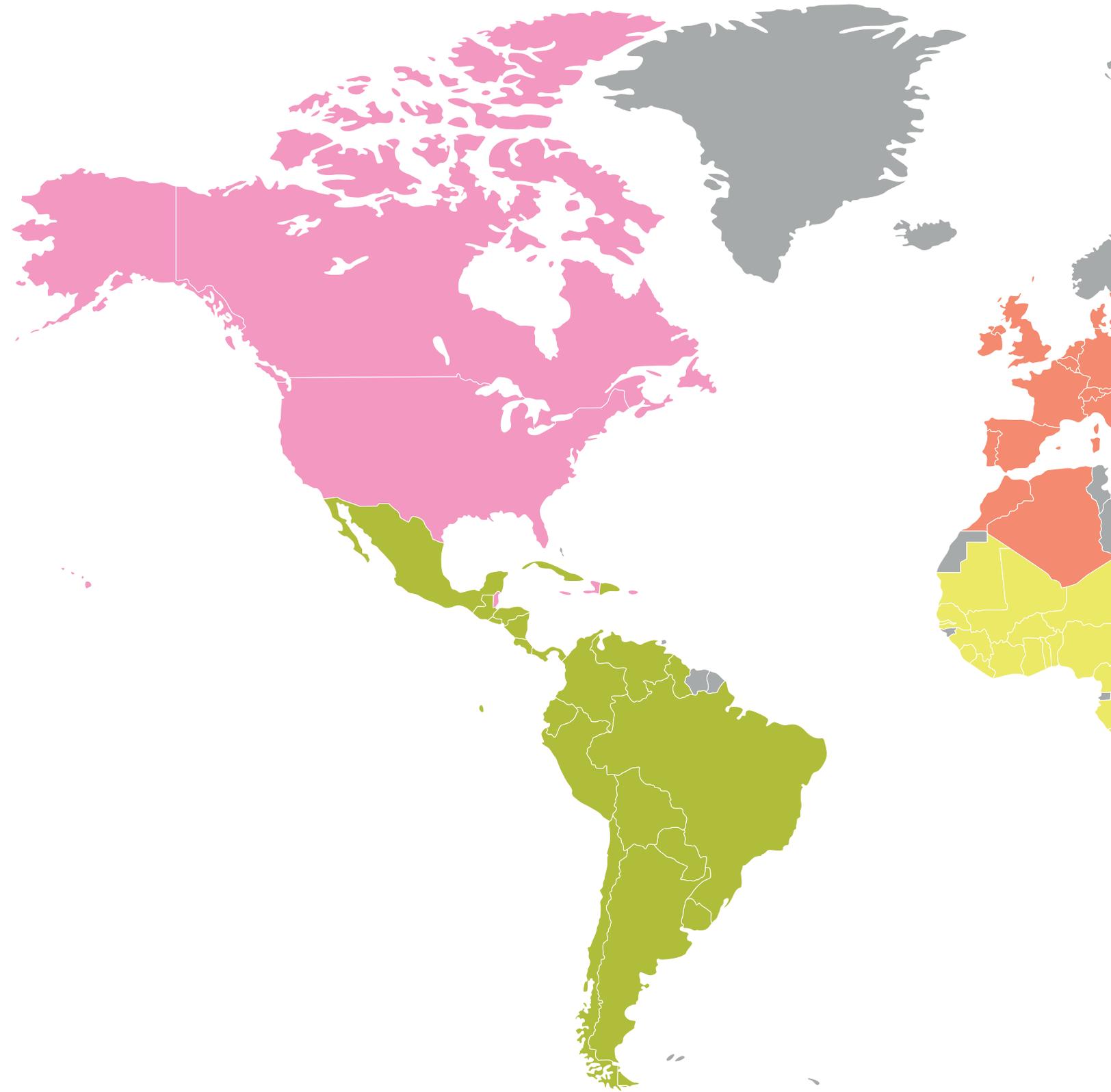


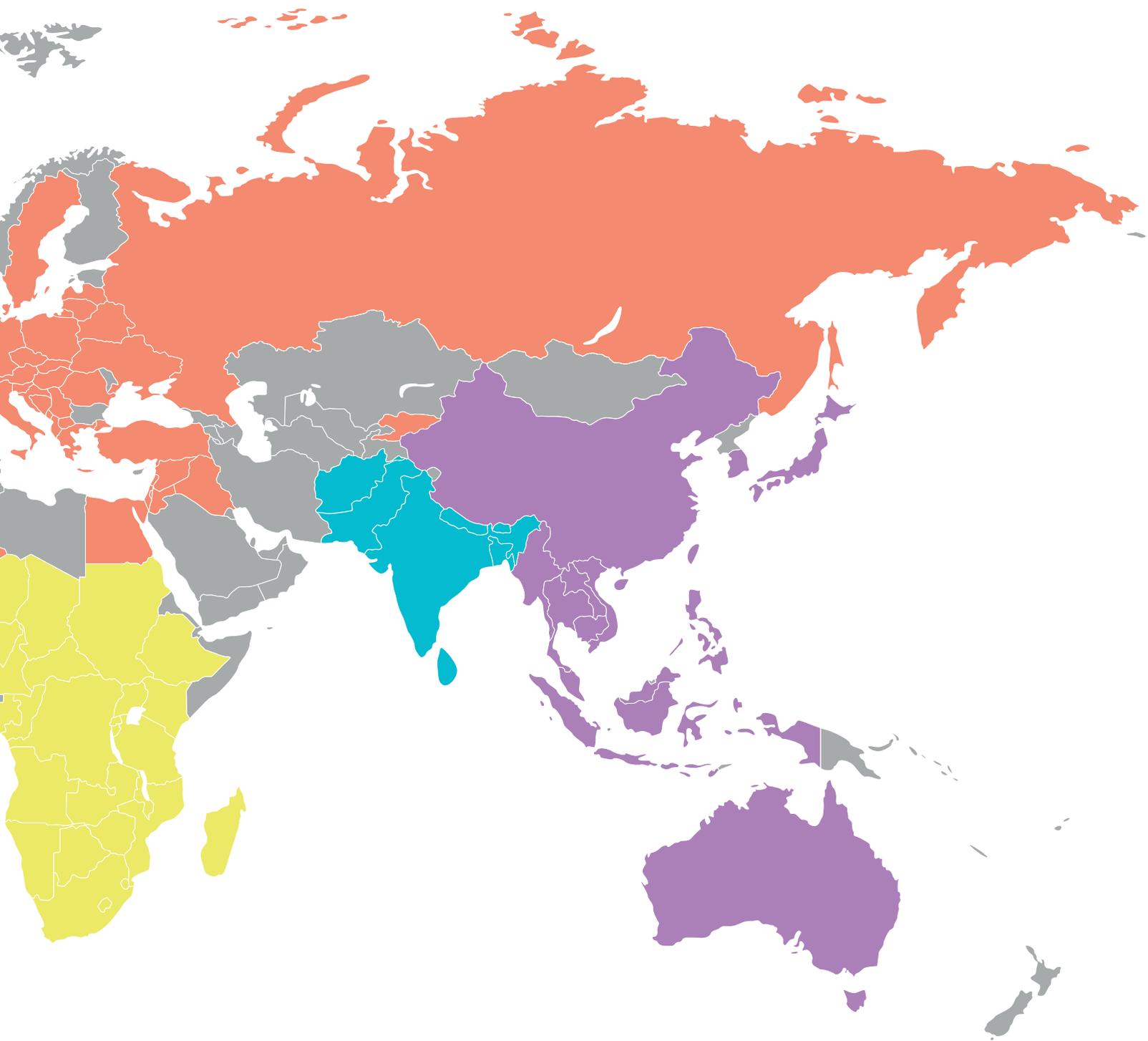
# Jesuits

THE SOCIETY OF JESUS IN THE WORLD



2022





- Jesuit Conference of South Asia
- Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific
- Jesuit Conference of European Provincials
- Conference of Provincials of Latin America and the Caribbean
- Jesuit Conference of Canada and the U.S.A.
- Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar



## Cover

The oratory of the International Spirituality Centre of Manresa (Cova de Sant Ignasi - Grotto of Saint Ignatius), with a view of the mountains of Montserrat. Two important places in the history of the conversion of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

**Photo:** José de Pablo, SJ

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## Back Cover

*The conversion of Ignatius of Loyola*  
Watercolour by Ludwig Van Heucke, SJ.

Artists can help us  
to see even Saint Ignatius  
in a whole new way.

Ignatius

# Jesuits

THE SOCIETY OF JESUS IN THE WORLD

2022



# Table of contents

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Presentation – Let’s take to the road!</b>  |   |
| Arturo Sosa, SJ – Superior General .....   | 7 |
| <b>Publisher – Friendship changes your vision</b>  |   |
| Pierre Bélanger, SJ .....  | 8 |
| <b>Entering the Ignatian Year. A call to embrace the radical newness of Jesus Christ</b> |   |
| Abel Toraño, SJ .....  | 9 |

