



EVERYBODY'S CHALLENGE

Essential Documents of Jesuit Refugee Service
1980 - 2000



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Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation with a mission to accompany, serve and plead the cause of refugees and forcibly displaced people. Set up by the Society of Jesus in 1980 and now at work in over 50 countries, the priority of JRS is to accompany refugees whose needs are more urgent or forgotten.

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Mark Raper SJ/JRS

Liberia 2000 JRS closed its work with Liberian refugees at the end of 1999. Ongoing programs were handed over to a new local NGO. JRS accompanied Liberian refugees in exile for five years, returning with them to Liberia in 1998.

Introduction

...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 countries and the universal Society could do to bring at least some relief to such a tragic situation...

Fr Pedro Arrupe's letter, *The Society of Jesus and the Refugee Problem*, 14 November 1980

The perilous journeys to exile of the Vietnamese boat people deeply moved Fr Pedro Arrupe. Although the Vietnam War ended in 1975, it was not until 1979 that great numbers of people began to leave the country, most making clandestine, risky journeys at sea. Fr Arrupe, then General of the Society of Jesus, appealed to some Jesuit Provincials for practical assistance. The spontaneous and generous 'first wave of action' provoked him to reflect on how much more the Society could do if its responses to this, and other contemporary crises of forced human displacement, were planned and coordinated.

From that initial sentiment has grown a world wide service to forcibly displaced people. On 14 November 1980, Fr Arrupe announced the birth of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). Coincidentally, it was his own birthday too. It is also the feast of the saintly Joseph Pignatelli, himself made a refugee several times, who gathered and supported so many exiled and dispirited fellow Jesuits during their Suppression.

This present booklet, gathering essential documents of the first 20 years of JRS, also serves to record this same step-by-step process, repeated by JRS workers over and again across the world during these past years. Moved with compassion at the plight of so many displaced people, Jesuit Refugee Service members, who are Jesuits, religious and lay people, have undertaken new initiatives, reflected anew on these experiences, and planned new actions. Each time, JRS calls again on a wide network of friends and companions to join

in this service. As one JRS group reflected in 1985, *We believe this call is not for ourselves alone.*

The Jesuit Refugee Service, for Fr Arrupe, was *everybody's challenge*. *The mandate given to JRS is a grace and responsibility for us all*, said Fr Kolvenbach in his letter on the 20th anniversary. Arrupe wanted the JRS to be a *switchboard* between offers of help and opportunities for service. He was sure that the Society could rely on the cooperation of its own members and communities, not only on the parishes, schools and other institutions under its care, but also on many friends such as religious congregations and lay movements. He has been proved right. Many JRS projects involve the collaboration of hundreds of volunteers, lay, religious and Jesuits. Yet even now, 20 years later, not all *the possibilities the Society already has and could have in the future...* have yet been exhausted.

The Society could make a *specific contribution*, Arrupe felt, not only to the refugees, but to a world in need of healing. He talked about this on 6 August 1981 to JRS workers in Bangkok. It turned out to be his last talk as General, since he suffered a cerebral stroke that very night while flying back to Rome. It was Hiroshima Day. Don Pedro had experienced that explosion and had tended its victims, since he lived a few kilometres from the epicentre of the blast, but was sheltered by a small hill. He compared refugee crises to the nuclear bomb, which harms not only its direct victims, but also explodes on the imagination of the world. Such a weapon is a crime against humanity. By being present to the victims, he explained, we join with those who seek to rebuild humanity. Serving those whom we see in need, we serve also the kingdom of God. *God is calling us through these... people*, he said.

One part of our work is the direct welcome we offer to the refugees. Another task is to reflect on what message refugees have for our world and to help our societies to become more sensitive to the changing needs of the foreigners in our land.

Even in the short 20 years of the life of JRS, the profile and needs of refugees and forcibly displaced people have changed a lot. For this reason the mission of JRS needs to be clear and the criteria for putting it into practice need to be well understood. *Refugee* is in fact an imprecise term applied to a diverse range of people.

Over these last 20 years, the number of conflicts of a religious or ethnic nature have increased, and so have their victims. In addition,

today the pressure for migration is a predominant characteristic of the interaction between states. But despite the growth of a global market, in which states are more open to the free flow of commodities, they nonetheless place increasing restrictions on the movement of peoples. In this context there is a world-wide growth in criminal human trafficking by which many refugees are doubly punished. They must pay cash in order to enjoy their fundamental human right of asylum. And as a result they are frequently seen as 'illegal'.

Fortunately, Catholic social teaching uses a broad understanding of who is a refugee. Yet while the needs of refugees differ according to their countries of origin or of asylum, or because of the reasons for which they left home, the pastoral and human response of JRS remains consistent.

Moreover, as Fr Peter-Hans Kolvenbach remarked in his *Review of Jesuit Refugee Service* in 1990, this response of JRS is *typically Ignatian*. It is similar to what Ignatius and his early companions actually did in response to a crisis of homelessness and poverty in the Roman winter of 1938.

This book gathers key documents that record the inspiration and the mission given to Jesuit Refugee Service by the Society of Jesus. It is a tool that will help JRS to develop the services it offers *for today and the future*. In new circumstances of refugees, the responses of JRS must also be creative. JRS workers are to be like the good scribe of the Gospel (Mt 13:52), making use of the old things and adding new elements.

Mark Raper SJ,
International Director, Jesuit Refugee Service, 1990-2000



Mario Almeida SJ/JRS

Albania 1999 The mass flight of ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo in 1999 drew widespread international attention. JRS worked with the refugees in Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania.

The JRS Charter and Guidelines

There are over 45 million refugees and displaced persons in today's world, 80 per cent of whom are women and children. Often lodged in the poorest of countries, they face growing impoverishment, loss of a sense of life and culture, with consequent hopelessness and despair. 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.

General Congregation 34, no. 16

20 years of JRS

Letter sent by Fr General, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ, to the whole Society on 24 March 2000

In November 2000 the Jesuit Refugee Service marks 20 years since its launch by Fr Pedro Arrupe. Today no person or nation can be unaware of the millions of people driven by force from their homes. The Society's response to their pressing needs has lost none of its apostolic value.

In the year before his debilitating stroke, Fr Arrupe devoted much energy to nurturing JRS, hoping to stimulate both a spiritual and a practical response by the whole Society to the refugees of his time. He saw JRS as providing this response and as the best way to co-ordinate Jesuit efforts across the world.

In 1983 the 33rd General Congregation (GC) showed special concern for millions of refugees seeking a permanent home. So too in 1995, GC 34 called urgent attention to *over 45 million refugees and displaced persons in today's world... Often lodged in the poorest countries, they face growing impoverishment, loss of a sense of life and culture, with consequent hopelessness and despair*. GC 34 explicitly affirmed the JRS as one means by which the Society fulfils its mission to promote justice and has to be considered, with so many other charity and development activities, a real social involvement in the spirit of the Society.

JRS workers have expressed the need to clarify and revise the organisation's procedures and criteria. The requests to JRS are growing, and it constantly faces new and changing situations. The new Charter and Guidelines of JRS give clarity for its identity and mission, and state criteria by which JRS decides where and how to intervene and to serve displaced people. Moreover JRS needed to overcome the difficulties created by poorly defined relationships with Major Superiors.

So it seems appropriate to ratify the mission of JRS as an international apostolic work forming part of the social apostolate of the Society of Jesus. The Charter and accompanying Guidelines have been developed following wide consultation. Drawing on 20 years of experience in the field and in partnership with other agencies,

the two documents distil much of what JRS has learned from our co-workers and from refugees themselves.

The Charter makes explicit the mission of JRS: to accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced people. It provides criteria for choosing projects, and outlines the ways of proceeding preferred by JRS. The new Guidelines, replacing those of 1987, detail methods of work appropriate to JRS, as well as the new organisational structure and the role and responsibilities of the Major Superior vis-à-vis JRS. The Guidelines deal with JRS membership, indicating how people are selected for JRS work and what support they can expect to receive. Helpful directives are restated concerning the recruitment of scholastics and brothers to JRS during regency.

Promulgating the new Charter and Guidelines has also made it possible for me to establish the juridical status of JRS as a work of the Society both under Canon Law and also – we hope soon – under civil law. I am confident that the Charter and Guidelines will assist all of us Jesuits to comprehend better this work of the whole Society and participate more fully in its mission.

In October this year Fr Lluís Magriñà will take up his appointment as International Director of JRS, replacing Fr Mark Raper who has held this post since 1990. I ask you to offer Fr Magriñà the same generous support and co-operation that you have given to Fr Raper during these past 10 years.

Fr Lluís Magriñà belongs to the Province of Catalunya. He has already held quite important responsibilities in the Society's apostolate: General Director of Intermón, Barcelona (1980-1995), JRS in Bukavu, in the then Zaire (1995-1996), Education Delegate in the Catalunya Province (1997-2000).

It will be difficult to imagine the JRS without Fr Mark Raper's competent and generous commitment. Very faithful to the original inspiration of Fr Pedro Arrupe, yet always open to new challenges and to new ways to advocate and help the cause of the poorest of the poor who are the refugees, he succeeded in being personally present where the need was most urgent and to foster a real partnership among all the volunteers – Jesuit and others. He exercised an inspiring leadership always in service of the increasing number of refugees everywhere. In gratitude for all this, may the Lord's grace continue to light his path and bless him in his new ministry. To his successor

I wish all the courage and strength which he will need in his responsibility for the JRS, 20 years old and so young in generosity and initiatives.

Given the growing numbers of people currently on the move, and the increasingly complex causes of their displacement, I echo the appeal of GC 34 *to all Provinces to support Jesuit Refugee Service in every way possible*. The mandate given to JRS is a grace and a responsibility for us all: *In companionship with Jesus Christ and serving his mission in the midst of refugees, JRS can be an effective sign of God's love and reconciliation. The biblical welcome offered to the widow, the orphan and the stranger is the JRS model of authentic pastoral service.*

The JRS Charter

Feast of St Joseph, Rome, 19 March 2000

1. The mission of the Jesuit Refugee Service is intimately connected with the mission of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), namely to serve faith and promote the justice of God's Kingdom, in dialogue with cultures and religions. As one of St Ignatius Loyola's early companions wrote: *The Society cares for those persons who are totally neglected or inadequately attended to. This is the basic reason why the Society was founded; this is its power; this is what makes it distinctive in the Church*¹. St Ignatius personally gave shelter to the homeless of Rome and established organisations to continue these services. Many of his followers have responded to the pressing social needs of their own times.

2. Jesuit Refugee Service [JRS] was established in 1980 by Fr Pedro Arrupe, then Superior General of the Society of Jesus. JRS was designed as a spiritual and practical response to the plight of refugees at that time, and to coordinate Jesuit efforts². Given the increased incidence of forced displacement in the 1980s and 1990s, the Society of Jesus has several times restated its commitment to refugees.

3. In 1983, calling for a *review of all our ministries, traditional and*

1) Jerome Nadal, MSHI, V.90-2, p. 126

2) *The Society of Jesus and the Refugee Problem*, letter of Pedro Arrupe SJ to all Jesuit Major Superiors, 14 November 1980. The aims and activities of JRS were initially set down by Fr Arrupe as:

- (a) to set up a network of contacts within the Society so that existing work for refugees can be better planned and coordinated;
- (b) to collect information that might lead to new opportunities for assistance to refugees;
- (c) to act as a switchboard between offers of help from Provinces and the needs of international agencies and organisations;
- (d) to conscientise the Society about the importance of this apostolate and the different forms it can take both within the countries of first asylum and the receiving countries;
- (e) to direct the special attention of the Society towards those groups or areas that receive little publicity or help from elsewhere;
- (f) to encourage our publications and institutes of learning to undertake research into the root causes of the refugee problem so that preventive action can be taken.

new³, the 33rd General Congregation reaffirmed the Society's concern for refugees. The Congregation urged the Society to take note of critically urgent concerns, among them *the sad plight of millions of refugees searching for a permanent home, a situation brought to our special attention by Fr Arrupe*.⁴

4. The mission of JRS, and its service to *refugees and displaced people*, were confirmed by Fr General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach in a letter to the whole Society in 1990. *Our service to refugees is an apostolic commitment of the whole Society, and in particular of those Provinces where the refugees come from, where they seek protection and first refuge, and where they finally settle. In the local context, the role of the JRS is to help our Provinces initiate and develop this work in collaboration with other Church and secular organisations, voluntary and governmental, which are active in the same field*.⁵

5. In 1995, the 34th General Congregation drew attention to several critical situations, among them *over 45 million refugees and displaced persons in today's world, 80 per cent of whom are women and children. Often lodged in the poorest of countries, they face growing impoverishment, loss of a sense of life and culture, with consequent hopelessness and despair*.⁶

6. In 1997, Pope John Paul II stated, *The Church looks with deep pastoral concern at the increased flow of migrants and refugees, and questions herself about the causes of this phenomenon and the particular conditions of those who are forced for various reasons to leave their homeland. In fact the situation of the world's migrants and refugees seems ever more precarious. Violence sometimes obliges entire populations to leave their homeland to escape repeated atrocities; more frequently, it is poverty and the lack of prospects for development which spur individuals and families to go into exile, to seek ways to survive in distant lands, where it is not easy to find a suitable welcome*.⁷

7. The 34th General Congregation affirmed JRS as one means by

3) GC 33, 1983, no. 39 (Note: A General Congregation is the highest decision making body in the Society of Jesus.)

4) GC 33, 1983, no. 45

5) *Review of the Jesuit Refugee Service*, letter of Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ, to the whole Society, 14 February 1990

6) GC 34, 1995, Decree 3, *Our Mission and Justice*, no. 65

7) Pope John Paul II, *Message on World Migration Day*, November 1997

which the Society fulfils its mission to serve faith and promote justice: *The Jesuit Refugee Service accompanies many of these brothers and sisters of ours, serving them as companions, advocating their cause in an uncaring world.*⁸

8. The mission given to JRS embraces all persons who are driven from their homes by conflict, humanitarian disaster or violation of human rights, following Catholic social teaching which applies the expression *de facto refugee* to many related categories of people.⁹

9. JRS, therefore, is an international Catholic organisation whose mission is to accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced people. JRS facilitates the involvement of individuals and communities, promotes regional and global cooperation and networking on behalf of refugees. JRS undertakes services at national and regional levels with the support of an international office in Rome.

10. JRS shares in the Church's response at the parish, diocesan and international levels. *By her nature, the Church is in solidarity with the world of migrants who, with their variety of languages, races, cultures and customs, remind her of her own condition as a people on pilgrimage from every part of the earth to their final homeland.*¹⁰

11. JRS is a work of the Society of Jesus, namely, a work whereby the Society carries out its mission¹¹, through which it manifests Ignatian values and for which in various ways it assumes ultimate

8) GC 34, 1995, Decree 3, *Our Mission and Justice*, no. 65

9) The term refugee is defined by the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951. Since this definition refers only to individuals in fear of persecution, regional organisations in both Africa (OAU 1969) and Latin America (OAS 1984) have developed definitions which more accurately cover the mass displacements resulting from the social collapse consequent on conflicts and human rights abuse. *Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity*, (Pontifical Council Cor Unum, and Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, 1992), applies the expression *de facto refugee* to *all persons persecuted because of race, religion, membership in social or political groups; to the victims of armed conflicts, erroneous economic policy or natural disasters; and for humanitarian reasons* to internally displaced persons, that is, civilians who are forcibly uprooted from their homes by the same type of violence as refugees but who do not cross national frontiers.

10) Message of John Paul II for the 85th World Migration Day, 1999, no. 2

11) Constitutions, Part VII, no. 622, no. 623

responsibility. The 34th General Congregation appealed to *all Provinces to support Jesuit Refugee Service in every way possible*.¹²

12. JRS forms part of the Society's social apostolate, expressed in the Characteristics of the Jesuit Social Apostolate. The social apostolate arises from the very nature and mission of the Society of Jesus. Its aim is *to build, by means of every human endeavour, a fuller expression of justice and charity into the structures of human life in common*.¹³ The Characteristics provide criteria for planning and evaluating JRS activities.

13. Within the Ignatian spirit, JRS welcomes the involvement of lay persons and cooperation and partnership with religious congregations. *All those engaged in the work [of JRS] should exercise co-responsibility and be engaged in discernment and participative decision-making where it is appropriate*.¹⁴

14. The criteria that JRS uses to select areas and activities are drawn from Part VII of the Jesuit Constitutions, concerning the mission of the Society of Jesus and its choice of activities.¹⁵ JRS gives priority to situations of great need, to places where a more universal good may be achieved, and to needs that others are not attending to. JRS chooses situations where it can make a special contribution because of its own expertise, because a partner is already established there, or because its initiative can enable others to become involved.

15. To accompany refugees is to affirm that God is present in human history, even in most tragic episodes. Jesus as an infant fled with his family into exile. During his public life, he went about doing good and healing the sick, with nowhere to lay his head. Finally he suffered torture and death on the cross. In companionship with Jesus Christ and serving his mission in the midst of refugees, JRS can be an effective sign of God's love and reconciliation. The biblical welcome offered to the widow, the orphan and the stranger is the JRS model of authentic pastoral service.

12) GC 34, 1995, Decree 3, *Our Mission and Justice*, no. 65

13) Constitutions, Complementary Norms, Part VII, 7. Social Apostolate, no. 298 - 302

14) GC 34, 1995, Decree 13, *Co-operation with the Laity*, no. 343

15) Constitutions, Part VII, no. 622, no. 623

Guidelines of the JRS

Introductory notes

1. These Guidelines describe how the JRS Charter is to be implemented. They were approved by Fr General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach on 19 March, 2000.¹

2. JRS is an international Catholic organisation² with a mission to accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced people. JRS facilitates involvement by individuals and communities, and promotes regional and global cooperation and networking on behalf of refugees. JRS offers services at regional and national levels, supported by an international centre in Rome.

3. These Guidelines are intended to clarify the organisational framework of JRS, its strategies and methods of work. They are designed to help everyone involved to know their roles and tasks.

A. JRS methods and strategies

Choice of activities and style of service of JRS

4. When selecting projects, JRS uses criteria found in Part VII of the Jesuit Constitutions, for choosing ministries that match the overall Jesuit mission.³ JRS opts to work in situations of great need, in places where a more universal good may be served, where people's needs are not being met by others, and where it has a special contribution to make. JRS works where it is likely to be effective by reason of previous experience, or because JRS or the wider Society or a partner agency has already established a base, or because a JRS initiative could help mobilise others. More detailed criteria and procedures are drawn from experience and are documented in manuals.

1) These Guidelines replace the former JRS Guidelines approved by Father General in 1987.

2) On 19 March 2000, JRS was given a juridic personality as a pious, autonomous foundation in accord with Canon Law, and recognised by the Vatican.

3) Jesuit Constitutions [no. 622, no. 623]; Cf. GC 34, 1995, Decree 6, no. 168

5. JRS gives priority to accompaniment and pastoral presence among refugees and forcibly displaced persons. Services are tailored to meet local needs according to the resources available. No mode of assistance is excluded, but JRS normally offers services that are direct and personal. These include programs of pastoral care, various kinds of education for children and adults, social services and counselling, and health care.

6. JRS opts for a personal style of presence, and deliberately keeps its administrative structure as light as possible. JRS is not normally equipped to undertake large-scale emergency or infrastructure projects.

7. JRS uses many channels to advocate refugee causes. Preferred methods of pursuing advocacy are partnerships with Jesuit social institutes and centres of research, and also with human rights organisations. Advocacy is a vital element of the JRS mission.

Cooperation and partnership

8. JRS works in coordination with local Jesuit Provinces and with Jesuit institutions and personnel.

9. Before setting up projects, JRS seeks to coordinate its activities and resources with those of existing groups, including local parishes and dioceses, religious communities and research institutes.

10. Where possible, JRS facilitates the involvement of individuals, institutions and communities in serving refugees according to their capacities and talents.

11. JRS seeks to work in collaboration with the local Church, always respecting the relationship of the Society with local Church officials.

12. *JRS joins efforts with other international institutions and organisations to combat the injustices which uproot peoples from their land and families*,⁴ cooperating with UNHCR and international agencies and NGOs working in the interests of refugees.

4) GC 34, 1995, Decree 3, *Our Mission and Justice*, no. 65

Cooperation with religious congregations

13. JRS may opt to join or support the initiative of another congregation, or take part in joint projects with other religious congregations.

14. In every cooperative venture, JRS encourages religious congregations and their members to serve refugees according to their charism.

Terminating or withdrawing from projects

15. Once a refugee situation is judged no longer to require the intervention of JRS, a program may be closed. Alternatively, the program may be transferred to the local Jesuit Province, if its capacity and willingness are evident. The project may be handed over to the local Church, or to an international or local agency (see 19, b and 20, b).

B. Modalities of the Society's service to refugees

16. The Society of Jesus exercises ultimate responsibility for JRS.

17. *The General Congregation appeals to all Provinces to support the Jesuit Refugee Service in every way possible,*⁵ and JRS very much relies on that support.

18. The commitment of the whole Society to JRS may be expressed and organised in various ways, according to the principles in nos 19, 20 and 21.

The international JRS

19. In areas of acute or pressing refugee need, or where the local Jesuit Province lacks sufficient resources or, because of other demands, cannot offer service to the refugees:

- a. The JRS, as an international agency, has the capacity to respond quickly, flexibly and with autonomy, as an approved body of the Society.
- b. The decision to undertake or to terminate such activities is made by the JRS International Director after dialogue with the Provincial(s) in the region.

5) Ibid.

- c. A written understanding or a partnership agreement will be arranged with the local Provincial(s), setting out priorities and the way JRS is to operate in that Province or region.
- d. Such programs and regions of the international JRS report directly to the International Director and are supported by the international office.

Local or autonomous JRS programs

20. In other areas, where the needs are not so overwhelming, or when the Province or Assistancy has the resources to undertake programs of service:

- a. Provinces and Assistantcies may undertake a JRS project, assume responsibility for it and assign personnel to it.
- b. Programs using the JRS name should only be undertaken or terminated after consultation between the Provincial and the JRS International Director, formalised in a written agreement.
- c. Such programs will be supported by the international office.

Non-JRS programs serving refugees

21. Each Jesuit institution and individual Jesuit, together with their collaborators, is urged to take initiatives in support of refugees. If an agreement has not been reached with JRS, responsibility for the initiative lies wholly with the one who undertakes the project. The JRS name and logo should not be used unless written permission is first obtained from the International Director. Nonetheless JRS, through its international and regional offices, is available to advise, encourage and, if necessary, co-ordinate such projects.

C. The organisational structure of JRS

The International Director

22. The International Director of JRS, who must be a Jesuit, is appointed by the Superior General of the Society and is accountable to him directly. The International Director serves for an indefinite term, normally not more than eight years. His responsibilities include promoting the Society's refugee ministry and providing the necessary leadership. He is responsible for all apostolates that carry the JRS name. He represents JRS in relation to other Church and international agencies. He determines the boundaries of JRS regions and must give approval before regional offices are established.

The council of the International Director

23. The International Director is advised by a Council of three or four Jesuits, who are his consultors. They are appointed by the Superior General and serve for unspecified terms. Together with the International Director, they also serve as the administrative board of the Jesuit Refugee Service Foundation.

The international office

24. The International Director heads the international JRS office at the Curia of the Society. He appoints staff and consultants, assigning to each a clear role and function.

Regional Directors

25. The Regional Director's position may be filled by a Jesuit, a religious or a lay person. Regional Directors are appointed in one of two ways, depending on kinds of the programs they direct. The procedures for these appointments will be detailed in a written agreement with Jesuit Major Superiors for that region.

26. The first mode of appointment is one initiated by the international JRS (cf. 19. above). Father General, in consultation with the International Director and the relevant Provincial(s) or Regional Superiors, appoints a Regional Director who is directly accountable to the International Director, while also maintaining close relationships with the local Jesuit Provincial(s).

