Consolation in action: the Jesuit Refugee Service and the ministry of accompaniment

Author: Kevin O'Brien

: Weston Jesuit School of Theology, 2006

CONSOLATION IN ACTION
The Jesuit Refugee Service and the Ministry of Accompaniment

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the S.T.L. degree
of Weston Jesuit School of Theology,
Cambridge, Massachusetts

S.T.L. Candidate: Kevin O'Brien, S.J.

Thesis Director: John O'Malley, S.J.

Second Reader: Kevin Burke, S.J.

1 May 2006

Contents

Introduction

"You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien,
for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (Ex 22:21)

A day after Christmas 2004, from an epicenter far off in the Pacific, towering waves raced across the ocean, crashing into unsuspecting beach resorts and coastal towns. As reports and video images of the destruction made their way around the world, *tsunami* became ingrained in our lexicon of disaster. Among the hardest-hit places was the province of Aceh in northern Indonesia. Four days after the tsunami, Andre Sugijopranoto SJ, Asia Pacific Regional Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), finally reached the JRS office in Banda Aceh, the main city in the province. A JRS worker offered him a grim account, conjuring images that would become all too familiar after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast of the United States nine months later:

> Corpses, corpses and more corpses. That is Banda Aceh now. Walking on foot in the streets, it is all corpses. The river behind the office is full of floating corpses. Yesterday they buried 40. Today more corpses appeared in the river brought by the stream. There is a rotten smell everywhere. Because people drowned, their stomachs are full, and today they started to tear open. The Raya mosque is full of corpses. The market in Banda Aceh is wiped to the ground. The stores are filled with dead bodies. In the jail in Kedah, all inmates died inside. The Brimo Asrama is also destroyed. The hospital is destroyed, only the health station is left. Many doctors are dead. There is no medicine in the health station. Disaster.[1]

The 4.5 million residents on Aceh had become familiar with disaster. For decades, they lived through a civil war between the Indonesian government and separatist groups. With the conflict came human rights abuses, a breakdown of social services, and massive displacement of peoples from Aceh to North Sumatra and elsewhere. To better respond to this humanitarian

---

[1] JRS Indonesia Alert no. 2, 30 Dec 2004, accessed at www.jrs.net/alerts. Shortly after the *tsunami*, the Jesuit Refugee Service in the United States organized a massive appeal for charitable contributions. By October 2005, the amount exceeded $1.75 million. Interviews with Ken Gavin, 24 March 2005 & 24 September 2005.

crisis, JRS established a presence in Aceh in 2001.[2] After the tsunami, JRS set up 49 refugee camps for 440,000 displaced persons in Aceh.[3] Soon they would focus their attention on the long-term task of rebuilding Aceh, including setting up schools, re-establishing health and sanitation infrastructures, and helping people generate income.[4] Equally important, JRS committed itself to caring for the spiritual and mental health of the people so traumatized by the disaster and wondering where God was in the tragedy. Yet, even in a catastrophe that would claim nearly 250,000 lives across the region and dislocate over two million people,[5] the JRS mission did not fundamentally change. As before, they were present to accompany, serve, and advocate for the people of Aceh.[6]

JRS responded to the victims of the tsunami and similar catastrophes out of heart-felt compassion. The plight of refugees and other displaced persons touches a primal nerve.[7] As with

---

[2] Jesuit Refugee Service, Annual Report (2003), 42; JRS Indonesia Alert no. 1, 30 Dec 2004, accessed at http://www.jrs.net/alerts.

[3] Becky Troha, "Sanctuary," *Company*, Spring 2005, 18, 23. According to Troha, JRS team members were the first to arrive at Aceh Island, where only 600 of the 1,500 – 2,000 residents survived.

[4] Troha, 20-21. According to the Indonesian government, about 117,000 students were without schools. Over 70,000 students and 1,700 teachers were reported dead or missing; 1,100 schools were destroyed (22).

[5] JRS Annual Report (2004), 3.

[6] A year after the tsunami, JRS in Indonesia reported that it had built "74 houses, with 53 more in progress, out of 545 planned. Material for 285 shelters was provided to allow people more comfortable housing while they wait for permanent houses. . . . JRS also employed 179 assistant teachers, provided 427 students with scholarships, and delivered more than 16,000 school packages to schools. The JRS health team treated around 15,000 patients and provided material for 15 public health centers and a mobile clinic serving 23 villages." *Jesuit USA News*, January 11, 2006, accessed at http://www.companymagazine.org/sjusa/06-01-11.htm. For a personal account of life in Aceh a year after the tsunami, see Robert N. Lynch, "After the Tsunami, Peace," *America*, 27 February 2006, 15-16 (Lynch is bishop of St. Petersburg, Florida, and chairman of the board of Catholic Relief Services).

[7] In this paper, I rely on the definitions of "refugee" and "displaced person" as adopted by the JRS in its Charter of 2000 and by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, in its document *Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity* (1992). A refugee is one who crosses a national boundary because of (a) persecution based on race, religion, nationality, or membership in social or political group; (b) armed conflict; (c) natural disaster; (d) violation of human rights; or (e) life-threatening economic conditions. An internally displaced person is one forcibly uprooted from their homes for the same reasons mentioned above but who do not cross a national border. Both groups of people live a provisional existence awaiting return to their home, resettlement to another country, or

any human enterprise, there are practical choices to make, logistics to orchestrate, and politics to negotiate. But the mission always remains rooted in a love for other human beings that is inextricably tied to God's unrelenting love for us and our love for God. In February 1981, Pedro Arrupe, S.J. gave a talk at the Center of Ignatian Spirituality in Rome, entitled "Rooted and Grounded in Love." In it, he explained how love is the "dynamis of our apostolic character" and the "weighty power of the soul" that defines the Society's charism.[8] This lofty rhetoric is made concrete in specific apostolic commitments. "The plight of the world," Arrupe said, "so deeply wounds our sensibilities as Jesuits that it sets the inmost fibres of our apostolic zeal a-tingling."[9]

Just months before this talk, Arrupe founded the Jesuit Refugee Service because his heart was moved by the plight of refugees both near and far. In the late 1970s, thousands of Vietnamese took to the seas, fleeing war and terror in their homeland. They would later be joined by refugees from Cambodia and Laos. Newspapers and television news chronicled the desperate journey of refugees in crowded boats. At the same time, Arrupe saw with his own eyes the dire need of hundreds of Ethiopian refugees in Rome. They were living on the streets and around the main railway station, homeless, hungry and fearful.[10] Arrupe called the Society of Jesus to act, and JRS was born.

Arrupe knew from personal experience what it was like to be a refugee. As a scholastic, he was forced to leave Spain after the socialists expelled all Jesuits from the country in 1932.

---

integration into their host community. In this essay, I use the word, "refugee," inclusively to include internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, and stateless persons.

[8] Pedro Arrupe, "Rooted and Grounded in Love," in *The Spiritual Legacy of Pedro Arrupe, S.J.* (New York: New York Province of the Society of Jesus, 1985), 146.

[9] Arrupe, "Rooted and Grounded in Love," 188.

[10] Peter-Hans Kolvenbach recounts this history in a letter to the whole Society in 1990. See *Acta Romana Societatis Iesu* 20:317. The *Acta Romana* contains official documents of the Society of Jesus. Hereinafter this source will be abbreviated to *ActRSJ*, followed by the volume number (if needed for clarity), and the page number.

The ensuing civil war kept him from returning to Spain for many years.[11] Later, when serving as director of novices near Hiroshima, Arrupe cared for hundreds of severely wounded people fleeing the fallout of the atomic bomb. His novitiate became a hospital. Upon entering Hiroshima hours after the blast, Arrupe described "an indescribable spectacle . . . a macabre vision which staggered the imagination . . . the tragic sight of those thousands of injured people begging for help."[12] Among the harrowing scenes, Arrupe recounted one in particular:

> As we approached the river, the spectacle was awful beyond words. Fleeing the flames and availing themselves of low tide, the people lay across both shores, but in the middle of the night the tide began to rise, and the wounded, exhausted now and half buried in mud, could not move. The cries of those drowning are something I shall never forget.[13]

For Arrupe, the sights and sounds of Hiroshima came alive again in the desperation of Vietnamese and Ethiopian refugees decades later. What in 1941 was a personal response to the plight of those displaced by a terrible bomb became in 1980 a corporate commitment of the Society to displaced persons around the world.

For inspiration for such a bold apostolic commitment, Arrupe looked well beyond his own personal experience to the example of Ignatius: "I ask myself what would have been Ignatius' attitude today in the face of the calamities of our times: the boat-people, the starving

---

[11] Kevin Burke, *Pedro Arrupe: Essential Writings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 19. Arrupe completed his Jesuit formation in Belgium, Holland, and the United States. Other Jesuits knew first-hand the life of a refugee. Ignatius fled from various inquisitions; Edmund Campion and his companions were exiled from their native land; Joseph Pignatelli and thousands of other Jesuits were dislocated after the Suppression; Karl Rahner was expelled from Innsbruck by the Nazis.

[12] From personal reflections by Arrupe reprinted in Burke, 44.

[13] Burke, 45. For other accounts of Arrupe's experiences in Hiroshima, see Ronald Modras, *Ignatian Humanism* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), 257-60; George Bishop, *Pedro Arrupe, S.J.*, (Gujarat, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2000), 157-72.

thousands in the Sahara belt, the refugees and forced migrants of today."[14] He found the answer in the story of how Ignatius and his nine companions spent their second winter in Rome in 1538.

It was a particularly harsh winter. Famine, disease, and cold forced thousands to flee the countryside for the city. Every night, people were dying in the streets. Even as Ignatius and his companions were discerning their future together and defending their new company from the attacks of their detractors, they were moved to respond wholeheartedly to the suffering in their midst. During the day, they begged for food and firewood; in the evening, they gathered people from the wet streets and brought them to the house where Ignatius and the others were staying. As many as 400 people at a time lived under the same roof. The first companions washed and fed their guests. They offered the most weak and infirm their own beds. After dinner, they assembled in the hall where, before a warm fire, the Fathers taught catechism and prepared their guests for confession and Eucharist. In the course of a year, in this house and other places, Ignatius and his companions cared for over 3,000 refugees.[15]

Reflecting on the significance of these and other works of mercy performed by the first Jesuits, Arrupe observed:

> Natural calamities and disasters – like outbreaks of famine, epidemics, catastrophes – make demands on our charity for assistance and help that can brook no delay. The practical conduct of Ignatius in this matter is of a decisively instructive value for us. . . . Ignatius teaches us by his deeds the primacy that charity – even initiatives of material assistance – can and must have, in given circumstances, in the totality of the Society's apostolic activity.[16]

---

[14] Arrupe, "Rooted and Grounded in Love," 169.

[15] This history was shared by Arrupe in "Rooted and Grounded in Love," 166-67 and by Kolvenbach, in *ActRSJ* 20: 316. See also William V. Bangert, *A History of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1972), 19-20; Candido de Dalmases, *Ignatius of Loyola: Founder of the Jesuits*, trans. Jerome Aixalá (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985), 164.

[16] Arrupe, "Rooted and Grounded in Love," 165-66.

Since before the founding of the Society of Jesus, refugees have made a rightful claim on its assistance – whether they are the famine victims of Ignatius' time, the atomic bomb survivors, boat people, and Ethiopian refugees of Arrupe's time, or the tsunami victims of today. Since 1980, the Society has depended on the Jesuit Refugee Service to honor its obligation to the millions of people who wander the earth as refugees.

In this thesis, I will share the highlights of the compelling story of JRS over its first quarter-century. In certain respects, JRS appears as a distinctive ministry of the Society of Jesus. At the same time, it manifests the characteristics of a typical Jesuit ministry. To appreciate both the continuity and discontinuity that JRS presents as a ministry, I will compare JRS to the ministries of consolation to which the first Jesuits devoted themselves.

In recounting the vibrant story of JRS, we learn that *how* JRS goes about its work is as significant as *what* it does. JRS accompanies refugees: walking with them, listening to them, learning from them, empowering them. In this accompaniment, the graces of the Spiritual Exercises come alive in remarkable ways. We see what consolation looks like in action. Moreover, JRS embodies for today the biblical virtue of hospitality. As a privileged expression of contemporary Jesuit spirituality and ancient virtue, JRS offers a model for ministry that can benefit any Jesuit work.

Chapter 1

The Story of JRS as a Jesuit Ministry

Around Christmas 1979, Arrupe gathered his assistants together for an informal consultation about how the Society could best respond to the refugee crisis. Arrupe was realistic about the global dimensions of the problem. As provincial in Japan, he had learned much about the geopolitical situation in Asia and the pressures that forced people to flee their homes. Moreover, soon after he was appointed Superior General in 1965, Arrupe traveled to Africa, a continent marked by civil conflicts that dislocated thousands of people.[17] Following the Christmas meeting, Arrupe sent telegrams to about twenty Provincials around the world. The response was immediate, with offers of personnel, food and medical supplies, financial help, and logistical support in relocating refugees.

A more formal two-day consultation followed in September 1980. The meeting was attended by Arrupe, members of the Jesuit Curia, including Michael Campbell-Johnson, S.J., head of the Social Secretariat of the Society, and five people outside the Curia with experience working with refugees.[18] Recalling the initial consultation, Campbell-Johnston observed, "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" (*EvChal* 44). Arrupe and his advisors first asked why they should get involved. To answer this question, they turned to the

---

[17] Interview with Vincent O'Keefe, S.J., 16 April 2005, New York City.

[18] This account of the discussions that preceded the founding of JRS is based on Arrupe's 1980 letter announcing the establishment of JRS (*ActRSJ* 18:319-21), and recollections by Michael Campbell-Johnston, S.J., the first international director of JRS, presented in *Everybody's Challenge: Essential Documents of Jesuit Refugee Service, 1980-2000* (Rome: Jesuit Refugee Service, 2000), 40-45. This source is a collection of official documents, personal recollections, and essays about the first twenty years of JRS. Hereinafter, *Everybody's Challenge* will be abbreviated to *EvChal*, followed by the page number.

example of Ignatius and the first companions, the founding documents of the Society, and the decrees of recent General Congregations.

Roots of JRS in Jesuit History

The "Formula of the Institute" constitutes the rule of the Society.[19] In the "Formula" of 1550, Ignatius states that the Society was founded "chiefly for this purpose: to strive especially for the defense and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine" ("Formula," 3). To achieve these ends, Ignatius commits the Society to a variety of spiritual ministries, including preaching the Word, teaching Christian doctrine, giving the Spiritual Exercises, hearing confessions, and administering the other sacraments (3). According to Jerome Nadal, Ignatius' faithful interpreter and spokesman, the use of "chiefly" and "especially" in the "Formula" indicates that for Ignatius, the spiritual ministries were primary.[20]

In the next paragraph of the "Formula," Ignatius expands the ministries of the Society to include works of mercy. A Jesuit, he writes, "should show himself ready to reconcile the estranged, compassionately assist and serve those in prisons or hospitals, and indeed to perform any other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good" ("Formula," 3). According to Nadal, the corporal works of mercy "must be given second place and undertaken when the [spiritual ministries] allow, if we cannot do justice

---

[19] Antonio M. de Aldama, *The Formula of the Institute: Notes for a Commentary*, trans. Ignacio Echániz (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1990), 33. Hereinafter, this source will be abbreviated to "Formula," followed by the page number of Aldama's text. The first draft of the "Formula," written in 1539, is also known as the "Five Chapters," and the second draft is included in the papal bull that approved the Society in 1540. In these initial forms, the "Formula" reflects the deliberations among Ignatius and his companions about what their Society would do and how it would function. The final version, approved in 1550 by Pope Julius III, was written mostly by Ignatius, with the assistance of his able secretary, Polanco. Its greater specificity reflects the lived experience of the Jesuits in the first decade (28-33).

[20] de Aldama, *Formula*, 44.

to both."[21] A similar ranking of ministries is found in the *Constitutions,*[22] which Ignatius and his editor, Juan Alfonso Polanco, began drafting in earnest in 1547.[23] Here too, preference is given to the spiritual works over corporal works: "The members will also occupy themselves in corporal works of mercy to the extent that the more important spiritual activities permit and their own energies allow" (*ConsCN* 650).

Though the "Formula" and *Constitutions* prioritized spiritual ministries over corporal works, the documents contain an inherent flexibility necessary for a religious order devoted to ministering to people in a variety of settings. They presume that Jesuits will try to perform both kinds of ministry whenever possible, rather than choose between them. At the consultation on the refugee problem, Arrupe quoted from a commentary on the "Formula" by Polanco: "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" (*EvChal*, 41). The JRS Charter, which we will consider later, quotes Nadal: "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" (*EvChal* 13).

According to the *Constitutions*, the superior must always keep in mind "the greater service of God and the more universal good" (622). This means that Jesuits must labor where there is the more pressing need either because others are not meeting those needs or because the

---

[21] de Aldama, *Formula,* 44.

[22] See *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms*, ed. and trans. George E. Ganss (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), nos. 400-414, 636-650. Hereinafter this source will be abbreviated to *ConsCN*, followed by the boldface paragraph number in the text of the *Constitutions*.

[23] Antonio M. de Aldama, *An Introductory Commentary on the Constitutions*, trans. Aloysius Owen (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1989), 4. The definitive text of the *Constitutions* was completed in 1553.

misery of the people is so great (622-623). In his letter announcing the establishment of JRS, Arrupe relies on these criteria for selecting ministries and finds JRS to be a perfect fit:

> 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. 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 organizations or groups (*ActRSJ* 18:319).

In making decisions about ministry, flexibility has always been characteristic of the Jesuit way of proceeding.

In its founding documents, the Society relied on traditional distinctions between spiritual and corporal works of mercy to explain what Jesuits did. In practice, however, this distinction is less fine. Jesuit ministry tended to both the mind and heart, body and soul. They responded to human need, whatever and wherever it was. In Venice, for example, while waiting for passage to the Holy Lands in 1537, Ignatius and his companions worked in hospitals, nursing patients, cleaning rooms, and burying corpses. Works of mercy, like service in hospitals, were so important to the first Jesuits that they later resolved not to be bound by the obligation of saying the divine office in common lest it interfere with their ministry.[24] After the founding of the Society in 1540, Jesuits continued to devote themselves to a variety of works of mercy. For example, they worked in hospitals, washing and feeding patients, as well as preaching to them and hearing their confessions. Similarly, Jesuits cared for prisoners and prostitutes.[25]

Faced with urgent human need, the first Jesuits naturally desired to help people, or as they would often say, “help souls.” In Ignatius’ *Autobiography*, the *Constitutions*, and his thousands of letters, no phrase occurs more frequently. For Ignatius and the first companions, to “help

---

[24] John O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993), 166.

[25] O’Malley, 171-74; 178-85.

souls" meant to help the whole person, body and spirit.[26] Arrupe explained: "For Ignatius, the true exercise of love for one's fellowman is apostolic zeal, the ardent desire to procure his salvation and perfection; but it is no less evident that Ignatius loves man whole and entire, as did the Lord for whose sake alone he loves."[27]

This desire to "help souls" was embodied in various ministries of "consolation," another oft-repeated term among the early Jesuits. "Consolation" had a particular spiritual meaning for Ignatius.[28] To console someone was not necessarily to make them feel better, as we would say today. In the *Spiritual Exercises*,[29] "consolation" describes a movement of the heart to greater faith, hope, and love in God (*SpEx* 316). It may be associated with deep-seeded peace, quiet joy, tearful self-reckoning, or confident zeal. Recognizing that only God gives consolation, the first Jesuits did not "bring" consolation to people; rather, they tried to help people be open to God, who is present to all creatures, animating every moment (*SpEx* 234-37). Traditional spiritual ministries, like administering the sacraments, were well-suited for consoling people ("Formula," 3). But in Ignatius' vision, any ministry could be a way of putting consolation into action; that is, of imitating Christ who comforts, consoles, strengthens and uplifts (*SpEx* 224).

The Jesuits' expansive understanding of "helping souls" and "consolation" explains why their oft-cited list of ministries was so long and seemingly open-ended. This devotion to the care of the whole person and their creative approach to ministry are illustrated in the story of the first Jesuits caring for the famine victims in Rome in 1538. As they fed and bathed their guests in one

---

[26] O'Malley, 18. Peter Faber explained how he wanted to bring help to others "not only for their spirit but also (if one may presume in the Lord) for their bodies" (167).

[27] Arrupe, "Rooted and Grounded in Love," 171.

[28] See O'Malley, 19-20, 82-84.

[29] References to the Exercises are taken from *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, ed. and trans. George E. Ganss (Chicago: Loyola Univ. Press, 1992). Hereinafter this source will be abbreviated *SpEx*, followed by the marginal number in Ganss' text.

room, they preached and catechized in the next. Today, JRS embodies this integral concern for the refugee. At the inception of JRS, Arrupe reminded us: "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" (*ActRSJ* 18:320). From the beginning to the present day, Jesuits have committed themselves to any ministry that allowed them to help souls and console people in their needs, both spiritual and physical.

To support his decision to establish the Jesuit Refugee Service, Arrupe not only relied on this tradition of Jesuit ministries but on the mandates of the more recent 31st and 32nd General Congregations. These Congregations essentially recast in modern terms Ignatius' commitment to help souls. The inspiration for this recapitulation of the Jesuit charism was the Second Vatican Council, which affirmed the Church's solidarity with the entire human family, especially the poor and suffering.[30] Reading the "signs of the times," the Church vowed to serve the world, particularly as it confronted a host of challenges, ranging from economic injustice to war, discrimination to illiteracy. Against these affronts to humanity, the Council asserted the inherent dignity of the human person as created in the image of God.[31]

Soon after the last session of Vatican II, GC 31 asked the Society to respond to the Council's call for renewal of mission in light of the needs of the modern world.[32] The Congregation urged the Society to "devote strong apostolic efforts without delay" to parts of the world struggling with "hunger and many other miseries of every sort" (*GC 31,* 375). It

---

[30] Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes,* nos. 1, 57-58 (1963), in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1 (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1992).

[31] *Gaudium et Spes,* nos. 3-4, 12.

[32] *GC 31,* nos. 1-2, 14-16. in *Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations of the Society of Jesus,* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977). Hereinafter this source will be abbreviated to *GC 31* or *GC 32* followed by the bold-face marginal number.

commended the social apostolate in its endeavor "to build a fuller expression of justice and charity into the structures of human life." (*GC 31,* 569).

