



In the footsteps of Pedro Arrupe

Ignatian spirituality lived in the
service of refugees



JRS



to accompany, to serve, to advocate

Jesuit Refugee Service

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November 2007

Introduction

The hundredth anniversary of Pedro Arrupe's birth is a fitting moment to remember his vision for JRS and ensure, even as the organisation grows and the world changes, that its vitality is sustained into the future.

The reflections of Jesuits shared in this booklet testify to the enduring legacy of his vision. They prove correct his prophetic hopes of the role that Jesuits are called to play in alleviating the *dramatically urgent needs* of forcibly displaced people, and of the *spiritual benefits* to be reaped in this important modern apostolate.

Twenty-seven years after the establishment of JRS, the *magnificent* response to his initial appeal has not diminished, and the impact of this apostolate on Provinces who make men available, remains real and profound. Arrupe's vision has inspired so many Jesuits, lay people and religious who have worked with JRS and will continue to guide it into the future.

Rome 1 November 2007

Lluís Magriñà SJ

Peter Balleis SJ

The Society of Jesus and the refugee problem

Around Christmas time, last year, struck and shocked by the plight of thousands of boat people and refugees, I felt it my duty to send cable messages to some 20 Major Superiors around the world. Sharing my distress with them, I asked what they in their own countries and the universal Society could do to bring at least some relief to such a tragic situation.

Their response was magnificent. Immediate offers of help were made in personnel, know-how and material; supplies of food and medicine as well as money were sent; direct action was taken through the mass media to influence government and private agencies; services were volunteered in pastoral as well as organisational capacities; and so on.

I consider this as a new modern apostolate for the Society as a whole, of great importance for today and the future, and of much spiritual benefit also to the Society.

As a follow-up to this first wave of action, I called a Consultation in the Curia to consider what response the Society might make to the increasingly serious refugee problem throughout the world...

At the outset, I explained that this situation constitutes a challenge to the Society we cannot ignore if we are to remain faithful to St Ignatius' criteria for our apostolic work and the recent calls of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations. In the Constitutions St Ignatius speaks of the greater universal good, an urgency that is ever growing, the difficulty and complexity of the human problem involved, and lack of other people to attend to the need (cf. Const. VII, 2, no. 623). With our ideal of availability and universality, the number of institutions under our care, and the active collaboration of many lay people who work with us, we are particularly well fitted to meet this challenge and provide services that are not being catered for sufficiently by other organisations and groups. ... Furthermore, the help needed is not only material: in a special way the Society is being called to render a service that is human, pedagogical and spiritual. It is a difficult and complex challenge; the needs are dramatically urgent. I have no hesi-

tation in repeating what I said at our Consultation: *I consider this as a new modern apostolate for the Society as a whole, of great importance for today and the future, and of much spiritual benefit also to the Society. ...*

In the light of our Consultation and after further discussion with my General Counsellors, I have decided to set up within the Curia a service to coordinate Jesuit refugee work, which will henceforth be referred to as the *Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)*.

I hope you will accept this letter and the request it makes in a spirit of alacrity and availability. St Ignatius called us to go anywhere we are most needed for the greater service of God. The spiritual as well as material need of nearly 16 million refugees throughout the world today could scarcely be greater. 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.

Pedro Arrupe SJ, 14 November 1980

'Swansong' for the Society

... It is natural that those working with refugees should have different reactions and points of view. Service to refugees adds a new dimension to your Jesuit work here in Thailand. The international Society can help, but this new development has special implications for you.

... You are doing a wonderful work, though a difficult one. It is an important work. You see little success externally in a country that is mostly Buddhist and where there are so few Catholics.

This is the hardest type of missionary apostolate. I think I can speak from experience. In Japan you may find a parish priest baptising only two people in 10 years. Actually what is in question here is not external success but commitment. We are to work as best we can – as I have been telling the Society all over the world.

You are doing a wonderful work, though a difficult one.

The Society has initiative and creativity. But sometimes the way it has used these has meant choosing the easier apostolates. I doubt whether the easy apostolate is the real apostolate!

The apostolate in Thailand is one of the most difficult in the Society because of the cultural conditions, the weather conditions, the political conditions, and all the rest. So you require a great heart to work with enthusiasm in a work whose results you do not see. Those who come after will say: 'What a wonderful job we are doing!' But they should not forget the many people who went before, preparing the way.

Do not misunderstand me: I can see that you are happy. But I can also see that your work is burdensome. Sometimes when you speak from the heart some feelings come out, not bitter feelings exactly, but ones that result from the burdens of your work – really hard work. And perhaps this is not always recognised by others.

Now it is time to consider the kind of help that the Society can give to the work among refugees. First, this new direction has implications for

the Society's work here in Thailand. That is because what I am calling a new dimension will involve collaboration with those Fathers already working in Thailand. As your Father Superior has indicated to me, this will mean an added burden for all. It will mean taking someone away from his present work for what is virtually a full-time new job – while you are so short of people.

I see my commitment, then, as not only to the Thai apostolate as it is now, but also to the new Thai apostolate with the refugees. Because of this new dimension, the Society as a whole should assist the direct work being done by the Jesuits in Thailand.

The other question concerns the new opening possible here. The work for the refugees can, and should, have a great effect on the Society's image in Thailand. And you should benefit greatly from that. But if this is to happen, the decision rests with the Society here in Thailand. We can only start out on this tremendous work step by step, looking ahead and searching out the way. Most probably we shall have to search for it daily.