27. In this case, the Regional Director is responsible for JRS activities in the region, including setting up and closing down projects; also for recruitment, orientation, placement, support and termination of workers; for preparing funding applications, evaluating and reporting on work done; for public relations; for maintaining the profile of JRS in the region and developing good relations with the local Jesuit Province(s), and also with Church and civil authorities; and for communications, research and public education concerning the needs of refugees in the region.

28. The second mode of appointment applies when a Provincial or Conference of Provincials is responsible for a JRS regional program (cf. 20 above). Here the initiative in appointing a Regional Director

lies with the Provincial or Conference, though the appointment must receive approval from the International Director. Depending on the terms of appointment, such Regional Directors may be given responsibilities similar to those listed in no. 27.

International meetings of Regional Directors

29. The International Director meets formally with the Regional Directors at least once a year to exchange experiences and learn from one another. This meeting is important in assisting the International Director to implement the JRS mission and manage the international organisation.

Planning, reporting & accountability

30. All JRS Regional Directors, however appointed, are to consult with the International Director when establishing priorities and programs. Major projects require a written plan approved in advance by the International Director. Authority to raise funds in the name of JRS belongs to the International Director, who may delegate this authority. Regional Directors must request permission before undertaking any new fund-raising. They should send the International Director an annual narrative and financial report covering all activities in their region undertaken in the name of JRS.

31. The International Director normally consults Regional Directors when setting policies applying to the whole of JRS.

Flow of communication

32. Within JRS major emphasis is given to keeping lines of communication open.

33. Regional Directors are encouraged to publish regular bulletins, recording and analysing the experiences of refugees and of the JRS workers who accompany them.

Identity of JRS

34. In some countries, to accomplish its mission JRS must register as a non-government organisation according to law. A local NGO proposing to use the JRS name must first have its constitution approved by the International Director before submitting it to the civil authorities.

35. Approval from the Regional Director (or the International Director) is needed for a project to employ the name "Jesuit Refugee Service", "JRS", or to use the JRS logo.

Regional councils

36. Each Regional Director, whether appointed by the international JRS or appointed regionally for autonomous JRS programs, is to be supported and advised by a council. Regional Directors responsible to the international JRS should propose a list of council members to the International Director for approval and appointment. Autonomous JRS regions are to have a comparable structure, with a committee or governing board or group of consultants who meet regularly.

National and Project Directors

37. In countries where JRS has major refugee projects, Regional Directors may appoint National Directors to assist them, after consulting the International Director. National Directors report to Regional Directors, and may be Jesuit, religious or lay. They oversee the implementation of country projects. They are responsible for relations with the local Jesuit communities and other religious communities, as well as for relations with national local Church, civil authorities, local representatives of international organisations such as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and other representatives of non-government organisations. They develop staff job descriptions and care for the working, living and safety conditions of JRS personnel. They explore new needs of refugees on the national level, and promote research.

38. With the agreement of Regional Directors, National Directors may appoint Project Directors responsible for a local project and its staff. A Project Director is responsible for the JRS team's relations with the local refugee population and with local authorities.

Jesuit Province Coordinators

39. Each Jesuit Province is to have a JRS Coordinator, or Contact Person, appointed by the Provincial in consultation with the Regional Director (or if there is not one, with the International Director). The JRS Province Coordinator maintains regular contact with the Regional and International Directors and is responsible for circulating

JRS communications to the Province, recruiting new JRS workers, encouraging public concern for forcibly displaced persons, promoting services to them, and soliciting financial contributions to JRS.

D. Membership

Recruitment, assignment and dismissal of personnel

40. JRS establishes its own criteria and procedures for selection and dismissal of its personnel, whether Jesuit, religious or lay.

41. Whenever possible, JRS consults, trains and recruits refugees, and encourages them to participate in planning, implementing and reviewing projects.

42. When a religious is being recruited to JRS, a three-way agreement is normally concluded between JRS, the individual religious and his or her Major Superior, concerning the length of time and conditions governing this assignment.

Status of JRS personnel

43. JRS personnel may be either volunteers or salaried. In every case a clear and just agreement must be concluded concerning benefits and conditions, duration of service, lines of accountability and procedures for dispute resolution.

Secondment of JRS personnel to other agencies

44. JRS may second personnel to another agency. In such cases an agreement is negotiated by the relevant Regional Director with the agency concerned, and is accompanied by a written agreement with the JRS member who undertakes this assignment.

Procedure for assignment of Jesuits outside of their Province to the international JRS

45. The duration and modalities of assigning a Jesuit to JRS require agreement of the sending and receiving Provincials and the JRS Regional Director. Once a Jesuit is made available by his Provincial and is accepted by the international JRS, JRS is responsible for determining his assignment. The JRS Regional Director informs the receiving Provincial in writing, in advance, about the proposed

assignment. The receiving Provincial's agreement is then necessary before the assignment takes effect.

Scholastics on regency

46. A scholastic in formation may be missioned to JRS and accepted for refugee service during regency. The Guidelines approved by Father General in March 1987 regarding scholastics spending regency with JRS remain in place.

Status of Jesuits in JRS

47. When a Jesuit is assigned to JRS, the receiving Provincial is responsible for his personal and spiritual care (*cura personalis*). If the assignment is for a short term, the Jesuit is regarded as *residing* (*degens*). If the assignment is for two years or more, he should be considered *applied* (*applicatus*).



Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ in El Salvador, 1987

chapter two

The foundation of JRS

We walked over to the mother house of the Missionaries of Charity... Mother Teresa quietly walked into the room... we had a vigorous exchange of views... I could not accept her views on the role of Jesuits – “Continue looking after the rich, it is what you know best”... Before leaving I gave Mother Teresa a copy of the Decrees in our last General Congregation and wrote the following dedication in it: “With the request that you pray for all Jesuits that they may work with the poor and oppressed with greater love and dedication. And please pray for me that I may help them to do this in some small way.” (1976)

...Next came a two day consultation on the refugee problem for which I was directly responsible. It was attended by Fr General with six members of his Curia staff and seven Jesuits from outside who had direct experience or knowledge of refugee work... the result was the setting up of the JRS in the Curia as an adjunct to my own Secretariat. (1980)

Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ

The Society of Jesus and the refugee problem

Letter of former Fr General, Pedro Arrupe SJ, to all Jesuit Major Superiors, 14 November, 1980

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.

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. The October 15 issue of *News and Features* reported on this meeting.

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. An additional incentive might be that the kind of service required, calling for relatively short periods of time from individual Jesuits, need not, if well planned and co-ordinated, disrupt the life and progress of existing

apostolates and institutions. 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 hesitation 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.*

We spent two days looking at the considerable amount of work already being carried out in this field by the Society and considering ways in which it might be extended and better co-ordinated. We examined the possibilities the Society already has, and especially could have in the future if this work were to be developed. A fuller account of this meeting, together with examples of what Jesuits are already doing for refugees in several parts of the world, is given in the current October issue of *Promotio Justitiae* (no. 19) which will be mailed to you shortly.

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 co-ordinate Jesuit refugee work, which will henceforth be referred to as the *Jesuit Refugee Service* (JRS). For the time being the JRS will be an extension of the Social Secretariat and come under the responsibility of Fr Michael Campbell-Johnston. If, however, its work increases, the JRS may be reinforced, though primarily with collaborators in other parts of the world.

The aims and objectives of the JRS are as follows:

- a. To set up a network of contacts within the Society so that existing work for refugees can be better planned and co-ordinated;
- b. To collect information that might lead to new opportunities for assistance to refugees;
- c. To act as a switchboard between offers of help from Provinces and the needs of international agencies and organisations;
- d. To conscientise the Society about the importance of this apostolate and the different forms it can take both within countries of first asylum and receiving countries;
- e. To direct the special attention of the Society towards those groups or areas that receive little publicity or help from elsewhere;
- f. And to encourage our publications and institutes of learning to undertake research into the root causes of the refugee problem so that preventive action can be taken.

It is not intended that the JRS become a big operation. In carrying out the above task, it will endeavour to work mainly through men in the Provinces themselves. It is for this reason I am announcing this new assignment of the Social Secretariat to you, as Provincial. I shall be counting largely on you and members of your Province to support and help develop this side of its work.

As an initial step, I would like to make the following requests:

- a. To bring the contents of this letter to the attention of the members of your Province and encourage them to respond to this new call;
- b. To provide the JRS with information about any work already being undertaken for refugees in your Province and how you foresee future possibilities for extending it;
- c. To let the JRS know what services or help you would like to receive from it;
- d. To identify, if you feel this necessary, a member of your Province who could serve as a liaison with the 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.



Thailand 1985 A Cambodian woman during evacuation following an attack on refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border.

August 6 was the Feast of the Transfiguration. Sixteen of us spent all morning with Fr General discussing our apostolate to refugees. It was an excellent and at times moving meeting in which there was wide agreement that our way of proceeding should consist essentially in a ministry of presence and sharing, of being with rather than doing for. Our value system and lifestyle is different from that of professionals. From our poverty (few funds, little expertise, no transport) we were powerful and able to give the people a sense of their own worth and dignity. At the end, Fr Arrupe gave a remarkable impromptu talk, speaking of a message he would like to be his “swan song for the Society”. He spoke of his memories of the atom bomb at Hiroshima which had exploded 36 years ago that day. After a farewell meal, we accompanied him to the airport and saw him off on a direct flight to Rome. None of us would ever have imagined that this was to be his last working day as General. It was on leaving the plane and passing through Immigration at Fiumicino that he had the stroke that left him with impaired speech and partially paralysed.

Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ (1981)

Final address to Jesuits working with refugees in Thailand

Pedro Arrupe SJ, 1981

I am very happy to hear all of the information you have given. 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.

First, I want to repeat what Fr Bob Rush (the Jesuits' Regional Assistant for East Asia) was saying: I think you should be very happy with your work here. 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.

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 a 100 per cent certain. In today's world nobody can be a 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.

To come to an agreed policy you will have to face tensions, because we have different opinions. Everybody has to express his opinion and his experiences clearly. And at the end there has to be a conclusion of some kind. Perhaps someone will have to change

his opinion, or at least act according to the opinion of someone else. That is the price we have to pay.

I have learnt many things today. For example, we talked about the local Church. But we have to be the local Church. When the Society comes to work in a new area, the first reaction of others is to be wary. The Society is feared everywhere: 'These Jesuits are very shrewd. They are powerful'. As I was saying the other day at the Ateneo de Manila: we are not as bad as people say we are, nor are we as good as people think we are. We are normal in that we are not geniuses. Perhaps we have a few geniuses in the Society, but very few. Years ago, it was said that the great power the Society possesses is its well-trained mediocrity!

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 those 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.

Now to the question of a co-ordinator for the apostolate among the refugees. I think this matter has to be decided here in Thailand. It is necessary to have somebody full-time to consider all the things we have discussed. He has to be a man who can hear opinions. He cannot give first place to his own personal opinion as an individual. The situation will be very complex in the beginning. The co-ordinator has to have an ear for every one of you, and for those who come from

regions outside Thailand; for the bishops here, and for everything that is going on. After that he will consult with the superior of the place and settle the policy to be followed. He has to be a very good man, open and prudent and with courage. This is because, although he is dependent on the local superior for final decisions, he will be the one who executes the policy.

I am very happy. 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.

I will tell you something I ask myself very often: Should we give spiritual help to the guerrillas in Latin America? No, you say? Well, I cannot say no. Perhaps in the past I have. But they are men, souls, suffering. If you have a wounded person, even if he is a guerrilla you have to help him. That is the meaning of being a Good Samaritan. Is this political? People say so. But no, I am being a priest now. I am helping this poor man. I don't care if he is a guerrilla, a religious or a non-Catholic. He is a poor man. He is the poor man who is suffering.

We cannot be naive and allow ourselves to be used politically by other people. But on the other hand we need a real Christian commitment. So many in Latin America are helping other people – perhaps guerrillas among them – taking them into their homes in order to save them from being killed. Charity is one thing, principle another, and casuistry is a third. Actual cases can be very difficult to resolve.

Still, we have to be open to many things. We are close to limits here – not only to the limits of Cambodia and Thailand. We are close to the limits of morality and of our own positions. We have to be careful.

For me it was a very consoling experience to write the letter about communism and social analysis. In that letter, I said that sometimes we have to collaborate with Communists. I cited *Populorum Progressio*, paragraph 23, as a reference. Why? Because I think what it says is true. But people will be scandalised! True, but that is what the Holy Father is telling us, so I am safe.

Take the case of Ethiopia. There we have a university, once Catholic, which was taken over by a Communist government. The Holy Father has told me to send Jesuits to the University of Asmara, a Communist university. So we are collaborating with the Commu-

nists by order of the Holy Father. Wonderful! We are not going there because we think we can influence many people in Ethiopia. We are going without supporting any Communist ideology.

Situations such as these are very difficult and complicated. Everything must be done with great discernment. It is not enough to have a great idea one day and go straight ahead and act on it. No, that could be very bad – unless the person in question is a prophetic servant inspired with a wonderful idea. The mixture of prophecy and prudence, security and risk, makes for complex situations. In Thailand you are in one of the hottest spots in this regard. Courage, please!

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 (seated, left) at Centro Astalli, Rome. Jesuit Father General between 1965-1983, Fr Arrupe set up the Jesuit Refugee Service in 1980. It was, he said, his *swan song to the Society*.

On 26 December, with the help of numerous religious, we organised a Christmas dinner in the Centro Astalli for some 110 refugees. It was a joyous occasion crowned by a visit from Fr Arrupe whom I drove from the Curia. He was warmly applauded and deeply moved. He spoke a few words which, though difficult to understand and translate, conveyed his feelings.

Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ (1982)

What Don Pedro had in mind when he invited the Society to work with refugees

Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ

One evening in 1979, the General Assistants were in an informal meeting and began to discuss the plight of the boat people. This was seen by Fr Arrupe as a challenge for the Society. Next day he wrote 20 telegrams to various Provincials of Asia and countries where refugees might one day settle, particularly in the US and Europe, and as you know the response was quite incredible and unexpected. Immediately offers of help arrived to the Curia – financial help, offers of people to volunteer for the camps, volunteers for countries of second arrival, to influence media on problems of refugees. It was a very encouraging reply.

The initial Consultation

Shortly after, Fr Arrupe called me in and asked me to arrange a Consultation as to what could be a more organised response to the problem of refugees. This Consultation took place on 15 and 16 September 1980. Fr Josep Sugrañes was also there at that meeting. The meeting was attended by Fr General, and five Assistants, as well as five people outside the Curia who had refugee experience. We considered four important questions at that meeting.

Why get involved?

The first question was, why should we get involved at all? Fr Arrupe answered this himself. He focused on two points especially. Many years before, he said, he was considering if the Society should not do something for refugees and immigrants. He also mentioned a meeting held in the Curia where he and the Assistants met with Robert McNamara of the World Bank, Dr Peccei of the Club of Rome, Sergeant Shriver of the Peace Corps, and others. McNamara told Fr

Arrupe privately that solutions to the fact that 600 million people lived in absolute poverty and that 15,000 people died each day, were possible, but no country would give up its privileges. This made a deep impression on Arrupe. It was, he believed, unacceptable.

For me, this is a good example of the way Fr Arrupe wanted to meet with others who understood world problems and solutions.

The Jesuit tradition

At that first JRS meeting, Fr Arrupe quoted from the Jesuits Formula of the Institute and from the commentary on it by Fr Polanco, the first secretary of the Society: *The provision of doctrine and instruction should be preferred to that of food and clothes unless there is urgent need such as hunger, in which case we must insist on trying to remedy it.* For the early Society, preference was to be given to the corporal works in times of catastrophe. So in our day, refugee work must be a priority for the Society.

Fr Arrupe then gave more reasons, referring to the Jesuit General Congregations 31 and 32. Our option for the poor and the voiceless directs us to the refugees who are the least of all in the sense of Matthew 25. The Society is everywhere and has information covering the whole world. We are already in contact with international organisations and are well situated. We speak a lot about insertion – here is an excellent opportunity. We can help with the complexities of the problems through our many institutions.

He went on to consider other factors: Such work will be a great help in developing our own spirit of poverty when we see so many suffering so much. This work will give us credibility by showing we are ready to suffer with the people. He ended by saying the following: *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 for the Society.*

What are we already doing?

The second point we considered was: What are we already doing? Each Regional Assistant reported what was being done in his Assistancy. A great amount was being done especially in Asia. Fr Pittau collected money in the streets of Tokyo for the camps in Thai-

land. Fr Mark Raper of the Asian Bureau had been especially active on the plight of refugees from East Timor. Fr Robert Drinan was also very concerned with the question of refugees. He took part in a fact finding mission to the southeast Asia camps. A very good article was published in *America* on that visit. Fr Dieter Scholz had been directing the Zimbabwe project from London. There was a project to help Botswana and Mozambique.

So nine examples of what was already being done were mentioned, because we realised that to encourage others, it was best to show what we were already doing. I would like to take three examples from those nine.

Three examples

The first example is that of Fr Nigel Johnston from Zimbabwe who did a tertianship placement in a refugee camp near Solwezi, in northwest Zambia. *It is clear that the most valuable thing I do is to live at the camp in a tent and share the life of the camp. This is quite different from the normal thing of people visiting the camp, organising things very efficiently, providing food, medicines, various services, going around taking photographs which no one ever sees again, and then going away until they turn up another day.*

The same point was made by Fr Patrick Moloney, the then Vice-Provincial for Zimbabwe, after visiting Solwezi: *Nigel is here totally at home in the rough conditions of the camp, living the same life, eating the same food, sharing as much as possible the same joys and sorrows and sufferings of the 8,000 boys about him.*

A second example is that of two American Jesuits, one working in Korea, Fr Kevin Kersten, the other in Taiwan, Fr Jerry Martinson. In 1979 they visited camps in Thailand, and this visit was described by an Ursuline sister, Sr Mary Robert Perillat, in a letter she wrote to the editor of *Asian Report*. Describing the poor medical facilities in the camp, and the fear and anxiety of the Cambodians in the camp, she went on to report that *...Into that scene walked our two smiling, mimicking, singing and strumming Jesuits, effecting the miracle that helped transform Sae Keow from a camp of interned refugees burdened with sorrow to a crowd of smiling and then laughing men, women and children. Gradually the fun-loving Cambodian soul found itself once again and the crowd began to clap in rhythm and sing along. No matter that the words*

were strange. I was singing, and that is what counted. After each session a new spirit filled the air. People began to look at one another and smile.

My final example comes from Fr Gildo Dominici, then working in Galang, Indonesia. He described his experience this way: *Working in a refugee camp is often hard and physically tiring. And the attitudes of the refugee do not always help. He is a person who has lost everything, uprooted from his culture and social background, and therefore extremely insecure. It is natural he should strive to recover this security. Hence the overwhelming urge to leave for a third country as soon as possible. This concern dominates everything else and pushes all other activities, religious, cultural, social, into the background. This mentality is the reason for his passivity and indifference and constitutes the first obstacle for constructive work in the camp.*

The same need for security leads the refugee to grab and cling on to everything. He is extremely demanding, wanting everything immediately. This is sometimes a heavy cross for those who work with refugees. A refugee camp is a rough school.

But it is also a wonderful human and spiritual experience. I am rediscovering humanity here in Galang. Greed and selfishness exist but the positive aspects of human nature are in much greater evidence. Here human solidarity is a reality and not just nice words.

And here I find God. The refugees are my greatest benefactors because they reveal Christ and give him to me. They help me make the Gospel flesh of my flesh. They give me the opportunity to spend my health, my time and all my energies for Christ in them.

I am the happiest of men to be here. I don't long to go back to teaching theology. Kuku and Galang are showing me God in man and therefore helping me to become myself, to realise my own genuine humanity.

So there we have three examples of what was being done.

What needs to be done?

Our third topic at the September Consultation was: What needs to be done? The non-Curia participants at the meeting made several important points. They emphasised that the refugee problem was a human rights problem. It was therefore necessary to influence governments. It was also a political problem, a symptom of unjust economic, social, political and religious structures. Thus there was a great need for more information, research, and co-ordination. Also,

the local church had to be involved in the refugee apostolate in the local countries. We recognised a severe refugee problem in Rome with Eritrean and Somali refugees, so for credibility we got involved here in Rome, setting up the Centro Astalli.

The fullness of life

That meeting made a very important remark about what we were doing in this new ministry. We are not concerned just with the survival of refugees, but with their full development. Our apostolate should therefore aim at improving the quality of refugee work already being done rather than adding our name to the list of existing agencies. This could be achieved by making men available rather than raising funds, although the latter may be necessary to facilitate our work in the camps. We also felt that the element of urgency must not lead us to ignore preventive action. We had the structures to do this in the Society, and had to be alert to the possibilities of doing what others were not doing or could not do.

One of the main practical problems in those early days was how to relate to agencies with whom we shared the work. At the time we felt we did not want to become an agency ourselves, yet we wanted very much to maintain our own identity and to work closely with the local church.

How do we respond?

Finally, we considered our fourth topic: What was our response to be? Our three experts, Fr Dieter Scholz, Fr Joseph Joblin and Fr Robert Paskey, all made concrete suggestions on the second day of the meeting. We tried to put these together and come up with one unified proposal.

The Jesuit Refugee Service

At the end of the meeting Fr Arrupe promised a full account of it and further consultation with the Heads of Provincials' Conferences. The first appeared in the special issue of *Promotio Justitiae* already referred to and the second took place later the same month in the Curia. As a result of all this, Fr Arrupe published his letter to

the whole Society of 14 November 1980, formally setting up the Jesuit Refugee Service in the Curia as part of the Social Secretariat.

So after that letter we tried to start. Initially there was a fair amount of opposition in the Curia. Some believed the Curia should not get involved in direct work, but rather should be the place to co-ordinate works and projects. There was some questioning by some of the Assistants. No channels existed, so I initially saw Fr Arrupe once each week to report on developments, though this eventually led to meetings only once a month.

We responded to certain problems, as we were able. One was helping a young Italian Jesuit working with Bishop Gasparini. Another was helping to prepare an address which Fr Arrupe gave at a meeting of African bishops.

Structural changes

I will stop here for the rest is history. The work of JRS expanded rapidly and began to occupy so much time that I was obliged to ask Fr Dieter Scholz to come and share the load. After Fr Arrupe's stroke, Fr Dezza continued to support it without wishing to make any structural changes. But, as soon as I left the Curia in 1984, Fr Kolvenbach separated the JRS from the Social Secretariat and Fr Scholz became its first independent director.

Review of the Jesuit Refugee Service to the whole Society

Extracts of a letter from Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ to the Society, 1990

I am writing to let you know that after hearing my Counsellors and inviting suggestions from Jesuit Superiors in refugee areas and from Jesuits in JRS, I have appointed Fr Mark Raper SJ (Australia), to succeed Fr Dieter B. Scholz SJ (Zimbabwe), as the new Director of JRS. Fr Raper will take office at the Curia on 1 May 1990.

Fr Raper was born in 1942, entered the Society in 1961, and completed all his studies in Australia, including an arts degree in the history and politics of southeast Asian societies and a diploma in education. He was ordained in 1973. While still in theology, he helped initiate the Asian Bureau Australia, a social institute specialising in research and publications on Australia's relations with Asia. Since 1982, he has developed and directed the work of JRS in the Asia Pacific region.

Fr Scholz, of the Province of Zimbabwe, was appointed by Fr Arrupe in 1980 to direct the newly created JRS. It was Fr Scholz who was responsible for establishing its structures and proposing criteria and norms for its activities. The central office in Rome and all the JRS regional offices owe him a major debt of gratitude for the courage, patience and painstaking care with which he has guided this important service the Society has been able to sponsor for a particularly disadvantaged segment of the world's population...

Why a Jesuit Refugee Service?