Ten years later, in 1975, the 32nd General Congregation stated more explicitly the Society's commitment to faith and justice: "The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement" (*GC 32,* 48). To serve the faith is "to help people become more open toward God and more willing to live according to the demands of the Gospel" (*GC 32,* 67). Yet, the Gospel reveals that love of God and love of neighbor are inseparably linked (*GC 32,* 80), demanding "a life in which the justice of the Gospel shines out in a willingness not only to recognize and respect the rights of all, especially the poor and the powerless, but also to work actively to secure those rights" (*GC 32,* 67). In every apostolate, therefore, Jesuits must preach Jesus Christ who offers "the complete and definitive liberation of mankind" (*GC 32,* 76), a liberation that must be as much material as spiritual (*GC 32,* 89). While attending to the immediate needs of the poor and powerless, Jesuits must also be willing to engage the social structures in which we live and dare to be counter-cultural in the gospel values we live and preach (*GC 32,* 84, 89, 93).

Foundation of JRS

Arrupe insisted that the Society, with its universal reach, its resources and connections, was in a unique position to offer a concerted response to the refugee crisis and thus live up to the ideals of Vatican II and the recent Congregations. He and his advisors discerned that a new structure was required. Many Jesuits around the world were then serving refugees and exiles. What was lacking was a concerted, corporate effort to link these more particular Jesuit commitments. Many other organizations were busy serving the dire material needs of refugees,

but none were focused on caring for their spiritual needs.[33] On November 14, 1980, after additional consultation with provincial conferences around the world, Arrupe wrote a letter to the whole Society, announcing the establishment of the Jesuit Refugee Service (*ActRSJ* 18:319-21).

JRS was constituted as an apostolate of the universal Society, not of any particular province. It was to be managed by the Social Secretariat in the Jesuit curia. Arrupe did not intend for JRS to become a large-scale relief agency. Instead he sought to rely on existing institutions and personnel within the provinces of the Society. He imagined that individual Jesuits would commit to the works of JRS for short periods of time, thus not disrupting existing apostolates. Arrupe outlined some limited objectives for this new structure: to coordinate relief efforts currently underway; to gather information about current needs and resources; to act as a "switchboard" between offers of help from the Provinces, relief agencies, and NGOs (non-governmental organizations); to support research about the underlying causes of the refugee crisis; and to promote public awareness of the problem (*ActRSJ* 320-21).

Like Ignatius' "Formula," Arrupe's brief letter contained enough specificity to provide guidance for ministries to get off the ground. At the same time, its generality allowed those who took on this work to creatively adapt their mission based on the lessons of experience. As a Jesuit ministry of consolation, JRS would care for both the spiritual and physical needs of refugees. Arrupe closed his letter to the Society with the following exhortation:

> St. Ignatius called us to go anywhere we are most needed for the greater service of God. The spiritual as well as material needs 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

---

[33] Peter Balleis, S.J., who has been associated with JRS in Africa and Rome for over a decade, explains: "Fr. Pedro Arrupe was asked by the World Bank President if the Jesuits could work in the camps. The reason was that many organizations were busy providing services so no one had the time to say hello to the refugees and ask them about their hopes and anxieties. JRS was created to spend time with refugees and to become their friends." Jesuit Refugee Service, *The Wound of the Border: 25 Years with the Refugees* (Rome, 2005), 175. Hereinafter this source, which contains a series of personal reflections on the history of JRS, will be abbreviated to *WnBord* followed by the page number.

> a privilege that will, in turn, bring great blessings to ourselves and our Society (*ActRSJ* 321).

Arrupe's "Swan Song"[34]

After Arrupe's letter was published, the Jesuit Refugee Service began its work in earnest. Michael Campbell-Johnson, as head of the Social Secretariat, directed JRS in its first years. He recalls that within the Curia there was some opposition to establishing a new apostolic structure. Arrupe's support for JRS never faltered, however. He was confident that a small group of people could handle any big problem with God's help. One of the first projects that JRS supported made a statement not only about how central the work of JRS was to the Society today but also how deeply rooted this new ministry was in the Society's history. To care for the Ethiopian refugees in Rome, JRS opened a center to provide food and shelter right behind the Jesuit curia. The center, called *Centro Astalli*, was set up in the basement of the same building in which Ignatius and his companions had helped the famine victims in the winter of 1538 (*EvChal* 58).

As he drew near the end of his tenure as Superior General, Arrupe kept the interests of JRS in the forefront. On August 6, 1981, the thirty-sixth anniversary of Hiroshima, Arrupe visited JRS workers in Thailand. From that meeting, as Campbell-Johnson remembers, a clear consensus emerged about how JRS would distinguish itself from larger and older relief agencies. In his description, we catch glimpses of what the JRS mission statement eventually comes to call "accompaniment":

> 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 experience, no transport) we were powerful and able to give the people a sense of their own worth and dignity (*EvChal* 32).

---

[34] For the following account of Father Arrupe's involvement with JRS in its first years, I rely on personal interviews with Vincent O'Keefe, S.J., General Assistant of the Society of Jesus (1965-83) and Mark Raper, International Director of JRS (1990-2000).

At the end of the meeting in Bangkok, Arrupe gave an impromptu talk. He acknowledged the difficulty of working in Thailand, referring to the challenges as "birth pangs before this new apostolate can be born" (*EvChal* 37). He advised those present at the meeting to be prudent and flexible. "In today's world," he said, "nobody can be a 100 percent certain. For this reason, great risks have to be taken in many places" (*EvChal* 34). He was concerned about JRS being used politically by the various warring factions in the region, but excited about the opportunities in working with non-Christians (*EvChal* 35-36). In such complicated circumstances, JRS had to carefully discern as a group, balancing "prophesy and prudence, security and risk" (*EvChal* 37). Any policy they adopt, Arrupe said, "should be flexible precisely so that we can experiment further….The elasticity of this experimentation and risk-taking should be all in one direction – the direction pointed out by the Holy Spirit" (*EvChal* 34). As he concluded, Arrupe counseled prayer above all:

> 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 emphasize, a message – perhaps my "swan song" for the Society. . . . 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 percent from St. Ignatius (*EvChal* 37).

That night, while flying back to Rome, Arrupe suffered a cerebral stroke from which he would never fully recover.[35] His talk to JRS in Thailand would be his last talk as General, the very "swan song" he predicted. Yet, even as he became more and more incapacitated in the years that followed, Arrupe maintained his interest in JRS. One year at Christmas, Michael Campbell-Johnson brought Arrupe over to *Centro Astalli* for dinner with the refugees. "He was warmly applauded and deeply moved," Campbell-Johnson remembers. "He spoke a few words which,

---

[35] At the JRS meeting in Thailand, Arrupe asked Angelo D'Agostino, S.J., a medical doctor, to help establish JRS in Africa. D'Agostino explains that the stroke left Arrupe with expressive aphasia, "which meant that although he could read, see and understand everything, still he could not express anything orally or by writing. It was as though he was in a glass prison." (*WnBord* 138).

though difficult to understand and translate, conveyed his feelings" (*EvChal* 39). Mark Raper, S.J., whom Arrupe appointed as regional director in Asia, recalls visiting Arrupe in the mid-1980s. Barely able to communicate, Arrupe sketched out a crude map of India and pointed to it emphatically, as if to say, "What are you doing about the refugees in Sri Lanka?"

By then, JRS was becoming more institutionalized, with its ministries expanding. In its first years, as it found its footing, JRS was animated largely by the vision of Arrupe. Like Ignatius, Arrupe presented a captivating ideal for service that tapped the apostolic zeal of many people. That vision, as we shall see, would later be incarnated in particular projects and defined in various documents. At the same time, accompaniment would gradually become its distinctive way of proceeding. JRS would continue its ministries of consolation after its founder's incapacitation. As Arrupe would quickly remind us, pointing to Ignatius' dictum at the end of the *Constitutions,* we entrust our work not to any one person, but to Christ above all: "In Him alone must be placed the hope that He will preserve and carry forward what He deigned to begin for His service and praise and for the aid of souls" (812).

JRS After Arrupe[36]

In 1983, the 33rd General Congregation accepted Arrupe's resignation as Superior General and named Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. as his successor. The Congregation affirmed the Society's commitment to refugees, calling Jesuits to respond to the "sad plight of millions of refugees searching for a permanent home, a situation brought to our special attention by Father

---

[36] For much of the history of JRS after Arrupe, I rely on personal interviews with Ken Gavin, S.J., National Director of JRS/USA (2004 – present); Robert McChesney, S.J., National Director of JRS/USA (1991-97); Vincent O'Keefe, S.J., General Assistant of the Society of Jesus (1965-83); Peter O'Driscoll, who worked with JRS in El Salvador from 1987 – 1994; and Mark Raper, S.J., International Director of JRS (1990-2000).

Arrupe."[37] Kolvenbach maintained the personal commitment shown by Arrupe. In 1984, he separated JRS from the Social Secretariat and made it an independent entity in the curia, naming Dieter Scholz, S.J. as its first international director (*EvChal* 45). This appointment marked a transition for JRS.

John O'Malley, S.J. describes the evolution of ministries in the early Society as a "superb case study of transition to institution from charismatic fellowship."[38] JRS underwent a similar transition in the decade after it was founded. Arrupe envisioned a loosely organized structure, committed mostly to networking people and mobilizing resources to respond to the refugee crisis. With each year, however, the world-wide refugee crisis got worse, demanding a more institutional, longer-term response. Like any Jesuit ministry, JRS had to adapt to meet the desperate needs of a growing number of people. Mark Raper explains this gradual evolution:

> 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 of 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 (*EvChal* 58).

As it grew bigger to meet more demands, JRS had to be careful about not becoming too bureaucratic, losing touch with the lives of refugees who are at the heart of its mission.

Expansion of JRS Around the World

In its first years, much of the attention of JRS was focused on Asia. Refugees continued to leave Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in large numbers. To meet this rising tide of refugees, JRS extended its commitments to camps in Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and the

---

[37] *Documents of the 33rd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1984), no. 48.

[38] O'Malley, 14.

Philippines. Many projects concerned basic education, language classes, and vocational training, so important to help refugees get back on their feet again. In the late 1980s, an increasing number of refugees were repatriated to Vietnam because of stricter immigration laws in once welcoming countries. In response, JRS organized teams of lawyers in Hong Kong and the Philippines to assist asylum seekers (*WnBord* 54) and set up an office in Ho Chi Minh City to monitor the condition of those sent back to Vietnam (*EvChal* 59-60).

In 1990, Kolvenbach appointed Mark Raper to succeed Dieter Scholz as international director. Because the refugee crisis was not abating, Raper set about to reorganize JRS to make it more adaptable to meet changing needs in the diverse contexts in which JRS was operating. He gave the regional directors more autonomy to approve projects. He stepped up recruiting efforts, particularly among lay persons and refugees themselves. At the time Raper took over, JRS operated in twelve Asian countries and three countries in Africa.[39] In the United States, under the leadership of Frank Moan, S.J., JRS focused on resettlement, publicity, and fundraising (*WnBord* 121). JRS began operations in El Salvador in 1984 in the midst of civil war. Peter O'Driscoll, who worked with JRS in El Salvador between 1987 and 1994, described JRS in its first years of operations there: "JRS was a free-wheeling, faith-driven group with a deep commitment to accompaniment and almost zero infra-structure for supporting volunteers. No formal orientation, no stipends or health insurance, just good committed friends!" (*WnBord* 99).

In a letter to the Society announcing Raper's appointment, Kolvenbach restated the Society's commitment to JRS, which he described as "a timely mission in the service of faith and the promotion of justice" (*ActRSJ* 20:314). He noted a growing resistance to refugees. Governments, he wrote, were making sharp distinctions between granting asylum to political refugees but not to economic refugees. Such distinctions, Kolvenbach asserted, were artificial.

---

[39] Interview with Mark Raper, 13 April 2005, Cambridge, MA.

The reasons that compel people to leave their homes are varied and often inter-related – violence, poverty, famine, political repression. Regardless of the cause, the effect is the same: a forced dislocation that causes human suffering.

Kolvenbach also expressed concern 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" (*ActRSJ* 319). He lamented the impression that "service to refugees is the responsibility of a small group of specialists with a particular calling for this ministry." To the contrary, he reminded the Society of Arrupe's original intention: "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" (*ActRSJ* 320). Admitting that "there remains a fairly frequent lack of apostolic availability" among Jesuits, Kolvenbach added that "service to refugees is one real test of our availability today" (*ActRSJ* 323).

Meeting with Raper soon after his appointment as international director in 1990, Kolvenbach asked him to do more in Africa. Since the days of Arrupe, JRS had been working in Ethiopia providing relief to thousands displaced by war and stricken by famine. This effort was matched by growing commitments in and around Sudan, which was mired in a long civil war that displaced millions. JRS projects in southern Sudan and in neighboring Uganda and Kenya included pastoral services, educational programs, medical care, and legal assistance. Similarly, JRS assisted Mozambican refugees in Malawi, Angolan refugees in Zambia, and Liberian refugees in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. In some cases, JRS was able to accompany the refugees home after civil war had ended (*EvChal* 60-61).

In the 1990s, no civil war in Africa received more attention than that in Rwanda, where in the spring of 1994, 800,000 people, mostly of Tutsi origin, were slaughtered in a three-month period. The violence ignited a massive refugee emergency: more than two million people, both Tutsi and Hutu, were displaced within Rwanda or in neighboring Burundi, Tanzania, and Zaire (now Congo). Before the massacres, there was only a handful of JRS staff working in Rwanda and Burundi. Patrick Gahizi, S.J., then superior of the Jesuits in Rwanda and director of the local JRS program, was killed during the bloodshed. After the hundred days of killing, JRS worked with other relief agencies in these countries and maintained a presence even after Rwandans returned home. In the years that followed, JRS workers walked with Rwandans on their long road to peace and reconciliation. By 1995, the basic structure of JRS was in place with nine (now ten) regional offices around the world, three of them in Africa: in Eastern Africa, the Great Lakes region, and Southern Africa.[40]

In Latin America, the work that began with displaced peoples in El Salvador in the 1980s expanded to countries like Mexico, working with Guatemalan refugees, and Colombia, serving internally displaced persons. With the end of the civil war in El Salvador in 1992, JRS began to focus its mission on helping people resettle back to their homes and to assisting in the reconstruction of the country. Eventually, this development work was handed over to the Central American Province of Jesuits, which founded a new agency, the Jesuit Development Service (*EvChal* 61)[41]. According to Peter O'Driscoll, the transition in El Salvador from JRS to the Jesuit Development Service provided a new model for transferring responsibility to the local level.

---

[40] By 2005, JRS had established a new region for West Africa.

[41] A similar transition took place in Cambodia after the resettlement of Cambodian refugees. According to Virginia Hasson, R.S.M., "Those working in Cambodia realized that the Jesuit presence would be needed long after resettlement had taken place. So Jesuit Service Cambodia was initiated and is thriving there even today" (*WnBord* 28).

In the mid-1990s, JRS in the United States began to directly assist refugees for the first time. Rob McChesney, S.J., national director from 1991-97, and his colleagues noted that the compassion shown to boat people and refugees in the 1980s was giving way to suspicion and fear of immigrants. In 1996, Congress passed a bi-partisan immigration reform bill, which mandated the detention of large numbers of non-citizens and asylum seekers, including children. These detainees may wait for months or years before they are deported or granted asylum.[42] Responding to the needs of those in detention, JRS began offering religious and pastoral services in several detention centers around the country, and partnered with the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference in offering legal aid to detainees.

Advocacy became more integrated into the work of JRS/USA. On a visit to El Salvador in 1991, McChesney asked a forcibly displaced person how JRS could help: "She responded that I should go home to Washington and tell the President to stop sending so many weapons to her country." Dislocated persons from Guatemala in southern Mexico shared the same sentiment. McChesney recalls that among JRS officials around the world, there was some disagreement about how central advocacy should be to the JRS mission: would such work take them away from being with the people? But listening to the counsel of refugees, McChesney insisted that JRS must advocate strongly before governments whose policies on immigration, foreign aid, or arm sales have a disastrous effect on refugees' lives. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, more stringent policies made immigrating into the United States far more difficult. Consequently,

---

[42] According to the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, as of March 2005, 1,225 immigrants from more than 100 countries were being held in long-term detention – that is, for many years – because they could not be easily repatriated to their home countries. Jodi Wilgoren, "Refugees in Limbo: Ordered Out of U.S., but With Nowhere to Go," *New York Times*, 4 June 2005: A9.

JRS/USA has devoted much effort to advocating before the U.S. State Department on behalf of refugees trying to settle in the United States.[43]

In Europe, advocacy also became more central to the JRS mission. The number of refugees skyrocketed after the fall of Communism in the late 1980s and during civil wars in the Balkans in the 1990s (*WnBord* 251-57). The alarming increase in displaced persons was accompanied by an emergent xenophobia. While providing the pastoral, spiritual, and material support traditionally associated with its mission, JRS set up offices in Geneva and Brussels to lobby governments on behalf of refugees. Having accompanied forcibly displaced persons on the ground, JRS Europe envisioned their mission as one of bringing their stories to the great councils of Europe (*WnBord* 260). As in the United States, JRS served in detention centers and provided legal assistance to asylum seekers in Rome, London, Vienna, Brussels, Malta, and Berlin (*EvChal* 62). JRS also began serving displaced peoples in Croatia, Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo, and Serbia and continued to facilitate networking among governmental organizations and relief agencies. As one example, JRS helped broker a deal to renew a water source for an entire neighborhood of war-torn Sarajevo.

In its advocacy, JRS is a voice for the voiceless. For example, JRS has promoted equality of access to education for refugee girls, who because of traditional stereotypes are often denied the education afforded to boys.[44] Moreover, in 1998, JRS collaborated with other NGOs to form the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, which estimates that over 300,000 children worldwide belong to armed groups, conscripted by force, fear, or desperation (*HorLrn* 105, 115). Before forming such coalitions or writing policy papers, JRS listens to refugees so that they can

---

[43] In 2004, approximately 53,000 refugees were resettled in the United States. JRS Annual Report (2004), 79-80.

[44] Jesuit Refugee Service, *Horizons of Learning: 25 Years of JRS Education* (Rome, 2005), 97-105. This source, published by JRS, contains a series of essays on refugee education. Hereinafter, this source will be abbreviated to *HorLrn*, followed by the page number.

help set priorities. Before speaking out on their behalf, JRS helps refugees give voice to their own experience, from which all advocacy stems.

JRS Charter of 2000

Nearly two decades after its founding, Arrupe's brain-child had grown much bigger than he expected. Kolvenbach observed in 1997, "JRS must be big if the problem and tasks at hand are big" (*EvChal* 77). When Arrupe founded JRS in 1980, there were about 5 million refugees. Within a decade, that number tripled. In the first years of the new millennium, over 40 million dislocated persons wandered the earth. At the turn of the century JRS sponsored projects in 50 countries and employed over 500 workers, a fifth of whom were Jesuits.[45]

With its expansive reach, JRS determined that it needed to clarify its mission, specify its operating procedures, and define its relationship with Jesuit provinces. To those ends, in 2000, Kolvenbach promulgated the JRS Charter and a set of operating guidelines (*EvChal* 10-25). In the letter announcing the Charter, Kolvenbach also stated that Lluís Magriñà, S.J. would succeed Raper as international director of JRS.

The Charter roots JRS in the work of the first Jesuits, in the experience of Arrupe, in the *Constitutions*, and in recent General Congregations. It defines the mission of JRS in three ways: "to accompany, serve, and defend the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced people" (*EvChal* 15). Jesuits, fellow religious and lay persons had been living the mission before it was put into words. Introducing the Charter and guidelines, Kolvenbach remarked, "Drawing on 20 years of experience in the field and in partnership with other agencies, the two documents distill much of what JRS has learned from our co-workers and from refugees themselves" (*EvChal* 10-11).

---

[45] JRS Annual Report (2003), 3; *EvChal*, 58, 77.

In 1995, the 34th General Congregation explicitly affirmed the ministry of JRS as critical to the Society's mission of promoting faith and serving justice. It also made the three-fold mission of JRS central to the identity of the universal Society:

> There are over forty-five million refugees and displaced persons in today's world, 80 percent 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 them as companions, advocating their cause in an uncaring world.[46]

With the Charter and its attendant guidelines, JRS emerged from its adolescence, and was now standing on its own, a mature apostolate ready to meet the demands of the new millennium.

Mission of JRS Today

There is something old and something new in JRS' mission today. The sheer size of JRS sets it apart as a Jesuit ministry. As of 2005, JRS directly served over 450,000 forcibly displaced persons in 53 countries (*WnBord* 286-87). In 2004, its operating budget world-wide amounted to nearly $24 million (US), double what it was in 2000.[47] Though in the common imagination JRS is associated with refugee camps, the work of JRS is as varied as the contexts in which it serves:[48]

- In the United States, JRS and another religiously affiliated NGO, Church World Services, worked under contract with the federal government to provide spiritual care in eight immigration detention centers. Similar projects were underway in Europe.
- In Ecuador, JRS assisted refugee women in establishing income-generating businesses.
- In Columbia, JRS trained community leaders in human rights legislation and conflict resolution skills.

---

[46] *Documents of the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources: 1995), no. 65. Hereinafter, this source will be abbreviated to *GC 34*, followed by the bold-face marginal number.

[47] Interview with Lluís Magriñà, S.J., International Director of JRS (2000-present), 12 November 2005; JRS Annual Report (2004), 83.

[48] For a complete description of JRS projects around the world, see JRS Annual Report (2004), available at http://www.jrs.net.

- In the Balkans, JRS worked with land-mine survivors and helped resettle families after a long-civil war.
- In Slovenia, JRS conducted training on human rights for detention center staffs.
- In Tanzania, JRS supported a radio program that broadcasts reliable information about the situation in refugees' home countries and produces programs concerning peace and reconciliation.
- In East Timor, JRS worked for the reunification of families.
- In Cambodia, JRS offered legal assistance to asylum seekers and helped resettle families to Canada.
- In Thailand, JRS promoted children protection policies in refugee camps.

JRS, like Jesuit ministries of all ages, strives to go where the spiritual and physical needs of people, especially the poor, are not being met. To address these needs and to have the most impact, JRS must adapt its mission and its organization as needed. In 1997, Kolvenbach told JRS regional directors meeting in Rome: "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" (*EvChal* 78). JRS has been flexible in its organization, particularly in partnering with other relief agencies, NGOs, and local churches. We find further evidence of accommodation in, for example, the decisions to commit more resources to advocacy, to serve in detention centers in the United States and Europe, and to transition JRS in El Salvador and Cambodia into a new, independent organization focused on long-term development.