At present the situation all across the world is changing very greatly. It is difficult, then, to have a fixed plan. A 10 year plan? Oh no, excuse me! If you have a two-year plan that will perhaps be enough, or even a day-to-day plan, because the situation is changing all the time and you are experimenting. And this is where prudence comes in, prudence to take calculated risks. You don't have to be 100 per cent certain. In today's world nobody can be 100 per cent certain.

For this reason *a fortiori*, great risks have to be taken in many places. 'I made a mistake!' Well, what this means is that we make a communal discernment as a group, then set a policy. And this policy should be flexible precisely so that we can experiment further. In all of this you have to think and pray as a group if you are to discover a general policy, and principles that everybody will accept. The 'elasticity' of this experimentation and risk-taking should be all in one direction – the direction pointed out by the Holy Spirit. ...

And unity? Yes, that is important. We share the same spirituality and the same commitment to Christ. Excellence, as St Ignatius thinks of it, is not scholarly excellence, though it may include that. Real excellence lies in commitment to Christ. We have to be excellent in our commitment.

Perhaps what Fr Ando [Isamu] was saying is utopian, but how terrific it would be for the Society to have non-Christians coming to work for the poor in the villages, coming motivated by philanthropy. If we could create a situation of that kind, we would have enormous possibilities for our work in Thailand. Then we would be collaborating with people to much greater effect than we can through the few Catholics that we are in the Orient. And through the mass media we can present matters in a human way, and so multiply the work and its effects. In that way we can build up the country indirectly.

This would amount to pre-evangelisation done by non-Christians! Yet in fact, by definition, we do not speak about Christ during pre-evangelisation. We cannot speak about Christ, but we have non-Christians doing something out of goodwill that we could do. I see an opening within refugee work for such an apostolate. I think this will be good to think about.

I will say one more thing, and please don't forget it. Pray. Pray much. Problems such as these are not solved by human efforts. I am telling you things that I want to emphasise, a message – perhaps my 'swan song' for the Society. We pray at the beginning and at the end – we are good Christians! But in our three-day meetings, if we spend half a day in prayer about the conclusions we expect to come to, or about our points of view, we will have very different 'lights'. And we will come to quite different syntheses – in spite of different points of view – ones we could never find in books nor arrive at through discussion.

Right here we have a classic case: If we are indeed in the front line of a new apostolate in the Society, we have to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit. These are not the pious words of a novice master. What I am saying is 100 per cent from St Ignatius. When I decided to come to Thailand, they said I could visit refugee camps. I have been in camps before. What we have done here is much more important. I am so happy, and I think it is providential that I came here.

There has to be a basic unity of minds for this new type of apostolate just about to be born. What we are going through here is the *dolor partus*, birth pangs, before this new apostolate can be born. With this medical observation I conclude my talk!

Pedro Arrupe SJ, 6 August 1981

Two Fathers General in the service of refugees Established by Fr Arrupe and implemented by Fr Kolvenbach

Working with refugees, I realise more and more that unless I give myself, it would be better that I gave nothing. People who are starving, homeless, friendless, so easily lose the sense of their human dignity. It is not enough to give them what they need. I must give in such a way that my giving restores their self-worth, their human dignity, in such a way that their hope and trust in mankind are rekindled.

The insight shared by Bill Yeomans, an Australian Jesuit who accompanied refugees in Asia Pacific for years before his death in 1989, captures the spirit of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) imparted by its founder Pedro Arrupe. The centenary of his birth is a fitting time to recall Fr Arrupe's unique vision for the refugee service he set up on 14 November 1980, a vision which has been faithfully adhered to and elaborated by thousands of Jesuits and their co-workers over the years.

JRS was the last project launched by Fr Arrupe as the Superior General of the Society of Jesus. His appeal, *God is calling us through these helpless people*, was prompted by the *shocking* plight of the Vietnamese refugees, and it was heeded by many Jesuits. The priority of these pioneers was simply to be in the camps, theirs was a personal approach based on the realisation that the world refugee problem is the story of millions of individual lives. Pierre Ceyrac, a French Jesuit, used to spend two to three hours daily just walking around and meeting people – the *walking ministry*, as his companion, an American Jesuit named John Bingham, used to call it. *We are continually approached by the refugees who want us to listen to their problems, who need help in filling up forms, and who confide their secrets.*

Fr Arrupe was *so happy* with the way JRS was developing: *I see a tremendous opening for the Society, and not only as regards work among refugees. This work will be a school in which we learn many things.* He spoke these words on 6

August 1981, during a meeting in Thailand with 16 Jesuits involved in the apostolate, where it was agreed that the way ahead lay in a ministry of *being with* rather than *doing for*. Fr Arrupe's talk that day would be his *swan-song for the Society*; the following day, as he returned to Rome, he had the stroke which left him with impaired speech and partially paralysed.

Spreading rapidly across the world, JRS continued to flourish under Father General Peter Hans-Kolvenbach. He made his predecessor's call his own and extended it to every Jesuit: *Our service to refugees is an apostolic commitment of the whole Society... one real test of our availability today*. Jesuits joined JRS teams with members of other congregations and lay people, who from early on formed part of the organisation. Their presence in the camps soon led to concrete services of assistance and education, and to advocacy. As JRS workers witnessed injustice, they felt the need to speak out on behalf of refugees whose fundamental rights were trampled. In the nineties, expansion on the ground was matched by the establishment of offices in Washington, Geneva and Brussels, to bring to the attention of international policy makers the concerns raised by field workers.

After taking shape over the years, the mission of JRS was officially enunciated and endorsed in 1995 in General Congregation 34: *There are over 45 million refugees and displaced people in today's world... The Jesuit Refugee Service accompanies many of these brothers and sisters of ours, serving their cause in an uncaring world. The General Congregation appeals to all Provinces to support the Jesuit Refugee Service in every way possible*.

