sider during the *fourth week*, the resurrection. Violence does not have the last word. This connects to the third *Apostolic Preference*: accompanying young people towards a hopeful future.
6. Do you see God already at work in all things and opening up the path ahead? Finally, in the *contemplation to attain love* we try to help them learn to live as “co-reconcilers” with the Spirit, i.e., as *contemplatives in action* who transform neighbourhood

conflicts, and sustain their socio-political activities, through their personal support networks and those of other agents of transformation.

There can be no *synodality* and the Church cannot be a *field hospital* without, to quote a much-loved phrase of St Ignatius, “*discerning reconciliation*,” according to various times, places and people.

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## Pathways to peace for the divorced and separated A pastoral process of accompaniment, healing, growth, and peace on a personal level and in families

Elena Rodríguez-Avial  
Province of Spain

*Seeking paths to peace among nations is certainly essential. But in Spain, Ignatian spirituality is also opening up pathways to peace for people wounded by divorce or separation.*

Some time ago in the Province of Spain we found two programmes for accompanying the divorced and separated which are still spreading to new cities and countries. The SEPAS programme takes place in group settings where people are all in the same boat while *Cuatro Estaciones* (Four Seasons) is

based more on accompaniment and pastoral work. The key factor in both is that those guiding the process have themselves gone through a divorce or separation. Both initiatives promote personal healing and help participants find peace for themselves and with their ex-partners and families.

### SEPAS

SEPAS (Loving and Serving via Seeds of Hope) began in 2014 in the Arrupe Centre in the city of Valencia, thanks to a group of separated lay people who wanted to work through their process from a faith perspective. They were

accompanied by Fr. Vicente Millán S.J., and later by Fr. Ignacio Dinnbier S.J. Currently, there are SEPAS groups in five cities.

SEPAS' key tool is the "meet up." For two years, people who are separated meet up every 15 days to work on the wounds caused by their relationship breaking down. They follow a programme centred on Jesus, the Good Samaritan. Applying discernment to the whole process, they work as much on the healing of personal wounds as on their own salvation. The aim is to offer people a hope-filled future.

The programme is continually developing. We have discovered that it is also important to help heal the wounds of the children of divorced people and of their families of origin. To that end, alongside other ecclesial movements, participants work with two other tools which tackle these issues.

Julián Ajenjo, the co-ordinator of SEPAS believes that today "although the Church has changed a great deal it is

still failing to understand the divorced." Julián tells many people involved in SEPAS that "divorce can turn out to be a blessing because it is a time where you can either stop to think and discern what you have done with your life so far and what you are aiming to do with it, or else you'll continue to experience setbacks. If you realise this thanks to a process of separation, then despite the suffering this entails, your spiritual and personal life will visibly improve."

#### Four Seasons

Created by the family team of the *Comunidad de Vida Cristiana* (Christian Life Community) this method is available in 17 Spanish cities and has also been exported to Uruguay, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Canada, Botswana, and the UK.

It consists of Ignatian-style accompaniment designed to help individuals who have suffered relationship breakdown to find answers, so they may emerge "re-constructed" and with greater self-worth from incredibly painful situations where their plans for

life no longer make sense. In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis asks us to accompany, to provide pastoral discernment for, and welcome to the divorced and separated (AL 242, 243). The strictly confidential nature of the relationship between the person who accompanies and the individual accompanied is key for the healing of wounds.

The inspiration behind Four Seasons is *kintsugi*, the Japanese art of repairing broken vases. Iciar Bayarte who helped to create this tool explains that in this tradition, "wounds are not covered up but bound anew with something of value. Someone who is re-building themselves after a painful process can give a great deal of themselves because they are bringing up things which have been buried. And from that fragile place, he or she can recognise their own potential. Very often people encounter God again after going far away from him because, for various reasons, they felt cut off from the Church. That is because if the process of rebuilding is to be genuine, it will happen through the Father's fraternal, loving embrace. Being in that



Very often people encounter God again after going far away from him because, for various reasons, they felt cut off from the Church.





Fall



Winter



Spring



Summer

place, you dare to really look at your past and your wounds. It's from that place that you are able to face things and rebuild." This experience allows people to make a fresh start in life by integrating their wounds and recognising them as a source of beauty and strength.

While this tool was forged by Christian experience, it is not intend-

ed only for believers. The process tends to take time, a year or more, and goes through four stages named after the four seasons.

Ultimately, both initiatives seek to offer, based on personal experience, the prospect of a hope which proclaims loudly and clearly that it is possible to emerge from these difficult

situations strengthened and made new. Many people who have gone through these programmes acknowledge their divorce has led to personal growth and drawn them closer to God.

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## Be curious, be present, reimagine: Three habits to transform your everyday relationships

Gerard J. Clarke, S.J.  
Irish Province

*How differences can be a source of encounters and creativity. The ecumenical experience of university chaplains at Belfast University as an example of friendship and collaboration rooted in the Gospel.*

### Chaplaincy together at Ulster University

At the University of Ulster in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Chaplaincy work is done together. Each chaplain attends to the spiritual needs of their congregations but work together as a team. Together we organise the usual student activities such as free lunch, worship, and outdoor activities, and

together we offer a challenging programme called *difference*.