JRS has increasingly relied on lay persons to carry out its mission. Today, JRS directly employs about 1,000 staff members around the world, four-fifths of whom are lay men and women. Moreover, thousands of refugees and former refugees assist in the work of JRS as teachers, administrators and social workers.[49] While collaboration with the laity is a particular

---

[49] "The total core team of JRS in 1994 worldwide comprised 966 persons, including 112 international volunteers. Of the 966 members of the core team, 69 are Jesuits, brothers, scholastics and priests. Eleven are priests and men religious belonging to other congregations. There are 67 religious sisters, 336 lay women and 483 lay men. Much of the work in the camps is done by about 4000 refugees who collaborate as teachers, administrators and social

emphasis in the modern Society, the first Jesuits were not unfamiliar with the benefits of relying on lay people to help its ministries. As the Society emerged as an institution committed to meeting the spiritual and material needs of people, Jesuits looked to confraternities of laymen and women who provided organized relief to the poor and the sick. These confraternities not only helped the Jesuits get their ministries started, but they supported their operation after individual Jesuits left a town or city.[50]

This traditional openness to working with lay persons in ministry was renewed in the Church after Vatican II. According to the GC 34, "Since that time a growing cooperation with the laity has expanded our mission and transformed the ways in which we carry it out in partnership with others. It has enriched what we do and how we understand our role in that mission" (*GC 34,* 332). The challenge remains to make that collaboration meaningful by giving more institutional control to lay persons and by devoting resources to form them in the Ignatian tradition.

The JRS mission to serve refugees resembles the aspirations of the first Jesuits to "help souls" and offer ministries of "consolation." As a rationale for JRS, Arrupe and Kolvenbach often raised the example of Ignatius and the first companions helping the famine victims of Rome in the winter of 1538. Today, the JRS worker continues to feed, clothe, and shelter the poor. The Society's commitment to corporal works of mercy is incarnated in a very real way in JRS. Workers also care for the spiritual needs of the displaced person, listening to them, praying with them, offering Mass and hearing confessions, anointing the sick, and preaching the gospel. Given that JRS serves people of different faiths and works in many non-Christian countries, their

---

workers." Address by Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Meeting of Major Superiors, Loyola, Spain, 25 November 2005, accessed at http://www.mdsj.org/announcements/ann020306_status.html. See also *WnBord* 287.

[50] O'Malley, 166-67, 194.

spiritual care may look different than the first companions who offered food in one room, and catechism in the next. The gospel that today's JRS worker preaches may be one of example or presence more than of words. In his 1990 letter, Kolvenbach wrote:

> 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 (*ActRSJ* 20:323).

In JRS' mission to advocate on behalf of refugees, we find another example of continuity with the early Society. In responding to human need, Ignatius was as interested in structural solutions to problems as he was devoted to personal care of the needy. For example, in 1542 Ignatius successfully procured the intervention of Pope Paul III to forbid the harsh practice in Rome of confiscating the property of Jewish converts and declaring their children disinherited. In the same year, he convinced the pope to moderate an outright ban on begging in Rome and to establish the Society of Orphans to help the poor who were sick or physically unable to work.[51]

Similarly, by focusing on policies that contribute to the suffering of refugees, JRS strives to have the greatest impact and do the greatest good. In the spirit of Vatican II and GC32, JRS addresses the root causes for the injustices suffered by refugees, challenges sinful social structures, and empowers refugees to reclaim their rights. With its contacts around the world, JRS is uniquely situated to zealously advocate for the poor and displaced. In the United States, for example, JRS is working with other JRS regions to address the plight of 105,000 Bhutanese refugees warehoused for the past 15 years in camps in Nepal; the suffering of Burmese Chin refugees who live in hovels in the forests surrounding Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia; and the dire need for sustainable food pipelines for refugees, especially those in Africa.[52] In the 1990s, JRS

---

[51] Arrupe, "Rooted and Grounded in Love," 167-68; Dalmases, 180; O'Malley, 190.

[52] Interview with Ken Gavin, S.J., National Director of JRS/USA (2004 – present), 24 October 2005.

began a productive association with Human Rights Watch (HRW), a long-established international advocacy group. While JRS helps HRW identify human rights issues pertaining to refugees, HRW lends JRS its expertise in advocating for and defending those rights (*WnBord* 160).

JRS and Education

In its mission, JRS reflects the Society's long-standing commitment to education.[53] JRS offers primary and secondary education to about 150,000 students around the world (*WnBord* 287). Education empowers refugees, promotes self-reliance, and enhances self-esteem in otherwise degrading conditions. Schools orientate refugees to the future and give them reason to hope and a sense of purpose. They also occupy both adults and children in the sometimes discouraging routine of camp life. Schools provide "a comfortable and reassuring sense of normalcy to the unnatural and often very limited environment of exile" (*HorLrn* 11). Many programs target groups most in need of educational opportunities and life-coping skills, such as young girls, teenage single mothers, land-mine survivors, and traumatized young people forcibly recruited into armed groups (*HorLrn* 52-53, 108, 112). In some cases, JRS schools and training programs have deterred recruitment of these "child soldiers" (*HorLrn* 108).[54]

Schools benefit the local community as much as refugees themselves. They provide an anchor of stability in unstable areas and form an educated, professional workforce. Recently, JRS has incorporated peace and reconciliation programs into its schools to address destructive, deep-

---

[53] Though not mentioned in the "Formula," by 1560, education became a primary ministry of the Jesuits, with new schools opening at a rate of four or five a year (O'Malley, 200).

[54] The plight of child soldiers is particularly tragic. Paramilitary and rebel groups target children in camps for conscription. Catherine Corbett, R.S.M, recalls one experience from her time in Uganda: "One memory that stays with me is how the rebels took a group of children and one boy kept falling over and not keeping up. They sat the children in a circle and had his brother kill him" (*WnBord* 162).

seeded resentments and hostilities that result from past wrongs inflicted on refugees (*HorLrn* 76-78). In developed countries where xenophobia is on the rise, JRS commits itself to public education campaigns to protect the rights and reputations of refugees in host countries (*HorLrn* 87-89).

Educating populations on the move requires creativity and adaptability, typical attributes of Jesuit ministry. In the Meheba refugee camp in Zambia, JRS set up what became known as the "University of the Forest" for Congolese university students who fled persecution in their home country in the 1990s (*HorLrn* 32). In the 1980s, JRS in Asia established partnerships with religious congregations such as the Sisters of Mercy, who sent personnel to work in camp schools and who engaged their educational institutions at home in new projects to support refugees. In some cases, refugees in the camps were following the curricula of institutions on the other side of the world, sitting for exams, and receiving credit.[55] Such distance-learning programs, which meet the increasing demand for post-primary education, have expanded considerably over the last twenty-five years. These programs require trained distance educators, self-motivated students, and adequate, up-to-date materials and books (*HorLrn* 33-35).[56]

When JRS teams arrive in distressed areas, they often find make-shift schools up-and-running with the help of refugees themselves, particularly interested parents and former teachers. The "school house" is typically located in places with shade (*HorLrn* 13). Traditionally, the United Nations, JRS, and other NGOs have focused their efforts and limited resources on providing primary education. More and more, JRS is working to provide secondary education in camps and educational opportunities for internally displaced students in urban areas (*HorLrn*

---

[55] Interview with Mark Raper, 13 April 2005, Cambridge, MA.

[56] See http://www.jrsafricaeducation.org/ for a sampling of JRS educational resources and programs.

25).[57] Adult education programs focus on teaching refugees to read and write in the language of their host country and on acquiring income-generating skills in a trade (*HorLrn* 46-47, 91-92). For example, in a camp for mostly Liberian refugees in Guinea, over 3,200 people, mostly women, have received vocational training since 2003. Among the skills learned there are soap-making, garment-dying, baking, and tailoring. A primary reason for the success of this program is that the refugees, not JRS, decided what skills would be most helpful to learn (*HorLrn* 46.)

Jesuits know how to run schools, an expertise often called upon by JRS. Patrick Samway, S.J., a professor at Saint Joseph's, took a sabbatical in 2004-05 to work in refugee camps in Chad. Thousands of Sudanese were spilling over the border, fleeing the genocide in Darfur, western Sudan. In this humanitarian crisis, Samway assisted JRS in organizing schools in three refugee camps, acting as a superintendent of sorts. Samway writes:

> These camps should be considered villages where traumatized individuals and families can stay and cope with the exigencies of everyday life until at some moment, maybe in two or three years, they are able to return to their homeland in relative peace and security. One simple way to test the present level of fear among the Sudanese in these camps is simply to look into the eyes of the children. Their eyes always tell the truth.[58]

The goal of JRS is to involve refugees as most as possible in their children's education, including the management of their schools (*HorLrn* 66-69). As a way of further empowering refugees, JRS emphasizes teacher training programs within camps and urban centers (*HorLrn* 16-17).

In JRS, other Jesuit educational institutions become partners in serving and advocating for refugees. In his 1990 letter to the Society, Kolvenbach challenged Jesuit universities and research centers to devote more resources to help JRS find long-term solutions to the intransigent refugee crisis. He stressed the need for more research into the underlying causes of forced migration, "a

---

[57] "Only 6% of all refugee students are enrolled in secondary education" (*HorLrn* 25).

[58] Patrick Samway, "Living on the Edge: A Report from Eastern Chad," *America*, 15 November 2004, 9.

task which as yet we have hardly begun to tackle" (*ActRSJ* 20:321). While immediate charitable assistance is necessary, Kolvenbach learned from JRS workers in the field that "the best service one can offer a refugee is the opportunity to stay at home," that is, to determine the reasons that cause a refugee to flee their home in the first place (*ActRSJ* 321). Kolvenbach also proposed that universities in developed countries educate refugees by enrolling students who relocate there, by constructing distance-learning programs, and by sending faculty members abroad to work directly with refugees (*ActRSJ* 322).

JRS and Jesuit universities have responded to Kolvenbach's challenge. For example, tutorships in refugee studies and human rights were established at Oxford University and at the University of Deusto in Bilbao (*EvChal* 65). In the United States, JRS developed a partnership with Fairfield University in 2002 to promote scholarship relating to migration and detention issues. Among the initiatives at Fairfield is a program to evaluate income-generating projects in JRS regions worldwide.[59] In the 2002-03 academic year, Saint Joseph's University organized a year-long series of programs relating to refugees, including lectures, a common reading of James Martin, S.J.'s, *This Our Exile* (an account of his experience working with JRS in East Africa), and a talk by a Sudanese refugee, then a student at Saint Joseph's.

Conclusion

Today, JRS exists as an international apostolate because the refugee crisis is an international problem. JRS is committed to accompany refugees on their return home and to stay with them for some time to help them rebuild their lives and communities and ensure their safety (*WnBord* 117). But the JRS mission is not boundless. Just as JRS must be willing to take on new projects, it must also be free to leave projects which are no longer needed or which can be taken

---

[59] In June 2005, Fairfield hosted a conference, "Migration Studies and Jesuit Identity: Forging a Path Forward." More information about Fairfield's initiatives related to JRS can be found at http://www.fairfield.edu/.

over by the local church, a Jesuit province, or an NGO. Deciding when to leave or hand-over a project relies on careful discernment among the JRS workers, their collaborators, and refugees. This discernment is not easy. Joe Hampson, S.J., formerly regional director for Southern Africa, describes the difficulty in this discernment: "It is easier to start a project than to close it. When you start, there is a creative energy, and to close it means going a bit against the philosophical current of JRS, which is to accompany refugees" (*WnBord* 227). JRS seeks the longer-term development of refugees and internally displaced persons, but understands that other groups may best be able to help them achieve that goal (*WnBord* 227). This freedom and flexibility, which have long been hallmarks of Jesuit ministries, serve to preserve the Ignatian charism of JRS, no matter how different the circumstances in which it operates.

Chapter 2
Accompaniment as the Practice of Solidarity

The diverse service and advocacy programs of the Jesuit Refugee Service incarnate noble human efforts to respond to what John Paul II once described as "perhaps the greatest tragedy of all the human tragedies of our time."[60] In the last chapter, we reviewed what JRS has done over the last twenty-five years. What these program descriptions and statistics cannot adequately convey, however, is *how* JRS goes about it work. From the crucible of refugee camps, war zones, and areas of natural disaster, JRS workers started to describe their way of proceeding as one of presence, companionship, and most commonly, accompaniment. This would become their distinctive style of ministry. By accompanying refugees, JRS learned how to best serve them and advocate their cause.[61]

Only gradually did "accompaniment" become part of the JRS lexicon. In 1985, at the first meeting of JRS regional coordinators from around the world, the participants explained that what sets JRS apart from other relief agencies is its focus on *being* with refugees rather than *doing* something for them. They continued, "We want our presence among refugees to one of sharing with them, of accompaniment, of walking together along the same path" (*EvChal* 70). Peter-Hans Kolvenbach helped to articulate the JRS way of proceeding in his 1990 letter to the Society, marking the 10th anniversary of JRS. With experience, JRS had learned that while giving food, shelter, and medicine is crucial, what the refugee most needs, Kolvenbach wrote, is "friendship, trust and a shared understanding of the reasons why they are forced to flee their country.

---

[60] See Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity* (1992), Introductory Letter, accessed at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_migrants_doc_19920625_refugees_en.html

[61] JRS gives a certain priority to accompaniment, from which effective service and passionate advocacy flow. Jesuit Refugee Service, *God in Exile: Towards a Shared Spirituality with Refugees* (Rome, 2005), 108. Hereinafter, this source will be abbreviated to *GodEx*, followed by the page number.

Friendship, trust, and understanding give refugees hope in their struggle against overwhelming odds" (*ActRSJ* 20:318). Kolvenbach distilled the meaning of accompaniment in these terms: "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" (*ActRSJ* 316).

In this chapter, I will explore further what JRS means by "accompaniment," relying on the stories of JRS workers to describe what it looks like in practice. Though accompaniment is a novel expression of Jesuit ministry, it is steeped in Catholic social thought, particularly in the notion of solidarity. Because solidarity provides a helpful context to consider JRS' way of proceeding, I will examine how the meaning of solidarity has been refined by John Paul II and Jon Sobrino and how accompaniment as practiced by JRS can further enrich that understanding. Accompaniment is a privileged way that solidarity is lived and learned.

Solidarity as a Social Principle and Moral Virtue

We can trace the inspiration for "accompaniment" to the spirit of Vatican II, which in its *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, proclaimed: "The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well."[62] Imitating the example of Christ, who lived and labored in communion with humanity, the Council boldly declared that the Church lives in "solidarity and respectful affection for the whole human family, to which it belongs."[63]

---

[62] *Gaudium et Spes,* no. 1.

[63] *Gaudium et Spes,* no.3. See also no. 32.

The recently published *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*[64] adopts the language of accompaniment to describe the Church's mission in the modern world. The Church speaks to "the people of our time, her traveling companions" (*Comp* 3) and "journeys along the roads of history together with all of humanity" (*Comp* 18). A recent Vatican document on the plight of refugees declared that "God, who walked with the refugees of the Exodus in search of a land free of any slavery, is still walking with today's refugees in order to accomplish his loving plan together with them."[65] The language of journeying or walking with refugees in their exile and on their return home conveys a dynamic image of the Church's mission in the modern world, which JRS incarnates in a dramatic, concrete way.

In papal social encyclicals over the last fifty years, we hear echoes of accompaniment through various expressions of solidarity. The meaning of "solidarity," a modern term, has evolved over time: it has been characterized as a law, as a principle, as a duty, as a value, and finally as a virtue.[66] As a social principle, solidarity derives from the nature of human beings as inherently social creatures and describes their interdependence in the modern world (*Comp* 192, 193). From the social nature of humanity stems the obligation of nations and persons to help one

---

[64] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington, DC: U.S. Conf. of Catholic Bishops, 2005). Hereinafter, this source will be abbreviated to *Comp*, followed by the section number. The *Compendium* is a summary of Catholic social teaching over the last century, with particular emphasis on its development since Vatican II. The *Compendium* states its purpose as follows: "The Church . . . intends with this document on her social doctrine to propose to all men and women a humanism that is up to the standards of God's plan of love in history, an integral and solidary humanism capable of creating a new social, economic, and political order, founded on the dignity and freedom of every human person, to be brought about in peace, justice and solidarity" (19).

[65] *Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity*, no. 25.

[66] See *Comp* 194, n.421 for a concise summary of how the meaning of "solidarity" has developed in the social encyclicals. According to the *Compendium*, Pius XII first used the term in his encyclical letter, *Summi Pontificatus* (1939). Other popes before Pius XII, though not using the term, "solidarity," expressed its meaning in references to human friendship and social charity.

another and to provide for future generations.[67] In the Christian view, the principle of solidarity governs how societies and governments should be organized: namely, to care for the most poor and defenseless as brothers and sisters in Christ.[68] Just as there are "structures of sin" in our world – unjust legal, political and economic systems and institutions – so there must be countervailing "structures of solidarity" (*Comp* 193). In John Paul's view, these structures of sin are the result of personal sin: "on the one hand, the all-consuming desire for profit, and on the other, the thirst for power, with the intention of imposing one's will upon others."[69]

In his landmark social encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, John Paul II offered his most systematic treatment of solidarity. For John Paul, "solidarity is the correct moral response to the fact of interdependence."[70] Solidarity expresses a moral duty. Given the fact of our dependence on one another, people of privilege must contribute to the full human development of the poor and marginalized (*SRS* 23). Solidarity is also a virtue, which John Paul describes as follows:

> This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all (*SRS* 38).

The virtue of solidarity is an attitude or disposition to serve another. As such, only solidarity can "conquer" the opposing vice, which is the all-consuming thirst for riches and power that devalues

---

[67] See e.g., Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967), nos. 17, 48, in David O'Brien and Thomas Shannon, eds., *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 240-262.

[68] See e.g., John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (1991), nos. 10-11, in O'Brien and Shannon, 439-488.

[69] John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) no. 37, in O'Brien and Shannon, 395-436. Hereinafter, this encyclical will be abbreviated *SRS*, followed by the section number. For helpful commentaries on this encyclical, see Gregory Baum and Robert Ellsberg, eds., *The Logic of Solidarity: Commentaries on Pope John Paul II's Encyclical, "On Social Concern"* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989).

[70] Donal Dorr, "Solidarity and Integral Human Development," in Baum and Ellsberg, 148.

and oppresses others (*SRS* 38). Solidarity is the virtue on which the edifice of justice is built, the structure of a new order, a "civilization of love" (*SRS* 33).

Like any virtue, solidarity must be practiced and learned. In John Paul's view, a sign that solidarity is taking hold in Christian character is a growing awareness of unjust structures and of our need to help one another, particularly the most poor. We "feel personally affected by the injustices and violations of human rights committed in distant countries" (*SRS* 38) and feel responsible for the needy and vulnerable. We begin to see them as fellow persons with dignity, as neighbors, as brothers and sisters in Christ (*SRS* 39, 40). This interior conversion and renewed vision impels us to act (*SRS* 38). The fruit of these actions of solidarity is greater collaboration, peace, and the material and spiritual development of people (*SRS* 39).

Donal Dorr commends the pope's efforts to enshrine solidarity as a moral virtue, "to give solid theological content to a word that is widely used in the world today, a word that describes a feature of modern moral consciousness at its best."[71] However, in his opinion, the encyclical falls short in one particular area: "it appears to lack an *affective* dimension," which Dorr finds surprising given "the strong affective bonds that link [John Paul] so closely to his own people in their history and their struggles."[72] As noted above, John Paul remarks how people are "personally affected" by suffering "in distant countries," but he gives no account of solidarity that comes through direct, sustained personal contact. The values and virtues he articulates, like charity, justice, and solidarity, thus "lack the flavor of real life."[73] Catholic social encyclicals, which have a universal audience, tend to speak in universal terms, laying out grand principles that can be applied to concrete situations. A philosopher by training, John Paul favored

---

[71] Dorr, 153.

[72] Dorr, 153.

[73] Dorr, 153.

elucidating eternal truths and deducing unchanging moral norms from them. While the pope is concerned with the immediate historical situation, this is not his starting point.[74] Because of the method he employs, the affective dimension of solidarity is largely overlooked amid his valuable recitation of eternal truths and their implications.

To correct this short-coming in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Dorr suggests that we give "some account of the experience of solidarity and the strong feelings that are part of it."[75] He continues:

> By the "experience" of solidarity I mean the actual sharing of life with a group of persons. When one shares the living conditions of a community, one can begin to share their sufferings and joys, their fears and their hopes. Out of this lived solidarity grow the bonds of affection that make one feel part of this people and enable them to accept one as truly part of themselves. It is a kind of miracle of the human spirit, and of God's grace, that this can take place even across boundaries of class and race.[76]

The "sharing of life" about which Dorr writes is accompaniment. If solidarity is a virtue emblematic of Christian character, then accompaniment is the way solidarity is lived, learned, and practiced. By making accompaniment so central to its mission, JRS enriches Catholic social teaching about solidarity.

John Paul describes the virtue of solidarity as an unwavering commitment to the common good and to the most vulnerable in our midst. The reader of the encyclical may be left with the impression that this can be accomplished by sheer force of will or intellectual assent. Yet experience tells us that we need more than intellectual commitments and will power to shoulder difficult responsibilities. Feelings and affections matter too in the moral life: they can animate desire for knowledge, impel us to experience the world, and bind us to other people. In Dorr's

---

[74] See Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 54-55, 61-66.

[75] Dorr, 153.

[76] Dorr, 153.

words, "The lived experience of solidarity and the feelings that go with it are the normal way in which commitment grows. Book study on its own is not very helpful in bridging the gap that often exists between the fact of interdependence and the undertaking of an appropriate moral response."[77]

In a speech to Jesuit university professors and administrators at Santa Clara University in 2000, Kolvenbach agreed that solidarity must be "learned through 'contact' rather than through 'concepts.'"[78] Urging educators to provide students with direct service with the materially poor, Kolvenbach explained, "When the heart is touched by direct experience, the mind may be challenged to change. Personal involvement with innocent suffering, with the injustice others suffer, is the catalyst for solidarity which then gives rise to intellectual inquiry and moral reflection."[79] While finding a rightful place for desire and affect in moral decision-making, we must be careful not to exclude the intellect. Discerning those interior movements, we see where they lead us. Reflecting on our experience, we find its meaning. Sound moral judgments require the use of both the intellect and affect, the mind and heart.

JRS is a school of the heart that leads to personal conversion and the slow though certain transformation of culture. David Townsend, S.J., testifies to this dynamic in the following note of thanks he writes to the refugees whom he accompanied in camps in Malaysia and Burma:

> Refugees rewrite the history of the world, from the point of view of the dispossessed and powerless. They enable people, like myself, to begin to re-configure our own lives. Refugees reveal the structural sin embedded in the world's contemporary systems. They reveal a task still to be accomplished. So, my refugee friends, whom I deeply admire for your incredible courage, resilience, creativity, and humanity, a huge "Thank You." Your retention of your own

---

[77] Dorr, 153-54.