The ultimate aim of the mission is to uphold what Fr Mateo Aguirre, veteran JRS director, calls *the dignity of hope*, in his contribution to this booklet. Fr Kolvenbach has often stressed that this is what JRS is about: *What is very clear is that JRS brings hope. Refugees understand that you are people who are interested in them, who really believe that they have a future. The way of acting of JRS is real grace. It is involved with people who are victims of injustice, of violence, of disorder, who are really in despair and it gives the best of itself so that refugees can come out of their despair*.

The three pillars of JRS – accompaniment, service and advocacy – combine to generate hope. *The simple fact that JRS exists, and is present where they are, is for refugees a sign of hope. But JRS will never consider itself as an institution that just accompanies people in hopeless situations. If JRS is present, it also works for advocacy. This is crucial because it is a question of justice*.

Echoing Fr Arrupe's words, Fr Kolvenbach describes justice as *the concrete way to love*, and elaborates: *This means we should bring the poor, the refugees, back into society. They have the right to be brought back. I am very grateful for what is done in the camps, not just to help refugees pass the time, but to help them to prepare their future.*

This goal is also achieved through projects with an Ignatian emphasis on education and training, which look beyond mere survival to development, to being fully alive. Through their presence, JRS workers are in a position to learn from the refugees what their needs and hopes are, and to design projects accordingly.

Through its presence and activities, JRS feels increasingly called to promote peace and reconciliation. Eradicating hatred and antagonism, arising out of conflict, ethnic, religious or other differences, misunderstandings between host populations and refugees, is a constant challenge in this work. Talking specifically about reconciliation, Fr Kolvenbach has assured regional directors that *the Society is proud of the work of JRS, whose concrete involvement speaks louder than words.*

To implement the JRS mission, Jesuits work in dynamic partnership with non-Jesuits. In fact, JRS would not exist without the help of so many others. At the same time, JRS finds its source and motivation in the Ignatian spirit and way of proceeding, and relies much on the support, resources and institutions of the Society of Jesus. The role played by Jesuits in JRS remains crucial and is nothing less than a catalyst, in the words of Fr Kolvenbach: *I really believe that the presence of the Jesuits in JRS should be the presence of a catalyst. It assures that everything moves even if most of the movement itself will be shared with others.*

Throughout his tenure, the key message of Fr Kolvenbach for JRS has been a simple one: Remain loyal to the vision of Fr Arrupe, with people who would otherwise be completely abandoned and forgotten. Nowadays, the increasing complexity of the phenomenon of forced migration means that JRS workers are called to accompany displaced people not only in traditional camp settings, but also in detention centres for asylum seekers, in sites for internally displaced people in conflict zones, and in urban centres where they struggle for survival. Time and again, Fr Kolvenbach has said: *I am very grateful that JRS remains faithful to the ideal of Fr Arrupe, even if it had to understand the necessity of advocacy, structural work and better organisation.*

Today, JRS counts more than 1,000 workers in over 50 countries; an organisation of this size requires administrative and coordinating structures and management strategies, however JRS has not become unwieldy and over-bureaucratic. JRS remains *light*, as both Fr Arrupe and Fr Kolvenbach were convinced it should, a pilgrim organisation ready to move with the people, to go where the need is. This flexibility is crucial for JRS, which serves according to the Ignatian priority of greater need, closing projects which are no longer necessary and starting up elsewhere. *The mission is to be on the move, to be always available to respond with alacrity*, said Fr Kolvenbach. *We are not called to stay forever in the same place with the same people, but to be like St Paul, to start something, and to move on when our work is done, constantly in search of needs that are not being met by others.*

Going to places where others are for some reason reluctant to go, seeking out the most forgotten refugees and standing by them, are by no means easy tasks. Fr Arrupe knew as much. On 6 August 1981, he told Jesuits working in the camps: *You are doing an important work though a difficult one.* Years later, in 2006, Fr Kolvenbach said: *It is much easier to...help in a way that you do not suffer. You just do your job. But this will not be the way for those who work in the framework of JRS.*

His words were echoed by Katrine Camilleri, a lawyer who has worked with JRS Malta for more than 10 years and who received the 2007 Nansen Refugee Award from the United Nations. During her acceptance speech, she said about her work in detention: *Accompanying asylum seekers and refugees is not always easy... not only because we come to share their unpopularity, but also because ultimately, this work is a daily encounter with great suffering, and with our powerlessness to do much about it.*

I am very grateful that JRS remains faithful to the ideal of Fr Arrupe

This work has cost some their lives. On 26 September 2007, less than a week before Katrine received the Nansen award, the coordinator of JRS Mannar in the north of war-torn Sri Lanka, was killed in a claymore mine attack as he delivered aid to orphans and displaced people. In a letter of condolence to JRS South Asia, Fr Kolvenbach wrote: *The lives of Fr Ranjith and Katrine, as well as many JRS workers all over the world, put to the fore the profound significance of the threefold mission of JRS.*

The challenges inherent in refugee work have never stopped a steady stream of volunteers from joining JRS. Jesuits and others give of their time, talents, professionalism, and of themselves, to live out the mission of JRS in a way that would have made Fr Arrupe proud.

Danielle Vella, Information Officer, JRS International office, 1999 - 2002

A faithfulness which bears fruit

The charism of Fr Arrupe is still well and truly alive after all these years. The mission of JRS is affirmed when we see so many people coming from different parts of the world, ready to continue accompanying, serving and pleading the cause of refugees, taking the dignity of each and every human being seriously.