Fr Pedro Arrupe created the JRS in 1980 as the Society's response to the drama of the Vietnamese boat-people and the plight of millions of starving refugees in the Sahel zone of Africa, a situation which he said *constitutes a challenge we cannot ignore if we are to remain faithful to St Ignatius's criteria for our apostolic work and the recent calls of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations* (Acta Romana, XVIII, 1, pp. 319-321).

Fr Arrupe asked the Society to undertake this new mission despite a sharp decline in the number of active Jesuits and requests

from many local Churches around the world to send Jesuits for other important works, recalling that we should keep before our eyes the greater service of God and the more universal good, and choose those places where the needs, spiritual and corporal, of our fellow-men are greater and more urgent. The 33rd General Congregation, in calling for a review of all our ministries, both traditional and new (no. 39) urged the Society to take note of several critically urgent concerns, which *had been mentioned frequently in the postulates*, among them *the sad plight of millions of refugees searching for a permanent home, a situation brought to our special attention by Fr Arrupe* (no. 45).

I have made these calls my own: Frequently, when visiting the Provinces and speaking individually with Jesuits, I have stressed the importance of this new apostolate both as an expression of our concern for the poor and as a significant step towards our renewal, personal and corporate, in availability, mobility and universality.

Furthermore, I see our work with refugees as a timely mission in the service of faith and the promotion of justice... Truly, the response so far has been magnificent. Those Provinces, communities and individual Jesuits who have given of their time, skills and other resources to serve refugees have told me that this sharing, far from being a burden, has brought them much spiritual benefit, as Fr Arrupe hoped it would...

St Ignatius and the displaced

Perhaps the most inspiring example of how we could respond today to the needs of the refugees in our midst is given by Ignatius himself and his first Companions.

Within a year of their arrival in Rome in November 1537, they were confronted with a severe crisis. The harvest during the summer of 1538 was poor and the winter the harshest Italy had experienced since the beginning of the century. Famine, disease and the cold drove thousands of impoverished people from the surrounding villages and towns into the city of Rome, very few were able to find shelter and relief. Most slept out in the open air, and every morning many refugees were found dead in the streets.

The community of 'friends in the Lord' at that time consisted of Ignatius, Xavier, Favre, Laynez, Bobadilla, Rodrigues, Salmeron, Jay, Broet and Codure. During the day, they went out to beg for bread,

vegetables and firewood. At night they collected the homeless in the streets and squares and brought them to their new house near the Torre del Melangolo, which a wealthy benefactor, Antonio Frangipani, had allowed them to use. There they washed their guests and gave them food. After supper, everyone gathered in the hall where a big fire was lit. The Fathers taught their guests the catechism and prepared them for confession and the Eucharist. Then every person was assigned a place to sleep. The Fathers offered their own beds to the sick and weak.

Within four months the number of refugees at the Frangipani house had risen from 200 to 300, and finally to 400, so that even this large building became too small. In mid-March, when the Companions began their nocturnal deliberations on whether they should found a new Order, Ignatius found another house to accommodate some of the refugees, while others were given places in hospices across the city, where the Companions visited them during the day. Within a year, the number of refugees in Rome cared for by Ignatius and his friends had risen to 3000, among a total population of about 40,000 people.

In February 1541, Ignatius and his friends moved from the Frangipani house to a building, where today the church of the Gesù, the international Scholasticate and the residence of the Italian Provincial are situated. Here Ignatius died in the early hours of 31 July 1556.

It was this response by Ignatius and his early Companions to the needs of the displaced people in Rome which inspired Fr Pedro Arrupe to act in a similar manner. In the autumn of 1981, hundreds of young refugees from Ethiopia were sleeping in the streets and *piazze* of Rome, around the main railway station. Most of them had no documents and no possessions other than the flimsy clothes they wore. In October, when the heavy rainstorms set in, they could be seen walking through the streets of Rome disconsolate, hungry, cold and wet. Most did not dare to beg for fear of being arrested. When one of them fell sick he was sent from one office to another, sometimes until he collapsed in the street with fever and exhaustion. Something had to be done.

Before the end of the year, the Jesuits responsible for the newly established Refugee Service opened a reception centre for Ethiopian refugees in the basement of the Gesù, in the Via degli Astalli, where Ignatius had established the first Generalate of the Society.

A characteristically Ignatian approach

Ignatius and his friends, when receiving the displaced people of the Roman *campagna* into their house, attached great importance to begging alms on their behalf, carrying on their own backs the daily rations of firewood and food, preparing the meals and washing the sick. They not only wished to live poorly, they wanted to live with and serve the poor. And at night, the *reformed priests*, as they were known in Rome because of their exemplary lives, gathered the refugees to instruct them in the faith and help them prepare for the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist. This integral response to the needs of the poor, physical and spiritual, based on personal presence in their midst, has been found a most helpful pastoral approach in our present-day service to refugees. It helps us to perceive needs in their lives which might otherwise remain concealed, and it can sometimes lead us to reverse our priorities.

The first thing Jesuits working with refugees in Central America, Africa and Asia tell me they discovered, is this: Anybody who has not actually been a refugee must approach the subject with great caution and respect, lest he misjudge the reasons why a person was compelled to flee. This is of especial importance in the context of the current debate on the distinction between political refugees and 'economic migrants'. The great majority of today's refugees are fleeing from highly complex situations in which their lives are threatened by multiple dangers and which make it almost impossible to distinguish between extreme poverty, famine, political repression, armed conflict and other forms of violence, which, for many, include prolonged and at times unbelievably cruel physical and psychological torture. People escaping from such conditions are often described as 'economic migrants'. They are not fleeing from persecution, it is argued, but seeking a better life. This reasoning is somewhat artificial and tends to reflect the attempt by those propounding it to justify their harsh treatment of refugees rather than the actual conditions from which refugees try to escape. For how can a refugee prove, as he must in order to be recognised as a political refugee, his *well-founded fear of persecution* to sometimes unsympathetic officials who have never experienced such fear themselves and who may have no personal knowledge of the country from which the refugee is fleeing? Poverty and famine may, technically, not constitute a form of perse-

cution, as understood in the relevant legal instruments, but their effect, when combined with one or more of the other factors I have mentioned, is the same.

What Jesuits working with refugees say they learnt about their needs, is this: A tent or a hut to give shelter from the rain, from the blazing sun during the day and the freezing cold during the night, is important; food, however meagre and frugal, to keep the body going on the long march to the border, and medicines to fight the fever and heal the wounds are more important; but what refugees, especially young refugees, need and appreciate most is friendship, trust and a shared understanding of the reasons why they are forced to flee their country. Friendship, trust and understanding give refugees hope in their struggle against overwhelming odds. Without hope, few could survive as physically healthy and mentally sane persons. So long as there is hope, even when there is neither shelter, nor food, nor medicines, refugees, even the most vulnerable among them, can overcome formidable obstacles.

Looking to the next several years, this is what I wish to stress as essential: a personal approach in our work with refugees and a deeper understanding of the fact that the refugee problem is the story of 15 million individual human beings – their suffering, their hope, their indomitable courage, resilience and determination to live.

Whenever possible, JRS has worked closely with and through the local Church, sometimes in a subsidiary role. Its policy has been to strengthen the local Church's manpower and other resources and to assist it in a variety of ways, rather than to develop parallel services and programs. Many Bishops have expressed to me their appreciation of this collaboration with the local Church. In this manner, JRS has also been able to offer the possibility of working with refugees to members of other religious communities and to many young lay associates.

Several such JRS teams have grown into small but strong faith communities, whose members live their commitment to refugees as the expression of their discipleship with Christ. They try to proceed by discernment in the midst of an extremely demanding and unpredictable life, where the needs of refugees may change quickly, where with the availability of very limited resources the requirements of one group of refugees have to be weighed against those of others, and where work on behalf of refugees is sometimes done in a context

of moral ambiguity allowing volunteers to serve the interests of refugees only at the cost of also serving the more calculating and less benign interests of political, commercial and military players in the same refugee drama. I wish to encourage those of you who are members of the JRS teams in the field to continue this important effort at constant discernment in the midst of the many tasks claiming your energy and attention, for your fellowship with Christ is the source of the hope you share with the refugees.

What remains to be done

1. Service to refugees: an apostolate of the whole Society

At the outset, Fr Arrupe intended the Refugee Service to be a network of contacts primarily within the Society in order to plan and co-ordinate our work in this field, to collect information that might lead to new opportunities for assistance to refugees, to act as a switchboard between offers of help from our Provinces and the needs of international organisations, to conscientise the Society about the importance of this apostolate and the different forms it can take both within countries of first asylum and receiving countries, to direct the special attention of the Society towards those groups or areas that receive little publicity or help from elsewhere, and to encourage our publications and institutes of learning to undertake research into the root causes of the refugee problem so that preventive action may be taken.

But above all, Fr Arrupe wanted this work to be carried out through Jesuits in the Provinces: *I shall be counting largely on you*, he wrote to the Provincials in 1980, *and members of your Province to support and help this side of its work* (Acta Romana, XVIII, 1, p. 321). Looking back we must admit that our Refugee Service has, inevitably perhaps, given the difficulties and complexities of this work, grown into an apostolate somewhat apart from the mainstream activities of the Society.

The initial growth of JRS and its present identity may have given the impression that the service to refugees is the responsibility of a small group of specialists with a particular calling for this ministry. I wish to stress that this is not so. Our service to refugees is an apostolic commitment of the whole Society, and in particular of those Provinces where the refugees come from, where they seek protection and first refuge, and where they finally settle.

In the local context, the role of the JRS is to help our Provinces initiate and develop this work in collaboration with other Church and secular organisations, voluntary and governmental, which are active in the same field.

Internationally, the JRS will ensure that our limited manpower and other resources are directed towards those groups of refugees, whose needs are greatest and less adequately met by other organisations. Thus, in developing its programs, JRS will pay special attention to refugee women and children and to the handicapped.

2. Service to refugees and Decree IV of GC 32

Jesuits everywhere feel a certain uneasiness today concerning Decree IV of GC 32, and are wondering whether in our mission we are responding generously and promptly enough to the mandate given the Society with regard to the promotion of justice as an absolute requirement of the service of faith. Here I only wish to indicate that the growing number of refugees and the widespread violation of their fundamental human rights certainly constitute one area of concerns and challenges which the Society cannot ignore.

3. The study of root causes: a matter of justice

The crisis of the refugees of our day is often discussed in terms of their growing numbers, the ordeals of their journeys overland or on the high seas, and the aid and resettlement programs provided through government and voluntary agencies.

Less attention has been paid to the more fundamental question of why there are 15 million refugees today, mostly from the poorest countries in the world. Assisting refugees is commonly seen as a work of charity rather than a matter of justice, and hence the need to explore the deeper reasons why people are compelled to flee their countries. Relief agencies frequently speak up for refugees to request more aid, but seldom to demand justice on their behalf. Jesuits who are working in the camps and whose energy and time is taken up by the tragedies of individual refugees and refugee families, by efforts to raise more aid on their behalf and find new places of resettlement, are urging us to move beyond this immediate service and probe for the root causes, which force people to flee. They do so because they are convinced that *the best service one can offer a refugee is the opportunity to stay at home* (M. de Vreede).

As mentioned earlier, one of the original assignments given to JRS was *to encourage our publications and institutes of learning to undertake research into the root causes of the refugee problem so that preventive action can be taken*. The fact that thousands of boat people, who fled their country when JRS was created nine years ago, are still languishing in camps across Asia today, and that millions of other refugees have since been forced to abandon their homes testifies to the importance of this aspect of our Refugee Service. To ignore the deeper reasons behind the phenomenon of forced migration is to limit our service to emergency relief, which is necessary, to be sure, in the early stages of every refugee flow but does not address the vital questions of why a person has become a refugee and what could be done to spare others a similar fate. Most refugees would say that these latter issues are those that matter most to them. With our many universities, social institutes and other facilities of study and research the Society is eminently suited to address these deeper and, in the long term, most important issues, a task which as yet we have hardly begun to tackle.

For this reason I would say that our service to refugees through political analysis, research, reflection and public debate, in order to deepen the awareness of this great human tragedy of our time at all levels of public life, is perhaps more urgent today, when refugees face open hostility and closed borders in many countries, than a decade ago, when world-wide compassion and generosity extended them a warm welcome. At the same time I believe that much of this work can be done within the framework of available resources at our universities, social institutes, media research centres and periodicals.

4. Refugee education: a unique contribution the Society can make

Most refugees are young people. In abandoning their countries, their homes, families and friends, they also lose the most important opportunity towards full human development, education.

The Society's institutions of higher education are in the privileged position of having the resources to make a special contribution in this area. In the developed world, they could provide learning opportunities for refugees resettled there. In addition, they could be of service to the large numbers of displaced people in poor countries by offering the following opportunities:

- **Distance learning:** Colleges and universities could offer courses

through learning packets containing printed and audio materials which could be studied independently, or under the guidance of qualified refugees or JRS volunteers.

- **On-site teaching:** Colleges and universities could release faculty members who would provide on-site teaching in specified areas identified as needed by the uprooted population.

- **Scholarships:** Refugees who have shown dedication to their fellow displaced persons and who seem to have the capacity for higher education can be offered scholarships to come and study at a college or university, on the understanding that they will return and use their newly acquired knowledge and skills to help the uprooted population of which they are members.

If our higher education institutions could join in this effort, the Society would be sharing one of our most precious resources with some of the poorest yet often very gifted people. As I pointed out in my recent letter on the Society's Apostolic Charity Fund (FACSI): *Jesuits cannot conceive of being able to come to the aid of the really poor without being concerned as well for their education* (FACSI Information, 89/17, 15 July 1989).

I have spoken in this letter of the reasons why the most recent General Congregation has affirmed and reinforced Fr Pedro Arrupe's original call that the whole Society dedicate some of its resources to the service of refugees. Those reasons referred principally to the spiritual and physical needs of the refugees. In concluding this letter I wish to stress another dimension. As Companions of Jesus, we *must be the same as Christ Jesus* (Phil. 2,5). We are called to share our life with the refugees because *He gave up His equality with God in order to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are* (Phil. 2,6f). We cannot meditate on the Gospel account of the Holy Family's flight, the fear of persecution and the harshness of homelessness and exile in a foreign land, and what it meant for Joseph to be woken up in the middle of the night and be told to take his family and flee to save the child from the murderous hand of Herod (Sp. Ex. 269) – without recognising His face in the faces of the refugees we encounter today.

Because Christ chose to express His love for us by walking the road into exile and, later in His life, making the journey to Jerusalem to suffer torture and death (Lk 9,51 - 19,28), our service and presence in the midst of refugees, if rooted in fellowship with Christ, can be a

prophetic witness to God's love for us and make that love visible and tangible to those refugees who have not heard the Good News. This witness is the pastoral dimension of our work with refugees. Direct evangelisation is often difficult because the many tensions and conflicts surrounding life in a refugee camp can easily inhibit a free response to the Gospel.

The Society's universality, our mobility and above all our apostolic availability are the qualities rooted in our tradition which should help us meet the challenge offered by the refugee crisis of our time. But, as I had occasion to point out in my recent letter on Jesuit Life in the Spirit (89108, 26 March 1989), while there has been an encouraging renewal in recent years in making the Spiritual Exercises a *privileged place* (GC 32, no. 209) of our experience of Christ, there remains a fairly frequent lack of apostolic availability. I believe that the Society's service to refugees is one real test of our availability today, and I add without hesitation that a generous response by the Society as an apostolic body to the needs of refugees, whom we encounter or who approach us for help, will make us bear more fruit in other apostolates as well.



Mark Raper SJ/JRS

Rwanda 1998 The majority of refugees in Rwanda are Congolese of Rwandan ethnic origin and are located in two camps: Byumba and Kiziba. JRS is responsible for community and pastoral services in these camps.

chapter three

A history of JRS

To understand why JRS has developed to its present form, we must understand what challenges it has faced, the resources with which it has met them, and what particular choices have been made... During its life, JRS has attracted many people to work with refugees for comparatively short periods. The spirit and traditions which animate this commitment need to be handed on... Finally this history is a labour of love. If refugees stand in the shadow of human injustice and evil, they nevertheless witness to God's light. This history is a work of gratitude to many refugees, to fellow workers who in them have seen God's glory, and a commitment to the struggle that refugees may live in God's light... The history of JRS is the history of the refugees. Until there are no more refugees, there can be no satisfactory conclusions to the story of JRS.

Andrew Hamilton SJ, *A History of JRS Asia Pacific 1979-1989*

The history of JRS begins with the experience of refugees themselves. It was to experiences of this kind in the Ogaden region of Africa and in Asia that Pedro Arrupe responded in 1980. At the time, the refugee crisis appeared to be one which could be met and redressed quickly by international goodwill. While Fr Arrupe envisaged the Jesuit service of refugees as continuing into the future, the service focused on a short-term mobilisation of resources. Accordingly, the goals of JRS were relatively modest, and its organisation loose. It was initially made a responsibility of the Social Secretariat under Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ.

We recognised a severe refugee problem with Eritrean and Somali refugees right on our own doorstep in Rome, said Fr Campbell-Johnston. So we set up Centro Astalli to provide food and shelter, in the basement of the same building where St Ignatius and his companions had helped the victims on the famine in 1538. Centro Astalli continues its work, serving up to 300 refugees daily.

From its modest beginnings, the JRS has grown considerably. At last count, it comprised an estimated 516 workers. These comprise 108 Jesuits (priests, brothers and scholastics), 85 religious from other congregations and 10 priests, while 313 are lay people. These figures do not include the large number of refugees recruited to take part in the programs. The programs themselves are found in some 50 countries, providing assistance to refugees and asylum seekers in refugee camps, to people displaced within their own country, and to those seeking refuge in cities.

We may ask, then, why an enterprise conceived originally in relatively small terms has grown so complex. The most obvious reason, of course, is that any original optimism that this was a brief crisis to be addressed quickly and solved, was soon shown to be misplaced. In 1980, there were some six million refugees around the world, and another four or five million people displaced in their own countries. In 1998, there were about 15 million refugees, and up to 30 million people displaced within their own countries. Many have been forced to remain outside their homes and countries for many years.

Against the background of increasing numbers of refugees, the growth of JRS can be considered in two ways: first, in relation to the local needs of refugees, and secondly, in relation to the changing nature of the world that produces refugees.

1. The response to local need

The growth and change of the services of JRS to refugees reflect their changing needs and opportunities. The demands of work with refugees soon became so pressing that Fr Dieter Scholz was called to assist in the work. *On 7 June, my colleague and collaborator, Dieter Scholz, celebrated his first year in the Curia running JRS,* wrote Fr Campbell-Johnston in 1982. *The main purpose of this was to coordinate and promote Jesuit involvement in the refugee problem around the world. Though a new venture in unfamiliar terrain, much had been achieved.* In 1984, JRS was separated from the Social Secretariat, and Fr Scholz was named its director. By this time, regional offices had been established in Asia, in Africa, and in the Americas.

As JRS' projects grew, the volunteers placed with them by JRS extended increasingly beyond Jesuits to include religious and lay people. Emphasis was placed on supporting the efforts of local churches to welcome refugees, ensuring that expertise and infrastructure remained even after JRS personnel had withdrawn.

In the Asia Pacific region, the plight of the boat people, which had inspired Arrupe to found the JRS, only worsened during the 1980s. The number of refugees fleeing from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia grew enormously. At the same time, commitments through the JRS expanded in the camps in Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Indonesia and the Philippines. Most projects were concerned with education, technical training, pastoral formation and health.

In *A History of JRS Asia Pacific 1979-1989*, Andrew Hamilton SJ writes: *The issues with which JRS had to grapple in these years can be seen most clearly in the records of the annual meetings of JRS personnel... These meetings offered an opportunity for JRS workers to relax together, to reflect on the life of refugees with whom they worked, to examine their own experience, and to plan to meet new needs and new situations... the themes of discussion at the early JRS meetings indicate both the dilemmas which face any work with refugees and the questions peculiar to the commitment of JRS. These questions pointed to many tensions. They included the tension between commitment to emergency relief and to development, the tension between the claims of agency and of network, the tension between commitment to people and commitment to cause, and the tension between immediate love and hard, discerning love.*

By 1989, the governments involved in giving shelter and resettle-

ment to Vietnamese refugees had decided to bring the crisis to an end by naming a cut-off date for new arrivals, and instituting a screening process to distinguish between refugees and non-refugees. The latter were to be repatriated to Vietnam. The anxiety and needs created by this Comprehensive Plan of Action created a need for counselling and for competent legal advice. Accordingly, from 1990, JRS established programs of legal and social counselling. Many young lawyers volunteered their time and expertise to help refugees. As the screening process concluded and the Vietnamese asylum seekers were either repatriated or resettled, JRS programs were wound down. At the same time a program to monitor the condition of people returning to Vietnam was begun in Ho Chi Minh City.

Even before the Cambodian refugees returned home in 1993, JRS programs were begun in Cambodia. They built on many years experience gained in the camps, particularly in work with the handicapped, including mine victims. The work in Cambodia was conceived as a service to the much-needed national reconciliation. Because this was now a work of development rather than a commitment specifically to refugees, responsibility was transferred from the JRS to the Jesuit Service Cambodia and to the Jesuit Provinces of Asia in 1995.

Similar patterns of growth, change, conclusion and devolution of works can also be seen in other regions. One of JRS' earliest commitments was in Ethiopia, providing food, shelter and medical aid to thousands of people displaced within their own country by war and famine, and to refugees and returnees whose tragedy had so touched Fr Arrupe.

Much reflection and exploration in Africa during these early years later found expression in dozens of programs whose shape was given by the needs of refugees and JRS' growing expertise in this type of work. The long-standing war in Sudan displaced millions. JRS supported educational initiatives in Southern Sudan and also in Port Sudan from the early 80s. Educational and pastoral services were also offered to those around Khartoum who were displaced from the south. The war also drove many refugees from South Sudan into Uganda. Education and pastoral care for Sudanese were the object of an extensive program based in Adjumani and of services for refugees in Kampala. For the thousands of refugees from many countries who find their way to Nairobi, scholarships, legal advice and medical help were provided.

Even after the civil wars in Angola and Mozambique, conflicts continued and people remained displaced. JRS had accompanied the many Mozambican refugees in Malawi since 1987 and helped to rebuild schools and communities in Mozambique to facilitate their return home. Likewise, JRS lived alongside those Angolans who had fled the war at home and found refuge in Zambia. Before the renewal of conflict in Angola, JRS workers moved there, providing services for a country shattered by war, in the hope that their presence might facilitate a peaceful return home for refugees. JRS provided assistance to Liberians torn apart by civil war, but the team was itself forced to flee an upsurge of violence along with the refugees. JRS workers set up operations in neighbouring Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire during the years of exile and finally accompanied Liberians during their return home.

The harrowing flight of more than two million refugees from Burundi and Rwanda led to a massive expansion of JRS work in Africa. From 1994, JRS workers joined other organisations in Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire, working with the survivors of massacre and flight. The unprepared return of the Rwandan refugees from neighbouring countries and increased insecurity forced many programs to be closed; yet JRS has maintained a presence in order to carry on its work quietly.

In Latin America, too, a large commitment to refugees developed out of the civil war in El Salvador of the eighties. When the war ended in 1992, the commitment to refugees became a commitment to the reconstruction of the nation. JRS programs were transformed into the Jesuit Development Service under the responsibility of the Central American Province. JRS workers accompanied the Guatemalan refugees in Mexico for several years. Now, in Colombia, JRS is seeking ways to support the many people displaced by endemic violence.

In North America, many hundreds of refugees could reach Canada and the United States thanks to JRS and Jesuit efforts to sponsor and welcome them. Meanwhile, the work of the regional office in the United States, which has always given great support to JRS programs throughout the world, was also shaped by the growing rejection of asylum seekers in the US. When Haitian refugees were turned away, legal programs to assist them were developed. As asylum seekers were routinely detained, programs of pastoral and legal care for detainees began.