*“The 5 week difference course was a great, ready-to-use small group resource for our Christian Chaplaincy. The stories shared each week helped us to think about situations of conflict in a complex world and the Bible stories challenged us to think about how we respond to adversity. I like that the course portrays reconcil-*

*iation more as a way-of-life than the end result ... as God wants us to find peaceful ways to live with difference in our everyday encounters.” (Gail Mercer, Methodist & Church of Ireland Chaplain)*

### A new programme to promote reconciliation: *difference*

An initiative of the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury’s Reconciliation



How to move through “complexity, division and difference to find hope and to imagine an alternative where healing, restoration and thriving relationships are possible”.

📷 The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, meets Pope Francis.  
© Lambeth Palace

Ministry, the *difference* programme is gathering more support in our divided community called Northern Ireland. Many people have heard about our conflict, ostensibly religious, between Protestants and Catholics, but even more about being British or being Irish. And many know about the triumph of peace with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, which ended 30 years of conflict on the island. We’ve enjoyed more than 25 years of peace and Northern Ireland is a very different place now.

While it seems that a new generation is not so much concerned about the religious and political divide anymore, there are new issues that divide us. And it’s not just a Northern Ireland phenomenon, it’s worldwide. Everywhere people find it hard to engage with others who think differently, particularly within churches: young people and older people, right and left. Public discourse is polarized and, in some countries, even family life is paralysed by the issues that divide them. And this is where the *differ-*

*ence* programme helps with *three habits* to transform everyday relationships: *be curious, be present and reimagine*.

Presbyterian chaplain Cheryl Meban commented: “*difference gave us a community to journey with, and a judgment-free zone for imagining how the world – and our own personal present in the world – might be different. I just love this course!*”

### Gospel Roots

And what’s really encouraging is how the programme is rooted in encounters which we find in the Gospel. Take, for example, that disastrous dinner party at Simon the Pharisee’s house, when a woman “who was a sinner” washes the feet of Jesus with her tears and dries them with her hair. And Jesus allows this *embarrassing* display to continue, even as he notices how his host, Simon, is disgusted and shocked by the gesture.

As in all embarrassing situations, people go silent and start thinking to

themselves. Simon the Pharisee thinks to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him.” And Jesus is thinking to himself too, but Jesus takes an important step. He becomes *curious* and probes Simon’s thoughts, offering him a story which helps his host to see the woman, “who was a sinner”, in a new way. He is *present* to the woman and her embarrassing gesture of devotion, allowing her, “a sinner”, to touch him, the rabbi! He is *curious* to know Simon’s mind and he tells a story of God’s forgiveness to *reimagine* how to relate to this socially objectionable person.

### Moving through difference to finding hope

And this is what we are learning thanks to the *difference* programme: how to move through “complexity, division and difference to find hope and to imagine an alternative where healing, restoration and thriving relationships are possible.”

Course participant, Favour Okpohs comments: “My main learning from the course is that people are more open and willing to share their challenges and receive encouragement when you are present with them. And that’s the greatest thing in life – being fortunate enough to bless others with gifts, good words, and a smile like mine!”

Wherever we live, when we encounter one another, we are only touching the tip of the iceberg. It helps to be *curious*, to listen and be fully *present* to the other person and then, by the grace of the Spirit, to *reimagine* new ways of relating together.



📷 Message from President Joe Biden during his visit to Ulster University



📷 Favour Okpohs, Tristan (the dog) and Rev. Cheryl Meban

**Ecumenical principle: doing what we can do together**

We are grateful to Archbishop Justin Welby for promoting the *difference* programme. It offered excellent contemporary videos, well-chosen scripture passages and creative activities for groups. And brought us, as chaplains from different Christian churches, together in a new and exciting way.

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 Written with the collaboration of Ulster University Chaplains Rev. Cheryl Meban and Gail Mercer.



## Finding God and humanity in a divided society

Liam Allmark  
British Province – JRS UK

*Against politics that manipulate opinions and feed the rhetoric of division, local initiatives bring refugees and citizens together for the care of the environment and of the elderly people: ways to create hope.*

“Politics is an essential means of building human community and institutions”, Pope Francis reminds us, “but when political life is not seen as a form of service to society as a whole, it can become a means of oppression, marginalization and even destruction.”

In recent years the UK has experienced worsening fault-lines in our society and hostility in our politics.

Fierce debates about issues such as immigration, colonial history and our place in Europe have led to deeply entrenched positions, polarisation, and denigration of people with differing views.

Amidst these divisions, refugees, including those accompanied by JRS UK, are often paying the highest price. People forced to flee their homes and seek safety here are

increasingly blamed for pressures on housing and healthcare, while targeted by populist political campaigns. As the Holy Father has warned: “it is forgotten that they possess the same intrinsic dignity as any person.”

At the same time, the very real anxieties and struggles of communities across the UK are often dismissed, ignored, or exploited. Economic pressures have left more and more people



unable meet their basic needs, while support systems have become weaker. This fosters a climate in which people arriving from other countries are easily scapegoated.

Persistently hostile rhetoric against refugees has been interspersed with troubling incidents of violence. Yet there have been few meaningful efforts, on any significant scale, to create opportunities for genuine encounter or reconciliation between host communities and people in search of sanctuary.