[78] Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 33, no. 1 (2001): 24. Here, Kolvenbach relies on an address that John Paul II gave to the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan in May 2000.

[79] Kolvenbach, "Service of Faith," 24.

> humanity despite your often appalling treatment and experiences is for me a mystery of the power of God's tremendous loving compassion in your lives, and is a challenge to a world so clearly in need of loving compassion (*WnBord* 36).

As Townsend's letter attests, JRS workers form affective bonds of solidarity with refugees that help them see the world from the vantage point of the suffering. They learn to shoulder their burdens and attempt to relieve their suffering. JRS workers put the virtue of solidarity into practice by working, living, praying and playing alongside refugees. For JRS, solidarity is a way of life. More than a vague feeling of compassion or shallow sense of pity, solidarity lived as accompaniment is a source of deeply felt, long-standing commitments to refugees.

Solidarity as Accompanying the Poor and Powerless

Mark Raper, S.J., international director of JRS from 1990-2000, recalls that "accompaniment" ("*accompañamiento*") was a term strongly in vogue in Central America in the 1980s. Though skilled in many ways, JRS workers were recruited primarily for their capacity to be friends ("*compañeros*") with the poor, that is, to fit into the local culture, to work and live alongside them, even at great risk. "Accompaniment" expresses in familiar terms a faith that seeks justice. Before beginning a project or advocating a cause, JRS first listens to the experience of refugees, thus empowering them to work with JRS personnel for a better life. Accompaniment also provides emotional solace. Raper explains:

> Our mission is not primarily building infrastructure. We do not have the resources for that. What we can do very well is to stay with the refugee. We let them tell their stories. We help souls by listening above all. This is so important because they must be able to share their pain and also their guilt over leaving their homeland or family behind, or their disappointment that life did not turn out for them as they had hoped. Only then can they move on.[80]

Given its roots in Central America, accompaniment as a style of ministry bears the imprint of liberation theology, which emerged in that region as a distinctive theological method.

---

[80] Interview with Mark Raper, 13 April 2005, Cambridge, MA.

The vantage point of the poor and powerless offers a unique perspective on solidarity. This is the place from which liberation theologians do their thinking and writing, proclaiming a gospel of liberation from sin embedded in all forms of oppression: religious, economic, social, and political.[81] Like more classicist or neo-scholastic theologians, liberation theologians insist that there is universal truth, but they differ as to the starting point of their investigation. In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, for example, John Paul adopts a classicist approach: he begins with universal principles or values and then applies them to the historical moment. In contrast, Jon Sobrino and his fellow liberation theologians start with practice and end by discerning truth amidst the concrete realities of daily life. They begin by reading the signs of the times, accompanying the poor and powerless, listening to their stories, and helping them write the enduring chronicle of their own liberation.[82]

Accompaniment is a well-spring for moral reflection through which we can discern the truth and determine the right thing to do. Because it places us with the poor, accompaniment ensures that we will not anesthetize ourselves from human suffering, turning personal tragedy into an academic question. We keep the stories of the refugees ever present. In this way, we imitate Jesus who lived with and for the poor. We take the preferential stance of God, who comes to the aid of the most neglected.

A friend of JRS, Jon Sobrino has entered into real relationships with refugees and internally displaced persons in El Salvador for years. His theological investigations have inspired the mission of JRS and offered a vital framework for reflection on their work. Like John Paul, Sobrino has devoted considerable attention to the meaning of solidarity. Sobrino's short-hand

---

[81] See Curran, 66.

[82] See e.g. Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 30-31; Curran, 66. Despite the difference in method, both classicist and historically minded theologians seek to place theology in the service of humanity.

definition of solidarity focuses on “unequals bearing one another’s burdens.”[83] “Unequals” refers to rich and poor persons, peoples, or churches. They are unequal because of an imbalance of wealth and power between them. Despite this inequality, solidarity is essentially a mutual relationship in which both parties give and receive. Further unpacking this definition, we can appreciate how accompaniment is embedded in the meaning of solidarity.

According to Sobrino, solidarity begins when we face reality, particularly the reality of the poor. Quoting his colleague Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., Sobrino writes, “The true reality of this world ‘is nothing more or less than the existence of a large part of humanity, literally and historically crucified by the oppression of nature, and above all, by historical and personal oppression.’”[84] Aware of this tragic reality, we cannot help but be affected by human suffering, for we share a common humanity.[85] We must let compassion stir our intellect and shape how we reason through the complicated reality we face and the solutions we devise.[86] Sobrino writes, “There is something in the suffering, crucified peoples that appeals to us, that draws us out of ourselves; that is the beginning of solidarity.”[87] A JRS worker in Indonesia reflects on his experience in a refugee camp: “A refugee camp is a rough school. But it is also a wonderful human and spiritual experience. I am rediscovering humanity here. . . . Here human solidarity is a reality and not just nice words” (*GodEx* 29).

---

[83] Jon Sobrino, *Where is God? Earthquake, Terrorism, Barbarity, and Hope* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 19. The scriptural source of this definition is Romans 1:11-12 (“For I am longing to see you . . . so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith”). See Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy*, 166.

[84] Sobrino, *Where is God*, 50-51.

[85] Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy*, 149.

[86] Sobrino, *Where is God*, 91.

[87] Sobrino, *Where is God*, 8.

In keeping with his method of rooting us firmly in history, Sobrino invites us to use all of our senses to engage reality, to take off our blinders and see the world from the perspective of history's victims.[88] He calls us to awaken from the "sleep of inhumanity," the dream-world that allows us to explain away or ignore the "reality of an oppressed and subjugated world."[89] He implores us to encounter reality with wide-open eyes and there find God who desires to heal us from our blindness. Finally, he urges us to listen to reality and to hear the cry of the poor in whom we hear the voice of God, who wants also to free us from our deafness.[90]

In Sobrino's view, it is not the powerful who take the initiative; it is the crucified peoples of our world who awaken us to reality and summon us to action. From this point of view, suffering is not only passive but active. Likewise, compassion in the face of suffering ultimately leads to effective action. However, we must resist looking for the "quick fix," as cultures of efficiency and productivity teach us. The danger of precipitously taking action is that we may not actually serve those most in need or address the real problem. Worst of all, we may propagate an already oppressive situation despite our best intentions. We must give ourselves time and space to feel the pain, anger and shame that comes with confronting human suffering. Such emotions root us firmly in the moment, in the truth. This truthful contact with reality liberates us from all the unreality and illusions we construct.[91]

Solidarity is more than just giving material aid. Though necessary to ease suffering, sometimes giving aid can be an excuse to hold back and stay at a distance. We might write a check but think and feel nothing more about suffering people and the underlying systemic causes

---

[88] Sobrino, *Where is God*, 38.

[89] Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy*, 1.

[90] Sobrino, *Where is God*, 43-45.

[91] Sobrino, *Where is God*, 7.

of their suffering. In contrast, solidarity is about establishing mutually life-giving relationships over the long-haul. “Solidarity means not only giving but self-giving. . . . Solidarity is helping one another, those who give and those who receive.”[92] In Sobrino’s short-hand definition, solidarity is bearing one another’s burdens.

Of course, the burdens carried are unequal. The poor and oppressed bear the brunt of sinful reality. They are the victims of our drive for money and power and the systems that enshrine these insatiable thirsts. We in the developed world shoulder their burdens by willingly offering our access to power, our money, technology, and other resources for the benefit of others. Some of us take risks in giving that help: facing derision by family or friends; giving up hard-earned money and well-cultivated career paths; and in some cases risking health and personal safety. In on-going relationships of solidarity, we give not only what we have but who we are: we give our time, respect, and affection.[93] Solidarity establishes friendships.

The poor and suffering are not passive recipients of aid: they help carry the burdens of their benefactors, the weight imposed on the wealthy and powerful by materialistic, individualistic, and rigidly secular cultures. The poor “offer community against individualism, cooperation against selfishness, simplicity against opulence, and openness to transcendence against blatant positivism, so prevalent in the civilization of the Western world.”[94] They help us see even more clearly how oppressively managed is the world’s abundance and how divisive is our thirst for safety and security. The poor challenge self-satisfied faith. They teach us about Jesus who walked with the poor and model a faith that is humble before God and resilient amid

---

[92] Sobrino, *Where is God*, 18-19.

[93] Sobrino, *Where is God*, 93.

[94] Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy*, 55

the inhumanity of our world.[95] They – the victims – forgive us our trespasses and invite us to reconciliation.[96] Finally, they reveal a holy determination to live, to give life to others, and to resist the forces of death that beat them down. This will to live in the face of great catastrophe Sobrino calls "primordial saintliness." They may not possess the heroic virtues customarily ascribed to canonized saints, but the poor demonstrate an "everyday heroism" in their witness to giving life in a hostile, violent world.[97] In these ways, the poor evangelize us, save us, and humanize us, for "one cannot be a human being and disregard the sufferings of millions of other human beings."[98] Like more official saints, the victims and voiceless serve as agents of conversion because "they have the power to move our hearts."[99]

The fruit of this mutual giving and receiving is affective union: "to love one another as sons and daughters of God. That is when the miracle of the shared table happens, the joy of belonging to the human family."[100] These affective bonds are palpable, as Patricia Lynch, R.S.M. attests from her experience working in refugee camps in Malaysia and Thailand:

> One day, as I walked through the camp with Yen, my interpreter, a small child ran out from one of the houses, threw her arms around me and hugged me. I was taken by surprise, as I did not know her, but Yen said simply, "She knows who loves her here. It is the Sisters and the Fathers." It struck me then that the people were very aware that we were with them because we really wanted to be. They knew that we tried very hard to make a difference for them (*WnBord* 58).

---

[95] Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy*, 167-68.

[96] Sobrino, *Where is God*, 94.

[97] Sobrino, *Where is God*, 71-73.

[98] Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy*, 151.

[99] Sobrino, *Where is God*, 73.

[100] Sobrino, *Where is God*, 9.

In such encounters, solidarity builds up lives and peoples when the world only conspires to tear them down.[101] This is a union of shared suffering, of carrying one another's crosses to the table. Though the banquet where everyone has a place is an inspiring image, the ultimate sign of solidarity will always be the cross, a symbol not of defeat but of great love, of God taking the ultimate stance with the victims of the world. Where there is great love, there is hope, and where there is hope, we always find life.[102]

JRS and Refugees Bearing One Another's Burdens

In JRS, both the worker and the refugee bear one another's burdens. Walking together along the road of exile, they provide a vivid image of solidarity lived in accompaniment. Because "accompaniment" became the preferred way of describing JRS' way of proceeding by the early 1990s, it was enshrined in the JRS mission statement. Significantly, this mission to "accompany" refugees echoes the early Society's commitment to "help souls" and to "console" others. Yet, these terms are not interchangeable. "Accompaniment" intimates a relationship of mutuality between the JRS worker and refugee, an insight into pastoral theology that should not be ascribed anachronistically to Ignatius and his companions.[103]

A conception of ministry as *being with* rather than *doing for* is reinforced in the opening decree of the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus. While acknowledging that the "overarching motive" of today's ministries "is the simple Ignatian desire to help people in Christ," the Congregation also called Jesuits "to learn how to be helped by people" (*GC 34,* 6). In the third decree on "Our Mission and Justice," the Congregation describes Jesuits as "fellow

---

[101] Sobrino, *Where is God*, 11.

[102] Sobrino, *Where is God*, 152.

[103] Etymologically, "accompaniment" means sharing or breaking bread together, which presumes a personal relationship based on mutual trust (*GodEx* 48).

pilgrims" with the poor, both journeying in faith towards the Kingdom: "We have often been touched by their faith, renewed by their hope, transformed by their love" (*GC 34,* 50).

Accompaniment, therefore, demonstrates a high degree of mutuality in the relationship between JRS and refugees. On the one hand, JRS exists to help the refugee. James Martin, S.J. worked for JRS in Kenya from 1992-94. With a background in business administration, Martin's mission was to help refugees in East Africa start small businesses. He soon realized that listening to refugees and spending time with them was as important as giving them money and practical business advice:

> All of them had been for much of their lives forced to wait and wait and wait in endless lines – in the camps, in the UN offices, in government offices, in jails, in hospitals. And when in those places they were finally ushered in to see this or that official, they were typically treated shabbily and dealt with as quickly as possible. So I was happy to sit with them and listen as carefully as I could to their concerns. Time, not just money, was something that I could easily give them, and it cost nothing.[104]

Peter O'Driscoll recalls from his experience working with JRS in El Salvador that the temptation to immediately do something for the refugee is strong. This response to suffering is understandable, but "we had to be willing to 'waste time,' listening to those we were sent to serve and learning from them."[105] It takes time to build a lasting trust that can endure unpredictable challenges. In the end, this time is hardly wasted. The trust and relationships that ferment over time yield benefits, both practical and spiritual. Listening and learning from refugees, the JRS worker affirms their dignity as persons and empowers them when so many decisions are taken out of their hands and when the circumstances of their life conspire only to devalue them. The

---

[104] James Martin, *This Our Exile: A Spiritual Journey with the Refugees of East Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 106.

[105] Interview with Peter O'Driscoll, 6 October 2005.

companionship of a JRS worker, who freely chooses to live and work alongside refugees, is a presence that gives them hope when they feel the absence of so much in their lives.

Accompaniment also has very practical effects. The presence of JRS "internationalizes" a situation, thus protecting refugees from attack in war-torn areas (*EvChal* 85). In El Salvador, for example, Peter O'Driscoll recalls that JRS was one of only a few agencies "willing to place volunteers in potentially hazardous, conflictive situations" to deter human rights abuses or outright slaughter of civilian populations by paramilitary groups (*WnBord* 100). Mark Raper elaborates: "When North Americans volunteered to live with communities of refugees in El Salvador, local armies knew that if they used U.S.-supplied M16s to kill American citizens, military aid and external political support for the dictatorship would dry up. Just by being there, one could protect human rights" (*WnBord* 100). For JRS in the United States and Europe, just being with refugees in detention centers helps to ensure that they will not be neglected or mistreated.

Moreover, listening to dislocated persons helps JRS devise effective strategies of action. For example, in conversations with Central Americans caught in the violence of civil strife, Robert McChesney, director of JRS/USA from 1991-97, learned that they had to focus more of their resources on advocacy to change U.S. policy in the region, particularly arms sales and military support.[106] In the United States, after listening to non-citizens in detention centers, JRS successfully campaigned to alter a policy that allowed minors to be detained in jails; now they are placed in shelters as they await the outcome of their cases (*GodEx* 89). In Thailand and Cambodia, JRS workers learned first-hand about the suffering caused by landmines. In 1994, JRS joined a coalition of agencies working against landmines. In 1997, the International Campaign to

---

[106] Interview with Robert McChesney, National Director of JRS/USA (1991-97), 22 April 2005, Baltimore.

Ban Landmines won the Nobel Peace Prize. The award was accepted by Tun Channareth, a JRS worker crippled by a mine (*EvChal* 65).

Accompaniment begins with a profound respect for the circumstances of the refugee. Sometimes this respect demands that JRS challenge the refugee, as Joaquím Pons, S.J., who worked in camps in the Democratic Republic of Congo, points out:

> In many cases, our education work consisted in confronting refugees and challenging their perception of themselves as eternally innocent victims. We tried to enlarge their minds towards a wider horizon of reality. Even if this sounds paradoxical, we felt that part of our service to refugees was to question them, whenever the situation demanded it. In the camps there was an atmosphere where the ideas and their interpretations were easily manipulated. Only someone who had won the trust of refugees could offer some objectivity and put into question the manipulated version of facts (*HorLrn* 120).

Peter O'Driscoll concurs that respect for the refugee is not necessarily an endorsement of everything he or she does or has done. Civil strife is complicated. Family loyalties and political ideologies run deep. Before a person is a refugee, they are a parent and citizen, allegiances that may get one mired in morally dubious situations. JRS still commits itself in some situations to work both sides of a border, to help refugees from all sides of a civil conflict. In Rwanda, for example, JRS assisted both Hutus and Tutsis caught in the cycle of violence. Mark Raper reflects on the ambiguities and tensions inherent in this tragedy:

> Of course, we had to make judgments about the assistance given to perpetrators of human rights abuses. But the real authors of the genocide looked after themselves. The generals and higher officers left very quickly. In the camps were the poor peasants who are the fodder recruited to fight in wars and the wounded. JRS did assist some Hutu soldiers, and we were one of the few agencies that went there. Most were wounded and disabled, or were the families of the soldiers, whom we felt had been exploited.[107]

---

[107] Interview with Mark Raper, 5 October 2005. Mateo Aguirre, S.J., the first regional director of the Grand Lacs region, agrees with Raper: "We were clear in our mission; we desired to help the most vulnerable, those who should not be abandoned....We took the side of the people in need, regardless of their ethnic origin" (*WnBord* 197).

In Sobrino's account of "primordial saintliness," he acknowledges that the poor and victims, like any human beings, may be "holy sinners . . . sometimes overcome by the mystery of iniquity" (*Where is God*, 74). Especially when the poor are mired in the moral ambiguities that often accompany human tragedies like Rwanda, we rub up

Because "accompaniment" is steeped in mutuality, we acknowledge too how refugees serve JRS, the Society of Jesus, and the Church. Gildo Dominici, S.J. of JRS in Indonesia puts it simply: "The refugees are my greatest benefactors because they reveal Christ and give him to me. They make the Gospel flesh of my flesh" (*GodEx* 29). JRS workers in a variety of settings testify to how much they are personally and spiritually transformed by the refugees' resilience against all odds, their courage in the face of grave dangers, their generosity amid destitute poverty, and their hospitality in times of great scarcity. Raper offers one testimonial from his experience in Rwanda:

> The immense heaviness of the Rwandan story was from the beginning lightened for me by the qualities of many people whom I met, both in Rwanda and in the refugee camps. I witnessed great kindness and repeated acts of courage. Hundreds of families took in orphaned children, as the most natural and most African thing to do. Tutsi widows helped their Hutu neighbors prepare food to bring to the men in prison, who may have killed their husbands.[108]

Jim Martin reflects on his own experience:

> The refugees in East Africa, people whom I had only read about in newspapers, people whose lives I (literally) couldn't begin to imagine, transformed my heart in ways that I also couldn't have imagined. Their lives, a full measure of sorrows and joys, forced me to confront the basic human questions of what it means to suffer pain and to experience happiness. . . . Their magnificent openness to life helped me face my own difficulties more honestly, and to stay in Kenya despite some strong temptations to leave. Most especially, in coming to know the refugees, and in being invited into their lives, I came to know more fully what it means to love and be loved.[109]

---

against the limits of Sobrino's category of "primordial saintliness." Can a Rwandan refugee who killed people during the genocide still witness to the will to live and give life that is the mark of Sobrino's saint? Sobrino implicitly raises this question when discussing child-soldiers who become part of paramilitary groups in order to survive, "an extreme example of the tragedy of the poor, and of their 'will to live'" (75). He concedes that it may be "blasphemous" to speak of "primordial saintliness" in such cases, "but perhaps it is less so than any other conceptualization we might make – if anyone wants to try – from the standpoint of a world indifferent to, and co-responsible for, such a tragedy" (75).

[108] Mark Raper, "Remembering Rwanda, 1994 – 2004," *America*, 19 April 2004, 17.

[109] Martin, xvi-xvii.

In their shared vulnerability, JRS workers and refugees build community. In their shared poverty, workers from developed countries break out of the prisons of materialism and individualism and learn to live more simply. From the refugees, they learn to value people for who they are rather than what they do or what they have. Amid the uncertainties of a transient life, JRS personnel learn to trust in God's providential care. Walking with refugees, they come to appreciate that they are not alone in their own suffering and that part of the human vocation is to carry the burdens of others.

The refugee teaches Jesuits and their collaborators to be more available for mission, ready to leave home, institutions, and familiar surroundings to redress the more pressing need and to serve the greater glory of God. In 1985, the regional coordinators of JRS described the witness that refugees offer the Society: "Beware, they are saying to us, of immobility, of fixed institutions, of set patterns of behavior 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" (*EvChal* 71). If we are to be "friends in the Lord," as Ignatius insisted,[110] then we must be friends with those whom Jesus chose to accompany: we must be "friends with the poor" (*GC 34,* 34). The poor and displaced "teach us about our own poverty as no document can. They help us to understand the meaning of the gratuity of our ministries, giving freely what we have freely received, giving our very lives" (*GC 34,* 548).[111] After working with JRS in Uganda, Gary Smith, S.J., reflected on the witness given by refugees to the Society: "I saw more clearly the size and power of the Society's

---

[110] Dalmases, 119.

[111] In December 2005, the Jesuit Provincials of the United States announced an apostolic priority for the Assistancy: greater solidarity with people suffering from "structurally entrenched poverty." Among the examples of those suffering from such poverty, the provincials included migrants and refugees. As proposed, this priority will influence choices of ministries, govern allocation of resources and personnel among Jesuit apostolates, and dictate style of living in Jesuit communities. In their letter, the provincials quote extensively from John Paul's *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis.*

mandate to itself: the poor are our preferential option and they hold the key to understanding who we are and what we can be" (*GodEx* 68).

As for the universal Church, refugees, in the words of the JRS regional coordinators, "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" (*EvChal* 71). To the 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 neighbor" (*EvChal* 71). At the same time, JRS incarnates reconciliation which is at the heart of the Church's mission. Because JRS teams are composed of people of different faiths and countries of origin, their collaboration, according to Fr. Kolvenbach, "is a tangible witness to the courage of daring to reconcile" and to a "multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society based on mutual tolerance" (*GodEx* 12).

As much as we emphasize the mutuality inherent in the relationship between refugees and JRS, we cannot ignore the fact that they are "unequals," as Sobrino uses the term JRS has access to resources, institutions, personnel, expertise, and power that refugees lack and need. In no way does solidarity require that JRS abandon these resources and privileges: to do so would only mire JRS in the poverty of the refugee which they both seek to alleviate. Instead, solidarity lived as accompaniment requires that JRS and people of privilege devote their resources to the service of those most in need and that they not be held captive by riches or power. Refugees and displaced persons want JRS' help. They only ask that as they give it, JRS workers remain close to them and remain open enough to receive help from those they seek to serve.[112]

---

[112] See Sobrino, *Where is God*, 145. Sobrino offers Oscar Romero and Ignacio Ellacuría as models of solidarity well-lived.