Countless JRS teams have kept faith with the vision of Fr Arrupe. I remember how the priority of JRS Bukavu (in former Zaire), for example, was to spend time with refugees, to listen to them. Projects flowed from this accompaniment, such as one initiative to assist victims of trauma. However, the main thing was not the programme *per se*, but our presence with the refugees who were traumatised. Our response was not pre-formulated but spontaneous. Members of the team would leave at 8am and come back at 6pm. Their dedication was really appreciated by the refugees, who understood we were really with them.

The charism of Fr Arrupe is still well and truly alive after all these years.

Our work in Lainé refugee camp in Guinea also comes to mind. The camp was meant to house 6,000 people but, due to insecurity in Liberia, the population had swollen to 30,000. As implementing partner of the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) for informal education, JRS learned an important lesson, namely that the refugees themselves would tell us what they wanted to learn. The project was discerned and shaped by the refugees, not by JRS. The refugees asked for activities to foster self-reliance in the camp and upon their return to Liberia. They told us that they wanted to learn how to make soap, since there was plenty of palm oil in the area, and how to dye clothes, a traditional activity in the region. The JRS project director, Sr Covadonga Orejas of the Vedruna Carmelites, was chiefly responsible for ensuring that it would be possible for the refugees to realise their desires, which were clear signs of the dignity of hope.

Mateo Aguirre SJ, Regional Director, JRS West Africa, 2001 - 2007

Taona's story

Taona was born in Mozambique, after the insurrection by the anti-communist Renamo movement had already ravaged much of the country. By the time he was ten, he knew more about death than life. Then his father was blown up by a landmine and a few days later, their village was burned down. His mother decided they had to run for their lives so they fled to Zimbabwe. Taona spent the next three years in the Mazowe River Bridge camp, one among some 30,000 refugees, behind a barbed wire fence. The things he remembered from home were fire, guns, hunger and death.

When Taona got his bar of soap and towel, he decided they were too precious for everyday use.

Taona fell sick and came to our hospital. He was diagnosed with cancer. When I first met him, the growth in his belly was so big, and he had already lost so much weight, that he could no longer walk unaided. Nevertheless, he insisted on sitting outside on the veranda to watch the nurses and other patients.

Taona was brave. I never saw him cry. Yet whenever a spasm of pain set in, his expression would change and his face suddenly seemed like that of an old man. Each time I visited him, he asked if I could find some medicine to take the growth out of his belly. Each time I had to tell him that I had failed.

One day I asked Taona if there was something else I could do for him. He hesitated and then, in a voice even lower than usual, he enquired if he could have a bar of soap. He added that never in his whole life had he had one all for himself – not at home in Mozambique, nor at the camp, nor here at the hospital. The other visitor who had come with me was already at the door of the intensive care ward when Taona made a sign to call me back. Could he make a second wish, he asked. Could he also have a towel? He had never had his own towel either.

When Taona got his bar of soap and towel, he decided they were too precious for everyday use. He kept the bright red and yellow towel neatly folded beside his pillow and underneath the towel, the bar of soap.

After each painkiller and before falling asleep for a few hours, he would pull the bar of soap out from underneath the towel, hold it to his nose, draw in the smell with his eyes closed and then place it back under the towel.

Late one Saturday evening, I was called to the hospital. Taona's end was near. His face was peaceful now and for the first time since I had met him, he looked like the 14-year-old boy he was. The towel lay neatly folded by his pillow.

The following morning we buried Taona in the small cemetery behind the hospital. His grave had been dug in the far corner of the cemetery, reserved for Mozambican refugees who died in the hospital. Government officials told us to keep their bodies separate. One day, the Mozambican authorities might wish to claim them. Taona was covered by a clean white sheet and wrapped in a new reed mat, which was tied at the feet, the waist and the neck. When Taona was lowered into the grave, an old woman stepped forward, knelt down and carefully placed the towel and bar of soap by his head. The soap was still in its wrapping.

Dieter B. Scholz SJ, JRS International Director, 1984 -1990

I have called you by name

One of the first things I did when I started to work with refugees as a novice in 1995, was to walk daily through the camps with my companion Jacob Okumu, and to learn the names of young people there. The more we called them by name, the more the 'refugee' label faded from our minds, and the faster we bonded in our relationships. Our perceptions of each other changed. Those we knew revealed their individual uniqueness, which we could relate to and identify with, cherish and learn from. Those whose names we did not learn, collectively remained 'refugees' until we left. When the time came for us to go back to the novitiate, our new friends asked us why we had come to be with them at all if we could no longer stay. We had bonded, but the time was too short, just a few months.

This was not just about JRS accompanying the refugees; we accompanied one another.

In 2000, I returned to Tanzania for my Regency. I spent two years working at Radio Kwizera (RK) in Ngara district and in the camps in Kibondo district. It never occurred to me to think of those who worked on the RK team as 'refugees'. In a spirit of cooperation, they were often referred to as the Kirundi team because they worked on Kirundi language programmes. Yet more often we addressed them by name. There was a great atmosphere of mutual sharing, interaction, respect, and a shared sense of responsibility in building the ethos of RK, *sowing seeds of hope* through the promotion of peace and reconciliation and through our news, environment, health, education, and entertainment programmes. Companionship grew among RK members regardless of whether we were Tanzanian or Burundian. We were part of one team.

It was the same with young Burundian people in the camps. This was not just about JRS accompanying the refugees; we accompanied one another. Our goal and vision was to build a community of hope through prayer and worship, reconciliation, concern for the poorest of the poor, visits and care for the sick, and, most importantly, through the celebration of life together. We did not offer services to the refugees; we responded to their needs together with them. We built a place of worship and class-

rooms, organised workshops and seminars on leadership and peer education, planned social and pastoral services and evaluated our activities. We worked together and through this experience, we recognised one another's strengths and weaknesses. We created a stimulating atmosphere in which to offer service and advocacy. Refugees identified with JRS and were part of our mission and family.