JRS UK is working to create hope in this difficult context, recalling the words of the Superior General of the Jesuits, that: “The kingdom of God cannot be present, cannot exist among us if we do not understand each other, if we do not recognize each other as people, if we do not try to have a situation in which the world can live in peace.” Guided by the global JRS approach to reconcili-

ation and the experience of colleagues in other parts of the world, we are undertaking new ventures to build bridges of peace within and between communities.

One early initiative has involved partnering with a volunteer group based near our centre in East London, bringing together refugee friends and other residents to help clean up our neighbourhood and preserve green spaces. By creating the opportunity for people to encounter one another, through a shared endeavour to protect our common home, we are building upon the Jesuits’ long history of promoting social cohesion and advancing the peace of our society.

Abdul, who has been accompanied by JRS UK for several years, reflected: “I truly enjoyed this experience for the conservation of nature and am looking forward to further participating in these ventures! I also

want to say thank you very much for providing me with this opportunity to connect with volunteers from the local community.”

While such projects are small and local, we remain inspired by the call of Pope Francis: “to realize that there are no lasting changes without cultural changes, without a maturing of lifestyles and convictions within societies, and there are no cultural changes without personal changes.” Through each personal encounter we can contribute to something much larger.

Another successful venture saw refugee friends and local students jointly hosting a Christmas celebration for older people in the community. As well as providing some much-needed joy for those experiencing loneliness and isolation, this kind of engagement between people of different ages is especially important at a time when generational divisions are also deepening.



Even though things have been so hard, I still have hope that things for me will change for the better and I have hope in God's mercy."

In 2024 and beyond we'll be expanding our reconciliation work by reaching out into new locations, to support residents and groups in creating spaces of encounter between people of different backgrounds and beliefs. At the same time, we're continuing to counter the dehumanisation of refugees in the UK, by accompanying people as friends, celebrating

the fullness of their humanity and the gifts they bring to our society.

A refugee friend recently expressed that, "even though things have been so hard, I still have hope that things for me will change for the better and I have hope in God's mercy." Such hope may also be extended to our wider society. For despite the many divisions we face,

if we uphold one another's humanity, create opportunities for encounter, and trust in God, there is a chance to build a more just and peaceful future.

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## University Martyrdom

José María Tojeira, S.J.  
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During the 1990 Congregation of Provincials, the Superior General, Father Kolvenbach, recalled the massacre the previous year in El Salvador of six Jesuits and two female support staff at the Universidad José Simeón Cañas (UCA) (The José Simeón Cañas Central American University), saying: “An institution of higher learning and research can become an instrument of justice in the name of the Gospel.” Thousands of people have attended events commemorating the martyrs’ deaths over the past 35 years. They regard the university’s witness to peace, justice, and reconciliation as an incentive, in the words of Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium*, to “spread the Kingdom of God ever further.”

Before the Jesuits’ death, there was certainly no shortage of people who deemed their activities to be inspired by politics rather than faith. However, the lasting nature of this widespread appreciation for lives grounded in faith and devoted to peace and justice is ample proof that a Jesuit university apostolate is fertile terrain for the Gospel and martyrdom. The Bishops’ Conference of El Salvador has launched a beatification process for the eight university martyrs, along with other murdered priests and laity.

Since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when universities were first established, they have attempted to present knowledge as one of the ingredients required to build a civil society. In contrast to

the power wielded by monarchs and religion (the two swords – temporal and spiritual), universities rendered knowledge as an instrument to develop society, always with the aim of expanding awareness of the individual’s dignity and conscience. Jesuit universities were nourished by this ancient tradition. In the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus, St Ignatius approves of universities as a Jesuit apostolate for “the building up of doctrine and life... to spread further [and] universally.” Without doubt, Ignatius, a tireless seeker after the glory of God and the greatest universal good, was drawn to this university drive to further the universal spread of knowledge. The humanism, freedom of thought and zeal to influence



society that distinguished our universities soon led (among other factors) to confrontations with despotic governments during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Today, that zeal in Jesuit universities to render the universal common good has driven our institutions of higher education to commit, in the words of Decree 4 of the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Congregation to “the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. For reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another.” We were also reminded during the same Congregation that we would not “work for the promotion of justice without

paying a price.” Academic knowledge arouses resentment whenever it tries, through a structural analysis of the world, to render goodness a universal reality and guide the world towards developing people’s sense of justice and peace. Or else, it does so when it proposes changing social structures which obstruct or hinder reconciliation.

In the face of grave injustice, only the path to the Cross is left for knowledge which is loving and based on solidarity. The Nicaraguan State interpreted the Central American University opening its doors to the persecuted as a green light to confiscate the UCA. In El Salvador, promot-

ing peace and human rights led to the martyrdom of six Jesuits. In the past, the faith itself was persecuted. Today, the works of the faith are persecuted. But today, like yesterday, martyrdom is the promise of a just and reconciled future, because hate just leaves the haters empty. A love full of solidarity, nurtured at universities through the Gospel and reason, is a love that grows. It attracts even people who consider others their enemies, offering them the chance to reconcile.