After the end of Russian hegemony in eastern Europe, Europeans found themselves with their own refugee crisis next door. The extensive Jesuit commitment to refugees, previously dominated by the establishment of services in the developing world, responded swiftly to the catastrophic displacement of people in Croatia, Bosnia, Albania and, more recently, Kosovo and Serbia. Jesuit scholastics led by sending help to their fellows in Croatia and Bosnia. Formal programs were established in the former Yugoslavia in 1993.

The European JRS combines personal contacts with refugees and asylum seekers in Europe with advocacy to ensure just immigration and asylum policies. JRS workers provide social and pastoral support to asylum seekers in Rome, London, Vienna, Brussels, Malta and Berlin. Offices in Geneva and Brussels, where international policy can be influenced, lobby governments for fair solutions for forced migrants.

In all these areas, the commitments of JRS have been shaped by the need of refugees. Fr Hamilton noted: *Many factors shaped the choice and style of JRS work. The ideals enunciated early on have been important. They led people to seek to make a contribution which other agencies could not make. They inspired an ideal of personal and pastoral presence. They emphasised reflection on the lives of refugees, and led workers to look to the deepest and sometimes hidden aspects of human dignity. All these ideals challenged the pragmatism and attention to more immediate needs which can control work with refugees (A History of JRS Asia Pacific, 1979-89).*

JRS commitments have also been shaped by opportunity. Where a strong Jesuit presence or church partner are found, it is possible for JRS to work effectively. That has been true in Croatia, for example, but is not so in the former Soviet Union. Nor were these conditions found after the collapse of civil society in Somalia, where a JRS education specialist has nonetheless been able to work as a consultant with UNESCO to rebuild the Somali school system.



Bosnia 1998 JRS set up projects in Bosnia and Croatia in the aftermath of devastating war. Assistance to landmine victims is an integral part of the work of JRS in southeast Europe, which has now spread to Macedonia and Yugoslavia.

2. A changed world for refugees

While the needs of refugees and opportunities to work with them explain much of the growth of JRS, the political and social changes in the world need also to be taken into account.

Until 1989, the world of refugees was shaped by the Cold War. While there were many local conflicts, the parties were mostly armed and, to some extent, controlled by the large patrons. When refugees were forced from their countries, the influence of the patrons or their cause ensured that they received shelter and were sometimes resettled. This situation ensured that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was relatively well funded. The early work of JRS developed within this framework.

The world of the nineties, however, is far different. The developed nations have less interest or leverage in local conflicts. When these conflicts are extended, civil society can collapse so that violence and poverty become endemic. The result is often massive internal displacement, as civilians flee war, ethnic persecution, famine and insecurity. It becomes more difficult for outside people to accompany them in these situations. This is a world which produces more refugees but in which it is harder to accompany them.

When refugees try to flee from their countries they face more obstacles. Increasingly neighbouring countries refuse to accept them and try to send them back even when it is unsafe for them to return. Immigration policies throughout the world have become more oriented to exclude people, than to welcome them. UNHCR is under pressure to represent the interests, not of the refugees, but of the nations which fund it, and so to repatriate them as quickly as possible to the countries from which they came, with the result that the experience and interests of refugees themselves can easily be neglected. This has been the context of the work of JRS since 1990, when Mark Raper replaced Dieter Scholz as International Director.

Increasingly, too, the fate of refugees is decided internationally. A climate of hostility to refugees means that their sufferings are ignored, that detention of asylum seekers becomes an accepted form of treatment, and that there is little hesitation to send them back. The voice of refugees must be represented in developed countries and in the organisations which help shape international policy. Writing about the growth of JRS in Asia Pacific, Fr Hamilton said: *The*

political context was important because it led to so many abuses of refugees' human dignity. The anguish of seeing these and the realisation that they were bound to political interests led to frequent discussion about the proper ways of handling them... both the cost of taking a stand and the need for information became apparent. So JRS moved to gather and disseminate information about the abused rights of refugees. The movement towards a stronger stand on human rights was accompanied by the desire to seek more information and disseminate it, as well as by the impetus to develop an ethical voice to contribute to the largely pragmatic discussions which were conducted about the future of the refugees. In the apparent moral vacuum, within which the future of refugees was being discussed, the intellectual traditions out of which JRS came promised to make an argued ethical vision possible and invaluable. This aspect of JRS work has grown since 1991. It has been reflected in the advocacy undertaken by JRS representatives in Geneva at the United Nations, in Brussels at the European Union, and in Washington. National offices frequently act in coalition with other organisations to influence refugee policy in their own country. In the international office in Rome, the appointments of an information and a policy officer ensure better coordination.

A collaboration between JRS and Human Rights Watch helps to link JRS field experience with effective lobbying. Tutorships have been established at the Refugee Studies Program at Oxford University and the Institute of Human Rights at the University of Deusto in Bilbao, in order to further JRS' research on refugee problems. JRS also makes significant contributions to the international campaign against recruitment of children as soldiers and the campaign to ban landmines. By accompanying victims in the Thai camps and in Cambodia JRS personnel gained first hand experience of the evil of mines, and JRS made an explicit commitment to the coalition working against landmines in 1994. But its voice was predominantly that of the victims. Accordingly, when the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines in 1997, it was received by Tun Channareth, a JRS worker crippled by a mine who had lobbied hard at home and abroad for an end to mines.

JRS has explored ways of working in a globalised world where needs are not defined by the boundaries between provinces and nations. There are still many refugees today. JRS continues to walk with them and seeks co-workers and helpers also willing to be companions to the refugees.



Kuangchi Program Service/JRS

Thailand 1980 Fr Pierre Ceyrac with a Khmer woman. In December 1980, there were about 170,000 Khmer refugees in 13 camps in Thailand. Jesuits from the US, India and other countries went to work in the camps. The number of Jesuits involved at this time and their vision made them particularly important in the subsequent shaping of JRS.

Ways of working

“We try to create a climate of friendship in the camp,” said Fr Pierre Ceyrac, a French Jesuit who lived with Khmer refugees in Thailand. Fr John Bingham, an American Jesuit who was Fr Ceyrac’s companion, explains: “It looks like the refugees are really sharp in finding out who cares about them and who doesn’t. One of our daily jobs is the ‘walking ministry’. We walk around the camp area and are continually approached by the refugees who want us to listen to their problems, need help in filling up forms, confide their secrets.” Pierre said he spent two to three hours daily just walking and meeting people, and thus came to know many refugees in the camp. John and Pierre were involved mainly in teaching English and French respectively. For the two Jesuits, it was not merely teaching a language, but ‘creating an atmosphere conducive to human dignity’. “They are broken, humiliated, crushed and pushed about... Our great effort is that we try to rebuild in them an image of human dignity and new hope... new joy... and human growth.”

M. Anthony Amalanathan SJ, A Jesuit Kampuchean camp experience

A more personal approach

Dieter B. Scholz SJ, JRS International Director, 1980-1990

Extracts from 'The World Refugee Problem: Our Responsibility and Role', an address given at the third international symposium of the Institute for the Study of Social Justice at Sophia University, Tokyo, December 1983.

The words spoken by Swiss Federal Counsellor Wahlen in his 1963 address on the occasion of the award of the Nansen medal, have often been quoted. Let me repeat them here: *All the State subsidies in the world will never be able to replace the warmth of assistance rendered by one individual, one human being to another. Help given by the State is usually anonymous and lacking in human compassion. It is man alone by his personal charity who can really bring succour to his neighbour in need.*

Many refugee workers would say that the logistics of supplying shelter, food and medicines to growing numbers of refugees, not to mention the time and energy taken up by resettlement work, make it almost impossible to build up such relationships of friendship and trust. Yet they remain aware, often painfully aware, that the latter are no less vital to the refugees' survival than the former.

In a special way, this aspect of voluntary work is the responsibility of voluntary agencies. A volunteer with nearly 40 years of work in developing countries wrote from one of the eastern border camps in Thailand: *I think that the way to the Khmers is straight to the heart. We must really love them to the last ounce of our sweat, to the last drop of blood, and to the moment of our time and beyond...*

This is what I would like to stress, a more personal approach in our work with refugees and a deeper understanding of the fact that the world refugee problem is the story of millions of individual lives: their suffering, but also their indomitable courage, resilience and determination to survive and live...

Assisting refugees is commonly seen as a work of charity rather than an effort to explore the deeper reasons why people are compelled to flee their home countries. Relief agencies frequently speak up for refugees to request more aid, but seldom to demand justice on their behalf. At international conferences on the refugee problem, the refugees themselves are not always adequately represented

to put their own case. Who could explain the problem better than they and speak of their hopes for the future?

We should examine critically the commonly held view that the refugee problem of our times is the cumulative result of accidental misfortunes, some natural, others caused by man, or of actions for which the refugees themselves are responsible. We should look at alternative explanations, for example, the proposition that the refugee problem is a *sign*, an indication of a more fundamental and pervasive disorder in the world political economy of our time (Dr Michael Schulteis SJ, *Refugees: The Structures of a Global Justice Issue*, 1983, Centre of Concern, Washington). If this is the case, then action on behalf of justice is called for, not only charity; and solutions are to be sought in the area of international politics and not merely by increasing the budget of aid agencies...

All refugee work should include a dual strategy: to meet the immediate and medium-term needs of refugees and to take effective action on political and socio-economic levels to eliminate the causes of refugee movements: *Service to refugees should not be dominated by an emotional impulse... to respond to the immediate needs of refugees. More difficult but ultimately more effective is an approach which while meeting immediate needs, also takes into account many complexities, ambiguities and contradictions which characterise this work* (World Council of Churches, *The Churches and the World Refugee Crisis*, 1981)...

Charity should permeate our relationships with refugees, and justice be our criterion when having to bear judgement on the politics involved in the refugee crisis of our time. I do not see many signs of hope that a rapid change for the better is imminent. But I do believe that a shared commitment to charity and justice on the part of those working with refugees can gradually transform the quality of the refugee problem itself, making the suffering of millions of people less unbearable and giving hope without which no person could live. In that sense, I fully agree with a UNHCR poster which says: *The refugee problem isn't hopeless. Unless you think so.*

A vision for JRS

At the end of their first meeting in 1985 in Chiang Mai, five years after the inception of JRS, the regional coordinators of Central America, South Asia, the US, Asia Pacific and Africa, together with the JRS Secretary and Associate Secretary at the Curia, issued the following statement:

Five years ago JRS was born out of a vision communicated to the Society by Fr Pedro Arrupe as one of his last bequests while General of the Jesuits. It was a double vision: he saw the need of millions of poor uprooted people the world over for food, shelter, justice and human support; he also saw the priceless contribution such people had to offer a corrupt world whose prevailing idols are wealth, privilege and power. He therefore challenged his fellow Jesuits to take up a new apostolate of great importance for today and the future and of much spiritual benefit also to the Society.

Five years later we, representatives of JRS, are more convinced than ever that Fr Arrupe's vision was a correct one. It has since been officially confirmed by our last General Congregation as an important means for implementing the preferential option for the poor taken by the Society. It has also been given strong and clear support by our new General, Fr Peter-Hans Kolvenbach. But it is more our own experience, the shared experience of those of us privileged to live and work among refugee and displaced peoples, that proves to us beyond any doubt the vision truly came from the Holy Spirit.

JRS is still a modest venture, even by Society terms. It cannot and does not wish to compete with the big international agencies or other groups that have been in the field longer than us. However it does claim to bring a specific dimension to its work that is sometimes lacking elsewhere. While always ready to help refugees in their material and spiritual wants, and also in designing projects leading to a fuller and more independent life, we try to place special emphasis on being with rather than doing for. We want our presence among refugees to be one of sharing with them, of accompaniment, of walking together along the same path. In so far as possible, we want to feel what they have felt, suffer as they have, share the same hopes and aspirations, see the world through their eyes. We ourselves would

like to become one with the refugees and displaced people so that, all together, we can begin the search for a new life.

This attempt to identify with the poor and rejected, however hesitant and imperfect, has brought us untold blessings. For by their very poverty, they teach us to become detached from material possessions and our own selves. Their insecurity and uncertainty about the future show us how not to rely merely on ourselves or on human planning. Their cultural values and simple dignity as human beings remind us that a person's worth is determined by what he is rather than by what he has. Their openness and generosity so often challenge us to share with them and others all that we have and are. Their happiness and laughter in the midst of adversity help us understand better the true meaning of suffering. Their deep faith and unfailing hope lead us to rediscover these spiritual values in our own lives. In a word, we have found Christ again in the faces and lives of these abandoned peoples, a Christ who is beckoning and calling us to follow Him.

We believe this call is not for ourselves alone. The refugees are speaking also to our Society, to the Church, to all men and women of good will. They are calling us Jesuits to those dispositions of flexibility and apostolic availability essential to St Ignatius's desire of serving God anywhere and in any way that would lead to his greater glory and the salvation of souls. Beware, they are saying to us, of immobility, of fixed institutions, of set patterns of behaviour and modes of operation that bind the Spirit; be bold, be adventurous, for to gain all one must be ready to lose all – as we have.

For the Church, the refugees are a constant reminder that the people of God is essentially a pilgrim people, never settled, always on the move, always searching, always reaching out further. We must be a Church of mission, not maintenance, whose task is ever to question prevailing attitudes and structures, especially those that discriminate against the poor and oppressed. And to many local churches, the presence of refugees is a standing invitation to open their doors to the stranger, to put into practice the Christian precept to love one's neighbour. In so doing, they enrich their own lives as a community and build a better church.

And to a world locked in a destructive power struggle based, in the final analysis, on the determination of wealthy nations and privileged élites to cling to what they have by maintaining the unjust

structures that guarantee their wealth and privileges, the refugees and displaced persons this same world has rejected offer a living witness to a counter civilisation, to a culture built on alternative values. They warn against the idolatry of *the good life* in a consumer society regulated by the law of gain which inevitably leads to the exploitation and degradation of many. Similarly they warn against the corrosive dangers of the national security state whose increasingly repressive measures are necessary to preserve an economic order in which the poor, whether nations or classics within them, become ever poorer to the benefit of the wealthy and powerful few.

Willingly or unwillingly, the refugees have been forced out of this unjust world, rejected by it. At the same time the chance has been given them to reject its false values. Millions of men, women and children, refugees and displaced people in countries throughout the world, have taken such an option. They are inviting us to join them in the struggle to build a better future where justice, simplicity, brotherhood and love will be the determining values of a new society. May we, Jesuits, Christians, all men and women of goodwill, not be deaf to their call.

What is essential to JRS?

A statement drawn up following discussion during the in-service seminar held in Kigali in August, 1995, around the question, "What do you regard as essential to JRS?"

To join JRS is to embark on a journey of faith in the company of refugees. Normally we act in international teams with an aim to build up local partners. Our desire is to offer personal, flexible and effective service to those uprooted from their countries and families, especially the most vulnerable. Planning is essential and starts with asking the refugees about their lives and needs, it implies analysis of the causes and politics of their displacement and creative yet realistic assessments of our own best contributions. Further discernment and renewed planning follow evaluations of our actions, on which in turn new engagements are built.

We try to be loyal to a wide network of partners, around the world and locally, among them the refugees whom we accompany. Transparent communications and reliable information are essential for the smooth functioning and growth of individuals and teams in the now extensive JRS network. We try to build a spirit of community, discernment and cooperation in our teams. JRS needs a reliable management structure, good leadership and careful personnel support in order to be an effective community of service.

JRS is ready to collaborate with all persons, communities and organisations which similarly seek the immediate and long term good of refugees. Without in any way proselytising, we prefer to build up the resources of the local church that it might continue like minded service. Founded by the Jesuit Order which continues to take a responsibility for it, JRS is also charged with animating communities and institutions associated with the Jesuits that they might develop, whether in their own name or through JRS, direct and competent services to the forcibly displaced.

JRS' style of service is human and spiritual, seeking the long term good of the refugees, while not neglecting needs that are immediate or urgent. Our service is pastoral and educational, most often with a training component. The refugees are credible and poignant witnesses to the need for justice in the world today. JRS

advocates actions for justice and for reconciliation of those who are estranged, so that our world might more fully reflect the greater glory of God.

Our vision, strengthened by prayer, is based then on the gospel and on the priorities for service enunciated by Ignatius Loyola: attend to the greater needs, seek the more universal good, and go where there is a lack of others for the service. The cross and resurrection of Jesus take us deeper into the mystery of human suffering and yet offer sources of hope. As companions of the refugees and of one another, we are companions also of Jesus.



Cambodia 1993 Tun Channareth (Reth) with his wife and two of their six children. Reth is a JRS worker who was crippled by a mine. He has lobbied hard at home and abroad for an end to mines.

The mandate given for Jesuits entering refugee service directs us to ministries which focus on the “human, pedagogical and spiritual” needs of the refugees. A reflection of our styles of service over these several years in camps in southeast Asia shows that we make a priority of:

- Availability: being personally available to refugees, sharing their lives as much as possible;*
- Understanding: understanding refugees and their particular situations, seeking to help but not to pamper them;*
- Helping them to reflect on their own situation: helping to understand and be well informed about their present condition and the options facing them;*
- Fostering self-help: encouraging refugees to help themselves as far as possible, thus building up their capacity, their confidence and their sense of self-worth;*
- Fostering self-determination: helping the refugees determine for themselves as much of their life circumstances as possible, including their own future.*

Diakonia, News from JRS Asia Pacific, Issue 1, November 1983

Accompany, serve and advocate their cause

Extracts from Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ's talk to the JRS Regional Directors, Rome, 23 June, 1997

It is unnecessary for me to affirm the mission of JRS, since General Congregation 34 appealed *to all Provinces to support JRS in every possible way*, and adopted the apostolate of JRS as its own. The Congregation described clearly the threefold mission of JRS and affirmed its way of proceeding: *The JRS accompanies many of these brothers and sisters of ours, serving them as companions, advocating their cause in an uncaring world. (Our Mission and Justice, no. 16)*

You accompany the refugees. You seek to be present, to listen, to help both the refugees and the world to find meaning in their suffering. You seek to become the companions of the refugees, *friends in the Lord*. You serve those who are forcibly displaced. You advocate their cause in an uncaring world. This is the most difficult part of your apostolate. A work of faith is a work of justice.

JRS as an organisation: size, flexibility, and professionalism

JRS today is unhappily big. I say unhappily because the refugee population is growing considerably. The needs have increased, hence JRS has grown. When JRS was initiated there were about five million refugees worldwide. In 1990 there were 15 million. In 1995, GC34 speaks of 45 million refugees and displaced.

Fr Arrupe was convinced that JRS should not become a big organisation. Clarifying this in the light of experience, JRS must be big if the problem and tasks at hand are big. But Fr Arrupe did not think JRS should become operationally unwieldy, intending it to be always as close as possible to the lives of the refugees.

Personal presence to the refugees is the distinctive feature of JRS which must be reflected in your dealings with one another and in your administrative style. The organisational structure of JRS should not develop in a way that it becomes top-heavy and bureaucratic.

JRS must be flexible: closing down when not needed and being ready to go to meet new needs which are unattended to by others. JRS, in the spirit of Fr Arrupe, should go where no one else would like to go or is not going. These demands pose problems to the organisation of JRS. Situations where JRS is at work have become complex, and this gives rise to many questions. The best thing you can do, and you are doing it, is to face the questions which arise directly out of the nature of the refugee problem.

JRS is structured in a modest way in comparison to the tasks it undertakes, and in comparison to other agencies in the field. Two main resources are needed: material and personnel. All the necessary material resources must be available. If you cannot secure the resources you need in order to help the people, do not start a project.

In the early days of JRS, every person of goodwill could be accepted in JRS. Now we need more competence and expertise, professionalism and experience, in order to maintain not only the quantity but also the quality of service we wish to give to the refugees.

The NGO profile of JRS

Today, JRS is and operates as an agency. The choice of an agency profile is simply what we call in our language *an apostolic instrument*, to give greater effectiveness to JRS' activities. In order to enter countries, to work in the camps under UN coordination and to cooperate with other groups in serving refugees, JRS presents itself as a non government organisation, in the same way as a school or a university has a secular identity. Yet it is a faith organisation, and first of all a refugee service.

We only have to open the bible to see that JRS responds directly to the commandments of the Lord. To work with refugees is already in line with the Gospel. Refugee service is a choice to offer inclusive, generous, personal and gratuitous care, without political or material interest. There is no reason to hide our identity, just as there is no need to proselytise.

JRS as a collaborative work

I come now to one of the beautiful features of JRS, that it is a partnership between Jesuits and non-Jesuits. Collaboration is a key

element of JRS. Since, at the same time, another key element is that JRS finds its source and motivation in the way of proceeding of the Society, a quality required of JRS officials is that they foster this integration in the Society and promote its essential Ignatian characteristics.

JRS has also made an impact on the Society, and there is a desire to support the orientation of JRS. JRS has humanised the radical interpretations of those who would exclude charity completely from the search for justice. JRS shows the fruit which comes from helping directly the poorest of the poor. At the same time it shows that generosity alone is insufficient and assistance must be based on a clear analysis of need and causes.



Jenny Catisco/JRS

Tanzania 1996 Radio Kwizera in Tanzania's Ngara region was set up in 1995 to be a voice of the refugees for the refugees and the local community. The radio station focuses on reconciliation in the politically charged atmosphere of the camps.

JRS and the Society are called, together with the rest of the Church, to work for deeper change in Africa, to promote peace and reconciliation... Witnessing to reconciliation is a role the Church should play everywhere, in East Timor, in Sri Lanka, in the Balkans, and its contribution should be concrete: 'Love not in words but in deeds'. In many parts of the world, religion has a strong impact. Ignatian spirituality is a help, but concrete involvement such as that of JRS speaks louder than words.

(1999)

Since JRS is international, and it likes to be wherever there is a need, its presence and its action can become delicate. JRS goes to places where conflicts have arisen through misunderstanding and it can do things that the local Jesuits or Church people may fear to do. In the Balkans, we are asked why are you helping Moslems and the Orthodox? Even our fellow Jesuits find it hard to understand that JRS is at the disposal of all, in the name of the Gospel, not only to Catholics. But one of the principles of JRS is to serve everyone equally. Even when what you do may be unpopular, the Society is proud of the work of JRS.

(2000)

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ

Waiting in joyful hope

William Yeomans SJ

Extracts from 'The Refugee Experience', The Way supplement, no. 64, spring 1989. Fr Yeomans worked with JRS Asia Pacific. He died on 8 January 1989, a few months after the article was sent from Thailand.

Generalisations are always dangerous (a good generalisation!) and when they are used about refugees, they are positively harmful. An indication of this is the simple fact that each refugee camp has its unique spirit, its own feel. It is vital that those who work with refugees become sensitive to this. That takes time. I go to work with the refugees not as one who is bringing something to them, but as one who has first of all to learn what I should bring. In initial emergency situations it is clear that food, shelter, medical attention are major needs and must be met as soon as possible. That would seem obvious and simple. It is not. 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 humankind are re-kindled. This gives a whole new understanding of why Jesus insists so vehemently in word and gesture that he is a slave to all. Even as a teacher he is a slave. He gives as if he were receiving. Working with refugees, I realise more and more that unless I give myself it would be better that I gave nothing.

There is a world of difference between self-indulgent pity which makes me feel good and the compassion of Christ which makes me realise that I am an unworthy slave. I am only doing what I ought to do. One of the worst crimes I could commit against refugees is to expect them to be grateful...

When refugees first became news, there was a great worldwide surge of emotion, pity, outrage, indignation. This gave rise to a flood of aid in material and personnel. At present, the current phase is compassion burn-out applied to individuals and organisations. The refugee phenomenon is no longer dramatic... The refugees have become a nuisance to governments of some host countries. They are

a 'problem' for which there is no foreseeable solution... In addition many do not qualify for acceptance in a third country. What is going to happen to them? A prolonged stay in a refugee camp is literally soul-destroying...