Conclusion

On the road to Emmaus, Christ appears as the stranger who catches up with the dejected disciples (Lk 24:13-35). Like Christ, JRS workers walk alongside refugees, listen to their stories, offer them hope by word and action, and embolden them to rebuild their lives. An equally compelling image of accompaniment in the gospels is Simon the Cyrene, who is enlisted to carry the cross of Jesus (Mt 27:32; Mk 15:21; Lk 23:26). JRS freely offers to ease the burden of the refugee, taking on the poverty, fear, and insecurity that come with displacement and embracing the cross as the enduring sign of love. The JRS worker is finally the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37) who, seeing suffering and moved by compassion, takes the risk of personally caring for the wounded person on the margins of society and offers them a reliable way to get back on their feet again.

Accompaniment is a novel expression of Jesuit ministry, but it is rooted in the gospel and steeped in the tradition of Jesuit ministries of consolation and in Catholic social teaching. The language of solidarity provides a helpful context to consider what accompaniment means. But for the virtue of solidarity to mean anything, it must be practiced. Accompanying the refugee, JRS reveals what solidarity looks and feels like amid the gritty reality of a beautiful but broken world. While solidarity calls us to high ideals, accompaniment asks us to get our hands dirty, our feet worn, and our heart broken because we walk with *someone* in particular on the road to *somewhere* specific. Peter O'Driscoll recently returned to El Salvador, to the same village where over a decade ago he lived and worked with *campesinos*. On his return, the people of the village – his old friends – ran out to greet him with warm, joyful embraces. Homecomings like these are signs of solidarity lived out in faithful accompaniment.

Chapter 3

JRS and the Spiritual Exercises

When founding the Jesuit Refugee Service, Pedro Arrupe was convinced this new international apostolate would be "of much spiritual benefit also to the Society" (*ActRSJ* 18:320). The last 25 years of accompanying refugees and internally displaced persons has affirmed Arrupe's conviction. Chief among those spiritual benefits is a deepening integration of the *Spiritual Exercises* into the mission of the Society and into the lives of individual Jesuits and their colleagues.

The *Spiritual Exercises* are one of the founding documents of the Society of Jesus.[113] Ignatius wrote the *Exercises* to describe the interior movements of his conversion and to help others on their own spiritual journey. He hoped that his Exercises would allow people to experience interior freedom from sin and disordered attachments so that they could make better decisions about their life and experience greater union with God.[114] Ignatius intended his manual of prayer to be used by spiritual directors to guide another through a series of "exercises," or prayer activities (*SpEx* 1-2).[115] The Exercises summon the person's intellect and affect, memory and will to promote greater self-understanding, but more importantly, to ferment a more intimate, deeply felt knowledge of Jesus Christ (*SpEx* 104). Relying on the imagination in particular, the

---

[113] The *Exercises* were first written by Ignatius shortly after his conversion in 1521 during his long period of prayer at Manresa. Though he continued to re-tool the *Exercises* over the next two decades, he had the essential elements of his work when he left Manresa to embark on his pilgrimage (O'Malley, 4, 25). The *Exercises* were published in 1548, but few changes were made after 1540 (37).

[114] See *SpEx* 21. There is some dispute among scholars as to which end is primary: choosing a state of life that allows retreatants to serve God best or experiencing more intimate union with God. Given the various uses that Ignatius made of the Exercises during his lifetime, these ends are not mutually exclusive but complementary. See Ganss, *Spiritual Exercises*, 146-47 n.14.

[115] The two primary methods of prayer that Ignatius teaches in the Exercises are meditation and contemplation. In mediation, retreatants rely on "their mental powers of memory, intellect, and will," to "reason out principles and to form basic convictions" (Ganss, *Spiritual Exercises*, 154-55 n.31). In contemplation, they rely on their imagination to place themselves in a gospel setting or a scene proposed by Ignatius. Contemplation often stirs the emotions and affect (162 n.61).

one making the Exercises walks with Jesus from his birth, through his hidden life and public ministry, to his death and resurrection. In this way, the *Exercises* are an experience of accompaniment: of being with Jesus and the Risen Christ, of loving and being loved by Him along the way.

Since the time of Ignatius, the Exercises have, according to John O'Malley, "set the pattern and goals of all the ministries in which the Society engaged."[116] While the Exercises are a source of personal edification, they are also meant to inspire loving service to others. In this chapter, I will describe how the Exercises animate JRS in their modern mission to "help souls." I will also show how the Exercises provide an easily accessible framework for JRS workers to reflect on and make sense of their experience of accompanying refugees. In the shared lives of JRS workers and refugees, the graces of the Exercises come alive in remarkable ways.[117]

Accompanying Jesus through the Exercises

Throughout much of the Exercises, we use our imagination to pray through the gospels, immersing ourselves into the sights and sounds of Jesus' life. We beg to know, love, and serve Christ more deeply and faithfully (*SpEx* 104). But before we reflect on the life of Jesus, Ignatius invites us to consider the event of the Incarnation itself. In the Contemplation on the Incarnation, we join the three persons of the Trinity gazing on the world with compassion. They see so much suffering and pain (*SpEx* 106) and resolve, "Let us work the redemption of the human race" (107). Their universal gaze narrows to "the house and rooms of Our Lady, in the city of Nazareth

---

[116] O'Malley, 4.

[117] The focus of this chapter is on how the Exercises provide a framework for JRS to reflect on its mission and its distinctive way of proceeding. Not covered here, but worthy of extensive examination, is how the Exercises may be offered to forcibly displaced persons in refugee camps, urban centers, or detention centers. In the United States, for example, creative practitioners are adapting the Exercises to various marginalized groups (such as prisoners and homeless persons) in non-traditional retreat settings.

in the province of Galilee" (103). This nondescript corner of the world will be the locus of the divine saving action: the sending of the Son (108).

God saves not by throwing us a lifeline from heaven and pulling us up to some lofty vantage point over history. God saves *in* history, such as in the mundane, concrete details of those rooms in Nazareth and the ordinary life a young Jewish woman. God saves by being with us – accompanying us – in our need. Salvation is not confined to a moment in Nazareth, or on the cross, or at the empty tomb. God saves throughout the life of Christ and, following his death and resurrection, throughout the life of the Church guided by his Spirit. The life of Jesus Christ, whom we come to know more intimately in the Exercises, expresses a Godly desire to bear all the beauty and burdens of reality in order to save us from meaningless suffering and death and free us from everything that dehumanizes. "It is the love of Jesus (and of God) that saves," Sobrino reminds us. "The love of Jesus saves human beings, especially victims; love that stays through to the end, even if it leads to a cross. That is what we call redemption."[118]

With Christ, JRS dares to get mixed up in the painful reality of dislocated lives, becoming their faithful accompanier, their humble servant, and their zealous advocate. With the loving gaze of the Trinity, we too witness the plight of millions of people, dislocated by violence, poverty, natural disaster, and repression of all kinds. And we, like the divine persons, are moved with compassion. Responding as Ignatius and Arrupe did to the suffering of others, we ask to join the Son in the work of redemption. According to Fr. Kolvenbach, "Our accompaniment confirms God is present in human history, even its most tragic episodes" (*GodEx* 11).

Though a universal gaze is necessary to keep the global plight of refugees in perspective, we risk inaction if our gaze remains so expansive. Our bold desires and apostolic zeal can be quelled amid sweet-sounding, esoteric principles and unrealized ideals. Just as easily, we can feel

---

[118] Sobrino, *Where is God*, 148.

overwhelmed by the enormity of the crisis. Imitating the Trinity, we must also focus on the concrete realities of our history. Like Mary, we occupy a distinct place on the earth and discreet moment in history. God sends us to *this* particular refugee or displaced person in *this* particular camp, detention center, or urban education center. Finding our place, *right here and now*, we pray for the courage to imitate Mary's majestic *fiat*, her decision to cooperate in the redemptive, loving labor of God.

From the Contemplation on the Incarnation, Ignatius moves us to a contemplation on the Nativity. We imagine Joseph and Mary on the winding road from Nazareth to Bethlehem (*SpEx* 111-12). We attend to the physical details of the cave where Jesus is born (112). We then put ourselves into the scene: "I will make myself a poor, little, and unworthy slave, gazing at them, contemplating them, and serving them in their needs, just as if I was there. . . ." (114). We are not passive by-standers, but servants, co-laborers in the work of redemption. In our service to the newborn Jesus, we anticipate the service that Jesus will offer throughout his life and death. For JRS workers, this contemplation of the Nativity is a reminder of their mission to serve refugees, who like the Holy Family wander in search of shelter and rely on the kindness of strangers to survive the long nights of exile.

In today's refugee, we also meet the child Jesus and the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt to escape Herod's persecution (*SpEx* 132, 269; Mt 2:13-23). A painting of this gospel scene, created by an Ethiopian refugee, graces the chapel of *Centro Astalli*, the center for refugees in Rome and the first JRS project (*GodEx* 23). In a homily on this gospel narrative, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach reflected: "Jesus, the Son of God, finds himself at odds with the political powers as soon as he is born. . . . In his own personal experience, Jesus fulfills the destiny of his own people and of so many other peoples. He experiences emigration, immigration, flight, exile"

(*EvChal* 93). The message of the gospel, Kolvenbach concludes, 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" (*EvChal* 93). Like a modern-day icon of the Holy Family, the logo of JRS features a family of five, walking together to a faraway place.

Our more intimate knowledge of Jesus impels us to make commitments. JRS gives Jesuits and their colleagues a concrete way to respond to the Call of Christ the King, a contemplation that introduces the public ministry of Jesus in the Exercises. We listen to Christ's invitation to each of us: "Whoever wishes to come with me must labor with me, so that through following me in the pain he or she may follow me also in the glory" (*SpEx* 95). This contemplation is meant to kindle our generosity and stir up our zeal to labor with Christ on mission.[119] If we take on the mind and heart of Jesus, we want to live in a certain way, loving and serving as Jesus did. Accompanying the refugee, JRS workers labor with the man Jesus whom Ignatius depicts as always on the move: preaching, teaching, healing, and caring for those most in need. Typical of any Jesuit ministry, JRS aspires "to be with Christ as servants of his mission, to be with people where they dwell and work and struggle, to bring the Gospel into their lives and labors" (*GC 34,* 7).

As we get to know Christ more intimately and love him more dearly, we become more like the One we love. We begin to take on his mind and heart. We appreciate how often Jesus acts out of pity; that is, out of a deeply felt, gut-wrenching, utterly human compassion for others who suffer (See e.g., Mt 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34, Mk 1:41; 6:34; 8:2; Lk 7:13).[120] Such a

---

[119] Ganss, *Spiritual Exercises*, 159 n.52.

[120] See Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy*, 132. In this book, Sobrino argues that mercy is central to Jesus' being and acting, which we are called to imitate. See also James F. Keenan, *The Works of Mercy: The Heart of Catholicism* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), in which the author describes the preeminent position that mercy enjoys in the Catholic moral tradition.

visceral reaction, we recall, is what impelled both Ignatius and Arrupe to respond to the needs of refugees in their times. The mercy of Jesus, like that of Ignatius, Arrupe and today's JRS worker, is not just a feeling or a vague desire to help people in need: it is instead a commitment so deeply embedded in their humanity that it imbues their way of living.[121]

Amid our personally transforming contemplations on the life of Jesus, Ignatius asks us to pause to consider the "Standard of Christ" (*SpEx* 143-147), that is, his values, ideals, and manner of living. To accompany Christ on mission is to be with Christ poor, misunderstood, and humble (146). In a world that esteems upward mobility, JRS takes the counter-cultural stance of downward mobility.[122] Michael Campbell-Johnson, S.J. observes how important such considerations were for Arrupe in deciding to establish JRS. He insisted that working with refugees "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" (*EvChal* 41). Such suffering is the natural consequence of faithful love and of choosing to be with the victims of the world. Living faithfully, simply, and humbly is a powerful witness to a world seduced by riches and honors. It is also the way of our salvation, which is the way of the cross.

Taking Crucified Peoples Down from their Crosses

Having reflected on the public ministry of Jesus, we then walk with him in his passion and death. The pace of the Exercises slows down considerably. We are less focused on sometimes painful self-examination, less fixated on the captivating activity of Jesus. More intimately united with Christ, we seek only to be with him in his suffering, feeling his sorrow

---

[121] See Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy*, 176 (discussing the mercy of those martyred in El Salvador).

[122] See Dean Brackley, *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2004), 98-100, 106-08.

and brokenness (*SpEx* 203). This is where our commitment to Christ and our response to the call of Christ the King lead us. In the same way, as we have seen, JRS describes its unique mission as "being with" rather than "doing for" the refugee.

JRS workers accompany refugees and internally displaced persons on their own road to Calvary and, as a result, taste the poverty, fear, and insecurity that mark their life. JRS staff experience frustration or despair when tireless labor confronts immovable bureaucracies and popular indifference, or when a gospel-inspired zeal yields few discernible results. They deal with dashed hopes and unmet expectations, both of themselves and refugees. The spirit of adventure that comes with going to far-away places and foreign lands soon gives way to the boredom that often pervades camps and detention centers. Thus encountering their own weakness and limitation, JRS workers become better servants, more understanding of human suffering, more sensitive to the plight of refugees.

To walk with the refugee can also entail great physical risk. The blood of JRS workers has sanctified the earth, a testimony to their faithful companionship with the refugee and a reminder of Arrupe's words at GC 32 that commitment to faith and justice would have "ultimate consequences."[123] Some JRS workers have been killed.[124] Others have died by accident or illness while on mission. Still others faced close calls. In 1987, Peter O'Driscoll's first assignment with JRS was to live in a refugee camp near San Salvador. The camp had a hospital which treated wounded guerillas who were awaiting transport by the Red Cross. Within a few months of his

---

[123] Modras, 274.

[124] To name just a few of these martyrs for the gospel, Patrick Gahizi, S.J. was killed in the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Antoine Bargiggia was shot dead as he traveled in Burundi in 2000. Karl Albrecht, S.J. was shot dead in his community by an intruder in East Timor in 1999. A few days earlier a young Indonesian priest, Tarcissius Dewanto S.J., working with displaced people, but not technically a member of JRS, was killed along with around 30 people who had taken refuge in the Catholic Church in Suai, East Timor. In 1996, Richie Fernando S.J., a scholastic from the Philippines, was killed by a hand grenade released by a student at a school founded by JRS in Cambodia (Interview with Mark Raper, 25 October 2005; see also *WnBord* 89, 182, 207).

arrival, the camp was attacked by the Salvadoran military. Soldiers entered the camp and attempted to drag the wounded guerillas out, prompting a relocation of many persons in the camp. JRS workers stayed with the Salvadorans as they resettled.[125]

Despite the risks, JRS workers follow Christ to the end, engaging the painful reality of dislocated lives and standing with the crucified peoples of the world, like Amalia Molina. Amalia and her husband, Gil, fled the civil war in El Salvador. They were arrested by the Immigration and Naturalization Service in Los Angeles in 1998. Separated from their children and each other, they were taken to a nearby detention center in San Pedro, where they lived with hundreds of other detainees for sixteen months. "We had one thing in common," Amalia recalls. "We were all suffering and we were all feeling frustrated and sad. In this situation, you just feel like dying. You don't know anything about your case, your future, how your family is doing. You are just waiting for the door to open to your freedom." She started a Bible study and prayer group in the detention center. Amalia recalls:

> At San Pedro, I had an encounter with Jesus personified; the Romans made fun of Him; they took His clothes, they rejected Him. He was a prisoner and He suffered. I saw His passion when detainees were crying after being searched naked; I saw Him when detainees were fighting for their rights and justice, when they were suffering and in pain and nobody cared about it. My heart was broken and my hands were tied. I could do nothing to help them, I was just another detainee. But I can say that I also saw Jesus' face when people came to see us.[126]

Inspired by the example of JRS workers who visited her in detention, Amalia decided to work with JRS after receiving asylum in this country. Time and time again, she returned to San Pedro and other detention centers, laboring in solidarity with the suffering and forgotten.

---

[125] Interview with Peter O'Driscoll, 6 October 2005.

[126] *War Has Changed Our Life, Not Our Spirit: Experiences of Forcibly Displaced Women* (Rome: Jesuit Refugee Service, 2001), 120-21. For a more complete account of Amalia's experience, see Ana Amalia Molina, *The Power of Love: My Experience in a U.S. Immigration Jail* (Washington, D.C.: Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean [EPICA], 2003.)

Accompaniment in suffering is central to the Jesuit charism. While on his way to Rome to offer the services of his company to the pope, Ignatius had a vision. Praying in a chapel in the small village of La Storta, Ignatius saw God the Father and Jesus, who was carrying his cross. In the vision, Jesus said to Ignatius, "I wish you to be our servant," and the Father placed him with the Son.[127] Within two years of La Storta, the Society of Jesus was formally established. La Storta would define the Jesuit charism. Theirs would be an apostolic order, "focused on mission and praxis, a mysticism of discipleship that follows Jesus carrying his cross, a spirituality of service with a particular sensitivity to the suffering."[128]

Like other Jesuit apostolates, JRS lives out this mission-orientated spirituality, placing the worker with the refugee. A zeal for the gospel and love of the most vulnerable impel the JRS worker to take up the refugee's cross, becoming like a modern-day Simon of Cyrene. Sobrino describes the solidarity of the cross: "The cross on which God is placed is the most eloquent proclamation that God loves the victimized of this world. On that cross, God's love is impotent yet believable."[129]

The cross is central to the Exercises. Early on in the retreat, Ignatius provides the following direction: "Imagine Christ our Lord suspended on the cross before you, and converse with him . . . in the way one friend speaks to another, or a servant to one in authority" (SpEx 53, 54). There, before the One we love, now crucified, we are to speak from the heart and to reflect on three disquieting questions that cut to the chase: *"What have I done for Christ? What am I*

---

[127] For a description of Ignatius' vision of La Storta, see Joseph Tylenda, trans. and ed., *A Pilgrim's Journey: the Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 113 and accompanying notes. See also O'Malley, 34.

[128] Burke, 31-32. Like the Franciscans, the Jesuits' spirituality embraced the world with all of its complexity: "Rather than moving away from history into the realm of the timeless, rather that turning one's back on human society and journeying into the inner expanses of one's own soul, the historical mystic turns toward God revealed *in* history and society" (32).

[129] Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy*, 9.

doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ?" (*SpEx* 53). This heart-felt conversation continues throughout the Exercises, as we are led ever more deeply into the mystery of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. For Christians, the cross is not a macabre symbol of defeat, nor an elevation of suffering as an end in itself. The cross is simply the result of Jesus loving to the end. This is where faithful accompaniment of the most poor and powerless often leads.

Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., martyred at the University of Central America in 1989, reworked Ignatius' questions for the present age. He suggested that we stand before the crucified peoples of today's world – like refugees – and ask: *"Have I helped to crucify them? What am I doing to remove them from their crosses? What must I do so they can rise up again?"*[130] In the shadow of the cross, we encounter the cost of our inaction and the regret of not doing enough. We face head-on our complicity in unjust social and economic structures that ultimately cause or tolerate the dislocation of millions. In the refugee, we encounter Christ, who judges us by how we treat the most vulnerable in our midst (Mt 25:35). In Kolvenbach's words, "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" (*EvChal* 94).

As people of faith, we know that beyond the shadow of the cross lies Easter morning. Mateo Aguirre, S.J., who worked in the Grand Lacs region of Africa, expressed the paschal mystery in very personal terms:

> The call of those who suffer is the driving force behind our presence here in the Grand Lacs region. We are children of the same Father; they are my brothers and sisters. They are also victims of the greed and manipulation of those who struggle to gain power. Commitment is tiring and stressful. We must live it in the light of this mystery because, from a human perspective, it makes little sense. What gives me strength is love beyond death (*GodEx* 79).

---

[130] Brackley, 40.

For José Núñez, S.J., the eyes of refugees reveal the image of the cross and the hope that lies beyond it. Núñez worked with JRS in the Dominican Republic in the 1990s, serving Haitian refugees crossing the border. Reflecting on his experience, he comments: "I always think of the way refugees look: their eyes carry the cross, with its bitterness, suffering and uprootedness. It is a nostalgic way of looking. But it also reflects hope and the desire to continue with their lives. Refugees do not choose to stay in the dark; they try hard to rebuild their lives. This reminds me that there is a gift hidden in the cross" (*WnBord* 119).

Witnessing to the Hope of the Resurrection

JRS is a concrete sign that death does not have the last word, nor do the civil conflicts and the refugee camps they spawn. In often mundane work in camps and detention centers, courtrooms and classrooms, offices and libraries, JRS gives us opportunities to remove refugees from their crosses and to empower them to rise up again. In its various ministries of consolation – in the care of the refugee's spiritual and physical well-being – JRS imitates the risen Christ whom we meet at the end of the Exercises, the One who consoles us in our need (*SpEx* 224). The consolation of the Exercises is a movement that impels us, like the disciples in the upper room, outward to console others.

The resurrection means that any disciple of the Risen Lord must carry on the work of salvation. Jesus saves us so that we can help to save others. We recall how Jesus saves: in concrete history. Walking with Jesus in his life, death, and resurrection, we are schooled in discipleship, motivated by the Spirit of Jesus to serve others in our historical moment. We do not save others *from* the world: we save them *in* the world, the place chosen by God for the ultimate act of divine self-giving. To save in the here-and-now is to work for a faith-inspired justice, for the liberation of all people from oppression and from all that devalues life, degrades human

dignity, and stifles the human spirit. With Jesus, we help realize the reign of God on earth, even as we anticipate its fullest expression in heaven. The reign of God is that vital symbol in our tradition that describes God's dream for us: to live in union with God and others, where loves conquers hatred, peace overcomes discord, and joy casts out all fear; where the littlest among us are given the place of honor; where every person is invited to eat at the same table; and where every refugee finds a home. The reign of God leaves no room for crosses.

In relationships of mutuality, such as those between the JRS worker and refugee, it is not JRS that does all the saving. In the Contemplation on Divine Love, the concluding prayer experience of the Exercises, Ignatius describes how "love consists in a mutual communication between the two persons," a dynamic exchange of gifts between one and the other (*SpEx* 231). In the mutuality of accompaniment, crucified peoples are bearers of salvation to JRS workers from developed countries.[131] As we saw in the last chapter, refugees shed light on the systemic injustices that spawn the refugee crisis in the first place. In their poverty and suffering, they reveal the insidious nature of the individualism, materialism, and hedonism so rampant in the "First World." In their personal encounter with refugees, JRS workers confront how they have been seduced by these cultural icons, despite their best intentions. This startling truth sets them free to embrace the counter-cultural gospel values lived by the poor and powerless, namely community, simplicity, loving service and sacrifice, and an utter openness to receive God's gifts.[132] The way to salvation is joining Christ under his standard: refugees and other crucified peoples show us the way.