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## Chantal walks along, opening up paths which build peace

Guillaume Rossignol

JRS France – French-speaking Western European Province

*The example of a woman who, to foster peace in an inclusive society, lends the verb ‘to accompany’ its most generous, reverent, and promising meaning.*

Being an artisan of peace means accomplishing specific actions to bring us closer to one another. Being an artisan of peace can be as simple as opening the door for someone and accompanying them as they cross the threshold.

And that’s exactly what Chantal does.

Like an artisan, who through its skill, passion and creativity patiently crafts unique works of art, Chantal devotes her time and energy to devel-

oping harmonious, fraternal relationships. As a coordinator [for JRS France], she helps asylum seekers living with several French families over a nine-month period. Chantal defines her role as “the common denominator”, in this process of providing hospitality for asylum seekers. She told us what it means to her personally to “accompany” and about the fruit this commitment yields.

Accompanying someone means being open to accepting who they really are as an individual. She says:

“The greatest challenge is perhaps to keep an open mind about each person you meet rather than succumbing to your own prejudices. Each person you accompany is completely different. Whatever your previous experiences, you have to tell yourself every single encounter is a fresh adventure. Every individual you accompany is unique, with their own quirks, vulnerability, and strengths.”

Accompanying someone means being just one discreet, modest link in their overall support network so you



It is clear to Chantal that accompanying someone involves “encountering the Other with a capital O.”



📷 Chantal accompanies immigrants towards inner peace.

can “encourage people to settle with the host families and, at the same time, develop new connections with others.” This empowers the people you accompany to freely take their own future in their hands. Later, they can then contribute towards building that alternative, more just, more fraternal world all of us are trying to create.

Accompanying someone also involves being unsettled yourself. For Chantal, this means “being ready

to get involved with the journey of change taken by the person you’re accompanying. It means being there when awkward questions crop up about the future and you don’t necessarily have the answers; or being there for them when they doubt and question what’s around them. Again, you don’t know the answers, but the main thing is to be there with them, as a companion.”

It is at that point you find you are actually on your own journey of discovery about who that person is but also who you are too. “This allows you to get to know the person you’re accompanying and meet the host families too,” says Chantal. On a deeper level, it helps you “realise just how lucky you have been and to share your blessings with people in a very vulnerable situation.” It is clear to Chantal that accompanying someone involves “encountering the Other with a capital O.”

Ultimately, the process of accompanying people in exile broadens both parties’ horizons, helping each become more humane. That process holds the seeds of peace.

Yet by sharing with loved ones how these encounters sustain her,

Chantal also reveals that the process has an energy of its own which outweighs her personal limitations. She is aware that the kind of welcoming she offers is possible only because it involves others apart from her, including her close friends or family, the asylum seekers themselves, fellow companions, the host families and their own friends and families. And as the days run their course, each of these people’s accumulated acts of kindness, just like Chantal’s, gradually create a mosaic of peace.

Pope Francis says: “Crafting peace is a skilled work: it requires passion, patience, experience, and tenacity. Blessed are those who sow peace by their daily actions, their attitudes, and acts of kindness, of fraternity, of dialogue, of mercy... But we should not fool ourselves into thinking that this all depends on us! Peace is a gift from God, not in the magical sense, but because with his Spirit he can imprint these attitudes in our hearts and in our flesh, and can make us true instruments of his peace.” (Sarajevo, 6 June 2015)



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## Praying for Peace

Gregory Sharkey, S.J.  
USA East Province  
Secretariat for the Service of Faith

*Why pray for peace if God, who has our best interests at heart, knows what we need? The insights of the Buddhist tradition and the solidarity between us all represented by the communion of saints in the Catholic tradition offer some possible answers.*

In a world afflicted by war and conflict we are urged to pray for peace. That the world needs peace is self-evident; yet there seems to be something paradoxical here. What is the point of our prayer? If God is all-loving and knows our needs better than we know them ourselves, God will give us what we need without asking, no? Surely God does not need to be persuaded to care for us any more than a newborn child must persuade its mother to love it. Clearly, we do not

pray in order to “change God’s mind,” or to convince God to be kinder or more generous. That would seem to contradict our very understanding of God.

Yet we have the example of Jesus, who prayed for others and taught us to pray for what we need. We place intercessions at the heart of the liturgy, coming right after our profession of faith. We assure others that we will remember them in prayer, and we trust

that this prayer is meaningful and not wishful thinking.

In genuine prayer we lift our minds and hearts to God, to use St John Damascene’s famous words. We turn our awareness to a God who is always present. Prayer in this case is more a matter of listening and abiding, and not so much a matter of words. We strive to make room for God’s spirit to fill us, displacing the mundane, self-focused concerns that usually pre-occupy us.

In this calm and silent space, we can dwell in God’s constant loving presence and let ourselves be drawn into closer union. How does this kind of prayer fit with intercession? How can we have a mature understanding of intercessory prayer that is not a “transaction” in which we trade our prayer in exchange for peace, or healing, or whatever good we seek?

For most of my life as a Jesuit I have been immersed in the world of Buddhism, especially of the Mahayana variety. Looking at the way Buddhist friends understand prayer prompts me to consider my own beliefs from a fresh perspective. Rather than promising to “pray” for someone or something, they speak of “offering aspirations.” That is, they voice a hope and bring to mind a worthy intention, held within the larger desire to cultivate universal compassion.