My time with people living in forced exile convinced me that they have as much to offer as those who serve them have to receive. They may live in highly uncertain surroundings, but refugees are often hopeful, happy, talented, and hardworking, especially when they are given support and opportunities. They are not to be seen simply as being at the receiving end of national, non-governmental and international humanitarian aid agencies. Recognising and treating them above all as people in difficult circumstances, changes the ways we look at them, at their rights and obligations. In Tanzania, this often meant allowing them to grow their own food in designated places and enabling them to sell their produce, so that they may contribute to meeting their unmet needs. It also meant encouraging them to plant and grow trees, even as they cut others for their domestic use. Consequently, they were less likely to be viewed as an environmental or security threat.

Addressing refugees by name is a powerful way of recognising that each and every one is a valuable and gifted person in his or her own right. Together they have much to share and to contribute to their host countries as they await return in dignity and safety to their homelands.

Deogratias M. Rwezaura SJ, Kibondo Project Director, JRS Tanzania, 2001 - 2002

An invisible world

In the autumn of 1998 I was in the middle of my Tertianship in Berlin. During my 16 years in the Society, I had never really stepped outside a world defined by education and by work with young people. When it came to choosing an experiment, I wanted to do something different, in which the dimension of serving justice was more clearly apparent than in anything I had previously undertaken. I also wanted to travel beyond the borders of the 'developed world' to Africa. JRS seemed most likely to be able to such offer an opportunity.

At first, I was disappointed. I was unable to go immediately. It is not easy to get people into refugee camps when they have no clearly defined role, status or service to provide. I began working for JRS Berlin with Bernd Günther and Stefan Taebner. This proved to be an invaluable introduction to a world which had hitherto been invisible to me. Ten years after German reunification, the impact of loosening borders was perhaps more clearly visible in Berlin than in London. I visited two centres where mostly young men were detained. The authorities suspected that unless they were detained, there was a 'reasonable suspicion' that otherwise they would abscond.

I got a glimpse of the strange limbo in which long-term
refugees find themselves

Apart from the tireless work of Bernd with asylum seekers and of Stefan with the Vietnamese community, some things stand out from that time, starting with the almost hopeless unfairness of the policy of detention. Replicated across Europe, it attempts to combine respect for the rights of asylum seekers with a utilitarian need to send messages to those who would abuse the system, and often ends up doing neither. Faith and prayer were deeply important to many people detained in those centres in the

deeply secularised world in and around Berlin. They prayed and sang their hearts out. I remember the petty dehumanising acts that are inflicted in the name of preserving *our way of life* efficiently. I buy a piece of chicken for an African I am visiting. I hand in the chicken-leg, whole, at the entrance and it duly reappears on the other side of the glass mashed-up under examination and considerably less appetising than before. I was struck by the ambiguity involved when people, desperate to stay in Europe but ignorant of its laws, only have their stories to stand on. I am still not sure whether the story I was repeatedly told by the young man I visited, often in tears, was the truth or if he believed it so passionately only because he needed to escape from his desperate circumstances. Then there was the hypocrisy of states that deport those who get caught – often brutally, by chartering planes and unceremoniously dumping them in the airports of developing cities – while at the same time rebuilding and servicing their cities with an army of invisible workers, who frequently have no employee rights because of their irregular migration status.

Eventually, it proved possible for me to spend two months in Kenya. I spent over three weeks in Nairobi, visiting not only JRS projects, but also the Jesuit parish in the Kangemi slum. I cannot forget the little girl, who lived with her mother and brothers and sisters in a wooden construction the size of a garden shed, and who cried because she thought I was the man who was going to pay for her education and then I wasn't. Nor the even smaller structure filled with children, and at the centre a silent woman infected by HIV, trapped between poverty and prostitution by the need to educate her children. In this context, where resources for citizens are so scarce, I could see how the thousands of refugees escaping conflicts elsewhere in the region, are on the one hand better protected from poverty than others, but have to endure resentments and inefficiencies similar to their counterparts in Europe. Watching the news in Nairobi, I realised just how much warfare there was in Africa. In England, at the time, you might expect one short news item about Africa in the Guardian newspaper in the course of a week, but apart from Zimbabwe and occasionally South Africa, the continent and its troubles were largely invisible. The staggering numbers of refugees and internally displaced people put European asylum controls into harsh perspective.

Finally I spent just over a month in Kakuma refugee camp, run on behalf of the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) by the Lutheran World Federation – possibly the most interesting month of my life. In the JRS team, Maureen

and Diane were responsible for education projects and Dorothy was responsible for the social service projects with a counselling dimension. I got a glimpse of the strange limbo in which long-term refugees find themselves, trapped in camps in a desert-like place helpfully donated to UNHCR by the Kenyan government without consulting the Turkana, the local nomadic tribe. Tensions between the two groups would still occasionally flare up. The importance of education and the power of the JRS ethos of empowerment were apparent. Maureen's main work was providing scholarships so that Sudanese refugees could attend Kenyan schools – preparing an educated class for the day when they could return and rebuild their country – and Diane's big project was to set up a tertiary-level distance learning project. Dorothy's project focused on the vulnerable, especially women, offering a space for healing in an uncompromising environment.