The hope of the resurrection is future-orientated but it is based on God's action in the past and present, which shows how faithful God is. Through the work of JRS, God steadfastly

---

[131] Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy*, 53-56.

[132] Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy*, 55.

accompanies those most in need of consolation. Bill Yeomans, S.J., who worked with JRS in Thailand, reflects, "I must give in such a way that my giving restores refugees' self-worth, their human dignity, in such a way that their hope and trust in humankind are rekindled" (*GodEx* 59). This hope is contagious. For Srey Pot, a Cambodian refugee, hope came in the form of a dance. Srey was born in a refugee camp near the Thai-Cambodian border, but soon after her birth, the camp was bombed and destroyed, forcing her family to flee to Thailand. There, she and her family were placed in another camp, which would be her home for ten years. When she was six-years-old, Srey, along with her sisters, learned traditional Cambodian dances at a camp school, practicing every day for four hours. After a peace agreement was signed in Cambodia in 1991, her family was repatriated to Cambodia, where they were given a small plot of land and some money to build their life again. At the village school, Srey continued to learn dance and joined a group of dancers who used traditional dance as a way to lobby for world peace and for an end to landmines. Srey reflects:

> My favorite Cambodian dance is "Peace," in which I dance as a dove of peace. I also like the "Ban landmines" dance. In this one, I dance as a butterfly captured by a landmine. One of my dreams is to visit the world with my dancing troupe, to dance and wish people peace, to make friends and show them our culture and to learn how people live in other countries. I look to the future with the hope that real peace will one day come for all of us.[133]

In the fall of 2000, Srey's dream came true: she and her dancing troupe traveled to Spain.

In JRS, the road from despair to hope often cuts through classrooms. Sok Leng lost both of her legs when she was 12-years-old, walking on a land-mine as she went to collect water near her village in Cambodia. "My parents helped me very much, but I had lost hope in life," she recalls. Unable to go to school, she stayed at home for 13 years, "When my brothers and sisters came home from school, I tried to learn their lessons. It was a very sad time for me." Then, she

---

[133] *War Has Changed Our Life*, 90-91.

was fitted for artificial legs, "which gave me hope, but it was so painful to learn to walk, my legs bled and I cried in pain. Within a year, I could walk well, but what next?" The answer came when a teacher invited her to join a JRS-founded vocational training school, appropriately named *Banteay Prieh*, the "Center of the Dove." Sok Leng chose to learn electronics. "At first, it was very hard because I had only been to school for one year, but after nights of hard work, I succeeded: I was good! I was also taught home gardening, and made many friends, disabled like myself. On graduation night I danced, and I was so happy." Sok now works at the Center as an adviser to girl students (*HorLrn* 53-54).

Just as the Risen Christ offered words of consolation to his dejected disciples, JRS relies on everyday conversations to bring hope to refugees. At the same time, JRS looks for creative ways to mediate the consolation of the gospel. In 1995, JRS established a multi-lingual radio station in western Tanzania to serve refugees of the Rwandan genocide. In addition to offering entertainment programming, the station provides reliable, balanced news about the situation back at home. It also promotes dialog and reconciliation among African neighbors and disseminates vital information about human rights and health care issues. The name of the station is Radio *Kwizera*, which in the local language means "Radio Hope" (*HorLrn* 80-81).

Conclusion

The Spiritual Exercises end with a heart-felt offering. With grateful hearts, we want only to return all that we have to God so that we can better praise and serve our generous Creator (*SpEx* 234). Embraced by this all-encompassing love, we cannot rest content, for love must show itself in deeds (*SpEx* 230). We want to love and serve as Christ did. Because of the graces given in the Exercises, we are freer to discern how we are best able to contribute to God's constant laboring to redeem the world, to realize the reign of God.

The Exercises teach us that God's dream for us and the world is manifest in the most concrete, personal ways, such as in Srey's graceful dance, a modern radio station called "Hope," and every-day conversations between refugees and JRS workers. Denise Coghlan, R.S.M. worked with JRS in Cambodia. In the most ordinary moments, she saw the face of Christ in the refugees and in her fellow JRS workers. In one scene, she describes how the consolation that caps the Exercises came alive for her:

> One image that remains etched in my mind forever is the frail body of Yi Yi in a swimming pool, supported in the arms of a former International Director of JRS. Yi Yi, a Burmese refugee medical student, was dying of cancer. Wasted in body, unable to move by herself but strong in spirit, she wanted to go swimming a few days before her death, to feel the joy of water touching, cleaning her whole body. The picture of Mark and Yi Yi laughing in delight as water splashed over her speaks not only of tenderness and fidelity to the end but also of the ability to respond to what many might have dismissed with a sympathetic smile as impossible or impractical (*GodEx* 80).

Chapter 4
JRS as an Embodiment of the Biblical Virtue of Hospitality

Over the years, JRS has explicitly grounded its mission in the ideals of Catholic social teaching and recent General Congregations of the Society of Jesus that call us to promote a faith that does justice and to labor in solidarity with those most in need. Moreover, JRS has found inspiration in the tradition of Jesuit ministries and in the Spiritual Exercises. In this chapter, I propose an additional inspiration for the vital work of JRS: the rich tradition of virtue ethics. Virtue ethics invites us to consider three basic questions: *Who am I? Who am I called to become? How do I get there?*[134] While traditional ethical systems focus on articulating principles and applying them to problematic cases, virtue ethics is primarily concerned with the person and how character is shaped. It asserts certain virtues – that is, attitudes, dispositions, character traits, and habits – that help us flourish as persons and live fulfilling lives.

The virtue that I propose as essential to the mission of JRS is hospitality, a virtue steeped in the biblical tradition. In the pages that follow, I will examine key texts from Scripture that have informed the Judeo-Christian understanding of hospitality. I also consider how hospitality was central to the early church's emerging identity and mission. Retrieving and re-interpreting this ancient virtue for today, I show how JRS practices hospitality in both new and traditional ways.

Hospitality as a Classical and Biblical Virtue

Hospitality is an ancient virtue, a mark of a civilized culture. In ancient Greece, to host a stranger meant not only to give material assistance but to respect the humanity shared by the citizen and stranger. Such welcome reflected a generous, socially conscious way of living

---

[134] See James F. Keenan, *Moral Wisdom: Lessons and Texts from the Catholic Tradition* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 96.

necessary to maintaining the order of the polis.[135] While hospitality can be exercised towards anyone, it is primarily directed toward the stranger. A Greek word for hospitality – and one often used in the New Testament – is *philoxenia,* which links the word for love or affection (*phileo*) with the word for stranger (*xenos*).[136]

For the Greeks, one is not born virtuous. Instead, virtues are learned and cultivated with practice over a lifetime. Thus, we become hospitable by exercising hospitality. Role models help us practice being good hosts. Parents, civic leaders, teachers, and peers may serve as models of virtuous living. We also find role models in the stories we tell, such as those the Greeks heard in the tales of Homer. In a similar way, the people of Israel and early Christian churches offered models of hospitality by telling stories. They hoped that faithful listeners would imitate the hospitality evident in Scripture.[137]

The Old Testament is a chronicle of God's hospitality to humanity and a summons to imitate this divine hospitality for others. God fashions the world and places man and woman in the Garden: "In God's creation, God is eminently hospitable."[138] Even when Adam and Eve are exiled from the Garden after the Fall (Gen 3:23-24), God makes clothing for them (3:21). Similarly, after Cain kills his brother, God gives him a mark to protect him (4:15), as he too is exiled from Eden, condemned to be a "wanderer on the earth" (4:12, 14). In these stories, we encounter Adam, Eve, and Cain as exiles from their original home and are reminded of God's special protection for those who wander the earth.

---

[135] Lucien Richard, *Living the Hospitality of God* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 5-6. Accordingly, in the *Odyssey*, Homer admonishes, "The city which forgets how to care for the stranger has forgotten how to care for itself" (Richard, 6).

[136] Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 31.

[137] Pohl, 173.

[138] James F. Keenan, *Virtues for Ordinary Christians* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1996), 108.

Similarly, we first meet Abraham as a wanderer and refugee. Faithful to God's command, Abraham leaves his home in Haran to settle in the land of Canaan (Gen 12:1-9). Because of famine, he flees to Egypt "to reside there as an alien" (12:10). Israel and the early church long upheld Abraham as a model of hospitality, as one who imitates God's hospitality.[139] Having experienced what it is like to be a sojourner, Abraham is sensitive to the needs of strangers. At the oaks of Mamre, Abraham feeds and shelters three strangers who are revealed to be divine messengers. He is rewarded for his welcome with the announcement that he and his long barren wife will be blessed with a child (18:1-15). The gospel writers celebrate Abraham as a gracious host, portraying the kingdom of heaven as eating with and being comforted by the great patriarch (Mt 8:11; Lk 16:19-31).[140] The author of the letter to the Hebrews implicitly reminds Christian communities of Abraham's example: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Heb 13:2).[141] The Old Testament offers other models of hospitality,[142] but Abraham is the archetype of the good host.

The people of Israel identify so much with the stranger because they were once refugees in Egypt and wanderers in the desert on the way to the Promised Land. Enshrining a duty to care for the stranger, the Torah reminds Israel of their once-alien status: "You shall not oppress a

---

[139] See a sampling of these early church writings in Amy G. Oden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 280 and following.

[140] John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 16.

[141] Entertaining angels is a popular Old Testament theme. See also Gen 19:1-11 (Lot gives sanctuary to angelic guests); Judg 6:11-24 (Gideon offers food to angel of the Lord); Judg 13:3-23 (the parents of Samson offer food to angel of the Lord).

[142] For example, Lot gives sanctuary to angelic guests and is saved from the destruction of Sodom (Gen 19:1-24). Rahab hides messengers sent by Joshua, and Joshua spares Rahab and her family while her city is destroyed (Jos 2:1-21; 6:22-25). The widow of Zarephath gives lodging and her meager supply of food to Elijah and is blessed with an abundance of food and the restoration of life for her son (1 Kgs 17:8-24). Similarly, the wealthy woman of Shunem houses and feeds the prophet Elisha and is rewarded with the birth of a son and later with his restoration to life (2 Kgs 4:8-37).

resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (Ex 23:9); "You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Dt 10:19).[143] To mistreat the alien is to break their covenant with God. Accordingly, the prophets repeat admonitions not to oppress the alien (Jer 7:5-7; Zech 7:9-10) and rail against Israel when in times of great prosperity they oppress the poor and defenseless.[144]

The duty to welcome the stranger was both an individual and societal obligation in Israel. According to Jewish law, crops remaining after harvest were set aside for strangers (Lev 19:9-10; Dt 24:19-22); tithes of grain were given to the poor and alien in towns (Dt 14:28-29; 26:12); and Sabbath rest extended to resident aliens (Ex 20:10; 23:12; Dt 5:14-15).[145] For Israel, hospitality was a concrete way for individuals and communities to honor their covenant with God, who since the dawn of creation had been so hospitable to them. Their corporate hospitality remains a standard for nations, churches, and religious communities today to judge their own commitment to care for the stranger and refugee in their midst.

Hospitality in the Gospels

The Old Testament begins with God's gracious hospitality to humanity. In stark contrast, the New Testament opens with descriptions of how inhospitable the world is to Jesus.[146] The innkeeper does not welcome Joseph and Mary. Jesus is born in the squalor of a manger, a long way from the beauty of the Garden of Eden (Lk 2:7). Soon after Jesus' birth, the Holy Family become refugees, fleeing Herod's persecution and migrating to Egypt, the land which once

---

[143] For similar admonitions and exhortations relating to care of strangers and aliens, see Ex 22:21; Lev 19:34; Dt 23:7; 24:17-18; 27:19; Job 31:32; Ps 146:9.

[144] See Richard, 26-27.

[145] For a concise summary of Jewish law with respect to strangers, see Pohl, 40-41.

[146] Keenan, *The Works of Mercy*, 21.

enslaved their ancestors (Mt 2:13-15). From the beginning then, the gospels identify Jesus with the alien, an association that foreshadows his ignominious death as an outcast beyond the city walls of Jerusalem.

Though facing rejection from the time of his birth to his death, Jesus repeatedly exercises the Jewish virtue of hospitality. In his first miracle at Cana, Jesus provides wine at the wedding feast (Jn 2:1-11). All four gospels describe Jesus feeding a crowd of five thousand people (Mk 6:30-44; Mt 14:13-21; Lk 9:11-17; Jn 6:5-13). At the Last Supper, Jesus washes the disciples' feet (Jn 13:1-11). Even on the cross, Jesus extends hospitality to the good thief, welcoming him into the kingdom of heaven (Lk 23:40-43). Jesus admonishes his disciples for not welcoming children (Mk 10:13-16; Mt 19:13-15; Lk 18:15-17), and for wanting to send hungry people away (Mk 6:36-37; Mt 14:15-16; Lk 9:12-13). The gospels thus portray Jesus as a model of hospitality, which Christians are called to imitate.

At the same time, gospel writers show how Jesus and his disciples accepted hospitality from others. Their itinerant ministry demanded that they rely on the kindness of strangers and friends for food and shelter (Mk 6:10-11; Lk 7:36; 10:4-12; 10:38-42; 11:37; 14:1). In two compelling gestures of hospitality, Jesus allows a woman to anoint his feet (Lk 7:36-38) and Simon the Cyrene to carry his cross (Mt 27:32; Mk 15:21; Lk 23:26). But even when he accepts hospitality, Jesus usually reverses the roles of host and guest.[147] Jesus has no home (Lk 9:58), yet he plays the consummate host.[148] For Jesus, an invitation to eat at someone's home becomes an occasion to give an important lesson (Lk 5: 29-39; 11:37-52; 14:1-24; 19:1-27).[149] For example,

---

[147] The same Greek word, *xenos*, can mean host, guest or stranger, a "semantic fluidity" that "conveys the blurred identities of guest and host" (Oden 51).

[148] Koenig, 90.

[149] In this way, Luke portrays Jesus as a traveling wisdom teacher (not uncommon in his day) who is invited to share his wisdom at table (Koenig 17).

he is a guest at Simon's house, but when Simon questions why Jesus would allow the sinful woman to wash his feet, Jesus teaches him about forgiveness and forgives the sins of the woman (Lk 7:35-50). As in the Old Testament, hospitality in the gospels is portrayed as a two-way street: both the host and the guest receive something in their encounter. With Jesus, hospitality is an invitation to enter into a relationship with another that is mutually transforming. According to Luke Timothy Johnson, hospitality is "the catalyst for creating and sustaining partnerships in the Gospel. Within these partnerships all members, even God as director, will play the role of stranger."[150]

While in our society today the stranger is often feared or viewed with suspicion, the gospels teach that the stranger was to be welcomed as Christ. Jesus tells his disciples, "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me" (Mt 10:40). Luke depicts the Risen Lord as a stranger who encounters two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35). The disciples offer the stranger hospitality: "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over" (24:29). Jesus accepts their invitation, but in typical fashion, he ends up playing the host, feeding them with the bread he blesses and opening their eyes to his divine presence, which impels them to proclaim the good news to others. After the resurrection, other disciples do not initially recognize Christ: he is mistaken for a gardener (Jn 20:11-18), a stranger on the beach (Jn 21:4-8), and a ghost (Lk 24: 36-43). In each case, Christ reveals himself to the disciples by word or gesture.[151] As in the Old Testament, to greet the stranger is to welcome the divine.

---

[150] Quoted in Richard, 35. Richard also quotes Thomas Merton on this subject: "No man knows that the stranger he meets . . . is not already an invisible member of Christ and perhaps one who has some providential or prophetic message to utter" (34).

[151] The Book of Revelation alludes to Christ as the stranger: "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me" (3:20).

In biblical times as much as in our own, the hospitality of Jesus is a counter-cultural statement. The meals that Jesus shares with others are a "kind of enacted parable about the kingdom of God."[152] All are welcome to the table (Lk 14:15-24): saints and sinners, friends and strangers, wealthy and poor, men and women. At one meal, Jesus teaches his host, a Pharisee:

> When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed . . . (Lk 14:12-14).

At Jesus' table, social boundaries are broken (Mk 2:15-17). In keeping company with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus transforms an ordinary meal into a joyous banquet where sins are forgiven and people are restored to the community (Lk 5:29-32; 7:36-50; 15:1-7; 19:1-10). People are fed, both in body and spirit. In his table fellowship, Jesus models a radical inclusivity that he expected his disciples to imitate.[153]

In his teaching, Jesus is explicit about the requirement of hospitality. "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36). In a parable about the final judgment (Mt 25:31-46),[154] Jesus teaches that failing to act mercifully and hospitably is an offense against God. The righteous will inherit eternal life because they were hospitable:

> I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me . . .

---

[152] Daniel J. Harrington, *The Church According to the New Testament* (Chicago: Sheed & Ward, 2001), 139.

[153] For more discussion on Jesus' meal ministry as an expression of the Kingdom of God, see Richard, 38-54; Koenig, 15-45. "The kingdom of God is like a moveable feast, a roving banquet hall that seeks the people of Israel as guests and hosts. At this table they may find reconciliation with one another, as well as a true home and a plenty that fills them up and propels them toward sharing relationships with their neighbors" (Koenig, 43-44). Meal fellowship in the New Testament is eschatological in that it points to the heavenly banquet.

[154] This text has been used throughout the ages to explain the duty of hospitality (Pohl, 20-23). Such use relies on a traditional interpretation of the last judgment scene: all humanity will be judged by how they treat those in need. Some biblical scholars, however, argue for an alternate interpretation: Gentiles in particular will be judged by how they treat Christian missionaries and disciples. In either case, the gospel makes hospitality central to God's judgment. See Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagina, vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 357-60.

> [for] just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me (Mt 25:35-36, 40).[155]

Conversely, the wicked are condemned for failing to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit the prisoner (25:42-46). Similarly, in Luke's gospel, the rich man who fails to feed and care for the poor man, Lazarus, starving at his gate meets a similar fate (Lk 16:19-31).

Luke provides a more positive role model of hospitality in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). Luke introduces the parable with the lawyer's question to Jesus: "Who is my neighbor?" (10:29). The focus of the parable in its final form is not the injured man, but the one who shows mercy (10:37). According to Luke Timothy Johnson, "Jesus reverses the question from one of legal obligation (who deserves my love) to one of gift-giving (to whom can I show myself neighbor)."[156] The Samaritan's act of mercy begins with his decision to come near the injured man, rather than to pass on the other side of road as the priest and Levite did (10:31-33). Only then is he "moved with pity" (10:33), or more literally translated, "moved in his spleen" or "in his entrails."[157] At this point, the Samaritan has another choice to make: whether to approach even closer and care for the concrete needs of another. The Samaritan makes the choice: "He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him" (10:34). He acts, unconcerned whether the injured person is Jew or Samaritan, stranger or friend. To the lawyer, Jesus instructs, "Go and do likewise" (10:37).

---

[155] See also James 2:15-17: "If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,' and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."

[156] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina, vol. 3 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 173 n.36. For more on this parable as a lesson in hospitality, see Richard, 46-47.

[157] Richard, 63; Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy*, 132. Sobrino commends how people of faith from the "First World" have dared to come close to "suffering Salvadorans in the countryside, in jails, and in refugee camps" (144-45).

In the same way, we are called to be a neighbor to refugees: to tend to their wounds and alleviate their suffering. But this act of mercy requires that we first see them, and where we stand determines what and who we see. JRS stands refugees amid the painful reality of their lives, listening to their stories and learning about how to best help them. Thus encountering refugees, we cannot help but be moved with the compassion of the Samaritan – and that of Ignatius and Arrupe when they helped refugees in their own times. Their plight gets us in the gut, a reaction that, according to Jon Sobrino, is profoundly humanizing. He interprets the parable of the Good Samaritan as an illustration about what it means to be human. For him, a human being is "one who interiorizes, absorbs in her innards, the suffering of another – in the case of the parable, unjustly afflicted suffering – in such a way that this interiorized suffering becomes a part of her, is transformed into an internal principle, the first and the last, of her activity."[158]

Like the Good Samaritan, JRS workers attend to immediate physical needs, but they are equally concerned with the systemic causes of forced migration. To that end, JRS is as likely to be found in university libraries and halls of government as in refugee camps. In their advocacy on behalf of refugees, they elaborate on the parable of the Good Samaritan. Biblical scholar Stephen Mott suggests that the Good Samaritan of today must be concerned not just with the immediate suffering of the person but with the underlying causes of their plight. Mott asks: "If every time the Good Samaritan went down that road from Jerusalem to Jericho, he found people wounded and did nothing about the bandits, would his love be perfect?" Today's Samaritan, he concludes, "not only binds the wounds but turns to stop the attack."[159]

---

[158] Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy*, 17.

[159] Stephen Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 58. See also Sobrino, *Principle of Mercy*, 178 (explaining how today's Good Samaritans must also work for justice, addressing the systems and structures that inflict the wounds in the first place).

Luke follows up the parable of the Good Samaritan with another portrait of hospitality. Jesus accepts the hospitality of Martha and her sister Mary (10:38-42), but the hospitality that each provides is distinct. Martha is the one whom Luke describes as welcoming Jesus into her home (10:38). She is "distracted by her many tasks" (10:40) in caring for her guest. Like any itinerant teacher, Jesus needed the shelter and (presumably) the food and drink offered by Martha. She is doing the "grunt work," serving as a disciple is supposed to do (see 22:24-27). Yet, Jesus applauds Mary for choosing "the better part" (10:42): sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to him (10:39). Here, the hospitality that is praised is paying attention to the guest. As in other settings, Jesus, the guest, ends up playing the host, offering to Mary God's life-giving word.

The gospels thus present differing portraits of hospitality. Jesus calls us to actively serve the physical needs of the stranger, who is Christ. At the same time, Jesus invites us to choose "the better part" of listening to and just being with the guest. While some find here a discrepancy, we can reconcile these teachings in a way faithful to the gospel. The parable of the Good Samaritan and the story of Martha and Mary come at the end of a chapter which begins with Jesus missioning seventy disciples. In his instructions, Jesus urges his disciples to be flexible as they go about their work: if they are welcomed in one home, stay; if not, move along (Lk 10:1-12). Similarly, the disciple must adapt to the situation: sometimes playing host, at other times acting as guest; at times feeding and sheltering those in need, at other times simply being present to them.