The most basic and universal Buddhist aspiration is expressed in the words “May all beings be happy.” Buddhists believe that all of one’s good deeds, thoughts and intentions can generate a positive effect, known as merit. Merit can be dedicated to the welfare and happiness of all be-



📷 Father General prays at the Peace Memorial in Hiroshima.

ings, living and dead. This, in turn, is rooted in the belief that all things are interconnected and interdependent. All that exists arises from prior causes and conditions. The merit generated by generosity, goodwill and compassion, then, can be an influence for good in this world.

There is a strong resonance here with our own belief in the communion of saints, the union of all believers, living and dead, forming one body with Christ as head, and in which “the good of each is communicated to the others,” as the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches. The

prayer of the saints on earth is united with the “cloud of witnesses” who have gone before us. Specific petitions may provide a focus for prayer. They take their meaning, however, in the constant abiding in this communion of love, wherein which we hold the needs of others, of the Church, and of the world in our hearts as we open our hearts and minds to the Lord in prayer.

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📷 © Sarbajit Sen - Pexels



The most basic and universal Buddhist aspiration is expressed in the words “May all beings be happy.”





*Resurrection.*  
Pablo Walker, S.J. Chile

## And even more...

While certainly true that migrant routes, the destination of refugees and pathways towards peace are marked by suffering and obstacles, our hope and our faith allow us, nonetheless, to keep moving forward. Above all, they allow us to express charity or love, that other central virtue of Christ's message. And for us, as members of the large Ignatian family, the foundation for all of this lies in the way in which St. Ignatius encouraged us to live. At the end of the Spiritual Exercises, the resurrection leads us to the contemplation to attain love.

These final articles, even though they do not relate directly to the themes of this issue, offer simply a glimpse of other aspects of the story, life and commitments of the Society of Jesus today. In other words, fresh examples of love incarnate.



Expulsion of the Jesuits from Spain, Port of Ferrol, La Coruña, 1767

## St Joseph Pignatelli (b. Zaragoza, Spain 1737 - d. Rome, Italy, 1811) Exile who restored the Society of Jesus

Wenceslao Soto Artuñedo, S.J.  
Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI) – General Curia

*The figure of St Joseph Pignatelli and the vicissitudes of the Jesuits of the Province of Aragon, in the climate of persecution that the Society experienced until its suppression in 1773.*

In 1767, Carlos III of Spain condemned the Jesuits to exile and loss of nationality, later expelling them from his territories. One of them, Joseph Pignatelli, we may justly consider the Jesuit patron saint of political refugees. Likewise, Antonio Ruiz de Montoya (1585-1652) of Lima could be regarded as the patron of forced migrants: in 1631, he accompanied 12,000

Guaranies on a journey of more than 1,100 km from Guayrá, Brazil, to Misiones, Argentina, to save them from being hunted down by the *bandeirantes* (armed groups involved in extending inland the peripheries of the Portugal's South American empire).

In Spain, the Jesuits' surprise arrest occurred early in the morning of 3 April.



St Joseph Pignatelli, Eloi Aran — © Province of Spain



He devoted his life to the governance of the Jesuits and to preparing for the complete restoration of the Society which would come about in 1814.

was a heroic decision given the Society was already under threat of extinction.

After the Pontifical Suppression of 1773, the Jesuits attained a certain degree of freedom. Pignatelli moved to Bologna where, aided by his family, he bought a house and, as well as helping his companions, devoted himself to the pursuit of culture and spirituality.

Catherine the Great protected the Society of Jesus, which accordingly survived in Russia where the 60-year-old Pignatelli joined it. On 6 July 1797, he renewed his vows. From 1798 to 1802, he resided as master of the “clandestine novitiate” of the “Russian” Society of Jesus in Colorno, Italy. In 1804, he left for Naples as Provincial to restore the Society at the request of the King. In 1806, he was ejected from Naples again for refusing to swear fealty to the upstart monarch, Joseph Bonaparte.

From 1806 onwards, he lived in Rome where he devoted his life to the governance of the Jesuits and to preparing for the complete restoration of the Society which would come about in 1814. Reputed to be a saint when he died on 15 November 1811, Pignatelli is buried in the Church of the Gesù. In 1954, he was canonised by Pius XII.

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📷 Saint Joseph Pignatelli, contemporary portrait, Attadale, Australia.

Two days later, the Zaragozan Jesuits, including Pignatelli, were escorted like dangerous criminals to a meeting point: in his case, the schoolhouse in Tarragona. From there, they were dispatched to the Tarragonese port of Salou. On 30 April, they set sail in vessels built for cargo for Civitavecchia in the Pontifical States (now in Italy).

But the Pope had no desire to accept this “free gift.” Hence the flotilla bearing the Jesuit Province of Aragon was threatened with cannon fire on arrival and refused entry to the port. The vessels departed for Bastia in Corsica. Unable to dock there either, on 14 July, they joined the ships of the Province of Toledo, and subsequently the remaining flotillas in San Florencio, Corsica.

Some ships were as overcrowded as refugee boats. For many Jesuits, this was their first time at sea and, within a hostile environment, they were permanently seasick. Supplies were an issue. And the heat was suffocating. No one knew what to do with this unwieldy cargo of around 2,500 Jesuits, the larg-

est gathering of the Society ever seen. The flotillas roamed the Mediterranean until a solution was found: to deposit the Jesuits in Corsica, a veritable hornet’s nest then belonging to Genoa.