What could I do there? Not a lot, but something. I could do a bit of teaching, spend time with people, and help with some of the building work. While I was there, the priests responsible for the different Catholic tribal communities in the camp went to a meeting in Tanzania. So I was acting parish priest for most of the month, carried around on the back of a bicycle. When fighting broke out between rival tribal groups – leading to some deaths and the torching of a whole area of the camp – I saw how important church leaders, in this case the catechists, were in the process of reconciliation. And I met some wonderful people, of deep faith, of great generosity surviving and growing together in an awesomely beautiful but harsh environment.

The richness of this experience with JRS astonishes me, even as I write about it now, eight years later. I have returned to work in secondary schools but those months have changed my consciousness. There is a sense of global connectedness that I did not have before, an awareness of that quasi-invisible presence on the streets of London. I still have my red stone, taken from the dried riverbed that ran past the camp, which I use in assemblies and presentations. I cannot do much, but I can at least do something to make voices heard, and thanks to continuing contact through fellow Jesuits involved with JRS, to make people and their stories known, and to encourage generosity towards those who were so generous to me.

John Moffat SJ,

Pastoral worker, Berlin, JRS Germany; Kakuma, JRS Kenya, 1998 - 1999

The specific Jesuit identity of JRS

Un Corps pour l'Esprit

Dominique Bertrand SJ, in his book *Un Corps pour l'Esprit*, describes the Constitutions like a body given to the spirit of the newly founded Society of Jesus. The Constitutions reflect many concrete issues and problems associated with the rapid growth of the Society and reached mature form only 18 years after it was founded.

Likewise, JRS was created out of the inspiration of Fr General Pedro Arrupe. Ten years later Fr Kolvenbach elaborated on this initial mission statement in his letter concerning JRS. Comparing the two processes, we see that inspiration, involvement and a brief mission statement come first. The formation of structures and a constitutional body come later; they are not aims in themselves, rather they support the mission. In other words, the spirit fleshes itself out in a body in order to be effective. ...

Integral human promotion

... A major concern of Fr Arrupe's was the pastoral care for the refugees. He wanted JRS workers to be with them. From this accompaniment emerge different activities to respond to specific needs. It is not a question of choosing between pastoral, educational or other developmental work, each is essential to the other.

A front-line apostolate

Often enough, refugee work is literally a front-line apostolate. At times those working with them are at risk. Refugees often live close to conflict-affected areas, along remote borders with poor infrastructure, and other difficult circumstances. JRS relies on the criteria laid out in the Constitutions to discern whom it should serve: those in greatest need, where the fruits of our work are greater, and where the effect of this work is most widely felt, *multiplicators* (Const. 622). In case of doubt, the Constitutions suggest that preference be given to spiritual over physical benefits; to choose the more urgent; to work where nobody else works; to choose works which are shorter in their duration; to do what benefits a greater number of people (Const. 623). ...

The emergence of a global market has left many victims and losers. Refugees are the tip of the iceberg of a global phenomenon of growing migration, voluntary or, in most cases, forced. The potential for conflict, if badly handled, is great. ... We are faced with two choices: stay out of it or get involved on the side of the victims. Together with other church organisations such as Caritas, JRS is in it, as one of the major front-line apostolates. The Church often earns respect from other organisations as a consequence of decisions by JRS to get involved in this work. ...

An emphasis on education

In the great diversity of its activities, education deserves to be emphasised as a major component of JRS work. Most NGOs deal with more basic matters like food, shelter, water, clothes, medical aid; education is not included in the list of priorities of the UN refugee agency (UNHCR). Nonetheless it is very important for camp life itself and for the future of refugee children. JRS has taken on a number of educational programmes in primary, secondary and, to a lesser extent, tertiary education. ... JRS service is therefore fully within the tradition of the Society of Jesus. ...

Mobility

With the foundation of many colleges, the old Society of Jesus definitely lost some of its initial mobility. ... JRS has regained this mobility. Fr Arrupe called Jesuits out of their work to become available for refugees, to go to unknown countries and to live in unknown cultures for some years. JRS does not put down lasting roots but accompanies refugees back home. When new needs arise, it moves on. It seems that JRS is providing the Jesuits with a new opportunity for missionary involvement. ...

Collaboration with the laity

The document *Cooperation with Laity in Mission* of GC34 mentions JRS as an example. The stress on cooperation seems to be a novelty, but in reality it is not. Ignatius sought the support and collaboration of others, for example, the St Martha House for girls, for many of his apostolic initiatives. After assuming responsibility for the institution for some years, Ignatius handed it over to the lay women involved in its management. In order to finance the colleges, Ignatius invited princes, bishops and others to be sponsors. It is a Jesuit characteristic to invite others to join in good

works, to give them a framework for doing good, or of taking on responsibility for a work of charity. JRS does depend on the goodwill of lay volunteers and religious of other congregations, as well as the generosity of private donors and organisations. However, it also provides them with the organisational structure and support, and, more importantly, a spiritual vision for serving refugee people. ...

A simple way of life

According to Ignatius, poverty is a bulwark of religious institutes which preserves them in their existence and discipline, and defends them from many enemies (Const. 816). ... Certainly resources are necessary to do the work, and many resources are needed because it is costly to set up a team in the middle of nowhere. Yet JRS should never allow itself to become finance-driven, so that money decides whether we will be with refugees or not. Simplicity in lifestyle and the nature of our activities act like a bulwark to preserve the Jesuit character of JRS.

Spiritual means

The Society was not instituted by human means, and neither can it be preserved and developed through them, but through the omnipotent hand of Christ, God and our Lord (Const. 812). ...

... The misery and needs of refugee people are so overwhelming that we will always fail to respond adequately with our human means. To endure this situation of helplessness in the face of great suffering and without losing hope and strength, spiritual means are more important than other forms of support.