The humdrum of routine is a crossroads. One road could lead to another camp which often is merely an exchange of routine. Another road leads, all too easily, to a rationalised discouragement in one form or another. The apathy and lethargy, even loss of hope, so many long-term refugees' experience, can seep insidiously into the spirit of the refugee worker. We work without joy which is worse than not working at all.

A third road invites us to go beyond the slough of despond, to go into and through to a renewed and refined and more realistic hope. It is the road that leads to the realisation that the best possible service we can give the refugees is to be with them, to stick it out with them, to hope against hope with them. This road leads to a whole new dimension where material aid, teaching and so on, are justly revitalised and lived spiritual values find their true place. What do you do for the refugees? You share pain and sorrow, you hope joyfully, you believe in them, even the thieves, thugs and liars, you love them. The rest is incidental...

As I said earlier I cannot enter fully into the minds and hearts of the refugees I serve. But I can and do, I hope, learn from them. Each camp is unique. And in each camp you find the sublimest of human values and the vilest of inhumanity. Kindness and cruelty grow together and we who try to serve the refugees must learn to wait in joyful hope for the harvest.



William Yeomans SJ

Pastoral accompaniment among refugees

The Jesuit Refugee Service experience

Mark Raper SJ, September 1998

When we know the suffering of so many refugees, a pastoral approach makes sense. Many are in shock. Many carry a deep sense of loss. Many are humiliated, anxious and disoriented. Many feel wronged. They committed or suffered atrocities. Their tension is great. They are a people on the alert. Family structure is often destroyed. Fathers may still be at war or were killed. In refugee settlements there is corruption, injustice and deceit. With loneliness and abandonment and under cramped living conditions, there is promiscuity. Morale and morality are lost or abandoned.

Yet in all this, there is also a great will to keep families together. There is great longing for integrity. There is heroic courage and readiness to forgive. One example of forgiveness can redeem and save a camp settlement of 20,000 people.

Announcing a JRS vision

Pastoral service is at the heart of the JRS mission. It is surprising then, that during its 18 years little has been written about the pastoral methodology of JRS. Many aspects are obvious to those with a pastoral sense. These notes, derived from the reports and reflections of JRS field workers, summarise the key themes and orientations of JRS pastoral service.

The pastoral role of JRS has these aspects: services that are specifically pastoral, and the pastoral dimension of all we do. The conditions of flight (which may have been precipitous, exhausting, provoked by violence, or more calm and planned) and the place of asylum (whether in camps, cities or detention centres) influence the ways we witness to the Good News among the refugees. Nonetheless our accompaniment and service are always pastoral. In JRS we can draw guidelines both from the mission given to us, *to accom-*

pany, serve and plead the cause of the refugees and forcibly displaced people, and from our many experiences.

Accompaniment

Accompaniment is an essential element of both our mission and of our methodology. To accompany means to be a companion. We are companions of Jesus, so we wish to be companions of those with whom he prefers to be associated, the poor and the outcast. Etymologically this word companion means *one who shares bread*. It is an expression of the commitment made in the Eucharist. This quality of companionship is well developed in Luke's account of the dejected disciples dragging their feet from Jerusalem to Emmaus, who find a companion in the risen Jesus, although they could not at first recognise him. He walks with those who are searching; he listens to them; he challenges their interpretation of the discouraging events; he waits, respects their freedom to walk on; he accepts their invitation to a meal, he breaks the bread – the climax of the story.

To accompany is a practical and effective action. Not infrequently it is precisely the way in which protection is given. It is a way to 'internationalise' a situation. The presence of an international team can sometimes prevent an attack on refugees. Moreover, presence can be a sign. That a free person chooses willingly and faithfully to accompany those who are not free, who had no choice about being there, is itself a sign, a way of eliciting hope.

Our accompaniment affirms that God is present in human history, even in its most tragic episodes. We experience this presence. God does not abandon us. As pastoral workers, we focus on this vision, and are not side-tracked by political manoeuvrings and ethnic divisions, whether they are among the refugees or among the agencies and governments who decide their fate.

Free from dependency

How can we accompany the refugees in a way that helps them to stand on their own two feet? *The refugees are kneeling people*, Gildo Dominici used to say, when he was chaplain in the Vietnamese refugee camp of Galang Island in Indonesia. They are brought to their knees by the dependent circumstances in the camp. They lost their

former role, whatever it was, of housewife, farmer, teacher, bank manager, but they have no new role except to wait on the decisions of others. The challenge for the pastoral worker is to establish a relationship that helps them stand, free from dependency, especially when the displaced person has urgent needs. We can be effective if we are loved by the people. But let us not be deceived. We must not be loved just for the money or goods that we bring.

Finding hope or bringing hope?

Do we bring hope, or do we find it there? The richness of human spirit that we discover among refugees, including a vibrant hope, is always a surprise. Obviously there is sadness in the exile's song. *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept, remembering Sion* (Ps. 136). The longing is tangible, a longing to see the Holy City. While there may be no rational grounds for believing that what a refugee longs for will actually come about, we also find hope. Hope is not optimism. Optimism expects things will get better. Hope is a virtue grounded in suffering. It is a grace which gives strength. Hope is a promise that takes root in the heart and is a guide to an unknown future. *Those who sow in tears will sing when they reap* (Ps. 125). The challenge for the pastoral worker is to search for and find the seeds of hope and to allow them to grow, to fan the feeble spark into flame. Hope is what enables us to live fully in the present moment. Our role is to help change a refugee camp from something just to survive into a time and place for growth.

The refugees have a message that our world needs to hear. JRS has a mission to help the world learn from the experience of forcibly displaced people. Teilhard de Chardin said: *I think that the world will not be converted to the heavenly hope of Christianity if first Christianity does not convert itself into the hope of the world.* We members of a worldwide community are privileged to be able to make that first step of conversion through listening to the stories and hopes of the survivors of human conflict.

Horizons for hope

In order to survive a difficult situation a refugee needs to see light at the end of the tunnel. One must have a contact with the outside,

someone who cares, some sense that our small situation is not the whole world, some project to complete, identification with a greater purpose. The risk of a refugee camp is that armed struggle or the liberation movement will provide that sense of purpose. Refugee camps are classic recruiting grounds for rebel movements. Some movements even insist on maintaining an environment of despair so that anger can be sustained, creating a desperate will to fight and to risk.

For Christians, the mystery of Christ can provide a larger picture, a meaningful story of suffering, sacrifice and hope within which to situate one's life, a person with whom to identify. But this, we must be absolutely sure, is not in order to escape reality, but rather to engage more profoundly in it, in service of others.

Listen, listen, listen

Surely the only way to learn what is the hope of a refugee is to listen to him. Our biggest temptation, on seeing the distress of the refugees in Karagwe or Fungnido Camp or in a city like Johannesburg or Nairobi, is to begin projects, to give material things, to decide *en masse* what the refugees need. They often arrive in exile without shoes, with only one torn shirt, hungry, without a clear plan. But they did not undergo this experience in order to get a shirt or shoes. Their human experience is to be respected. They are traumatised by violence, lonely, rejected, exhausted in body certainly, but also exhausted by their loss of a place in a stable society, even sometimes guilty at what they did to survive. They want to be understood, to be heard. Their frequent question is: Why is God doing this to me? They have a right to ask this question. But it cannot be asked unless someone listens. This is our primary role, to listen to the questions, to the longing and to the fundamental human need of the refugees.

Information and communication

Often we and other voluntary workers are the first and only people whom a refugee can trust after the trauma of flight. They left in fear and live in shock. We have a responsibility not only to listen but also to speak, and to facilitate communication. Refugees need to be informed to learn the truth. Refugees are so often excluded from

decisions concerning their lives. Wherever possible, JRS includes the refugees in our planning and decision making. Our communication must be transparent.

Across borders

JRS is one of the few agencies which places itself on both sides of a refugee border. When a conflict continues, it is immensely difficult even for us in JRS to maintain open communication across those borders. Imagine then how difficult it is for the refugees. First, the obstacles are physical. A border may be mined or patrolled. Second, there are political obstacles. But there are also obstacles of the mind: ideological differences, racist prejudices, or sheer misinformation. While this is one of the most important services that we can offer, it also requires a high level of self-awareness, self criticism and capacity for analysis. We are often too little aware of our own ideological interpretations and prejudices. It is so natural for us, in listening all day long to the refugees' stories, also to take on their interpretation of events.

Criticise the refugees

Fr Dieter Scholz SJ often used to quote Nigel Johnson's experience in the camps of young Zimbabwean freedom fighters in the late 70s. In a camp of 10,000 young men, there was little he could do except be with them, talk to them, accompany them. One of the special contributions, he said, was to criticise them. It sounds shocking, but the closed environment of the camp creates a hothouse for ideas and distorted interpretations. Only someone who is accepted and trusted can introduce a dose of reality and criticise the unreal interpretations of the refugees. Moreover only someone who is well informed and has a balanced judgement can play this role.

Forgiveness and healing

Many people talk today about reconciliation. Yet it is not a developed art or ministry, rather it is a pioneer field. Perhaps the most effective actions are not self-conscious. Formation for peace can be integrated in our normal services. An agent of reconciliation must

be close to the people, but not take sides. With a Christian group we can offer opportunities and conditions for change of heart within the context of liturgy. But even outside of occasions of worship and liturgy and depending on the culture, the community may be helped through theatre and dance, songs and choirs, counselling, formation of the teachers and other leaders. Reconciliation with one's own past involves remembering what happened, healing the memory and preparing for the future.

Preserve and foster culture

Normally, culture is the vehicle that sustains sanity when all else is under attack. Our role is to foster the culture of the people whom we serve. For exiled people there is a risk that culture stagnates, or is frozen in a time-warp, at the moment of exit. Healthy culture is creative and thus changing.

What about us?

Many of us come from lives that are regular. We are used to planning what we will do during the day. Things change when we work with refugees who constantly bring new and urgent problems. We must be ready for the unexpected. We sometimes live simultaneously in several cultures, that of the host country and that of the refugees, and may be exposed to new and shocking events without warning. This brings a new turbulence into our own imaginative life. As a result obviously, our own spiritual life and our prayer will be disturbed and should adapt. To persevere in this work with integrity, a JRS worker needs a strong life of the spirit. The Good News may gain new meaning, and possibly lose old meanings. We may need regular time to speak to God about the reality around us. There are many scriptural sources which can help us appreciate our experience of finding God in the unexpected visitor.

A discerning team

But a stronger individual spiritual life is not enough for us. JRS workers rarely act alone. We do need to share what is happening to the refugees and to us. Most importantly we aim for solidarity

and frequent communication among members of a project team or country program. JRS requires a cycle of discernment that leads to planning, evaluating and reporting in the light of our common mission. In reflecting on our experiences, we have the chance to discern again and to give fresh input into our decisions. Reflection and self criticism help prevent us from being overwhelmed by the great needs, from favouring small groups and from taking sides. In serving all we can also be agents of reconciliation. These ideals need the co-operation and fidelity of all.

Discernment is a key element of Ignatian spirituality and thus of our methodology. We sift our reality according to all our ways of learning and understanding: our social and political analysis, what we have heard from the people, what we judge after prayer, what we realise is tugging at our hearts. All this, shared, discussed and reviewed after prayer, can help us know what the Spirit is asking of us. JRS workers are all invited to share the search for faith. If we value one another we will listen to each other. To value one another means to care for one another. This does not always come spontaneously to teams composed of persons from diverse cultures, ages, formation. Yet if we want it we will work for it.

Accompanying our colleagues

Since JRS began, we have attended to the pastoral needs of our colleagues from other agencies. Generally the JRS teams include people who are more senior and more experienced than many of the voluntary agency members. This care for our fellow refugee workers, a valued service, is offered mostly through simple friendship, and through joining as equals in the forums for exchange and solidarity, but at times also through counselling, or through offering regular liturgies. In the privileged encounter with the refugees or with extreme situations of suffering, many people are touched and are moved to question their own lives. They deserve to be accompanied.

Pastoral welcome - policies and practices

In the pastoral support to refugees, certain classic principles apply. Basic among them is the refugees' fundamental right to free-

dom of worship. Secondly they have the right to worship in their own language and according to their own culture. Another principle refers to the duty of the local church of the place in which they take refuge to welcome the strangers.

...The responsibility of offering welcome, solidarity and assistance to refugees is incumbent, first of all, on the local Church. It is called to en flesh the Gospel demands by reaching out to them without distinction, when they are in need and where they are alone. This response will take different forms: personal contacts, defense of individuals and groups, denouncing injustices which are the root of the evil, lobbying for the passage of laws to guarantee effective protection, education against xenophobia, setting up volunteer groups and emergency funds, spiritual aid. (Pontifical Commission for Pastoral Care of Migrants, *Refugees, a Challenge to Solidarity*, Rome, 1992)

JRS has a pastoral and human obligation to defend and promote this basic human right to freedom of worship, whether the refugees are Muslim, Buddhist or Christian. Conversely, no religious practice may be imposed on refugees either by force or through the 'black-mail' (whether subtle or not) of assistance offered exclusively to those who attend religious services.

Welcome illegal immigrants

John Paul II has reinforced the Church's responsibility to welcome refugees and migrants even when they may be regarded as illegal. He says: *The Church, as a sacrament of unity... of the whole human race, is the locus where immigrants whose situation is illegal are also welcomed and recognised as brothers and sisters. The various dioceses have the duty to mobilise themselves so that these persons... may be welcomed as brothers and sisters in the Christian community* (John Paul II, *Migrants and their Irregular Situation*, July 1995).

Since the responsibility towards the refugees falls first to the local Church, JRS offers its services in support of the local Church. Often a local diocese is overwhelmed by the arrival of foreigners in its territory or is not aware of the appropriate procedures. JRS generally works well with the local Churches.

Although a Catholic organisation, JRS is called to serve the whole refugee population, not simply the Christians, or only members of the Catholic Church, and we in turn encourage the Catholic commu-

nity among them to serve all their fellow refugees. Sometimes those pastors who accompany their flock into exile do adapt. Others need help to appreciate the totally new context.

Shaping JRS priorities

The pastoral dimension of JRS helps shape JRS criteria for selection of where, among whom and how we shall work. Pastoral reasons, for example, cause us to go beyond the Geneva Convention definition which might limit the range of people who JRS may serve. When we speak of *great human need*, we are speaking pastorally, referring to the needs of the whole person, spiritual and material.

I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Mt 25/35)

The welcome to a guest is the model for our encounters with refugees, the methodology for our pastoral dimension, and the criteria for authenticity of our pastoral service in JRS. Hospitality to visitors is a recurring theme of the bible. The visitors for whom Abraham, as a good bedouin, rushed to prepare restful shade and a refreshing meal at the oaks of Mamre were revealed as the messengers of God's promise. Whether the guest arrives when expected; or whether we must keep our lamps burning and watch faithfully and patiently (Mt 25/1-13; Lk 12/35); or whether our visitor arrives in the middle of the night and we must go importunately to seek food from our neighbour (Mt 15/23; Lk 11/5), in all cases the quality of our welcome to this stranger as a messenger of God is the key criteria for authentic pastoral service.

The criterion of the authenticity of our faith

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ

A homily on Matthew's Gospel 2: 13-18 at the European Congress of Jesuit Alumni and Alumnae in Brussels, 19 August 1993

The theme of today's Gospel is that the refugee, the migrant and the exile is the Lord himself. Whenever they benefit refugees, actions that are effective touch the very heart of God.

Jesus, the Son of God, finds himself at odds with the political powers as soon as he is born. His frail and defenceless family is forced to reach for the only defense available, namely flight into a strange land. And it was not only to provide him with relative security that the Lord God *called his son out of Egypt*, the land of slavery. In his own personal experience, Jesus fulfils the destiny of his own people and of so many other peoples. He experiences emigration, immigration, flight, exile.

Once the chosen people had entered the Holy Land and settled there, the word of God ceaselessly reminded them that God had brought them out of another country, and for this reason they should be ready to receive other peoples as migrants. We should give a welcome to all who flee wars and famine, as did Israel of old, and to all who are forced by political hardship or economic exploitation to seek shelter.

When Job announces that he will allow no sojourner to pass the night without shelter (Job 31:32), he is in fact receiving the *image and likeness* of the God whose heart is open to welcome the oppressed. The Old Testament records this special love of God for the stranger, the marginalised, the orphan and the widow (Ps. 146:9). Because this welcome is a core aspect of God's identity, the Law of Israel prohibits xenophobia or racial discrimination. Refugee, immigrant or exile, each is first a human being, a son or daughter of our Father, a brother or sister of Jesus the Lord, in whom the Spirit of God shines.

Jesus showed clearly that his Father's love for the weak is the distinctive characteristic of our God. He sought to share the life of

the defenceless and uprooted, those who easily fall victim to economic exploitation and political manipulation, those who come last. These people are described by the Old Testament as being *at the tail of human society* (Deuteronomy 28: 43-44). Jesus came among us, but then had the experience of not being accepted or welcomed by his own, that is, by us. He was forced to flee while still an infant, and was obliged to change residence on several occasions because of the hardness of human hearts. Jesus identifies with the homeless so that he may bless all who welcome him in the refugee and curse those who do not assist him in the migrant (Matthew 25:31).

The Lord Jesus lives out the commandment of his Father, *You shall love the stranger* (Deuteronomy 10:19). Commentators note that this is the only occasion on which the Old Testament exhorts us to love anyone other than God, or anything other than God's commandments. The word of God establishes for us that the way we treat a refugee is the criterion of whether our faith is authentic. To exploit a refugee, to neglect or ignore a person in need, is to turn away from the one true God. It is to serve a God other than the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The heart of our Christian faith is at stake here. We are called not only to resist the disintegration of Christian values, the Gospel places clear social and economic demands on us as well. We are called to move beyond the comfortable level of good intentions and fine words to resolute action. Twenty years ago, Fr Pedro Arrupe urged us to be *men and women for others*, believers who find the love of God inconceivable without practical love for the poorest in society.

Through no fault of their own, millions of our sisters and brothers find themselves forced out of their homes and their countries by war, oppression, threats or starvation. They are driven out into the unknown, where often they must live without dignity or rights, without even the basics to stay alive. These are people, fathers and mothers like yourselves, who love their children: they suddenly become strangers in a foreign land, outcasts often even among Christian people. Resolve to take action then, and resolve to love, for love is shown in deeds rather than words. Study the impact of your own decisions. Measure your resolve. Share with others your experiences of working with refugees, migrants and homeless people.

As you come to know refugees better, sharing their hopes and disappointments as well as their sorrows and joys, your own con-

victions will grow stronger. You will be able to combat phenomena such as those we see in Europe today: prejudice based on stereotyping and newly revived ethnocentrism which engenders hatred and violence towards strangers.

Come to know these new Europeans as real people, and this experience will strengthen you to resist the kind of repressive legislation that merely echoes the words of the innkeeper at Bethlehem who refused an unknown young couple in need.

With God's grace, may you find the face of Christ in your sisters and brothers who are in dire need: *If you did it to one of these least of my brethren, you did it to me.*



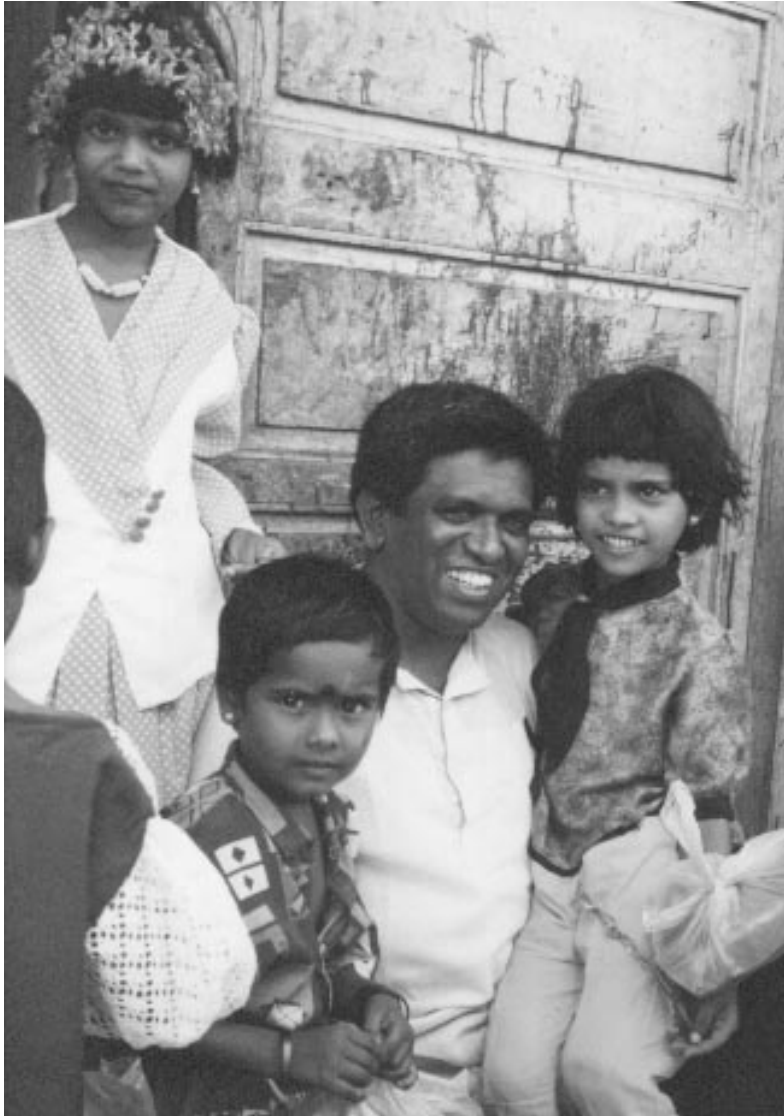
Jenny Catiso/JRS

Colombia 1998 Nearly two million people have been displaced in Colombia's relentless civil war which preys on civilians.

The main result of my visit to El Salvador was a set of policy guidelines, arrived at after several discussions... the following six principles were agreed:

- 1. The principal criterion for any work must be the needs of the refugees themselves;*
- 2. The Society should be prepared to do pioneering work, to look at what is not being done, to see what new needs are not being met;*
- 3. In existing work for refugees, the Society's role should be to collaborate if needed, in an attempt to improve what is being done;*
- 4. We should not aim at founding big new structures ourselves;*
- 5. We are at the service of the local Church but this does not mean we should be dominated by it;*
- 6. This is an important commitment for the Province which can give new life to it.*

Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ (1984)



Mark Raper SJ/JRS

India 1996 JRS South Asia director, C. Amalraj SJ, sits with some children in one of the 133 camps which house 70,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The self-stated primary aim of JRS in Tamil Nadu is to affirm each refugee as a unique person.

chapter five

The Jesuit identity of JRS

A commitment to the men and women who live a life of hardship and who are the victims of oppression, cannot be that of a few Jesuits only. It should characterise the life of all of us, individuals and communities. Alterations are called for in our style of living, so that the poverty we profess may identify us with Christ and with the poor to whom we preach the Gospel... It will be necessary for a larger number of us to share more closely the lot of families who are not well off, who make up the majority of victims of injustice. If we have the humility to walk with the poor, we will learn from them what we can do to help them.

General Congregation 32

I wish to thank in a special way those Jesuits whose selfless service remains a hidden part of their apostolic work and whose kindness is known to the refugees alone.

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ, *Review of JRS to the whole Society*, 1990

The specific Jesuit identity of JRS

Peter Balleis SJ, former JRS Southern Africa director, September 1995

Unguided missiles was a title given to JRS personnel by some UN people working in the same refugee camp in Thailand. I assume that, besides its humorous connotation, the title somehow reflects a question about the identity of JRS as seen through the eyes of observers. But it's also a question that arises for people working in JRS.