The Jesuits from Aragon eventually disembarked in Bonifacio on 24 August after a distressing, uncertain crossing that lasted nearly four months. A letter reached José Pignatelli there from his brother, the Spanish ambassador in Paris, earnestly imploring him to leave the Society. Despite the Jesuits’ hand-to-mouth circumstances with regard to food and lodging, he utterly refused to do so.

In 1768, Genoa sold Corsica to France. As a result, the Jesuits were deported a second time. They were brought to the port of Genoa, from where they departed in small parties bound for Sestri de Levante and onwards to the Po Valley, reaching the Papal States on 18 October. The Aragonese Province were allotted the city of Ferrara, where on 2 February 1771, Joseph Pignatelli pronounced his vows. It



## Who is bringing hope to the neglected Church in Laos?

Francis Kham  
Philippine Province

*The contribution of Vietnamese workers living in Laos offering a new life for the Lao Church; where foreigners bring hope, energy and passion for the renaissance of faith.*

For some unknown reason, and for most people, both the country of Laos and the Lao Church have become forgotten lands. People frequently discuss and are well-informed about neighboring countries like China, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Vietnam, but there is very little information and knowledge about Laos. However, a group of people has brought light and hope to this small Church.

### **The ones who bring with them some hope**

Within the confines of the Lao Church, Vietnamese workers have emerged as essential pillars, both in terms of their sheer numbers and their impactful contributions. These individuals, coming from impoverished villages, make a poignant journey, leaving behind their families and homeland in pursuit of employ-

ment opportunities. In this quest, they carry not just personal dreams but also a collective aspiration for a brighter future, not only for themselves but also for the generations to come.

Despite the challenges inherent in migration – from conditional employment to various risks and unforeseen obstacles – these Vietnamese workers display remarkable resilience. Their





« Vietnamese Catholics exhibit unwavering piety and love for the Church, carrying these deep-seated religious sentiments wherever life takes them.

stories unveil the struggles faced in a foreign land, shedding light on the determination that propels them forward. The forgotten Church in Laos is now illuminated by the hopes and aspirations these individuals bring, casting a light on the often-overlooked contributions of those seeking a better life beyond their borders.

### **The ones who are with the Church**

Vietnamese Catholics exhibit unwavering piety and love for the Church, carrying these deep-seated religious sentiments wherever life takes them. In their pursuit of livelihoods, they consistently seek solace in parishes, with priests, religious men and women, fostering a continued connection to their faith. Due to the limited number of churches in Laos, Vietnamese Catholics working far from home have few opportunities to attend church. They greatly appreciate priests coming to celebrate the Eucharist or offer sacramental ministries near their homes and workplaces. Consequently, chicken farms

and duck farms can become places for mass, and construction sites, lumberyards and other working environments can be venues for celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation.

The Lao Church, akin to a convalescent patient, experiences revitalization with the integration of Vietnamese immigrant brethren, infusing the faith community with richness and vibrancy. The immigrants uphold religious traditions acquired from their families and parishes. These traditions serve as a link to their homeland, reinforcing their faith during their journey to sustain themselves and actively contribute to the spiritual vitality of the local Lao Church.

### **The ones who expanded the tent of the neglected Church**

In the quiet corners of Laos, where the Lao Church struggled in the aftermath of missionary expulsion, a beacon of hope emerged through the dynamic spirit of Vietnamese

immigrants. Since liberation, the Lao Church had faced a scarcity of resources, hindering its ability to flourish. However, a transformative wave began when Vietnamese lay brothers and sisters infused their energy and passion into the neglected Church.

These Vietnamese individuals became catalysts, reigniting the fervor of Lao lay Catholics who had drifted away. Through their unwavering enthusiasm, they sparked a renaissance of faith, inspiring Lao Catholics to re-engage with their religious roots. The Vietnamese community's diverse skills were instrumental in constructing and developing parish facilities in villages across Laos. Whether as construction workers, carpenters, drivers, or street vendors, their collective desire to serve the Church and illuminate the path of the Gospel for our Lao brothers and sisters has expanded "the tent" of the once-neglected Church, bringing renewal and vitality to God's family in their country.



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## The feast of Christ the King and its Jesuit roots

Bernard J. McGuckian, S.J.  
Irish Province

***2025: 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Feast of Christ the King. Devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius laid the foundations for this feast, which retains its relevance in the age of republics and democratic governments.***

On the last day of the liturgical year, in 2025, as always, the Mass in honour of Christ the King will be celebrated. It was first celebrated exactly one century ago by Pope Pius XI in St Peter's Basilica, in Rome, on the last day of the Holy Year 1925. Some 400 years earlier, in 1525, Ignatius of Loyola was putting the finishing touches to his Spiritual Exercises. St Francis de Sales famously said: "This little book has made more saints than there are letters in it!"

"This little book" is divided into what are called Four Weeks. These contain a set of contemplations based on the Old and New Testaments. These aim to lead a person to greater knowledge, love, and service of Jesus Christ. A significant moment in the process features a meditation on the Kingdom of Christ. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity and King of the Universe is calling each one of us to an eternity of happiness with Him in His Kingdom. It is never too

soon to begin preparing for this great event.