Peter Balleis SJ, JRS International Director, 2007 -

Jesuit brothers and JRS

Most JRS activities have a Jesuit brother at their heart and origins. Brothers have been involved in the JRS mission from the very start. As soon as Fr Arrupe made his first appeal in 1980, *Bob Maat* (ex-Detroit), *Noel Oliver* (Pune) and *Paul Macwan* (Gujarat) went to Thailand.

The commitment of all these brothers to serving refugees is true to their calling ... to accompany forcibly displaced people, who rank among those experiencing discrimination, those deprived of dignity, those without voice or power.

Others soon followed suit. *Tom Williams* (Maryland) was one of the initiators of technical training for landmine victims in Ampil Camp at the Cambodian border, an initiative which developed into the core programme of the Jesuit Mission in Cambodia. Many others were at hand throughout Asia Pacific in those early years, like *Lionel Tremblay*, a Canadian of the China Province. Based in Hong Kong throughout the 80s, he directly supported refugees and helped the many JRS workers who came there for the Indochinese refugees. *Dinh Ngoc Tinh*, of the Australian Province, worked with JRS teams in the Hong Kong refugee camps. Two Australian brothers, *Renato Zecchin* (who later went to Pakistan as a missionary, studied theology and was ordained) and *Ian Cribb* began a work for JRS in Pulau Bidong, a Vietnamese refugee camp in Malaysia. Across the globe, in Canada, *John Masterson* worked in a house of welcome for refugees in Toronto for many years.

As JRS grew, brothers formed an integral part of its expansion worldwide. *Jan Caers*, a Belgian, (formerly) of the Eastern Africa Province, went to

Ethiopia in 1984 to help the victims of the Wallega famine. *Michael Bennett* of Oregon helped in the administration of the Eastern Africa region for several years in the late 80s. Not a few served in more than one country, such as *Fernando Breilh* of Ecuador, who went first to Thailand and later to Malawi to support Mozambican refugees through an education programme. Accompanying the refugees back home, he spent years working in Lichinga in northern Mozambique, assisting the rebuilding of the diocese after the war and helping returnees reintegrate into local communities. *Nick Johannesma* of Canada, a veteran of Bhutan and many difficult situations, went to Ethiopia in the early 90s to begin a JRS agricultural project in the north of the country.

Herbert Liebl, an Austrian from the upper German Province, first joined JRS in 1990 in Malaysia, where he helped Vietnamese unaccompanied minors. Later in Sweden as a JRS contact person, he worked with the local Caritas on refugee resettlement. Herbert then worked for some years in Zambia, going on to become the anchor-person of the JRS team in remote Cazombo, Angola, until the war forced a painful withdrawal. His delicate role supervising the team's cross-border contacts between Angola and Zambia ended abruptly once the Angolan war resumed. Having given his all to build the team and the local community, Herbert had to re-adjust to the new reality of conflict and exclusion. In later years, he worked for JRS in Liberia, where he joined a team which included *Domino Frank*, a Nigerian brother.

Joe Shubitowski of Detroit and *Martin Murphy* of Ireland were both builders. Joe helped construct solid, beautiful buildings in the Rwandan camps in Tanzania in 1995 and 1996. A few years earlier, Martin had helped to rebuild the Angonia mission in Tete Province in northern Mozambique, thus facilitating the return of the refugees coming back from Malawi.

Brothers have served as JRS directors, among them *Raúl Gonzalez* of Venezuela, who served as regional director of Latin America and as country director of Zambia. *Stephen Power* was one of two brothers who opened the British base of JRS, after working with Sudanese refugees in Port Sudan for five years. He was later appointed regional director of JRS in Eastern Africa, country director of Ethiopia and finally assistant to the JRS International Director. The other founder of JRS UK, *Bernard Elliott* has been a pioneer in the care of asylum seekers. Bernard began in the early 80s while he was minister at Heythrop College, to welcome and care for Vietnamese refugees. Then he helped Cambodians, then

Ethiopians, Angolans and whoever fled the latest disaster. He is regarded as one of the most knowledgeable persons in Britain on the practice of immigration detention.

JRS could not have such a strong base in Germany, without the careful support of *Michael Hainz*, who inspired and encouraged many even while deeply engrossed in his doctoral studies in rural sociology, and in his teaching duties at the social sciences faculty in Munich. A French brother, *Jean-Paul Wihlm*, while not formally part of JRS, worked both as a nurse and in the administration of the French Red Cross, welcoming refugees to France over many years and helping them to settle. *Alessandro Brusacoram*, who died suddenly at the end of 1998, spent several nights a week helping at Centro Astalli, the JRS programme of the Italian Province which Fr Arrupe himself initiated. *René Maurage* of Verviers in the South Belgian Province has for long years helped asylum seekers with advice and social assistance. *Saviour Mifsud* has cooperated with JRS in Malta since its inception there, and *Paul Spiteri* as minister of Loyola House in Naxxar, Malta has been a great support in welcoming refugees.

The commitment of all these brothers to serving refugees is true to their calling as defined by Decree 7 of GC 34, to be *deeply involved in the struggle for faith and that struggle for justice which it includes, contributing to every kind of material and technical work at the service of the apostolate and of the body of the Society*. Many have willingly made themselves available to accompany forcibly displaced people, who rank among *those experiencing discrimination, those deprived of dignity, those without voice or power*.

Mark Raper SJ, JRS International Director, 1990 - 2000

I was a stranger and you took me in

There are currently some 50 million forcibly displaced people, 80% of whom are women and children. The problem is getting worse. The global refugee population increased from five million in 1980 to 15 million today, that is people who have fled their countries of origin.