I would like to develop and share a few thoughts about this issue. I will approach the question of the identity of the JRS by pointing out elements which the early Society of Jesus and JRS seem to have in common, both with regard to the founding process and to their essential characteristics. This comparison might help to highlight and preserve the Jesuit identity of the JRS.

15 years old

At the Kigali meeting somebody compared the present stage of growth of the JRS to the stage of adolescence. JRS came into being at the initiative of Fr General Pedro Arrupe in 1980, born as a response to the refugee crisis in Asia and the Sahel. It is his *last child* – his last apostolic initiative – left to the Society. Fr Arrupe gave his last public address to JRS personnel in Bangkok on 6 August, 1981. The next morning he had a stroke on arrival in Rome.

The *child* is now 15 years old. It has grown fast, is big and is quite dynamic. Many Jesuits show favourable interest but at times they also ask questions about the *young person*. The JRS appears a bit confusing to some. The structures of government and responsibility are not always clear. JRS operates as an international body of the Society within, sometimes parallel to and, sometimes independent of, the traditional provincial structures. Provincials do not always know how to deal with this new situation in terms of government in the Society. Concern for refugees is high on the agenda of donor organisations. For this reason the JRS appears to receive donor support more easily than other apostolates of the Society. The 34th General Congregation mentions JRS several times in its documents. The Society acknowledges the potential of its own *child* which is maturing.

But, like a young adult, JRS is also beginning to look at itself, to ask about its identity and future direction. There is a need to clarify the structures of government. Recruitment criteria and procedures are being written down and harmonised. The JRS offers its personnel some training with the Oxford Refugee Studies Program and the JRS in-service seminar. Financial policies still need to be more organised and streamlined. Questions about the mission of JRS are being discussed: Where does the JRS involvement end once the refugees have gone back?; Should JRS respond more to the material or intellectual and spiritual needs of refugees?; Is JRS just an NGO like the many others or a Church body with an evangelising mission? JRS is, in fact, a young institution and is in the process of defining its institutional character and, alongside this, its future orientation. Like a young adult it is at a point where it can develop in different ways.

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. This structural and constitutional body developed with the dynamic growth of the Society. The Constitutions reflect many concrete issues and problems associated with the rapid growth of the Society. It only reached its mature form 18 years after the Society was founded. The General Congregation of 1558 approved the official version of the Constitutions of the Society.

At the beginning of the Society of Jesus was the Spirit, the inspiration of a few men led by Ignatius, their desire to serve souls and to spread the faith. Before any line of a mission statement was written, the companions of Ignatius served souls already in an integrated way, including the physical needs of the sick and suffering. This spirit became a body in the foundation of the Society of Jesus when the Pope approved their *Formula Instituti* in 1540 and confirmed the revised version in 1550. The two documents expressed the mission and character of the Society. For over a decade, these were the only two official documents of a Society which by the time of Ignatius' death had grown to over a thousand members and had spread all over the world.

Likewise, the JRS was created out of the inspiration of Fr General Arrupe. A call on major superiors to respond to this human crisis

and a letter to the whole Society are the foundation documents of JRS. Ten years later Fr General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach elaborated on this initial mission statement in his letter concerning JRS. Comparing the two processes we see that the inspiration, involvement and some kind of short mission statement come first. The formation of structures and a constitutional body come later. In the growth process structures and constitutions are not aims in themselves but they support the mission. In other words, the spirit fleshes itself out in a body in order to be effective.

The JRS has reached a certain stage in its growth. In order to fulfil its mission more effectively and not to lose the initial spirit in the rapid growth process it needs more supportive structures and policies. However the body which JRS needs is one which will not petrify or suffocate the spirit; a body of flesh (flexibility) and bones (structure), *un corps pour l'Esprit*. The specific characteristics are reflected in the foundation process. Even at an early stage in their growth processes, a child and young adult manifest all the characteristics which will make up the adult. In order to understand better the charism of the Society of Jesus we must look back to the founding period. Similarly, all the characteristics of the grown-up JRS are already implicit in its founding and growth process. We will find a lot of commonality in comparing the foundation processes of both the Society of Jesus and JRS. The JRS is not just a Jesuit-run apostolic work for refugees, but it is Jesuit by its very nature.

Integral human promotion

The *Formula Instituti* spell out the meaning of *helping the souls* with a list of apostolic activities. The list includes pastoral, intellectual and charitable works. The care for spiritual growth implies care for the intellectual development and physical well-being of the human being and society. The Society of Jesus carries out works of integral human promotion. So does the JRS. A major concern of Fr Arrupe's was the pastoral care for the refugees and being with them. From being with them JRS carries out different activities and responds to specific needs. Pastoral, educational or any other developmental work with refugees do not exclude one another but are integral to one another.

A front-line apostolate

Refugee work is often enough literally a front-line apostolate. Where refugees are, there is conflict. At times JRS workers, like others in this work, are at risk. Refugees and, therefore, the work with them, are often along frontiers in remote rural areas with little infrastructure and in difficult situations. The JRS is in line with a lot of criteria spelled out in the Constitutions to help choose an apostolate: the greater needs, the greater fruits, the work with multipliers (Const. 622). In case of doubt the Constitutions suggest that preference be given to spiritual benefits over physical; 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 (Const. 623).

One might be tempted to compare the enormous changes on the global level at the end of this century with the beginning of modern times in the 16th century. A complete new era began with the arrival of the Europeans on the shores of the Americas, Africa and the Indies. The conquest of other people for the sake of economic, political and cultural motives was a very ambiguous historic development with many victims. The forces of change were so powerful that nobody could stay out of it. The first Jesuits chose to be in it, to be on the boats sailing to Brazil, Africa and the Indies. Although not always, they often chose to be on the side of the victims in this global process. Similar drastic changes are occurring in our own times. We are experiencing the globalisation of the world economy and communications systems, the emergence of more global institutions and their response to global issues. There are many victims and losers in this emergence of a global market, communication system and culture. Refugees are the tip of the iceberg of an increasing global migration, voluntary or, in most cases, forced migration. This carries a lot of potential for conflict if badly handled. It is not in the power of the Church, nor the Society of Jesus, to stop or to influence these fundamental changes. Again there is the choice to stay out of it or to be in it and to take a position on the side of the victims. The JRS is in it, together with other Church organisations like Caritas, in on one of the major front-line apostolates in this historic process.

Through this engagement the JRS often earns new respect for the Church from other organisations. However, there is a certain

ambiguity in collaborating with UN organisations. The missionaries came to Africa alongside the colonial powers of that time. Their security depended on those colonial powers. The JRS is, in a similar way, moving under the umbrella of UN organisations who could be compared to the former powers. The UN represents very much the political will of powers who are also the greatest arms exporters. Those very same countries also contribute humanitarian aid. The ambiguity of this collaboration with the powerful institutions of our times also existed in the early days of the Society of Jesus.

Encouraging diversity

The founding members who gathered around Ignatius were not just from several different nations but were very different in their personal characters. From its very beginning the Society of Jesus has been a multi racial and culturally diverse body. The works and tasks they took on were also very different. There was and is no apostolic specialisation. The first Jesuits were present in every continent. This diversity is reflected in JRS too; the teams are multi racial, from different continents and cultures. The JRS even goes beyond the limit of the Society of Jesus – a male order – by putting females and males together in teams. The same applies to the mixture of laity and religious.

There is no specific area of work in which JRS specialises. In this it differs from other NGOs, e.g. MSF (*Médecins Sans Frontières*). Projects carried out by JRS teams in different countries and refugee situations are very diverse. The specific needs of refugee people combined with the gifts of JRS personnel very much define the nature of the work.

An emphasis on education

In the great diversity of its activities, education deserves to be emphasised as a growing component of JRS work. Most NGOs deal with more basic matters of refugee life like food, shelter, water, clothes, medical help; education is not included in the UNHCR list of priorities. Nonetheless it is very important for camp life itself and for the future of refugee children. The JRS has taken on a number of, at times big, educational programs in primary, secondary and, to a lesser

extent, also tertiary education. At the 1994 Kigali meeting education was a central topic. An education desk for Africa is being set up. The JRS is therefore fully within the tradition of the Society of Jesus. After the successful foundation of the first Jesuit College in Messina in 1548 many other colleges were founded in Europe at the request of bishops and princes. Education became the apostolate which fundamentally influenced the development of the Society. The institution of the Professed House was intended to provide financial security for Jesuit communities in colleges.

Mobility

With the foundation of many colleges the old Society of Jesus definitely lost its initial mobility. It is amazing to read about the distances and places covered by the early Jesuits. Short and intensive missions in different places in Europe characterise the apostolic works of Peter Favre, Peter Canisius, Nadal and other founding members. The most travelled and mobile early Jesuit was Francis Xavier. With the growth of the organisation and the establishment of big institutions many Jesuits lost this initial geographical mobility and apostolic availability. It is often a complaint in our own days that this is also missing now. JRS has regained this mobility in the Society. Fr Arrupe called Jesuits out of their work to become mobile and available for the refugees, to go to unknown countries and cultures for some years. JRS does not put down lasting roots but becomes mobile alongside the refugees on their return. When new needs arise it moves on. It seems that JRS is providing the Jesuits with a new opportunity for missionary involvement. Few Jesuits seem to feel the call for life-long missionary work in another country. With the rising numbers of local vocations it is also less necessary; Provinces short of manpower might not like to see a Jesuit go forever. But many are open to make themselves available for a limited time to work in a missionary apostolate. The Society of Jesus, through JRS, is regaining some of the mobility which is traditionally so characteristic of Jesuits.

Collaboration with the laity

The document *Co-operation with Laity in Mission* of the recent General Congregation mentions JRS as an example of cooperation.

The stress on co-operation with laity seems to be a novelty, but it is not. Ignatius sought the support and collaboration of others, e.g. 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 running. 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 a good work, to give them a framework of doing good, or of taking on responsibility for a work of charity. JRS does depend on the good will of lay volunteers and religious of other congregations as well as the generosity of private donors and organisations. But it also provides them with the organisational structure and support, and, more importantly, the spiritual vision for serving refugee people.

Inner bond of unity

It is at times hard to see what keeps this extremely mobile, diverse and at times apparently loose organisation together. It cannot be a strong organisational structure because it does not have one, at least compared to the enormous organisational structure of the UN and other organisations. At one of the JRS in-service seminars, I spent three weeks with 35 other JRS workers. I went away with a feeling of unity. The group kept its diversity in work and outlook but an inner bond of unity had grown. The eighth part of the Constitutions presents ways towards uniting distant members with their head and among themselves. Union of hearts is the most important aspect. This union is fostered in different ways in JRS, through friendships, communication, meetings and visits. The union of hearts also needs the outside hierarchical structure of directors on different levels. Where this union with the responsible JRS director is not nourished disunity also arises within the team. Ultimately it is the common mission to refugees which keeps this bond of unity of a *Communitas at dispersionem*. The growing young Society soon felt the need to spell out in the Constitutions the structures and means in order to preserve the unity of the body. The JRS is also establishing and defining clearer structures of responsibility and government with the same need to preserve the unity of the body in its great apostolic dispersal.

How to preserve and develop the Jesuit spirit

The foregoing sections are an attempt to demonstrate that JRS is, by the nature of its process of foundation and growth and in many essential characteristics, very similar to the Society of Jesus in its early years. JRS is very Jesuit. But, because of its rapid growth and expansion, there is a potential danger of JRS changing or even losing its initial Jesuit charism. That danger can be expressed in a simple question: Is the JRS just an NGO or a Church organisation? The question is not whether it is registered as an NGO but whether it is concerned with the very characteristics and *modus procedendi* of JRS. What is the difference between JRS and other NGOs or Caritas? At times the outside pressure is heavy on JRS to adapt and to act like the others.

The heading of the last chapter of the Constitutions expresses a similar concern held by Ignatius and his companions about the rapidly growing Society: *How the whole body of the Society can be preserved and developed in its well-being?* Some important points which Ignatius makes in this chapter also apply to JRS.

Simplicity

According to Ignatius, *poverty is like a bulwark of religious institutes which preserves them in their existence and discipline and defends them from many enemies* (Const. 816). It might be a surprise for the reader to see poverty listed among the important means to defend the Jesuit character of JRS. It is true that JRS teams are working in many situations, often living a harsh and simple life with risks. The issue is less about the lifestyle. Development work, including humanitarian and refugee work, has become a big industry of big money and benefits. The financial volumes of programs of the UNHCR are impressive. There is a danger that JRS could be tempted to go for big things too. There are a number of dangers involved in big money. First of all, in handling big money one might lose sensitivity for it and for the poverty of refugees. Availability of big money can change the lifestyle of the JRS. Secondly, we might not always have the necessary administrative skills to handle projects of this volume. Thirdly, big money is not always available for the same project. Donors like to switch. And what then? Is JRS going to pull out because the money

dries up? 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. But the JRS should never allow itself to become money-driven, so that money decides about our being with the refugees. Simplicity in life-style and the character 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). Of all means helpful to preserve the Society Ignatius mentions first of all the spiritual means which unite the human instrument with God... *For they are the interior gifts which make those exterior means effective towards the end which is sought (Const. 812).* This means using natural means with the grace of God.

For its own apostolic effectiveness and preservation of its Jesuit character the JRS needs to give importance to the spiritual means and the nourishment of these in the teams. I see a danger that for different reasons, e.g. pressure of work and diversity, team members cut down first on time for prayer on an individual and communal level. The celebration of the Eucharist degrades from being the focal point to an occasional event. Not very surprising then, that disunity and unhappiness creep into the people and the teams. 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, the spiritual means are more important than other forms of support.

We know that an absolutely essential element of the Jesuit charism is a sense of mission... This central characteristic of the spirit of the Society of Jesus finds expression in the way the guidelines for the apostolate, as given by Ignatius in Part VII of the Constitutions, are structured.

First of all, he deals with the “missions from the Holy Father”... In this context of “missions” entrusted by the Pope, it is appropriate to recall some of the pressing words John Paul II used, when visiting the refugee camp of Morong in the Philippines: “The fact that the Church carries out extensive relief efforts on behalf of refugees should not be a source of surprise to anyone. Indeed this is an integral part of the Church’s mission in the world... Of all human tragedies of our day, perhaps the greatest is that of refugees.”

Carlos Soltero SJ, ‘A Challenge to Service in the Light of the Jesuit Constitution’, *Refugee Service and Mission Today*, 1983



Michael Coyne/JRS

Uganda 1994 Celso Romanin SJ at work in Adjumani. The great majority of Uganda's refugees are from Sudan. Most live in settlements in northern Uganda, where JRS provides pastoral and education services.

JRS and the Ignatian tradition

Mark Raper SJ

Extracts from a talk given at Georgetown University during the Ignatian anniversaries in 1991

JRS was the last project launched by Pedro Arrupe as Superior General of the Society of Jesus. Don Pedro shared with his Basque predecessor, Ignatius Loyola, more than a physical likeness. He is credited with *refounding* the Jesuit Order during his generalate from 1965 to 1983, in the wake of profound social changes during the 1960s. His was the quality of heart and vision required by the Catholic Church if it was to embody the insights of the Second Vatican Council. The Council had asked each religious order to return to its founder's charisma or inspiration. For the Jesuits, Arrupe oversaw that recovery with panache.

The early Jesuits and the poor

Ignatius Loyola was never known to send Jesuits on mission whether to Trent, Germany, England or Sicily, or to found new colleges without instructing them also to give alms, visit hospitals and prisons and to assist people in need. No task, however spiritual, was judged complete unless it included practical charitable work. It was said of Ignatius that he *loves the person whole and entire as did the Lord, for whose sake he loves.*

In a letter to Jesuit scholastic, Sebastiano Romeo in Cyprano, Ignatius wrote: *Visit the sick and the poor in your land who are without resources, and get them what they need. If they are in prison, visit them. And to those who are living in a better style of life, take care to go with them as well, so that you can provide corporal good for one and spiritual good for the other.*

The inspiration for such instructions was Ignatius' own experience, a personal spiritual journey on which he reflected constantly. His reflective mind is evident throughout his retreat manual, The Spiritual Exercises. Following his own religious conversion, Ignatius' first action was to abandon militarism. He laid his sword at the

Virgin's feet in the chapel at Montserrat and adopted poverty as a way of life. As a beggar, he learnt at first hand how degrading that experience can be. He was cited as a refugee by the Dominican Inquisition, who claimed he had fled to Rome to escape their inquiries. Meanwhile, Ignatius moved from analysing his own experiences to studying Christ, the poor man. He would later instruct his brother Jesuits to live poorly like the first apostles, so that those who met them would know that God was their treasure. Already Ignatius and his companions were looking beyond their own parish and town to the whole known world, to Germany, Spain, France, England, the Indies, America, Ethiopia.

In Rome, Ignatius and his companions assisted not only the homeless of Rome but also the more permanently marginalised, including Jews, beggars, prostitutes and delinquents. Ignatius lobbied to have unjust laws changed, and set up associations and programs aimed at providing aid that would be constant, discreet and respectful. And he sought to ensure that these groups would not be solely dependent on charity.

At that very moment, Arrupe remarks, Ignatius Loyola's own problems were gigantic: *The campaign of defamation let loose by his slanderers threatened to ruin his whole work of founding the Society of Jesus. He needed to spend a lot of time lobbying and appearing in court in order to be cleared of all charges that November.* Arrupe's comment is revealing, given the timing of his own decision to found a worldwide refugee operation and attend to the homeless Ethiopians in Rome. At the time he was under severe attack as General, including attacks from fellow Jesuits. Nothing could distract him from what he perceived as a world crisis.

A spirituality deriving from Ignatius

Three major breakthroughs have been identified as leading to Ignatius Loyola's vision and way of acting. First, he learnt and then taught interiority, a reflective process by which a person rehearses decisions in the imagination, meanwhile seeking openness of heart to welcome the will of God.

Second, Ignatius' view of the Incarnation led to his claim that by contemplating the word and revelation of God one can actually find God in all things. Every reality, every experience, every choice

may turn out to be an occasion of grace. Even a refugee camp, with its in-built evils, can become an arena in which one finds the Lord through contemplation.

Third, as a consequence of this practical mysticism, an *apostle* is seen as called to service and action (*apostle* here includes anyone called in faith to respond to Christ). Ignatius moved away from the monastic way of life to a different model of Christian ministry, one designed to ensure flexibility and mobility. The dynamic for this way of proceeding was developed in the Spiritual Exercises, whose aim is precisely to lead participants to be free for any service. For Jesuits, this dynamic found further expression in Ignatius' Constitutions, and in the apostolic works that Jesuits chose.

Ignatius sought an integration of Christians' spiritual calling with their vocation to serve the human family – an integration now termed *the service of faith through the promotion of justice* (see Decree 4 of the 32nd General Congregation, 1974, the source document for current Jesuit thinking). This combination is rooted in the deepest Ignatian tradition of mysticism. Sustaining a commitment to seeking justice requires a robust spirituality, one that *no one can maintain without continuous prayer, which gives meaning to his/her action*.

On 7 August 1981, Pedro Arrupe suffered a cerebral stroke on a flight from Bangkok to Rome. The previous day he had given his last talk as Superior General to a group of JRS workers meeting in Bangkok. He pleaded for Jesuits to pray constantly to be guided by the Spirit, and to seek close union in every way, since refugee work is front-line work where conflict and hostile ideologies are to be expected.

Vignettes of Jesuit experiences

History records many cases of Jesuits who were refugees. Edmund Campion, Robert Southwell and other English companions went in to exile in order to follow their vocation and be trained as Jesuits before returning to their homeland. In the *Brag*, a compelling piece, Campion describes how he studied in Germany and Bohemia, was then called out of exile in Prague to go to Rome, and from there was sent to England.

Before, during, and after the Suppression of the Society of Jesus, there was a century of persecution, exile and refugee life for the

Jesuits as a body. In 1750, the year before the first Acts of Suppression, there were about 23,000 Jesuits spread through Europe, East Asia, Latin America and Africa. Some 700 colleges and 300 mission stations were active.

Dismissal from the Portuguese and Spanish dominions occasioned great hardship. Some Jesuits arriving in Portugal after expulsion from the colonies were thrown into gaol and remained there for 17 years. Joseph Pignatelli was among several thousand Jesuits dumped in camps in the Papal States. It is not difficult to imagine the distress of elderly priests and brothers sent into exile, and then to a foreign land, with their identity, their name as Jesuits, removed. Many, before being unloaded on alien shores, spent time as boat people, passed from port to port because the French, Genoese and other governments were unwilling to accept them, fearing political repercussions.

The Jesuit presence in Australia has explicit refugee origins. In 1848, the year of revolutions, the Emperor Leopold was persuaded by the Liberals to expel the Society of Jesus from his Austro-Hungarian realm. The Society, re-established scarcely 30 years earlier following its Suppression, was just finding its feet again. Some Austrian Jesuits took refuge in one of the few European countries who would receive them; others went to the United States. Two, Aloysius Kranewitter and Maximilian Klinkowstroem set out for Australia as refugees, and as chaplains to refugees. The party from Silesia included 150 farmers and craftsmen and their families. They were Catholics experiencing persecution due to a rise of Lutheran fervour. Kranewitter was ordained only six weeks before their departure. Their ship arrived to a hot dry summer in Port Adelaide, *Port Misery*, a colony founded only 12 years before. Klinkowstroem fell ill and returned to Europe. No suitable place to settle was evident and internal dissension broke the group apart. Kranewitter found himself in an English-speaking colony in the antipodes, wondering where to begin. In time he did great things, but his Australian beginning was a bitter refugee experience.

Criteria and priorities of JRS

The JRS deserves the name Ignatian because, as Arrupe remarked, it is the sort of thing Ignatius would have done. In fact, it is what

Ignatius and his companions did do, and the kind of initiative that flows naturally from their spiritual outlook.

Though the language of Ignatius Loyola may sound more spiritual than practical, its wisdom turns out to be of both kinds. Jesuit criteria for choosing ministries are outlined in the Constitutions. Jesuits (and their co-workers) should go:

- Where there is the greater divine honour or the greater service to God;
- Where the more universal good can be done, such that we influence people who will accomplish more good;
- Where there is the greater need, the more severe misery, or a lack of others to respond;
- Where people actually want us to be, so the mission is likely to bear more fruit;
- Where there is more evil and where the Jesuits are held in bad repute.

The attitude required of an Ignatian apostle finds expression in the Spiritual Exercises. The person on mission is to be:

- Free from biased or disordered attachments;
- Ready for service, together with the Lord, in a mission to the world;
- Striving to see with the eyes of God what is happening in the world;
- Looking to stand alongside the poor in the spirit of Jesus, and with humility.

Given the size and intensity of refugee needs, and the limited capacity of JRS to respond, how are choices to be made? JRS seeks to go where there are very great or very urgent needs, where others are unable or unwilling to act, and where our resources are likely to be most useful.

JRS is not well equipped for massive ad hoc relief. Instead we are generally engaged in training programs (e.g. for teachers and teacher-trainers, and for para-social workers). This seems a characteristically Jesuit choice. Though education was not the purpose for which the Society of Jesus was instituted, within 20 years its men were deeply engaged in a network of high schools across Europe. Schooling was perceived as the greatest need at that time. Similarly, in the camps we are attracted to assist in extending basic education to the refugee populations (normally largely children and women).

Put simply, JRS is a network of projects and services that rely on the Ignatian spirit and which are promoted and supported by the Jesuit Order, centrally and through its various institutions. Our workers underline the importance of *presence*. To be a refugee is a spiritual condition. When one is rejected, driven from home, has lost family, social identity, possessions, future, even perhaps a limb, it means a great deal that other persons come from outside and stay in the camps. We come to listen, to foster initiatives, to promote organisation – in short, to offer a source of hope. We believe in the refugees. To let them know this in some practical way is to change their lives.