The matrix out of which emerged the Feast of Christ the King came from the events at Paray le Monial, France, where St Margaret Mary Alacoque received extraordinary revelations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As a cloistered Visitation nun, she was in no position to promote the devotion as asked for by the Lord. However, she was told that others would

be sent to help her. The first of these was Claude de la Colombière, a Jesuit priest, canonised in 1992 by John Paul II. Before her death in 1690 it was revealed to St Margaret Mary that the Jesuit Order was to promote devotion to the Heart of Christ.

Over the years after her death in 1690, many others, both men and women, lay and religious, have carried on the work that began with St Margaret Mary. In the Spanish speaking world, for instance, the extraordinary growth stemmed from the initiative of Blessed Bernard de Hoyos, who died at the age of 24. He was beatified by Benedict XVI. A further boost to the work was the foundation of the Apostleship of Prayer in 1844 at Vals de Puy, in France, by the Jesuit François-Xavier Gautrelet. In the pontificate of Pope Francis, this movement has been adapted to the requirements of the digital world of the new Millennium. It is now known as the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network (PWPN). It features prominently the Way of the Heart.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century two papal initiatives enhanced the importance of this devotion in the Church. In 1856, Pope Pius IX established the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart. Later, on the eve of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pope Leo XIII consecrated the whole human race to the Sacred Heart.

The initiative of Jesuits and laity in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries related to the Feast of the Sacred Heart laid the foundations that led finally to the establishment of the Feast of Christ the King. Among these were Fathers Sanno-Solano in Italy and Victor Drevon in France. Inspired by these two Jesuits, Baron Sarachagga and especially Marthe de Noaillet, a married woman, carried on the work. Marthe was largely responsible for the groundwork that led to the establishment of the feast.



© Marthe de Noaillet

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is the matrix from which sprang the concept of a Feast Day honouring the Universal Kingship of Christ. Despite Jansenist opposition, the Suppression of the Society of Jesus from 1773 until 1814 and even the widespread replacement of temporal kingships by republics in the wake of the French Revolution, the resolve to honour Christ's unique Kingship did not waver. In this context, the meditation in the Spiritual Exercises on the heavenly King's call to participate in his Kingdom makes perfect sense.

In *Quas Primas*, the encyclical establishing the feast, Pope Pius XI wrote "People are instructed in the truths of the faith and brought to appreciate the inner joys of religion far more effectually by the annual celebration of our sacred mysteries than by any official pronouncements of the teaching of the Church. Such pronouncements usually reach only a few and the more learned among the faithful; feasts reach them all; the former speak but once, the latter speak every year – in fact forever."

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People are instructed in the truths of the faith and brought to appreciate the inner joys of religion far more effectually by the annual celebration of our sacred mysteries than by any official pronouncements of the teaching of the Church.



© Sanctuaire de Paray-le-Monial, in collaboration with The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network.



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## Francis in Marseille: May the Mediterranean be a bridge, not a graveyard

Timothée Pigé, S.J.

French-speaking Western European Province

*In September 2023, the Jesuits and the entire Ignatian family in Marseille offered Pope Francis a hearty welcome to the city. The Holy Father's visit was a prophetic occasion where he reiterated his hope that Europe would be a welcoming place for refugees.*

In September 2023, Pope Francis came to Marseille. Everyone in the city, whatever their religious creed, gave a wholehearted welcome to the week-long *Rencontres méditerranéennes* (Mediterranean Encounters 2023 or Med '23), a timely foundation for the papal visit. A week earlier, 70 young people met up with 70 bishops from every corner of the Mediterranean.

The Church in Marseille, particularly the Jesuits and the entire Ignatian family including the students of the Collège Saint-Mauront (located in one of Europe's most deprived neighbourhoods), the city parish of Saint-Ferréol, the CVX (Christian Life Community) and the MEJ (Eucharistic Youth Movement) were heavily involved in the organisation.

I had the privilege of taking part in all the Med '23 gatherings. So, what did I witness? Initially, the extraordinary presence of the Pope being fervently welcomed by Marseille, and indeed, the whole of France. More than just marking his visit, the Papal Mass was a special time of mutual encounter between the Pope and Marseille, France, and



📷 A week of meetings between 70 young people and 70 bishops

Europe. Once again, Francis invited the city, country, and continent to work towards the Mediterranean becoming a bridge for migrants.

On Friday, 22 September, I had the privilege of grasping that point especially strongly during a time of prayer for sailors and migrants who died at sea. In what proved a highly emotional experience, I accompanied four exiled people: Ibrahim, Salle, Jurus, and Junior. I was moved first of all by hearing Junior read the account of St Paul's shipwreck in the Acts of the Apostles. I was not the only person there to ask myself if this was really the Scripture account I knew so well. It most certainly was. But Junior, who had crossed the seas before finding sanctuary at Saint-Ferréol (a parish entrusted by the Diocese to the Society of Jesus) infused Paul's story with new life.