Too frequently these refugees end up in immigration detention centres. Their fate is a symptom of the international community's incapacity or unwillingness to manage migration, for which refugees pay a high price: their freedom.

The number of internally displaced people (IDPs) – who do not leave their country – has also increased exponentially. In 1999, IDPs were registered in 40 countries as opposed to just five in the 1970s. Today there are some 24 million internally displaced people in the world, particularly in Colombia and Sudan. It is often more difficult to assist IDPs than refugees, especially when their displacement is continuous, caused by prolonged conflict, when the government is the aggressor, and when armed groups are active.

The true history of wars around the world can be read on the faces of refugees. Entire generations in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe have known only life in a refugee camp. Communities are dependent on aid, cultures are eroded, and education is hard to come by. Hopelessness sets in, human dignity is sorely tested. To be a refugee means to live on the edge of society, socially and politically marginalised.

The experience of JRS consistently reveals that we have much to learn
from refugees

Refugees long to return home, but have nothing to do in the meantime. How can we accompany refugees and enable them to rebuild their lives? The challenge is to establish a relationship without creating dependency.

God in exile

Suffering can undermine our belief in a merciful and compassionate God. Seeing and experiencing evil hurts us profoundly. We ask: *where is God in all this?*

The Bible shows us that more than 2,500 years ago, women and men were asking the same questions. The Israelites suffered war, violence, hunger, persecution and exile. Apart from the Exodus of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land, the People of Israel were exiled twice more. In exile, Israel deepened its knowledge of God, and that experience serves as an inspiration for those working among refugees today.

We cannot be indifferent to the plight of refugees. The prophet Isaiah spoke to the exiled Jewish community in Babylon: *But Zion says: 'The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me'. Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will never forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands* (Is 49:14-16). This is the key experience which must nurture our spiritual life: God is with us. A Burundian widow from Lukole camp in western Tanzania once said: *God understands us because He has also lost a son.*

Opening our hearts

Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me (Mt 25:34-35).

Hostility comes from ignorance, hospitality from openness. Hostility towards strangers is born in a heart with barriers, hardened and incapable of seeing richness in diversity. The collective hostility of the western world can be healed by learning from hospitality in other cultures. The shift from hostility to hospitality happens when one experiences welcome, this gift of opening oneself to the reality of an individual or a family of refugees.

John Paul II, in his 1998 Lenten message, reiterates that where there is greater hostility, there is all the more need of welcome: *This climate of welcome is even more necessary because nowadays we witness diverse forms of rejection of the other. This is seen in the serious problem of millions of refugees and the exiled, in the phenomenon of racial intolerance towards those whose only "fault" is looking for work and improving their living conditions outside their own country, in the fear of whatever is different and therefore perceived as a threat.*

Accompanying refugees offers us Christians a special opportunity to reach out to people from other religions. More than half of today's refugees are Muslims. The welcome we offer is the gauge of our faith.

The person at the centre

If a stranger lives with you in your land, do not molest him. You must count him as one of your countrymen and love him as yourself – for you were once strangers yourselves in Egypt. (Leviticus 19:33-34)

There is no such thing as an impersonal mass of immigrants or refugees. Behind the cold statistics is a person with a unique story. It is easy to be discouraged at the sight of an enormous refugee camp which shelters 200,000 people, as in western Tanzania. But then it is easy for hope and solidarity to emerge when talking to a refugee who shares his or her feelings and life. One JRS worker described accompaniment as a *treasure* full of surprises.

The service of the Church to the refugees is rooted in a sacred reality: every person is created in the image of God, and deserves to be treated as such. The public perception is often radically different. We continually hear media alerts about 'invasions of immigrants'. Differentiating between voluntary and forced migration is becoming more difficult than ever, between those who flee death and persecution, and those who flee misery and social injustice. Europe is busy creating a fortress and governments are sceptical of asylum claims.

We have the responsibility to find out what is happening in other parts of the world. Little appears on our television screens about the armed conflicts and consequent displacement marking every region. If we try to understand the causes, maybe irrational fears of 'mass invasion' will diminish.

Learning from refugees

We had a house, land, a car... They burned our home because we are Tamils. We fled to the north of Sri Lanka. I sold all my jewellery. We would have lost our sanity were it not for our faith and the Eucharist. Now we don't have much, but at least we are alive.

The woman who said this teaches us much about hope and courage, which comes from a deep experience of God. The experience of JRS consistently reveals that we have much to learn from refugees, from their solidarity and generosity. Although they have lost almost everything, they cling to a dogged determination to live and to restore their dignity. *In our work, we see the best and the worst of man, but life is stronger than death*, says Fr Mateo Aguirre, JRS West Africa regional director.

Hoping against hope

I know the plans I have in mind for you – it is Yahweh who speaks – plans for peace not disaster, reserving a future full of hope for you... I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have dispersed you. I will bring you back to the place from which I exiled you. (Jer. 29:11,14)

There is no better gift for people in exile than the hope of peace, wrote Miriam, a refugee from Africa. To take away a person's hope is a dreadful thing for without hope, the human spirit dies. To do all we can to keep hope alive, to be grateful for the gifts of each day, to add the spice of joy to life in exile: these are the tasks God entrusts to us.

God's Chosen People wanted to follow Him while they were in the desert in search of the Promised Land. Work with refugees is a parallel spiritual journey, of refugees and others who seek a land of peace and justice, and of those who join them in their mission of rebuilding humanity.

Lluís Magriñà SJ, JRS International Director, 2000 - 2007

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to accompany
to serve
to advocate