In February 1990, Fr Kolvenbach extended the call to be concerned for refugees to every Jesuit. He believed the response of Jesuits to the Refugee Service had already been *magnificent*, and added: *The Society's universality, our mobility, and above all our apostolic availability are the qualities rooted in our tradition which should help us to meet the challenges offered by the refugee crisis of our time.* The response to this new call has been outstanding.

The vision and structure of the Society of Jesus are indeed well geared to the world-wide refugee problem. Jesuit formation aims to develop a sensitivity to human needs, the ability to assess the degree of urgency, and flexibility to act as needed. The Society's local units have authority to take decisions, while remaining in constant communication with the centre in Rome. In each region, Jesuit institutions have collaborators who share their ideals and orientation. Because of this, JRS has been able to develop in its first 10 years a world-wide infrastructure.

Action required

Any human person is suited to answer the call of another person in need. But where the problem is great, community action is more effective than individual response. JRS seeks to collaborate with groups committed to *the preferential option for the poor*, and who are sufficiently organised to make practical co-operation feasible. World-wide networks such as those of the Christian Life Communities and Jesuit Alumni Associations share the Ignatian spirit, but need to develop definite local or national structures to be of use to JRS in a corporate sense. Christian groups can promote practical

action in favour of refugees locally, and also make up-to-date information available. It is best to explore with regional representatives of the JRS the ways local collaboration can best be pursued.

JRS itself is not so much a separate organisation as a kind of worthy parasite. Its international operations are maintained by a minimal administration. Instead it relies on resources available through the Society of Jesus – its morale, organisation and local institutions. JRS workers confirm that to work with refugees requires not only relevant skills but also a solid spirituality, such as that pioneered by Ignatius.

The Jesuits' previous and present Generals, Arrupe and Kolvenbach, have both called specifically for help from universities, especially Catholic universities. Required are researchers willing to study international questions from the perspective of the refugee: Why are so many people refugees, and why do they remain refugees? These great human problems pose a major intellectual challenge. Likewise, a university's law school, medical school, sociological research facilities, can assist refugees in practical ways.

Refugees themselves have most valuable contributions to offer. They can recognise clear-sightedly the evil and powerful forces active in the world today. But their voices are not readily heard. Here, too, is a problem and an opportunity worthy of profound intellectual commitment.

The most urgent task of all, however, is reconciliation, peace-making. As Cardinal Etchegaray remarked at the end of the Gulf War: *We did not lose peace the day the war began, and we did not gain peace the day the war ended.* Especially in technological societies where war has become antiseptic and remote, there is a need for solid research about the way conflicts arise and about paths toward peace.

All of us, whether on humanitarian grounds or Christian, are called to serve the victims of the world's conflicts, but also to realise the impact that refugees have on the world's imagination. We are invited to view reality from the point of view of the refugee and her (or his) offended human dignity. That way we will come to see truthfully and appreciate the divine call to a new solidarity among the world's populations.



Mark Raper SJ/JRS

Nepal 1999 Around 97,000 refugees who were forced out of Bhutan have lived in camps in eastern Nepal for a decade, anxiously awaiting repatriation. JRS lobbies for the return of the Bhutanese to their homeland.

Some of those Provinces which have... encouraged men to offer themselves for refugee work for short periods of time, perhaps as part of a sabbatical, are discovering that Jesuit involvement in the refugee work is attracting growing interest to the Society... The influence on men returning from time spent in refugee camps on their Province, within their communities and on the people they encounter in their ministries, is real and profound. As one Jesuit said: "We want our Jesuit brothers to share in this great experience. It is a wonderful way to have a deep, spiritual renewal... An experience of total detachment. You usually practice poverty without noticing it. But now you are one of the refugees. You are not attached to anything."

Dieter Scholz SJ, 'The Jesuit Refugee Service', *Refugee Service and Mission Today*, 1983



Peter Balleis SJ/JRS

Angola 1996 The resumption of war in late 1998 fuelled large-scale death and displacement: millions of Angolans are internally displaced and hundreds of thousands of others are refugees in other countries. JRS offers a presence to people displaced by the war.

chapter six

Refugees in the world today

Refugees can expect one of four fates. They can return or be forcibly returned to their own countries. They can be resettled in another country. They can be assimilated into the society of the nation where they first arrive. Or they can arrive in camps, awaiting a better future. The choice of destiny is rarely their own.

Andrew Hamilton SJ, *A History of JRS Asia Pacific 1979-1989*

Displacement now

Mark Raper SJ

Extracts from 'Watcher, what of the night?', an article which appeared in Priests and People magazine, March 2000

Currently one in every 120 persons on earth is a forcibly displaced person living away from home. The United Nations estimates their number at 50 million worldwide. This figure includes refugees, asylum seekers, those who have returned home but continue to experience insecurity, and 30 million internally displaced persons (by conservative estimate). This last group are victims of violence who remain within their own country.

The UN definition of a refugee attempts to be quite precise. The 1951 Convention recognises as a true refugee one who has left his or her country for fear of persecution. Later definitions like those in use in Africa and Latin America expanded the refugee category to cover mass displacements brought about by internal conflicts, social collapse and abuse of human rights.

Catholic social teaching uses the term *refugee* broadly. *Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity* is a 1992 document jointly authored by the Pontifical Council Cor Unum and the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. This important document applies the expression *de facto* refugee to

- *persons persecuted because of race, religion, membership in social or political groups;*
- *the victims of armed conflicts, erroneous economic policy or natural disasters;*
- *and for humanitarian reasons to internally displaced persons, that is, civilians who are forcibly uprooted from their homes by the same type of violence as refugees but who do not cross national frontiers.*

Today, as never before, refugees are part of a complex global migratory phenomenon. Political, ethnic, economic, environmental and human rights factors combine to generate population movements. As a recent UN report on international migration notes, *many people are prompted to leave their own country by a mixture of fears, hopes and aspirations which can be very difficult, if not impossible, to unravel.*

Forced displacement is now a problem that affects every continent and region of the world. During the last 20 years almost every country in Africa has produced refugees, or received them. Whole generations of people in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe know no other life than that of a refugee camp. Denied an education, children lack hope for the future. Adults lose their roles, their skills and dignity. Communities are forced into dependency. Cultures atrophy. Lost generations linger in legal, social and political limbo, largely ignored by the international community. At moments when high profile crises do attract media coverage, refugees' lives are in danger of distorted reporting...

Africa

Africa is the main refugee-generating continent, and also the most hospitable to refugees. Political and ethnic conflicts in the Great Lakes region, especially Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, have generated millions of refugees in the last decade alone. Most have remained within the region and within their own countries, or have crossed into neighbouring Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Zambia. The upheaval in Congo-Brazzaville, largely unexamined in Western newspapers, has uprooted at least half a million people.

The Horn of Africa still witnesses armed conflicts that force millions to search for safety. The conflict in southern Sudan has displaced over four million people. Eritrea's struggle for independence from Ethiopia spans almost 40 years, its latest bloody episode fought out in a period of famine. Eritrea and Tigray, once allies, have engaged in fratricide killing thousands. Somalia remains fragmented after the post-Cold War collapse of Siyad Barre's dictatorship, artificially propped up for too long. Those who flee such conflicts in the Horn are to be found, for the most part, in Uganda, Kenya and Egypt.

In southern Africa, Mozambique continues to absorb millions of people: refugees, demobilised soldiers and internally displaced persons repatriating after years of war. Despite floods, a disastrous cyclone and bitterly contested elections, Mozambique offers its people increasing freedom and a growing economy. Angola should be on the same path following the peace accord of 1994. Instead, it has plunged back into a war fuelled by mineral wealth. The venality of

the international community colludes by permitting the country's wealth to be traded for weapons. Three and a half million Angolans are displaced within their own country. New refugees arrive daily in Zambia, Namibia and Congo. Southern Africa also has *urban refugees*, now a phenomenon in most cities. Urban refugees are those who lack access to other means of survival and refuse to live on rations in a remote refugee camp. To earn a living they drift to the cities anonymously.

In West Africa, civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone are supposedly settled but flare periodically, leaving thousands of their citizens in neighbouring countries, afraid to return.

Asia and the Middle East

The Palestinians in the Middle East and the Burmese ethnic minorities in Thailand compete for the title of longest-lasting refugee population. Both conflicts date from the 1940s. The conflict over Kashmir dates from the partition of India and Pakistan, as does the displacement of the so-called Bihari Muslims, an Urdu speaking minority within Bangladesh. When the Soviet Union pressed down into Afghanistan in 1979, a conflict started that has displaced millions into Pakistan and Iran. Despite the withdrawal of the Soviet Union and its own collapse, the violence hardly abated. China's occupation of Tibet and the existence of Tibetan refugees is well known, thanks to their respected spiritual leader the Dalai Lama. Less known is the predicament of 100,000 Bhutanese, only marginally less in number than the Tibetans, rendered stateless and confined to camps in lowland Nepal for 10 years.

Sri Lanka meanwhile is the scene of one of today's most poignant conflicts, producing a worldwide diaspora that rivals the Sudanese. None of those who fled wanted to leave home, but none could stay in the face of pitiless violence. Seemingly ethnic based, the conflict is (like so many others) about power and control. In southern India 100,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees live mostly in small camps. The UN was asked to help but is denied access. India, together with most Asian nations, still has not signed the 50-year-old UN Convention guaranteeing protection to refugees.

Twenty-five years after the Vietnam War and the side-show conflicts in Cambodia and Laos, the last Lao refugees have just returned

home or been resettled. Disputes arise still over the safety of new Cambodian refugees in Thailand. The last pockets of Vietnamese are still detained in Thailand, while the remnant in Hong Kong have just been granted residence. World sympathy overflowed towards the Indochinese refugees in an earlier era, but finally froze solid.

For 24 years the people of East Timor suffered the world's pragmatic silence in the face of Indonesia's attempt to swallow their territory. Standing in the ruins of their houses, without work, without money, without shelter, the Timorese can for the moment smile because they are free. But an enormous challenge of nation-building lies ahead.

America

The conflicts of the 70s and 80s, fuelled by Cold War rivalries, have subsided. In their place oppression and displacement of indigenous minorities continue. That in Chiapas, Mexico, is well documented. So too is the violence associated with large-scale poverty-induced migrations. A prime instance are the undocumented Haitians who live and work, virtually as slaves, in the Dominican Republic. In Colombia, rural peasants are caught in a triangular conflict between the military, the paramilitary (security forces protecting commercial interests) and the guerrillas. Described by North and South American observers as *our hemisphere's most serious humanitarian crisis*, Colombia currently has over a million people forcibly displaced following competition for land and control. The United States, in a massive plan supposedly aimed at imposing peace, proposes to fund and reequip the Colombian military, one of the main culprits in the violence.

In Canada and USA, previously generous immigration policies have given way to concerted preventive measures. Special US immigration centres are inadequate for the tens of thousands of foreigners detained, often for minor irregularities. Asylum seekers awaiting a hearing or deportation are imprisoned with convicted criminals.

Europe

The brutal war in Chechnya has provoked one of today's most dramatic man-made crises of forced displacement. The rest of the

world needs and fears the Russian State, and will not openly challenge its actions. Other countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union are involved, some receiving, others repelling refugees. The NATO bombing of Serbia is also of recent memory. After March 1999, two million Albanian Kosovars were displaced, over 800,000 of them to the neighbouring countries, especially Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro. Bosnia lives under an imposed and uneasy peace. Reconciliation there is at least a generation away.

As barriers in western Europe are raised against immigrants and asylum seekers, the problem is pushed further east. Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania and Lithuania all receive Sri Lankans, Sudanese and Afghans. Many come seeking work, many seeking safety, most seeking transit further west. Everywhere, but especially in Europe, the task of distinguishing refugees from ordinary migrants presents new and serious difficulties. In earlier times migrants and refugees were distinguishable from one another. And refugees could be distinguished from 'economic migrants' (dismissed as 'fake'). Now 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' population movements resemble one another, as do people fleeing threats to their lives and those escaping poverty and social injustice.



Malawi 1994 Pastoral care and counselling form an integral part of JRS services in Malawi. *Generally it is the non-government organisations (NGOs) and the churches who do the face-to-face work. The large international bodies negotiate policies, provide food and transport, but the NGOs are right there alongside the people* (Mark Raper SJ, *Exile and Solidarity*, a Global Panorama, April 1994).

New scenarios for old: populations displaced

Mark Raper SJ, May 1998 (extracts)

*I shall take you from among the nations
and gather you together from all the foreign countries,
and bring you home to your own land.*

Ezekiel 36:24

By most reckonings the world should be a more peaceful place. The Cold War is over. Conflicts between sovereign states are few. Regional conflicts like those once witnessed in Indochina, Angola, Mozambique and Central America are no longer fanned into flames by super-power conflicts. And a global nuclear melt-down seems unlikely – despite some recent nuclear muscle-flexing on the Subcontinent.

Yet paradoxically, intense new conflicts are breaking out almost uncontrollably within national borders. In nine cases out of 10, the victims of current conflicts are civilians. Today at least 50 million people worldwide suffer forced displacement.

Certainly provocations to war always exhibit a local colouring, but the conditions underlying today's conflicts are global in origin. Ninety percent of those displaced come from the world's least developed regions. Even when as fugitives they manage to cross borders, nearly all remain within the world's least developed regions. Now we are all citizens of a world in which the ongoing refugee flows need to be queried and understood. For those who profess religious beliefs, theological reflection regarding displacement – a major sign of our times – is vital. Good reflection leads to action, creative and faithful...

To be a refugee

To be a refugee is to live at the margins of society, excluded from political or social importance. The man or woman who is a refugee may one time have been important, once enjoyed a role in life. In a camp of displaced people, each one is a former something: a

former farmer, housewife, doctor, husband, minister of state. Each is a person in waiting, dependent on another's decision.

Sadly, refugee crises have long been a constant in human experience. Throughout human history people have fled violence, armed conflict and persecution. However, in recent years forced migration has assumed new and drastic dimensions. While forced migration itself is not new, our era is unprecedented in six respects:

- ***The scale of the problem:*** JRS began in 1979 as a response to what was then perceived as a horrifying world crisis. Yet refugee numbers have quadrupled since then, to a peak in 1994-95. Numbers may have climbed still higher, were it not for large-scale forced returns. But what is frightening is the increased number and intensity of the current conflicts. Last year these numbered between 65 and 70. As a result of the long-running dispute in Sudan, around three million people are unable to return home.

- ***The complexity of current predicaments:*** New terminology is one indication of complexity. We now distinguish asylum seekers, stateless persons, illegal immigrants, undocumented people and rejected asylum seekers. We also speak of mass expulsions, ethnic cleansing, forced migration, internal displacement, involuntary repatriation and imposed return. Determining who gains official refugee status has also become more and more complex. A person who is recognised as a refugee in Africa may be no more than an asylum seeker in Europe. The Geneva Convention is more restrictive, the Convention of the Organisation of African Unity broader.

- ***The speed of events:*** The Great Lakes region provides sad examples of mass population flows in both directions. Everyone remembers the massacres during the second quarter of 1994 when at least 500,000 people were killed in six weeks. Then 1.75 million Hutus moved to neighbouring countries Zaire, Tanzania and Burundi, where they were provided with international assistance. Many organisations, including JRS, invested great energy in setting up projects in the region, from the end of 1994. More recently, in late 1996, around 1.5 million Rwandans were forcibly returned home in a matter of weeks. The camps in Tanzania were emptied of 500,000 Rwandans in December. But by January 1997 they were filled by 300,000 Burundians.

- ***Security:*** Forced population displacements, inevitable during and after conflicts, are themselves likely to become a threat to regio-

nal, national and personal security. Despite the end of the Cold War and the spread of democracy, life has become increasingly difficult and dangerous for many populations. A number of nation states have collapsed, including Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the former Soviet Union. Even the creation of new states – 27 in the last 10 years – is a sign of volatility. In many countries citizens have lost confidence in their own government's ability or will to protect them. When the economy declines or global forces shift the balance of power within a country, governments are tempted to use force to control their people.

- ***The refugee's intensifying experience of rejection:*** Many countries' main aim now is to keep refugees at a distance. *Fortress Europe* is being reinforced to stem a *foreign invasion*. The media are enlisted to protect us from the forcibly displaced, ignoring their sufferings and oversimplifying their struggles. Restrictive migration legislation, common policies regarding asylum requests and the upsurge of extremist anti-foreigner groups all typify Western trends.

- ***Globalisation:*** The refugee phenomenon is now truly international and cannot be addressed nation by nation. The movement of peoples is just one aspect of wider global trends. Refugees can no longer rely on governments or even intergovernmental bodies for protection. This is a major concern.

What sparks refugee movements?

No field worker doubts the importance of being present among refugees and displaced people – most of whom are women and children. But what can be done to prevent new violence erupting, and to prevent still more forced migrations?

It is important to understand that refugees may be marginalised people, but their significance is far from marginal. What displaced populations reveal to us all are profound shifts and stresses underlying our social and economic systems. Refugee movements are like earthquakes signalling movement between the earth's tectonic plates. They are warning signs of our global community's deep tensions. When refugees cry for help, they cry out on behalf of all of us.

What turns local conflicts into humanitarian disasters is poverty. People living constantly at the limit cannot survive long without a field to cultivate or a market at which to sell their produce. They are

compelled to move just to stay alive. As mentioned earlier, over 90 per cent of the world's refugees come from the poorest countries and are hosted by them.

Remedies offered by major western monetary institutions involve tough prescriptions for economic reform. In the poorest countries, the structural adjustments required by the world's affluent states carry a high human and social price. Usually what follows is unemployment, declining wages, reduced public services and increased income differentials.

Other forces are also at work. Within a nation one group seeks to maintain exclusive power, or a powerful minority fears it may lose its wealth or power. In Sudan the struggle is for control of recently discovered oilfields. In Sri Lanka and Rwanda, colonial powers gave minority groups within the civil service disproportionate access to wealth, so a predictable reaction set in when colonial patronage was withdrawn.

It is also important to investigate the source of weapons that escalate these conflicts. Ask what fishing, mining or timber concessions were granted in payment for weapons. During my stay at the Centre Christus in Kigali in 1994, two little boys stepped on a landmine hidden in the bamboo forest nearby. One was killed, the other lost a part of a leg. The mine was manufactured and sold by an Italian company.

Reflecting and acting

How then should one think compassionately, and at the same time practically, about such matters? Let's start with the Gandhi Talisman: *Recall the face of the poorest and most helpless person whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to this person. Will the person be able to gain anything by it? Will it restore the person to control over personal life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj, self-rule, for the hungry and also spiritually starved millions of our country people. Then you will find your doubts and your self melting away.* Or you may choose to reflect on the lives of particular refugees you have encountered, or people whose stories you have heard. What is common to their experiences? What roots of violence lie behind each story?

Christian reflections and responses

Pope John Paul II has consistently drawn the world's attention to refugees, not only to prompt compassionate action but to invite structural reflection. More than 10 years ago he described the tragedy of refugees as *a wound that typifies and reveals the imbalance and conflicts of the modern world* (Encyclical letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987, no. 24). The plight of refugees cannot be solved by local projects alone, but calls for a new global vision.

Christians have many reasons to insist on the dignity of each human person. They look for inspiration to a Lord who was humbly born, experienced exile as a child and felt rejection as an adult, and who constantly sought out the company of those whom society sidelined. In our time refugees and displaced persons suffer diminishment of their dignity as human persons. We are called not only to insist on their dignity but to stand with them. To accompany any person in need is the first duty of the Church.

Caring for refugees in fact offers Christians many opportunities to contact and assist people of other faiths. Over half the world's refugees today are Muslim. Most of my own fieldwork has been among Buddhists. Such efforts accord fully with mainstream Catholic teaching. The present Pope has urged Christians to offer *love and assistance to all refugees without distinction as to religion or race, respecting in each of them the inalienable dignity of the human person created in the image of God*. (Pontificio Consiglio della Pastorale per i Migranti e gli Itineranti, *I Rifugiati, Una Sfida alla Solidarietà*, 1992, no. 1).

One task for the Church and for all people of goodwill is to arouse public opinion. Opinion makers need to understand that in too many countries human rights are still violated with impunity. And that a world in which human rights are not respected will continue to produce refugees. The Pope has been consistently strong in refusing to accept that displaced populations are to be regarded as normal: *It is something repugnant and abnormal for hundreds and thousands of human beings to be forced to leave their own countries because of their race, ethnic origin, political convictions or religion, or because they are in danger of violence or even death from civil strife or political turmoil. Exile seriously violates the human conscience and the norms of life in society; it is clearly contrary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to international law itself* (Address to government authorities and

the diplomatic corps, Bangkok, 11 May 1984; *L'Osservatore Romano*, 21 May 1984).

In his annual messages for Migration Day, Pope John Paul II refers to the challenge to confront public opinion and to challenge unjust laws. And in his 1998 Lenten Statement, he highlights the biblical theme of welcoming the stranger: *An atmosphere of welcoming is increasingly necessary to confront today's diverse forms of distancing ourselves from others. This is profoundly evidenced in the problem of millions of refugees and exiles, in the phenomenon of racial intolerance, as well as intolerance toward those whose only 'fault' is searching for work and better living conditions outside their own country...*

The Pope's religious reflections point to quite practical steps: *The Word of the Lord acquires new relevance given the needs of so many people who search for housing, struggle for work and seek education for their children. Welcoming such people remains a challenge for the Christian community which cannot ignore its obligation to respond so that everyone is enabled to find living conditions suitable to the dignity of a child of God.*

I exhort every Christian to give evidence of his or her personal conversion through a concrete sign of love toward those in need, recognising in this person the face of Christ and repeating, as if almost face to face: 'I was poor, I was marginalised and you welcomed me' (Message of the Holy Father for Lent, 1998).

The experiences that refugees and displaced people recount are among the significant signs of our times. Listening can help us understand our era better from God's perspective, and especially from that of Jesus, the Servant Lord. Attending to the lives of our refugee brothers and sisters has the potential to lead everyone of goodwill to a new mind-set, one aimed toward a more compassionate and welcoming world order.

Meanwhile, we do well to remember that Jesus reached the Resurrection only by willingly entering his Passion. His experiences of rejection and betrayal were preludes to his vindication and being raised to the Kingdom. Confronting the refugee phenomenon face to face may be one of our contemporary ways to religious conversion: a compassionate conversion, the kind our world needs.



Elena Marion/JRS

Albania 1999 When ethnic Albanian refugees fled intensified Serb repression in Kosovo in March 1999, JRS set up a number of assistance projects in Albania which were closed later that same year when the refugees returned to Kosovo.

Hosting refugees can be very demanding: hurriedly organising housing, food, jobs, welcoming committees, sponsorships, and social contacts. In times of high unemployment and economic recession, people's minds are not prepared and refugees are looked upon as intruders. Their arrival also takes on a political dimension which often means a series of annoyances for the host country because the countries from which the refugees fled often demand their return or exert diplomatic pressure. It is so much simpler to just ignore this human tragedy and to shut one's doors... But to have the courage to welcome the refugees and the satisfaction of solving their problems can be a source of great enrichment. The whole history of mankind is made up of displaced populations but nothing can be compared to what is happening in our times on a worldwide scale. Such numerous and such disparate displaced masses demand of our established communities an exceptional effort to adapt themselves to new ways of life and different ways of thinking, and thus to achieve mutual understanding and harmony. And when assistance to newcomers goes beyond satisfying their immediate needs and strives to integrate them in their new environment, the chances are that yesterday's refugee becomes tomorrow's creative and productive citizen. We hold the power to isolate ourselves or to open up to each other in warm encounter.