It was even more moving to watch Ibrahim and Jurus carry a garland of flowers to Pope Francis, leave it at the foot of the Cross, and share with the Holy Father a special time of prayer for all those who had died or were lost at sea, including some of them they had known personally. Only 10 months earlier, Ibrahim had been rescued at sea. It was a joy to see him

hand Francis a holy card depicting St Ignatius. Painted by Ali, an Afghan man at JRS Paris, it had been signed by the whole JRS France team. On returning to his seat, Ibrahim told me that he had been careful to display the card, so the front was visible to the Pope but also the cameras! What stands out to me from the whole celebration was the sense of having a ringside seat at a prophetic event: the Pope meeting two refugees, a Muslim, and a young Christian, and praying with them for the world!

The third thing I witnessed that day was hidden from view. Yet perhaps it was the most important thing of all. I became aware of it while helping out on the Encounter week for 70 young people and 70 Mediterranean bishops. And like Mary, what I saw and experienced then, I pondered in my heart. Following a social gathering the previous evening and a morning's retreat, the young people met up again. It was after two intense and fruitful days of visits and talks. You could tell something in the atmosphere had changed. Every single person was chatting freely: Jews were talking to Muslims, French people to Georgians, young people to bishops. Something had happened – there



was a real atmosphere of friendship and spiritual conversation. This was more than a prophetic event. It felt as though the Kingdom itself was coming to life right before our eyes here in Marseille!

How will these young people turn out? I really don't know... All I can say for sure is that they have become aware of what's at stake – the Church being alive and the Mediterranean serving not as a graveyard but as a bridge, a harbour and a lighthouse. And they are on to it! Thank you, Francis, for having been the prophetic voice of this hopeful future!



“There can be no peace without a culture of care.”

(1 January 2021)

## POPE FRANCIS, PROTAGONIST OF PEACE

*“May weapons fall silent! Let us heed the cry for peace of populations, of the people, of the children! Brothers and sisters, war does not solve any problem: it sows only death and destruction, foments hate and proliferates revenge. War cancels out the future. I urge believers to take just one side: that of peace. But not with words — with prayer, with total dedication.”*

(18 October 2023)

*“Peace will never come by pursuing individual strategic interests, but only from policies capable of looking to the bigger picture and the development of all: policies attentive to individuals, the poor and the future, and not merely to power, profit and the present.”*

(28 April 2023)



## PRAYER

Now, Lord, come to our aid!

Grant us peace, teach us peace; guide our steps in the way of peace.

Open our eyes and our hearts, and give us the courage to say:

"Never again war!"; "With war everything is lost".

Instill in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace.

God of Love, you created us and you call us to live as brothers and sisters.

Give us the strength daily to be instruments of peace;  
enable us to see everyone who crosses our path as our brother or sister.

Make us sensitive to the plea of our citizens  
who entreat us to turn our weapons of war into implements of peace,  
our trepidation into confident trust, and our quarreling into forgiveness.

Keep alive within us the flame of hope,  
so that with patience and perseverance  
we may opt for dialogue and reconciliation.

In this way may peace triumph at last.

Amen.

[Pope Francis, 8 June 2014]



## JUBILEE 2025 Pilgrims of Hope

### **The Society of Jesus joins Pope Francis and the whole Church in celebrating the Holy Year of the Jubilee 2025.**

This tradition has its roots in the history of the Hebrew people. It was brought back to the forefront in 1300 by Pope Boniface VIII. Initially celebrated every 50 years, the cadence was reduced to 25 years. It is a year of grace that gives the faithful the opportunity to rekindle their relationship with God, to re-establish right relationships with people and with creation.

The theme chosen for 2025, *Pilgrims of Hope*, meets the needs of our times. Our era is marked by many sources of pain and suffering. Christians, inspired by the Paschal Mystery that opened the way from the cross to the resurrection, from death to life, can bear witness to a hope that is so necessary nowadays.

Pope Francis reminds us: “We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision. The forthcoming Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire.”

Living fully the spirit of the *Universal Apostolic Preferences* of the Society of Jesus by strengthening their implementation, as we are invited to do by Fr Arturo Sosa, Superior General, enables Jesuits and the Ignatian family to take part in this pilgrimage. The Jubilee points us towards God. It is in itself “movement”. But more than that, it links up with the main element of our third Preference, the accompaniment of young people in the creation of a hope-filled future.

Yes, in 2025, the Society of Jesus enters wholeheartedly into this movement because it recognises its duty to participate to the growth of hope in the world.





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in service throughout the world,  
inspired by the Gospel  
and working with and for those who want to create a better world, full of hope.





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- For more information, contact the Jesuit Provincial Offices.  
(Depending on the laws in force in your country, you could get a receipt for tax deduction.)
- To support the mission of the Society as a whole, or for information on how best to contribute, contact the Jesuit Conference offices in your continental region.

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■ *After the storm,*

■ di Peter Girasek, SJ

■ Acrylics and wood on canvas

The journey of migrants is often that of a rough and even perilous sea voyage.

When the clouds and storms are behind them, when they have encountered helping hands along the way, the hope of sailing to a land of peace opens up...

## Discover in this edition

### \* With the migrants

- Faces and commitments of JRS
- Internal migration
- Welcoming migrants
- Real-life stories

### \* In search of peace

- According to the Bible
- Through reconciliation
- In conflict zones
- Through prayer