JRS models this two-fold hospitality. Like early Jesuit ministries, JRS is committed to spiritual and corporal works of mercy: feeding, clothing, and sheltering refugees and caring for their spiritual needs. At the same time, JRS exercises hospitality by simply accompanying

refugees, being with them rather than simply doing something for them. In a culture where time seems so precious, they give refugees the gift of time. "Wasting time" with them, JRS learns to see each refugee "as a human being rather than as an embodied need or interruption."[160] As we have seen, by accompanying refugees, JRS builds relationships of trust that become well-springs of hope for refugees and avenues of grace for JRS workers. Explaining the significance of the story of Martha and Mary, Luke Timothy Johnson captures the experience of JRS workers: "Jesus nicely turns the point from one of providing a service to receiving a gift: the other who comes into our space is a messenger of grace."[161]

Such mutuality is critical in ministering to forcibly displaced persons. For refugees who come from cultures that value hospitality, community, and openness of homes, allowing them to host and help others reminds them of their inviolable human worth.[162] When refugees first come into contact with JRS, there is a certain power imbalance because of the disparity of needs and resources. There are real differences. Refugees need what JRS has. Moreover, JRS workers willingly choose to live among refugees while refugees do not choose a transient life. If JRS always assumed the role of host, then the power imbalance would remain, as would the temptation to abuse that power. In all likelihood, the refugee would always have to adapt to the social order established by JRS and abandon their way of living in order to assimilate into a new home.[163] Always hosting and always helping can easily devolve into always controlling. This

---

[160] Pohl, 178.

[161] Johnson, 175. See also Pohl, 72: "Hospitality is a 'two-way street'."

[162] Pohl, 121.

[163] James F. Keenan, "Jesuit Hospitality?" in *Promise Renewed: Jesuit Higher Education for a New Millennium*, ed. Martin Tripole (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999), 241.

warped vision of hospitality condescends, belittles, and disempowers: it "fills their hands but breaks their hearts."[164]

Humility calls us to recognize our limitations, to appreciate the gifts offered by those we serve, and to realize our need for conversion. JRS personnel and other ministers of hospitality serve best when, like the ancient Israelites, they acknowledge how they too are aliens in their own ways. As a further corrective to the power differential in their work, JRS strives to imitate Jesus who allowed himself to be a guest at times, to be served as well as to serve. In Zacchaeus, they find another model of humble hospitality (Lk 19:1-10). Zacchaeus, a wealthy tax collector in Jericho, at first plays host to Jesus: he is "happy to welcome him" (19:6). This welcome becomes a moment of conversion for him. Responding to Jesus' own graciousness, the tax collector promises to give half of his possessions to the poor and to repay people he has defrauded (19:8). Jesus, the guest, seeks out and saves the lost (19:10). In the same way, refugees are messengers of grace for JRS workers who desire to make a more wholehearted response to Christ, to live more simply and faithfully, and to nurture a life-affirming faith that does justice.

Hospitality in Paul and the Early Church

Like the Israelites, early Christian communities viewed themselves as displaced persons, as strangers in a world where they were never fully at home.[165] They did not belong to this world (Jn 15:19; 17:14) because their true and lasting home was with Christ in heaven (Phil 3:20; Eph 2:6; Heb 11:13-16; 13:14). Christians described themselves as "aliens and exiles" among non-

---

[164] Pohl, 120 (quoting Philip Hallie, *Tales of Good and Evil, Help and Harm* [New York: Harper-Collins, 1997], 207). The one who offers hospitality faces the possibility that their welcome will be abused, ignored, or rejected. According to Martha Nussbaum, this is a risk inherent in ministry: "There is a loss in value whenever the risks involved in specifically human virtue are closed off. There is a beauty in the willingness to love someone in the face of love's instability and worldliness that is absent from a completely trustworthy love" (Pohl, 149).

[165] Oden, 36.

believers (1 Pet 2:11). For the writer of 1 Peter, the Church was like a "home for the homeless" where Christians could overcome the alienation they experienced in the world.[166] They were expected to "be hospitable to one another" (4:9). Christians were more than just spiritual refugees from heaven: they sometimes fled persecution in the Roman Empire.[167] As aliens both spiritual and political, early Christians identified with strangers, and thus were apt to extend hospitality to them.

This hospitality facilitated the spread of Christianity. The early Church was not a monolithic structure but a collection of assemblies united by a common creed and sometimes common founder, like Paul. Each assembly usually gathered in the home of a wealthy patron. As a church community grew in number, it assumed duties of hospitality once exercised by the patron alone. Like Jesus and his disciples, Paul and other Christian missionaries depended on the hospitality of communities to support their itinerant mission (Rom 1:8-15; 15:22-29; 16:1-2, 23; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10-11; 2 Cor 8:16-24; Phil 2:19-23; Phlm 22). Eventually, the bishop and deacons assumed principal responsibility for hospitality to Christian missionaries and strangers in need (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:7-8).[168] In the crowded, transient urban centers of the first century, Christian churches welcomed newcomers and performed works of mercy for those in need. Such hospitality made Christianity very attractive to these newcomers and attributed to the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire.[169]

Hospitality was thus a mark of the Christian. Paul expected his communities to exercise the same mercy and hospitality that God and others showed to them: "Welcome one another,

---

[166] Harrington, *Church*, 138.

[167] Oden, 38.

[168] Keenan, "Jesuit Hospitality," 232, 237; see also Pohl, 56.

[169] See Keenan, *Mercy*, 4; Keenan, "Jesuit Hospitality," 232; Harrington, *Church*, 140 (relying on the work of Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* [Princeton, 1996]).

therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Rom 15:7). Elsewhere in Romans, Paul writes:

> Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection...Contribute to the needs of the saints [i.e. fellow Christians]; extend hospitality to strangers (Rom 12:9-10, 13).

Such care for friend and stranger alike was indispensable to building up the community, the household of God (1 Cor 3:9-17; 14:4; Gal 6:10). All people are one in Christ: no baptized person was to be excluded from the community (Gal 3:27-28; Eph 2:17-22). Paul condemned any hint of exclusion or lack of welcome at community meals (see e.g. Gal 2:11-14), especially at the celebration of the Lord's Supper. For Paul, the common meal was both a "symbol and medium of the gospel."[170] These social gatherings were intended to demonstrate unity, offering a "real-life preview of the coming kingdom so that it could inspire other kinds of sharing in the church, both spiritual and material."[171] Welcoming one another was a concrete way to imitate Christ and bring about the reign of God.

In some of his harshest rhetoric, Paul challenges the church at Corinth about their exclusionary, unwelcoming meal practices. As with other Christian communities, Corinthians met regularly (perhaps weekly) to share the Lord's Supper in house churches.[172] The problem for Paul was that the wealthier members, those who had the luxury of time, were eating and drinking before the poorer members arrived, usually taking the choicest portions and leaving the rest with

---

[170] Koenig, 54.

[171] Koenig, 68.

[172] These houses were likely large enough to accommodate about forty people in the largest room or atrium. Customarily, the congregation gathered over an extended period of time because slaves or poorer day laborers did not have control over their time as wealthy householders did. Food and drink, usually donated by wealthier Christians, were prepared for a common meal. Once people had gathered, a leader pronounced Jesus' blessing of the bread at the Last Supper (1 Cor 11:23-24). Then, the congregation ate the common meal of donated food. Words of blessing were spoken over the wine (11:25), and all shared the wine. Finally, a concluding blessing was offered (Koenig, 64, 67). For another description of these community meals, see Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians,* Sacra Pagina, vol. 7 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 417-18.

leftovers: "For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk" (1 Cor 11:21). It is also likely that the late-comers would have had to eat outside the main dining area.[173] Such practices only served to "humiliate those who have nothing" (11:22) and to divide the congregation between the rich and the poor, the "haves" and the "have-nots" (11:18). As a result, the very purpose for which they gathered was undermined: "When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper" (11:20). A divided meal where some Christians are excluded or relegated to secondary status fails to realize the radical equality and companionship which the Supper is intended to manifest. Paul urges the Corinthians to carefully discern how they are treating each other at their meals (11:28). "When you come together to eat, wait for one another" (11:33) so that they may truly become one body in Christ (10:17; 12:12).[174]

In the midst of his criticisms against the Corinthians, Paul relates Jesus' words of institution at the Last Supper (11:23-26) to emphasize that their common meal is not simply about eating and drinking. According to one commentator, "The supper of the crucified Lord must disclose and embody God's world-reversing gospel. Here, as in Christ's death and resurrection, the weak, the lowly, the foolish, and the despised of the present age are being lifted up."[175] The meal, so important in Jesus' ministry, was also a counter-cultural statement for Paul. In her fascinating study of early Christian hospitality, Christine Pohl writes, "Although we often think of hospitality as a tame and pleasant practice, Christian hospitality has always had a

---

[173] Collins, 418-19.

[174] In Romans 14-15, Paul expresses a similar concern for unity at community meals. Here the conflict stems from differing judgments about whether certain foods may be eaten and holy days observed. While in principle Paul sides with those who take a liberal approach to dietary and holy day regulations, he urges them to be sensitive to those with more scruples and to defer to them if necessary to avoid scandalizing them and dividing the community. Christians must build each other up (Rom 15:2) and welcome one another (15:7).

[175] Koenig, 68.

subversive, countercultural dimension."[176] The shared meals as envisioned by Paul were a stark contrast to elaborate banquets favored by the Romans where socio-economic boundaries were reinforced and where hosts expected some tangible benefit for their hospitality.[177] Christian hospitality embraced the poor and powerless and expected nothing in return (see Lk 14:12-14). In Pohl's words, "God's guest list includes a disconcerting number of poor and broken people, those who appear to bring little to any gathering except their need."[178]

Meal practices thus helped Christians form their identity in a sometimes hostile world. Practices of hospitality were embedded in their tradition and their way of life. Soon, hospitality became institutionalized. By the 4th and 5th centuries, hostels and hospitals cared for the needy, and monasteries welcomed pilgrims. When the Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity, these institutions were publicly funded. Hospitality as care for the stranger and the needy was transformed into public service.[179] As more and more of these institutions were founded, Augustine, John Chrysostom and other church fathers reminded Christians that face-to-face hospitality was a personal duty for each Christian: they were not to leave the demands of hospitality to public institutions.[180] With the Roman Empire crumbling around him, Augustine reminded Christians: "Be meek, sympathize with the suffering, bear the weak; and on this

---

[176] Pohl, 61.

[177] Pohl, 42.

[178] Pohl, 16; see also 18-19.

[179] Pohl, 43.

[180] Pohl, 45.

occasion of the concourse of so many strangers, and needy, and suffering people, let your hospitality and your good works abound."[181]

Pohl argues that the virtue of hospitality as lived by Paul and the early Church and as witnessed by the Old and New Testaments has been lost in the modern world. She contends that by the Middle Ages, hospitality to strangers was relegated to institutions or government bureaucracies and "hospitality" as a practice was restricted to the care or entertainment of family, friends and business associates.[182] Because the central site of hospitality for the needy had moved from smaller worshipping communities and homes to larger institutions, "the socially transformative potential of hospitality was lost."[183] By the 18th century, hospitality "disappeared as a significant moral practice"[184] and "the term 'hospitality' had been emptied of its central moral meaning and left only with its late-medieval trappings of luxury and indulgence."[185] Henri Nouwen joins Pohl in mourning the loss of this biblical virtue:

> At first the word "hospitality" might evoke the image of soft sweet kindness, tea parties, bland conversations and a general atmosphere of coziness. Probably this has its good reasons since in our culture the concept of hospitality has lost much of its power and is often used in circles where we are more prone to expect a watered down piety than a serious search for an authentic Christian spirituality. But still, if there is any concept worth restoring to its original depth and evocative potential, it

---

[181] Pohl, 171-72. See also Oden, 45, quoting from Augustine's Sermon 61: "Acknowledge the duty of hospitality, for by this some have attained unto God."

[182] Pohl, 6-7.

[183] Pohl, 51.

[184] Pohl, 36.

[185] Pohl, 38. In the 16th century, John Calvin lamented the demise of biblical hospitality: "This office of humanity has . . . nearly ceased to be properly observed among men; for the ancient hospitality celebrated in histories, is unknown to us, and inns now supply the place of accommodations for strangers" (36). In the 18th century, Samuel Johnson attributed this loss to the growth of the commercial economy. People no longer had the time to welcome strangers, and caring for strangers could not help the host gain influence with people who mattered (37-38).

> is the concept of hospitality. It is one of the richest biblical terms that can deepen and broaden our insight in our relationships to our fellow human beings.[186]

In recent years, Nouwen, Pohl and other Christian ethicists, spiritual writers, and biblical scholars have urged a recovery of hospitality to strangers as an essential Christian virtue and practice. The Jesuit Refugee Service is a vehicle to help this recovery along. To appreciate how JRS does this, we turn now to consider how Jesuits understand hospitality in light of their own charism and tradition.

Jesuit Hospitality

In the recent 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, Jesuits invoked the virtue of hospitality as animating their mission in the world today:

> While the term was rarely used, GC 34 was touching upon the Christian virtue of hospitality, of making the Society a symbol of welcome – to the poor, to lay people, to those searching for meaning, to those who want to talk seriously about religious issues (*GC* 34, 11).

Reflecting on GC 34's invocation of hospitality as a virtue, James Keenan, S.J. contends that the Jesuit brand of hospitality is distinctive in the Church. Traditionally, monastic or more particularly Benedictine hospitality meant to welcome the stranger into the house, giving him or her food and the best room.[187] This notion of hospitality is congruent with the monk's life of stability and regularity. Jesuits, however, have a different way of life: "Jesuit identity is not shaped by where we live but rather by what we do."[188] With their distinctive identity, Jesuits exercise hospitality in a particular way.

---

[186] Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 46-47.

[187] For excerpts of Benedict's Rule, see Oden, 77, 185, 208, 255, 273.

[188] Keenan, "Jesuit Hospitality," 235.

Jesuits define themselves by their ministries.[189] Unlike the monk's life of stability, the Jesuit's vocation, according to the *Constitutions* "is to travel through the world and to live in any part of it whatsoever where there is hope of greater service to God and of help of souls" (*ConsCN* 304; see also 308). In the Spiritual Exercises, we experience ourselves as journeyers, particularly on the road with Jesus. In the Contemplation on the Incarnation, our home is the world as we take in the universal gaze of the Trinity (*SpEx* 102). In the Contemplation on the Nativity, we imagine ourselves as a servant journeying with the Holy Family "serving them in their needs" (114). In the Meditation on the Two Standards, Christ's disciples are sent "throughout the whole world" to spread the gospel (145).[190] The life of a Jesuit is thus characterized by mobility. He lives as one sent on mission to help those in need. Jerome Nadal, Ignatius' faithful interpreter, described Jesuits' home as the road or the journey. According to Nadal, "There are missions, which are for the whole world, which is our house. Wherever there is need or greater utility for our ministries, there is our house."[191]

Given the self-described identity of Jesuits as men on the move, Keenan raises the question: how can such an "apostolic vagabond" exercise hospitality?[192] While traditional hospitality is exercised in its receiving, Jesuit hospitality is "distinctive in that it is practiced in its

---

[189] This is the central premise of John O'Malley's *The First Jesuits* (see e.g., 18). As we read in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the "Formula of the Institute" details an expansive list of ministries devoted to both spiritual and corporal works of mercy ("Formula," 3). Similarly, the *Constitutions* describe a diverse array of apostolic works (*ConsCN*, 400-414, 636-650).

[190] These connections between the Exercises and the Jesuit mission are taken from Keenan, "Jesuit Hospitality," 237-39.

[191] Keenan, "Jesuit Hospitality," 236-37. Keenan relies on John O'Malley's translation of Nadal in John W. O'Malley, "The Fourth Vow in Its Ignatian Context: A Historical Study," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 15, no. 1 (1983), and "To Travel to Any Part of the World: Jerónimo Nadal and the Jesuit Vocation," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 16, no. 2 (1984).

[192] Keenan, "Jesuit Hospitality," 236.

sending. . . . It is practiced by pilgrims rather than by patrons."[193] Jesuits practice hospitality more like the itinerant Paul than the stable Christian assemblies who welcomed him. Jesuits are more like the Good Samaritan journeying along the road, tending to those who suffer, than the consummate host Abraham who welcomed angelic messengers into his home.[194] A Jesuit model for hospitality is not a monastery but a refugee camp:

> For we live where our ministry is and inasmuch as we go out to the whole world we are called especially to those who find no dwelling place in this world. . . .Where anybody in need is, there is our mission and our hospitality. Our hospitality is not then a domestic one, but a mobile one, mobile not because our communities are mobile, but because those whom we serve are found throughout the whole earth.[195]

As GC 34 envisioned, JRS is a "symbol of welcome" (11) to refugees around the world. For JRS workers, refugees are initially strangers but they often become companions along the road of their now shared exile. Over the last twenty-five years, as the number of forcibly displaced persons has risen, JRS has become more institutionalized to meet a growing, more widespread crisis. The operations of JRS have become more efficient, programmatic, and professional. Advocacy in the halls of power has become more a part of the JRS mission. Educational institutions are cooperating more and more with JRS in understanding the root causes of forced migration and exploring long-term solutions.

With this institutionalization, however, comes a certain risk: that JRS will begin to lose its inherent mobility, availability, and adaptability. We have seen how in the early church, as hospitality became more institutionalized, Augustine, Chrysostom and others cautioned that Christians could not abdicate their personal duty to offer face-to-face hospitality to strangers. As if responding to this age-old caution, JRS has placed a corrective to becoming too

---

[193] Keenan, "Jesuit Hospitality," 240.

[194] Keenan, "Jesuit Hospitality," 240-41.

[195] Keenan, "Jesuit Hospitality, 240.

institutionalized in its mission statement, which pledges to "accompany, serve and plead the cause" of forcibly displaced persons.[196] The statement gives priority to accompaniment because only by "being with" refugees can JRS most effectively serve their material and spiritual needs and most zealously advocate their cause. JRS personnel are thus found on the frontlines, exercising hospitality in war-torn cities, ravaged country-sides, desolate detention centers, and overcrowded camps. JRS workers stay with the refugee, practicing hospitality on the road which is their home.

Conclusion

The virtue of hospitality is human attentiveness to the physical and spiritual needs of others, especially strangers. As a virtue, hospitality is a fundamental orientation in a person, a moral stance that is cultivated over a lifetime.[197] JRS is a school of many virtues, including hospitality. In this chapter, we have explored how the models of faith in the Jewish and Christian scriptures can inspire the hospitality of JRS. By extending welcome to others, no matter where they are, JRS workers respond concretely to God's unfailing hospitality to us. Like the Good Samaritan, hospitable persons recognize the fundamental worth of every person, realize what the other lacks, and respond with compassion.[198] As much as in biblical times, the shared table today is a compelling sign of the reign of God and an impetus for greater union across ethnic and religious boundaries.

We have also considered how hospitality is not just about providing a service but about forging a mutual relationship with friend and stranger alike. The roles of host and guest are often

---

[196] This language is taken from mission statements in various official publications of JRS, including annual reports. As we learned earlier, the three-fold mission of JRS – to accompany, serve and advocate -- was approved by the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus in 1995. See note 46 and accompanying text.

[197] Pohl, 176.

[198] Keenan, *Virtues*, 110-11.

blurred. Both have something to offer, and both have something to risk, for "faithful hospitality usually involves laying our lives down in little pieces, in small acts of sacrificial love and service."[199] In the encounter with the stranger, there is a "de-centering of perspective": one's view of the world is questioned and one's sense of what it means to be "at home" is shaken.[200] In their co-laboring, the refugee and JRS worker recognize that even away from home, they can feel at home in the company of another who shares their life and who is willing to lay down their life in little pieces in small acts of love.

---

[199] Pohl, 34.

[200] Oden, 15.

Conclusion

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord,
plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.
Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you....
I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations
and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord,
and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile"
(Jer 29:11-12, 14).

While JRS remains faithful to its original mission to accompany, serve, and advocate for the refugee, the context in which it lives out that mission today is changing. Marking the 25th anniversary of JRS, Fr. Kolvenbach explained: "Forced migration is taking place in a rapidly changing world where the old certainties are often out of date. Wars and conflicts are ending while others are erupting. The important geopolitical issues and the areas of the world most significantly affected are not those of yesterday."[201]

Lluís Magriñà, International Director of JRS, details several of those changes. The number of persons displaced within their own countries has surpassed the number of persons seeking refuge in other nations. While continuing to serve in camps, JRS is focusing more resources to care for internally displaced persons who end up in urban centers where they are "often more isolated, anonymous and difficult to trace" (*WnBord* 286). Working with internally displaced persons requires JRS to negotiate "volatile security situations" and complicated, fluid social and political conditions (*WnBord* 286). Adding to the challenges of JRS today, the detention of migrants is also on the rise. Finally, as the number of people directly or indirectly working with JRS grows to meet evolving needs, a concerted effort must be made to accompany

---

[201] Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "Letter to the Whole Society on the 25th Anniversary of the Jesuit Refugee Service," 14 November 2005 (reprinted in Kevin O'Brien, "Consolation in Action: The Jesuit Refugee Service and the Ministry of Accompaniment," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 37, vol. 4 [2005], 49).

the accompaniers, that is, to care for JRS workers in the field, offering them both professional development and pastoral care.[202]

Kolvenbach urges JRS today to be flexible and available as they discern whether to embrace new missions or leave places where the work can be handed over to the local diocese, Jesuit province, or another NGO. In planning for the future, JRS asks the same questions Ignatius advised when considering ministries in the early Society: *Where is the greater need? How can JRS meet the need most effectively? Where and how can JRS have the most impact on the lives of forcibly displaced people?* As JRS staff discern these priorities and devise prudent "exit strategies," they necessarily address the tension that comes with being a larger, more institutionalized apostolate. While structures are necessary to their mission, JRS personnel must remain in direct contact with those they serve.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which hit the Gulf Coast of the United States in 2005, we were given an unexpected peek into what JRS teams face every day. With thousands of people driven from their homes by storms and floods, we confronted an unsettling reality all too familiar to people in lesser developed nations. As reporters described hurricane and flood victims as refugees, we in the United States were suddenly not so different from those displaced by the tsunami a year before. Ill-prepared to deal with the long-term dislocation of its own citizens, government agencies were urged to turn for help to relief organizations expert in dealing with resettlement of refugees.[203] As New Orleans drained and hurricane season passed, cities and states prepared themselves for the long-haul of re-developing lands laid waste by Katrina.

---

[202] Interview with Lluís Magriñà, 12 November 2005.

[203] James Dao, "No Fixed Address," *New York Times*, 11 September 2005, sect. 4: 1. These agencies have resettled over two million refugees in this country since 1975.