Louis Joseph Goulet SJ, 'A World of Refugees', *Le Brigand*, Missionary Review of the French-Canadian Jesuits, November-December, 1981

The causes of forced displacement: the breakdown of sustainable global community

Mark Raper SJ

Extracts from a talk given at 'The prophetic mission of Churches in response to forced displacement of people', a global ecumenical consultation, Addis Ababa, 1995

*To know our sorrow
is to know our joy -
Somewhere a mother will rejoice.*

from *Somewhere*, by Es'kia Mphahlele

One eloquent sign of our times is the mass displacement of peoples, a warning sign to us all. The population flows that are visible, a tenth of the iceberg, conceal vast personal and national tragedies, economic inequality of catastrophic proportions, collective violence, and nation-states bent on denying human rights and repressing their own citizens.

Once alerted, our faith compels us to seek justice. But first we must unearth the causes so that our work for justice and our compassion are well targeted. Our world is changing. Old explanations must be discarded and new ones discovered. Accurate analysis and informed reflection are then available as a basis for our prayer lives to face the contemporary mystery of suffering. We need to scrutinise tragic situations and discover their meanings. The refugee, too, asks for an explanation and has a right to it, even more than food or shelter.

Knowing what is happening, and why, makes it less likely that helpers will be co-opted into conflicts. Our role is to be objective about their situation and question their ideological interpretations. If we understand the factors operating, we are in a position to act more precisely and devise better strategies of presence and assistance. We will avoid treating symptoms as causes, and not blame victims for what is outside their control.

We will have the chance to advocate appropriate policies, develop useful structures and challenge unrealistic procedures. We will have what it takes to prepare our field workers. We will be better prepared to intervene earlier and to act in the refugees' long term interests. We will be less afraid.

Genuine reconciliation requires a process from truth to justice to reconciliation. Nothing worthwhile can happen until the truth of what really happened, and may be still happening, is acknowledged. In each place of pain and within each crisis the truth must be revealed. Then justice will not be sold short, nor reconciliation short-circuited.

Individual and communal factors causing displacement

Refugee flight, according to the UN Convention on Refugees, must take place as a result of persecution. To be legally recognised under the convention, a refugee must prove well-founded fear of persecution. Some countries use the convention definition to restrict the right to asylum. Most European countries, and the USA as well, require that persecution be individually based. The fact that someone's uncle was tortured, or that her ethnic group was under attack, is not considered an adequate reason for flight unless she can show that she was personally targeted for persecution.

Clearly not every experience of forced flight matches these legal requirements. Today's conflicts are rarely aimed at individuals. In Guatemala whole communities are targeted. Communal fields are razed, communal medical centres destroyed, villagers en masse are forced off their land. In any case most lives are communal, not individualistic. And reasons for flight are generally communal.

It is the rich countries that ask for individual proof before granting refugee status. Meanwhile 90 per cent of the world's refugees struggle to survive in other poor countries that adjoin theirs. Few individual questions are asked of them. Meanwhile regional definitions, like that formulated by the Organisation of African Unity for Africa, and in Cartagena for Latin America, acknowledge a broader range of reasons for flight. Experience shows that any refugees' right to asylum should be linked to their government's failure to protect them, rather than to their experiences as individuals.

Many valid reasons for flight fail to fit within current legal definitions. There also exist reasons for flight that elicit no one's sympathy and offer no valid reason for seeking protection. Those who commit violent crimes and then leave home for fear of reprisal, as in Rwanda's case, deserve to be called to account.

Why did you move?

To understand refugees one must set them in a broader context. Most leave home seeking:

- a better education for their children;
- better employment;
- life nearer their friends or family, and
- a safer place.

What distinguishes a refugee from a migrant is the speed with which the decision to depart has to be made, as well as the coercion and fear.

Reasons for flight vary across a scale from alarming to urgent:

- to find schooling for my children. All the schools at home were closed because of the war.
- to find a home for my family. Ours was destroyed in the fighting.
- to find work. My shop was burned, or my fields mined, or my cattle looted by the soldiers.
- to find a safe place near friends. Where I was living, anyone who looked like me or shared my beliefs risked arrest.
- to go to a safe place. Around us the violence never ceased.

Individual motivation and well-founded fears

The decision to take refuge or migrate may be sharpened by personal motives, such as:

- fear of immediate attack, rape or violence;
- repeated attacks or threats;
- chronic lack of confidence, breakdown of communal trust;
- despair about the future of one's children;
- attraction of greater political or social freedom;
- the promise of better education and greater social mobility;
- the image of a better life in the West;
- the hope of family reunion;
- the desire of the diaspora to return to home.

External and social causes

An analysis presented in a paper by the World Council of Churches, the Central Committee Statement on uprooted people, *A Moment to Choose*, classifies causes of flight under three headings:

1. The multiple causes of forced displacement

War, civil conflict, human rights violations, colonial domination and persecution for political, religious, ethnic or social reasons characterise every region and are major causes of forced human displacement today.

The correlation between violations of human rights and situations that produce refugees is very strong. Significantly, 90 per cent of countries with high levels of human rights violations belong to a group of 36 countries that give rise to most of the world's internally and externally displaced people.

2. Severe breakdown of economic and social conditions

The breakdown of conditions that once provided people with the means to survive in their traditional communities and in their own countries is accelerating the movement of people.

Disarray within the world economic order is a major cause of instability. The malaise affecting the capitalist system has its cruellest effects in poorer countries. African countries, especially those tied to single commodity markets, continue to slip further behind in their share of world trade. Currently 1.2 billion people live in absolute poverty, an increase of 40 per cent in the last 20 years. Those who chronically lack life's necessities become acutely vulnerable. In turn, their plight increases the likelihood, size and complexity of new emergency situations. Examine the political causes of economic hardship and the distinction between merely economic migrants and refugees becomes difficult to sustain.

3. Environmental devastation

This has emerged as a powerful motivation for large-scale human displacement. Researchers estimate that 10 million people are already environmental refugees.

The breakdown of sustainable community

This is another of the major reasons for today's massive forced

displacements. Community breakdown is world-wide and pluriform. Ethnic conflict breaks down communities. Misguided leaders purposely keep alive the memory of harsh events in a people's history to shape their sense of ethnic identity. The resentment that results can be potent, as witnessed in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Much of the blame must be shouldered by politicians who manipulate their people's beliefs for their own ends and then ignite the flames of war.

Ethnic hatred in Rwanda was fanned by provocative radio broadcasts. The individuals who masterminded that conflict should not escape prosecution. They are emblematic of those who destroy our communities. No individual should enjoy impunity after perpetrating malicious actions at a leader's behest. Nonetheless, a hierarchy of responsibility does exist.

Family breakdown

At one level community is founded on the family. Again and again today's conflicts target the family unit. Earlier wars also broke the family apart: men left their wives behind to go and fight. Today, the men may be the ones left behind, a switch of gender roles. In our time any method of splitting the family is fair game. Children are abducted to become soldiers, mothers are killed and young women forced to fight. How can you teach another way of life to children who know nothing but violence?

The motivations behind this new kind of war are clear. First, the strategy is to divide people and then gain power via chaos and misery. Second, witnessing a family member killed is calculated to create hatred and terror, and to turn even children into fighters.

The causes of displacement - dare to ask why

To become a refugee today is to fall into a bad space. To be in a refugee camp is to be in an evil place. Many refugees ask: Why does God allow this? And they have the right to an answer from us based on deep reflection. Certainly this evil situation was not made by God, but by human action. But we may still ask: How can we, before God, allow this suffering? And more positively: How can we collaborate with God's action so that God's grace overcomes this evil?

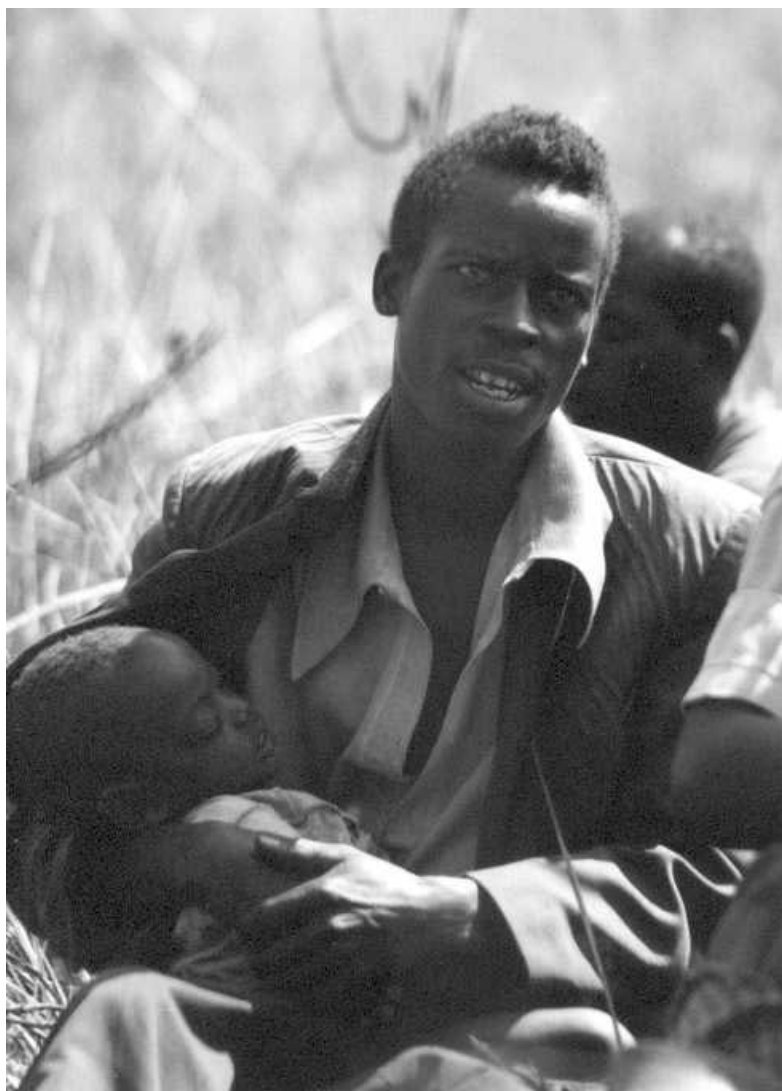
When we arrive as a refugee agency on the heels of a disaster

in Karagwe or Bukavu or in the Bihac pocket, and see countless people displaced and suffering, our first temptation is to mount large scale assistance. The speed of the arrival and the congestion, the humiliation, anguish, guilt, sadness; all of these forces create tremendous physical, moral and spiritual crises. Help is indeed needed. But a vital additional task for the church is to face the mystery of this particular suffering and evil, to help people find a meaning within their own situation. Our task will include supplying food, water and shelter, but goes beyond this to human solidarity before our common Father.

We must know well what message of hope we dare to bring to people who have been denied hope. *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* (Jeremiah 29:11). Can we believe such promises? Can we carry that message?

All of 2,500 years ago, Ezekiel was charged to bring a message to a people who had suffered a long cruel exile: *I am going to take you from among the nations and gather you together from all the foreign countries, and bring you home to your own land. I shall pour clean water over you and you will be cleansed; ...I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead* (Ezekiel 36:24-33). Ezekiel issued a call to change and be converted because something had gone terribly wrong. Even the victims needed to look to themselves, so as not to succumb to the evil and allow it to devolve into hate. If they were not to become like their oppressors, conversion was necessary. It still is.

The fourth song of the Servant of Yahweh in Isaiah (Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12) has a message for us when we ask why. The suffering people are themselves a silent protest against corrupt human ways, including those that descend to the politics of ethnicity. The refugees are best placed to tell us clearly and correctly what is wrong. It is the innocent on all sides of a conflict who can start the miracle of reconciliation. We have seen it time and again when widows from opposing ethnic factions come together, or when landmine victims and other war-wounded meet. The suffering people themselves have a vital interest in change. Those who are in power work to maintain the status quo. The solution will come from the victims. Indeed it does already. God has chosen them.



Jenny Caliso/JRS

Zambia 1999 Attending a meeting of a JRS community development project at the Meheba refugee settlement.

chapter seven

Reflections on the refugee experience

At present the refugees are survivors. An essential part of my job is to help them to do more than survive – to help them to live as free men and women.

William Yeomans SJ

Ban Vinai

William Yeomans SJ

Ban Vinai is 11 years old. I have been here for 16 months. I am a newcomer. I have not grown up from infancy to boyhood or girlhood, to manhood or womanhood in Ban Vinai, like those who arrived here at the age of nine, 10, 11, 12. They are bred of Ban Vinai. I am a foreigner. I live outside the camp. Therefore, I speak not from knowledge but from ignorance.

I do not know what it means to be a grown man used to a hard life of work in a tiny mountain village and who now, after years of enforced idleness, has lost the habit and taste for work. A man whose moral fibre has been sapped because he has nothing to do, whose children have never seen him work!

I do not know what it means to be an old woman of 60 or more who spends her day in her hut weeping for a homeland and a life from which she has been brutally torn.

I am not a former responsible village leader who now finds his position and prestige disintegrating among his own people, and so turns to degrading subservience to those who can provide privileges and status symbols.

I am not a Hmong forced to live in a situation that can neither support nor nourish my culture, where there is no stimulus for creativity because life is secure, sheltered, unvaried, dull.

All this, and so much more I do not know, here in the heart, the only home of true knowledge. I do not speak the language of the refugees on any level: linguistic, psychological, social, spiritual. I have never walked in their shoes.

What then is the life of the refugees in Ban Vinai? Is material security, guaranteed food, housing, medical care, education (up to a point), a life? Is being deprived of the dignity of work a life? Is procreating children for an unknown or illusory future a life? Is education without purpose a life? Can life be found in an opium pipe? What is life for those who have been born of the soil and who now are without land, like the native Americans without their great plains?

And what are the needs of the refugees in Ban Vinai? Materially theirs is not a life of material hardship. It cannot be compared with

the starving destitute of Africa or of the barrios of central and south America. But we have our poor for whom life is hard and rations just about sufficient.

But for all refugees it is a life of deprivation: the deprivation of physical liberty that in all but the strongest erodes psychological and spiritual liberty; deprivation of a reasonably predictable future and consequently deprivation of those realistic hopes that can inspire the human heart to engage itself gladly in the tasks to be done, be they ever so laborious and tiring.

The refugees of Ban Vinai are deprived by an alien power of that soil out of which their culture and character grew. As a result, what roots they have are withering and in a few years will surely die.

The real needs of the people of Ban Vinai may be discerned in the syndromes characteristic of long confinement. They can eventually come to accept camp life not merely as normal but even as desirable. Their horizons are limited to the perimeter of the camp, not by their own choice, but because of an induced apathy to what happens in the inaccessible and therefore irrelevant world outside.

By dint of having everything provided they can lose healthy independence and self-reliance and become unashamed to beg (the infamous *gimme* syndrome). They can become a prey to fear of leaving the security of the camp for an unknown third country; a fear heightened by discouraging letters and cassettes from jobless and disillusioned relatives struggling to live in the supposed Eldorado.

Their contact with educated and affluent foreigners, like myself, whose backyard is the world, can sow bitter seeds of resentment and make them feel ignorant and ashamed of their own culture. These feelings are nourished by what they see on television and videos and in the movies. The young especially are all too prone to accept the world portrayed there as normative.

And what of the 20,000 aged 15 and under, either born in the camp or brought there at an early age, whose memories of Laos would be an entry into a strange land and a totally unfamiliar way of life.

What too, of the young women, accustomed to a comparatively easy life in the camp, who have never known the hard toil of the Hmong woman in Laos where the burden of farm work was carried largely by the women?

As I said, I am a newcomer, an outsider. Hence my view is superficial and inadequate. Only a Pere Bertrais who knew the Hmong so



Jan Cooney/JRS

Thailand 1987 Getting water at Ban Vinai, the major camp for the Hmong situated by the Mekong river. Ninety-eight per cent of the refugees in Ban Vinai were Hmong from Laos. There were 45,000 Hmong in the camp.

intimately in Laos could give a true assessment of what they have become in Ban Vinai.

You may think I have painted a grim picture. I have, because it is grim. But I would not want any other work than what I am doing. There is in it no superficial job satisfaction or self-fulfilment and so it is capable of engendering a most profound joy.

I am not sure exactly what I am really doing or where it is leading, but that does not disturb me. As St Ignatius wrote a few weeks before his death: None of us can know for certain in this life exactly how far we are furthering or hindering what God is trying to work through us. Therefore I live in joyful and salutary fear.

Finally, I hope I will never propose a glib answer to the question that the refugees pose to the world community until I have found out exactly what the question is.

Each of us spoke of our own work, sharing what we had learnt from our time with the refugees. We spoke of the deep human anguish of refugees who had lost homeland, close family members, their freedom to choose, their works and their dignity. Perhaps the most pervasive problem was the sense of powerlessness. Many refugees had experienced appalling suffering in their homeland or during their flight but, in the camps, the universal problem was that of having no say in their own lives and in their future.

In camps which were virtual prisons and under policies imposed by governments with their own political interests, refugees were most often voiceless. For some of us, this suffering was a challenge, even a challenge of our faith. But we had also learnt of the people's resilience and courage. We asked how JRS workers can be companions of our refugee people. Again and again, we turned to prayerful discernment of this question.

We saw our first service as to share, even in some small measure, the lives and sufferings of the refugees, to be able to love and respect them, to be a sign of solidarity and hope. With people of whom the overwhelming majority are Buddhists or animists we saw our presence as witnessing to God's love and the message of the Gospel but without wishing to impose our own Christian beliefs.

Diakonia, Issue 1, November 1983

The first thing I learned in my new work was that anybody who has not actually been a refugee should speak about the subject with great caution and reserve lest he appear presumptuous, misjudging people and distorting issues. Most refugees who have been through the ordeal, and who survived, are reluctant to expose the horror of their experience...

I also learnt that so long as there is hope, even when there is neither shelter nor food nor medicine, refugees, even the most vulnerable ones, can overcome formidable difficulties and obstacles...

It has been said that *African refugees vote with their feet against suffering and oppression, and for freedom, justice and the hope of a new life* (Pedro Arrupe SJ, *The Refugee Crisis in Africa: Opportunity and Challenge for the Church*, 1981). The young Zimbabweans had opted for exile in a foreign land to express their protest and resistance against the racial injustice and oppression of the Rhodesian Front government of Mr Ian Smith. Their dignity and life was all they could take with them, and some not even that. In a dilapidated little house on the outskirts of Maputo, I met a group of 25 youngsters who had one or both of their legs blown off while crossing the minefields along Rhodesia's eastern border. They suffered great physical pain and psychological trauma, but they were proud and had no regrets. The same is true for many, perhaps the majority of today's refugees, that no sacrifice is too great for them to save their dignity as human beings.

Dieter B. Scholz SJ, *The World Refugee Problem: Our Responsibility and Role*, 1983



Quentin Dingham/JRS

India 1996 A Sri Lankan Tamil girl in Ascot camp, Tamil Nadu. Apart from Sri Lankans who flee their country altogether, there are 650,000 internally displaced people in the north of Sri Lanka.

The flight of a refugee is, on the one hand, an act of fear and desperation, and, on the other, an act of faith and hope in the goodness of their fellow human beings who are waiting to receive them and help them begin life anew. How many refugees have seen their faith and hope justified? How many have been bitterly disappointed? What can we do to help them?

Jerry Martinson SJ, 'A Refugee Encounter', *Progressio*, March 1982

The personal story of refugees is one of suffering. Many can tell of rape, robbery, and murder as they fled from their homes. Many tell also of sickness, hunger and exposure. Where they live in camps, their story is often one of intimidation by faction leaders, other refugees, and by forces of the host country. They live in dependence for their food, for shelter and for medical care. Their memories commonly do not sustain but torment them.

The experience of refugees cannot be described simply in terms of personal suffering. For their story is one which involves massive evil. This evil is at many levels. It is manifest in the exploitation, robbery and abuse of refugees by those who prey on them. It is less manifest but strongly present in the treatment of refugees by governments, who create the conditions which produce refugees and use them as pawns on the larger international board. Evil is most sadly apparent in the corruption which life as a refugee so commonly induces – by seeking one's own advancement at the expense of others or by despair and apathy. In the world of refugees, the goodness of the human spirit is locked in an unequal struggle with evil.

The story of refugees is one of injured human dignity, of suffering and diminishment. The injustice of the societies and world order which produce refugees and devise ways of handling them must frame the perspective of any group which works with refugees... the task of JRS has been to accompany refugees in their suffering while addressing its causes without flinching.

Mark Raper SJ, *Exile and Solidarity*, a *Global Panorama*, April 1994

Why don't I return to Ethiopia? A war between Eritrea and Ethiopia broke out in June 1998. It is a silly war, so many people are being killed and displaced for a piece of desert land. I imagine there are other interests for both countries involved.

My younger brother was imprisoned in June 1998, for the crime of being of Eritrean origin (although he was born in Ethiopia). He is still detained in Bilate detention camp, on the outskirts of Addis Abeba. My elder brother was deported to Eritrea but I have no news of him. My two younger sisters are in hiding in Ethiopia, I know nothing about them either. I cannot return to Ethiopia, I would not even be allowed to enter the country just because my father was Eritrean. What will I do if I'm sent to Eritrea? I've never even been there, it is not my land, I was born in Ethiopia.

I would like to return to my country whenever there is peace. However, if there is no peace, I will stay here, even if I am not accepted. I cannot return to a warring country were I am even considered a stranger.

I also want to fight for my brother. He has already been in prison for two years. But I prefer him to be in prison, rather than in Eritrea, where young men are conscripted, trained and sent to fight. How could he fight against his own country, Ethiopia?

Tigist, a refugee who lives in a shelter for women and children in Italy



Stephen Power SJ/JRS

Nathaniel at a library in Nduta camp, Tanzania.

I have been a refugee for most of my life. I remember clearly the day, years ago, when I fled my country, Burundi, to go to Congo with my parents and five younger brothers and sisters. I was 17 years old at the time. We had to leave on 25 April 1972. When we reached Congo, we settled near the village of Mboko in the Uvira region for three years... It soon became too hard for us to stay in Mboko... in 1975, we moved to a nearby camp for Burundian refugees. I lived and worked in the camp for the next 21 years... Life went on until we were forced to flee again when the war in Congo between Mobutu and Kabila reached the Uvira region in 1996. The camp population was dispersed... My mother, wife and eight children, and I crossed Lake Tanganyika with 45 other people in two large canoes to reach the Kigoma region of Tanzania... we were moved to Nduta camp, Kibondo district... My life continues as a refugee. We receive some food every two weeks, and we are sheltered from war. But camp life is very hard. Our family and friends are scattered, I do not know where some of my brothers and sisters are. The camp is in a forest and we cannot grow much food for ourselves. Nor are we able to move or travel outside the camp without permission, which is very hard to get... There are many difficulties and little joy for us refugees, yet it is impossible for a Christian to lose hope. The patience and endurance I need come from God. After 28 years of being a refugee, I am confident that God knows when I will return home to Burundi.

Nathaniel Ntukamazina



Mark Raper SJ/JRS

Timor 1999 A joyful moment as refugees – forcibly deported from East to West Timor by pro-Indonesian militias and military – take a ferry back home.

The plight of thousands of Vietnamese boat people moved Jesuit Father General Pedro Arrupe SJ to explore what the Society could do to alleviate the suffering of refugees in the world. On 14 November 1980, he established the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). Today this service is active in 50 countries. The service of the refugees, for Fr Arrupe, is 'everybody's challenge'.

This present book gathers essential documents of the first 20 years of JRS. It traces the growth of JRS, recording the 'step-by-step' process by which JRS workers meet refugees, undertake new services, reflect on these experiences, and plan new actions. Many JRS projects involve the collaboration of hundreds of volunteers, lay, religious and Jesuits.

Documents which mark the setting up of JRS and its ratification as an essential part of the mission of the Society of Jesus; which describe criteria for selection of projects and the quality of service JRS personnel strive to offer refugees; which explore its roots in Ignatian spirituality, are included. This book seeks to grasp the inspiration which has guided JRS over the past 20 years.