Perhaps after Katrina – after seeing the tragedy of dislocation played out on every cable channel and after hearing horrifying tales of lives on the run – we understand better why JRS does what it does. Perhaps one day, JRS will cease its work of accompaniment, service, and advocacy. This will be good news because JRS began and still exists to respond to the agony of an ever-growing number of refugees. Andrew Hamilton, S.J., an Australian theologian and long-time collaborator with JRS in Asia, observed: "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" (*EvChal* 57). The story continues to unfold in the resilient lives of refugees and the faithful accompaniment of JRS personnel.

For now, the story of JRS lacks an ending. But we know its beginnings in the vision of Arrupe, in the prophetic calls of Vatican II and GC 32, and in the early Society's commitment to helping souls and offering ministries of consolation. In these beginnings, people today find inspiration to rally to the defense of forcibly displaced persons. In these beginnings, we find the seeds of hope that one day may lead to a happy ending for the refugee and a quiet end to the work of the Jesuit Refugee Service.

God of compassion, in your Son you shared the life of all who are excluded.
May we search for you in the places and among the people of your choice.
May we follow the compassionate Jesus.
May we walk with those driven from their own homes.
Place our hands, our hearts, and our minds at their service.
Lead us on your way together, until at last we all find our home in you. Amen.

Pedro Arrupe, S.J.
(*GodEx* 138)

Appendix A: How You Can Become Part of the JRS Story

Over the last twenty-five years, many Jesuits, religious, and lay persons in the United States have played significant roles in the JRS story, offering months or years of service to this international apostolate which Arrupe held so dear. This opportunity still exists for people called to work directly with the poor and marginalized or advocate their cause. Consult the JRS international website (www.jrs.net) or the JRS/USA site (www.jrsusa.org) for more information about the many programs and needs of JRS.

Jesuits and their colleagues can contribute to the vital mission of JRS without becoming formally a part of its structure. First, we remember Arrupe's "swan song" – his message to all of us just before he suffered his stroke. "Pray. Pray much," he said. "Problems such as these are not solved by human efforts." We can only cope with the refugee crisis if we beg for the assistance of the Holy Spirit. One way of keeping the plight of the refugee close to us is to make use of the special readings and prayers for refugees and exiles provided in the *Lectionary* (nos. 866-870) and *Sacramentary* (pp. 913-914). To be a "companion" is, at least etymologically, to "break bread" with one another. In the Eucharistic meal, we accompany the refugee in our prayer.

We can also support the work of JRS by learning and teaching about migration issues. Sometimes, we need only look as far as those we work, study, and pray with: friends and colleagues who have experienced the tragedy of displacement in their own lives or families. They need to tell the story of their families and countries, and we who have lived lives unscarred by displacement need to learn from them.

Another indispensable source of information is the national and international news media (even though news accounts of refugees are often buried on page 9 or at the end of a telecast). On the JRS internet site, you can access *Servir*, the JRS magazine published three times a year,

and sign up for *Dispatches*, a twice monthly e-mail news bulletin. Another valuable internet source is the website for a recently announced campaign by the United States Catholic Bishops: *Justice for Immigrants: A Journey of Hope* (www.justiceforimmigrants.org). The aim of the campaign is to mobilize Catholic institutions and persons of good faith to support comprehensive immigration reform. The website is a treasure trove of documents and information about migration issues, including Catholic social teaching and pending legislation. Most practically, the campaign has compiled "resource kits" for use by liturgists, homilists, parish leaders, and educators.

Educators can make a significant contribution to the labor of JRS. In a talk at Santa Clara University in 2000, Fr. Kolvenbach declared that Jesuit universities must be actively engaged in forming persons in solidarity with the real world.[204] This means that our students must "let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering, and engage it constructively."[205] Part of this painful reality is the plight of refugees and displaced persons, which John Paul II graphically described as "the festering of a wound which typifies and reveals the imbalances and conflicts of the modern world."[206] Teachers can put students in contact with refugees and migrants through service-learning programs and immersion experiences and then help them reflect on these experiences.[207] They can also bring this reality into the classroom by assigning reading that gives voice to refugees, by

---

[204] Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 33, no. 1 (2001): 24.

[205] Kolvenbach, 24.

[206] John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 24, in David O'Brien and Thomas Shannon, eds., *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 409.

[207] For an engaging account of one such immersion program on the Mexican border, see Kurt Denk, ed., *Many Hands, One Dream: the Story of Project Mexico* (Baltimore, MD: Resonant Publishing, 2004).

inviting in guest speakers, by incorporating case studies dealing with migration issues, and by using multimedia to introduce students to life on the border or in refugee camps.

Finally, JRS can always use our financial support. Religious communities, families, businesses and schools may consider fundraising or tithing part of their income. This generosity becomes an act of solidarity especially when coupled with prayer for JRS and refugees and education about the challenges they face. As Father Kolvenbach wrote in his letter commemorating the 25th anniversary of JRS, "The assistance to JRS should not exclude financial considerations. JRS deals with the most unpredictable of works and it is unfortunate if its financial situation is also precarious."[208]

---

[208] O'Brien, 50.

Appendix B: The Story of JRS in Summary

A JRS Chronology	
Nov 1979	Fr Pedro Arrupe SJ sends a letter to Jesuit Major Superiors seeking support to provide relief to the Indochinese *boat people*. Fr Arrupe was overwhelmed by the immediate offers of help.
1980	An estimate six million refugees world-wide and an estimated four to five million displaced
Sept 1980	Fr Arrupe calls a Consultation in the Jesuit Curia to consider the possible response of the Society of Jesus. Decision to set up a service to co-ordinate Jesuit refugee work. This was to be called the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS).
Nov 1980	14 November: The birth of JRS is announced. Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ takes responsibility for JRS, which forms part of the Social Secretariat of the Society.
Early 1980's	The work of Jesuits in many countries is pulled under the umbrella of JRS. The countries where work with refugees was active at this time included: Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Philippines, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Sudan, El Salvador
1980	Centro Astralli is founded in Rome to provide food and shelter for Eritrean and Somali refugees. It is set up in the basement of the same building where St Ignatius and his companions had helped the victims of the 1538 famine. This is the longest running JRS project.
1980	The war in Guatemala starts displacing the population towards Mexico (through 1982, one million people are displaced).
Aug 1981	Last talk of Fr Arrupe to JRS workers in Bangkok. He suffered a cerebral stroke on the flight back to Rome.
1981	Angelo D'Agostino SJ is appointed to take responsibility for refugee concerns in Africa.
1982	Work in Ethiopia begins with the displaced and people affected by the Ethiopia-Somalia war and later by the Wallega famine.
1987	Mark Raper SJ is appointed to co-ordinate JRS in Asia Pacific.
1983	Civil war breaks out in Sudan for the second time since independence (1956).
1983	Forced displacement in Sri Lanka due to violent reactions by the ethnic Singalese to armed campaigns by the Jaffna Tamils.
1983	*Diakonia*, the newsletter of JRS Asia Pacific, appears. It publicised refugee issues and the work of JRS with them for Jesuit publics.
1983	Frank Moan SJ is appointed as refugee co-ordinator for the American Jesuit Assistancy.
1984	JRS separated from the Social Secretariat. Dieter Scholz SJ became its first director and Mike Schultheis SJ first associate director.
1983	JRS starts a program of accompaniment for refugees of El Salvador and Guatemala.
1985	First meeting of Regional Directors takes place in Thailand. The Bangkok regional office is set up. Mercy Sisters set up Mercy Refugee Service, an important event for JRS recruitment policies.
1986	JRS starts working in Khartoum, Sudan, with the internally displaced people.
1987	Projects established in Malawi to support the many refugees fleeing Mozambique and Angola.
1987	Repatriation to El Salvador starts (through mid 1991)
1988	Mike Schultheis SJ appointed JRS Director for Africa. The war in Mozambique creates huge refugee flows towards Malawi.
1989	An estimated 15 million refugees, and up to 30 million internally displaced people world-wide.
1989	Establishment of the Resource Base for Refugee Education in Nairobi.
1989	Appointment of Tom Steinbugler SJ as Regional Director of JRS Asia Pacific. The Comprehensive Plan of Action for the resettlement of Vietnamese Asylum Seekers (CPA) is signed by many Western and Asian countries and UNHCR. JRS starts a legal project to assist *boat people* with their resettlement claims in Hong Kong and the Philippines.
May 1990	Mark Raper SJ is appointed International Director.
1990	War in Liberia starts, displacing over a million people within and some 700,000 as refugees outside the country. War in Liberia starts, displacing over a million people within and some 700,000 as refugees outside the country.
1990	First visit of a JRS team to Cambodia. Cross border operation and a JRS presence in Cambodia start.
1991	Disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Massive exodus, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
1991	JRS initiates the MOLU education project (Mozambican Open Learning Unit) in Malawi.

	The split in the Southern Sudanese rebel movement, the SPLA, causes flight into Northern Kenya. Kakuma camp is formed and JRS starts working there. Siad Barre regime collapses in Somalia. Refugees flee to Kenya and Ethiopia.
1991	JRS officially starts working in Mexico to assist Guatemalan refugees in Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo.
1992	Signing of peace accords in El Salvador in January. The Aristide coup d’etat in Haiti raises the number of Haitian refugees to Dominican Republic. JRS starts working in Dominican Republic.
1992	JRS Europe formed by bringing together the work with refugees of the Jesuits across Europe.
1992	Mike Schultheis SJ moves out to take up a particular concern for the Mozambicans based in Malawi. Michael Evans SJ is appointed Regional Director for East Africa.
1992	Peace accord in Mozambique. JRS starts repatriation programs and reintegration work in Mozambique. JRS is set up in Liberia under the direction of Myriam O’Brien SSL, with direct coordination from the international office. Huge refugee flows from Sudan into North Uganda.
1993	JRS is established in Croatia, Bosnia, Nepal, Liberia, Uganda, Kenya, Mozambique, Peru, Zambia and Somalia.
1993	JRS withdraws from some programs in Malawi, Sudan, Thailand, El Salvador. War in Burundi starts after the assassination of Melchior Ndadaye, producing huge refugee flows.
1993	Vincent Mooken SJ is appointed first Regional Director of South Asia (spilt from JRS Asia Pacific)
1993	Cambodian refugees start returning home.
1994	JRS joined other international agencies to work with the survivors of the massacre in Rwanda, with projects in Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire (DR Congo). The JRS Grand Lacs region is set up with Mateo Aguirre SJ as Regional Director.
1994	JRS joins the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.
1994	Armed conflict starts in Chiapas, Mexico. Legal incorporation of the *Servicio Jesuita para el Desarrollo* (former JRS) in El Salvador. Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ returns to El Salvador replacing Peter O’ Driscoll. Rob McChesney SJ is appointed Director of JRS USA. JRS is set up in Colombia.
1994	JRS Europe starts under Eddy Jadot’s direction. The regional office is set up in Brussels and JRS expands to other European countries. Regional meetings start.
1994	Tom Steinbugler SJ hands over to Quentin Dignam as Regional Director in JRS Asia Pacific. Down scaling of JRS programs with Indochinese and withdrawal of JRS as these camps are closed.
1995	South Africa Regional Office established with Peter Balleis SJ as Regional Director. Withdrawal from Mozambique. Set up of Radio Kwizera in Tanzania.
1995	Dayton peace agreement in December 1995. Repatriation to Bosnia starts.
1995	Barbara Harrell-Bond establishes with JRS and the Jesuit Private Hall at Oxford, Campion Hall, the Pedro Arrupe Tutorship. Rick Ryscavage is appointed as first Tutor, until 1997. First JRS in-service training seminar in Kigali.
1995	*Jesuit Service Cambodia* starts development work with Cambodian returnees, while continuing to assist refugees. JRS and Caritas set up an education program for the Bhutanese refugees in Eastern Nepal. Bombing and exodus from Jaffna, Sri Lanka.
1995	Carlos Esteban Mejía appointed coordinator for Latin America region.
1996	JRS establishes a permanent presence in Geneva with the appointment of Elisabeth Janz to represent JRS at the UN and to ensure that JRS has a voice in key committees and NGO networks.
1996	A Communications Audit takes place, an evaluation of JRS communications capabilities around the world.
1996	Forced repatriation of Rwandans from DR Congo and Tanzania.
1996	Set up of JRS Angola. The campaign to ban landmines in collaboration with JRS Cambodia becomes part of JRS mission in Angola.
1996	JRS starts working in Tamilnadu, India. Richie Fernando SJ is killed in Banteay Prieb, Cambodia
1997	An agreement is signed finalising the first stage of the return process for Guatemalan refugees in Mexico. JRS Mexico ends its work with Guatemalan refugees but continues to assist displaced from Chiapas. JRS USA starts the Detention Centre Project. Carlos Esteban Mejía is replaced by Raul Gonzalez SJ as coordinator for Latin America.

1997	Tun Chunnareth, a JRS Cambodia worker and a landmine survivor receives the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. Steve Curtin SJ takes over from Quentin Dignam as Regional Director in JRS Asia Pacific.
1997	Stephen Power SJ replaces Joseph Payeur SJ -who had replaced Mike Evans in 1996- as Regional Director in East Africa. JRS Southern Africa begins the work with urban refugees in Zambia and South Africa. JRS Grands Lacs sets up its office in Bujumbura. Work starts in Rwanda with Congolese refugees.
1997	JRS starts to work with Burmese refugees in the Thai-Burma border camps. Closure of Sie Khieu, the last camp for Indochinese in Thailand.
1997	Maryanne Loughry RSM replaces Rick Ryscavage SJ as the Pedro Arrupe Tutor in Oxford, until 2004.
1998	Renewed wars in Angola and the *African war* in DR Congo. JRS Southern Africa grows in response given the huge refugee and IDP flows in Zambia and Angola. Outburst of war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. First meeting of pastoral workers in Harare.
1998	JRS joins with a group of five other leading NGOs to form the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, campaigning to draw attention to the estimated 300,000 child soldiers worldwide.
1999	JRS begins the Africa Education Project to enhance the quality of education.
1999	Christine Bloch replaces Elisabeth Janz as JRS Representative in Geneva.
1999	JRS establishes a presence in East Timor and West Timor working to support refugees and facilitate their return. Karl Albrecht SJ and Tarcisius Dewanto SJ are killed in September.
1999	War and displacement in Angola. New projects in Namibia and Zambia start.
1999	JRS is set up in Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. Stjepan Kusan SJ is appointed Regional Director.
1999	End of the Guatemalan refugee repatriation operation in June.
April 2000	A symposium on Africa is organised by JRS at Deusto University, Bilbao.
2000	An estimated 22 million refugees and 30 million internally displaced people worldwide.
Oct 2000	Lluis Magrinya SJ replaces Mark Raper SJ as International Director.
2000	On 3rd October, Br. Antoine Bargiggia, a JRS worker, is killed in Burundi. JRS faces out from Congo Brazzaville as reintegration of refugees grows.
2000	Andre Sugijopranoto SJ appointed Regional Director in Asia Pacific. JRS is set up in Ambon, Indonesia, and later in other islands such as Aceh and Medan, Sumatra.
2000	Chepe Nuñez SJ is appointed regional director in JRS Latin America and the Caribbean. Due to increased violence in Colombia, JRS expands its work within Colombia and to Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela, and later on to Costa Rica and Brazil.
2001	An estimated 21 million refugees and 25 internally displaced people worldwide. UNHCR's Global Consultations on International Protection. First UNHCR's Consultations with refugee women, Geneva.
Nov 2001	Mateo Aguirre SJ is replaced by Joaquin Ciervide SJ as Regional Director in the Great Lakes. Mateo re-launches JRS activities in West Africa and sets up a JRS region there with the establishment of a project in Guinea and later on in Liberia and Ivory Coast.
2001	John Guiney SJ replaces Stephen Power SJ as JRS East Africa Regional Director.
2002	JRS hands over its activities in East Timor to the Jesuits and local church groups.
2002	A peace agreement is signed in Angola. Repatriation and reintegration of Angolan refugees and IDPs start.
July 2002	JRS gets a consultative status at ECOSOC
August 2003	JRS is officially registered at the Vatican State as a foundation and recognised by the Italian State.
2003	International Meeting of all Africa Country Directors in Nairobi. Assassination of the Apostolic Nuncio in Bujumbura.
2003	PS Amalraj SJ replaces C. Amal SJ as Regional Director in South Asia. Ken Gavin SJ is appointed JRS USA Country Director.
December 2003	JRS gets an observer status at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).
2004	Peace agreement in Sudan. Crisis in Darfur and set up of JRS in Chad.
2004	Two million displaced by the tsunami in December. JRS increases its response in Sri Lanka and Indonesia.
2005	Joanne Whitaker RSM replaces Joe Hampson SJ as Regional Director in Southern Africa. Andre

	Sugijopranoto SJ is replaced by Bernard Arputhasamy SJ as Regional Director in Asia Pacific. Alfredo Infante SJ replaces Chepe Nuñez SJ as Regional Director in Latin America.
August 2005	Peace agreement in Burundi.
September 2005	First international meeting of Regional and Country Directors of Africa and Asia in Nairobi.

This summary is reprinted from Jesuit Refugee Service, *Wound of the Border: 25 Years with the Refugees* (Rome, 2005), 289-294, used with permission.

Sources

I. Primary Sources: Official Documents

Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations of the Society of Jesus. St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977.

Documents of the 33rd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus. St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1984.

Documents of the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus. St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995.

Flannery, Austin, ed. *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents.* Vol. 1. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1992.

Ganss, George, ed. and trans. *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms.* St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996.

Jesuit Refugee Service. Annual Reports (2003 & 2004).

____________. *Everybody's Challenge: Essential Documents of Jesuit Refugee Service, 1980-2000* (Rome, 2000).

____________. *God in Exile: Towards a Shared Spirituality with Refugees* (Rome, 2005).

____________. *Horizons of Learning: 25 Years of JRS Education* (Rome, 2005).

____________. *War Has Changed Our Life, Not Our Spirit: Experiences of Forcibly Displaced Women* (Rome, 2001).

____________. *The Wound of the Border: 25 Years with the Refugees* (Rome, 2005).

O'Brien, David and Thomas Shannon, eds. *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992.

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005.

Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. *Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity* (1992), accessed at www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_migrants_doc_19920625_refugees_en.html

Society of Jesus. *Acta Romana Societatis Iesu.* Vols. 18 & 20 (Rome, 1981 & 1991).

II. Secondary Sources

a. Books

Arrupe, Pedro. "Rooted and Grounded in Love." In *The Spiritual Legacy of Pedro Arrupe, S.J.* New York: New York Province of the Society of Jesus, 1985.

Bangert, William V. *A History of the Society of Jesus.* St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1972.

Baum, Gregory and Robert Ellsberg, eds. *The Logic of Solidarity: Commentaries on Pope John Paul II's Encyclical "On Social Concern."* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989.

Bishop, George. *Pedro Arrupe, S.J.* Gujarat, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2000.

Brackley, Dean. *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times.* New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2004.

Burke, Kevin. *Pedro Arrupe: Essential Writings.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004.

Collins, Raymond F. *First Corinthians.* Sacra Pagina. Vol. 7. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999.

Curran, Charles E. *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis.* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002.

de Aldama, Antonio M. *An Introductory Commentary on the Constitutions.* Translated by Aloysius Owen. St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1989.

____________. *The Formula of the Institute: Notes for a Commentary.* Translated by Ignacio Echániz. St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1990.

de Dalmasas, Candido. *Ignatius of Loyola: Founder of the Jesuits.* Translated by Jerome Aixalá. St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985.

Denk, Kurt, ed. *Many Hands, One Dream: the Story of Project Mexico.* Baltimore: Resonant Publishing, 2004.

Ganss, George, ed. and trans. *Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius.* Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1992.

Harrington, Daniel J. *The Church According to the New Testament.* Chicago: Sheed & Ward, 2001.

____________. *The Gospel of Matthew.* Sacra Pagina. Vol. 1. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Gospel of Luke.* Sacra Pagina. Vol. 3. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991.

Keenan, James F. "Jesuit Hospitality?" In *Promise Renewed: Jesuit Higher Education for a New Millennium,* ed. Martin Tripole. Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999.

____________. *Moral Wisdom: Lessons and Texts from the Catholic Tradition.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.

____________. *Virtues for Ordinary Christians.* Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1996.

____________. *The Works of Mercy: The Heart of Catholicism.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.

Koenig, John. *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.

Martin, James. *This Our Exile: A Spiritual Journey with the Refugees of East Africa.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999.

Modras, Ronald. *Ignatian Humanism.* Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004.

Molina, Ana Amalia. *The Power of Love: My Experience in a U.S. Immigration Jail.* Washington, D.C.: Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean [EPICA], 2003.

Mott, Stephen. *Biblical Ethics and Social Change.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Nouwen, Henri. *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975.

Oden, Amy G. *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.

O'Malley, John. *The First Jesuits.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Pohl, Christine D. *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

Richard, Lucien. *Living the Hospitality of God.* New York: Paulist Press, 2000.

Sobrino, Jon. *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994.

____________. *Where is God? Earthquake, Terrorism, Barbarity, and Hope.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004.

Tylenda, Joseph, ed. and trans. *A Pilgrim's Journey: the Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola.* Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991.

b. Articles

Kolvenbach, Peter-Hans. "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education." *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 33, vol. 1 (2001): 13-29.

Lynch, Robert N. "After the Tsunami, Peace." *America*, 27 February 2006, 15-16

O'Brien, Kevin. "Consolation in Action: The Jesuit Refugee Service and the Ministry of Accompaniment." *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 37, vol. 4 (2005): 1-51.

Raper, Mark. "Remembering Rwanda, 1994 – 2004." *America*, 19 April 2004, 14-17.

Samway, Patrick. "Living on the Edge." *America*, 15 November 2004, 8-9.

Troha, Becky. "Sanctuary." *Company*, Spring 2005, 17-23.

III. Personal Interviews

Brackley, Dean, Professor of Theology and Ethics, Universidad Centroamericana (UCA), San Salvador, 28 September 2005, by email.

Gavin, Ken, National Director of JRS/USA (2004 – present), 24 March 2005, by phone; 7 June 2005, in Washington, DC; 24 October 2005, by email.

Magriñà, Lluís, International Director of JRS (2000-present), 12 November 2005, by email.

McChesney, Robert, National Director of JRS/USA (1991-97), 22 April 2005, in Baltimore, MD.

O'Driscoll, Peter, JRS in El Salvador (1987 – 1994), 6 October 2005, by phone.

O'Keefe, Vincent, General Assistant of the Society of Jesus (1965-83), 16 April 2005, in New York City.

Raper, Mark, International Director of JRS (1990-2000), 13 April 2005, in Cambridge, MA; 29 September 2005, by email; 5 October 2005, by email; 25 October 2005, by email.