13

SECTION 1

Ignatius

To see all things  
new in Christ

*Personal and institutional  
testimonies*



|   |    |
|---|----|
| ● <b>Finding the crucified Christ in the migrants – India</b>   |    |
| Prakash Louis, SJ .....   | 14 |
| ● <b>Having in mind the dalits and the transgenders – India</b>   |    |
| C. Joe Arun, SJ .....   | 17 |
| ● <b>My commitment to an ecological vision for a better world – India</b>                                 |    |
| Lancy D’Cruz, SJ .....  | 20 |
| ● <b>School ignited with Ignatian light – India</b>   |    |
| Alfred Toppo, SJ .....  | 24 |
| ● <b>An eye opener – India</b>  |    |
| Samborlang Nongkynrih, SJ .....   | 28 |
| ● <b>The story of a crazy idea – Low Countries</b>  |    |
| Nikolaas Sintobin SJ .....  | 31 |
| ● <b>The diary of a cannon ball – Lebanon</b>   |    |
| Jad-Béchara Chébly, SJ .....  | 35 |
| ● <b>Love that restores dignity – JRS Syria</b>   |    |
| Gonçalo Fonseca, SJ .....   | 39 |
| ● <b>“Adore and Trust” – Spain</b>  |    |
| José María Rodríguez Olaizola, SJ .....   | 42 |
| ● <b>Breaking the downward spiral of poverty – Hungary</b>  |    |
| Kiss Ferenc, SJ .....   | 45 |
| ● <b>Building new bridges – Belgium</b>   |    |
| Laurent Salmon-Legagneur, SJ .....  | 48 |
| ● <b>The Ignatian background of Filippo Grandi that forged his unswerving sense of dedication – Italy</b> |    |
| Stefano Del Bove, SJ .....  | 51 |
| ● <b>Life Lessons – France</b>  |    |
| Bernard Paulet, SJ .....  | 55 |



|   |  |     |
|---|--|-----|
| ● | <b>What is this for? – Central Europe</b>  |     |
|   | Georg Nuhsbaumer .....   | 57  |
| ● | <b>Working as a network yields miracles – Venezuela</b>  |     |
|   | Alfredo Infante, SJ .....  | 61  |
| ● | <b>A new way to handle life and society – Cuba</b>   |     |
|   | Luis Fernando de Miguel, SJ and Maite Pérez Millet .....                                       | 64  |
| ● | <b>Being silent in action – Colombia</b>   |     |
|   | Stivel Toloza, SJ .....  | 67  |
| ● | <b>Get up and walk! – Mexico</b>   |     |
|   | Roberto López Facundo, SJ .....  | 70  |
| ● | <b>The shoots of the rosebush: Life that is hidden and always new – Mexico</b>                 |     |
|   | An interview of Brother Marcos Alonso Álvarez SJ by Germán A. Méndez Ceval SJ .....            | 73  |
| ● | <b>A light sparkling in the Honduran shadows – Honduras</b>                                    |     |
|   | Ismael Moreno, SJ .....  | 76  |
| ● | <b>Christian Vipassana Meditation – Japan</b>  |     |
|   | Toshihiro Yanagida, SJ .....   | 79  |
| ● | <b>Springing life to villagers – Timor Leste</b>   |     |
|   | Júlio António Sousa Costa, SJ .....  | 82  |
| ● | <b>The miracle of the pandemic for Rhon – Philippines</b>                                      |     |
|   | Ro Atilano, SJ .....   | 86  |
| ● | <b>Navigating beyond boundaries – Indonesia</b>  |     |
|   | Communication Team Province of Indonesia .....   | 89  |
| ● | <b>“Father, you have no idea what’s going on in a factory” – Cambodia</b>                      |     |
|   | Kim Tae-jin, SJ .....  | 93  |
| ● | <b>Antiracism in the heartland – United States</b>   |     |
|   | Winnie Sullivan and Lisa Burks .....   | 96  |
| ● | <b>“Praying for the Church and the Society” ... and its “action component” – United States</b> |     |
|   | James F. Joyce, SJ .....   | 100 |
| ● | <b>To be actively and explicitly anti-racist – United States</b>                               |     |
|   | San Jose CORE Collaboration (Collaborative Organizing for Racial Equity) .....                 | 103 |
| ● | <b>Beyond the fear – United States</b>   |     |
|   | Bianca Lopez .....   | 106 |
| ● | <b>She finally smiled – United States</b>  |     |
|   | Robert Braunreuther, SJ .....  | 108 |
| ● | <b>Accompanying youth in a rollercoaster – Kenya</b>   |     |
|   | Caleb Mwamisi .....  | 111 |
| ● | <b>Strengthening and empowering – Rwanda</b>   |     |
|   | Ernest Ngiyembere, SJ .....  | 114 |
| ● | <b>A Jesuit scientist and the Spiritual Exercises – Democratic Republic of the Congo</b>       |     |
|   | Jean-Baptiste Kikwaya, SJ .....  | 117 |
| ● | <b>Crossing the frontier and making a commitment – Cameroon</b>                                |     |
|   | Alfonso Ruiz, SJ .....   | 120 |
| ● | <b>Rowing into the deep in Southern Africa</b>   |     |
|   | Chiedza Chimhanda, SJ .....  | 123 |

# 126

## SECTION 2

### COVID-19

*Experience-based reflections*



- ▶ **Covid-19 and the UAPs**  
Pierre de Charentenay, SJ ..... 128
- ▶ **Coping with the pandemic and the lockdown – India**  
Anthony Dias, SJ ..... 131
- ▶ **A home (be)coming at Loyola House – Canada**  
Greg Kennedy, SJ ..... 135
- ▶ **“Whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord” – France**  
Sylvain Cariou-Charton, SJ ..... 138
- ▶ **Reimagining Christian Service – United States**  
Ashley Woodworth ..... 141
- ▶ **Fighting Covid-19 as a scientist – United States**  
Anthony Fauci ..... 143

# 145

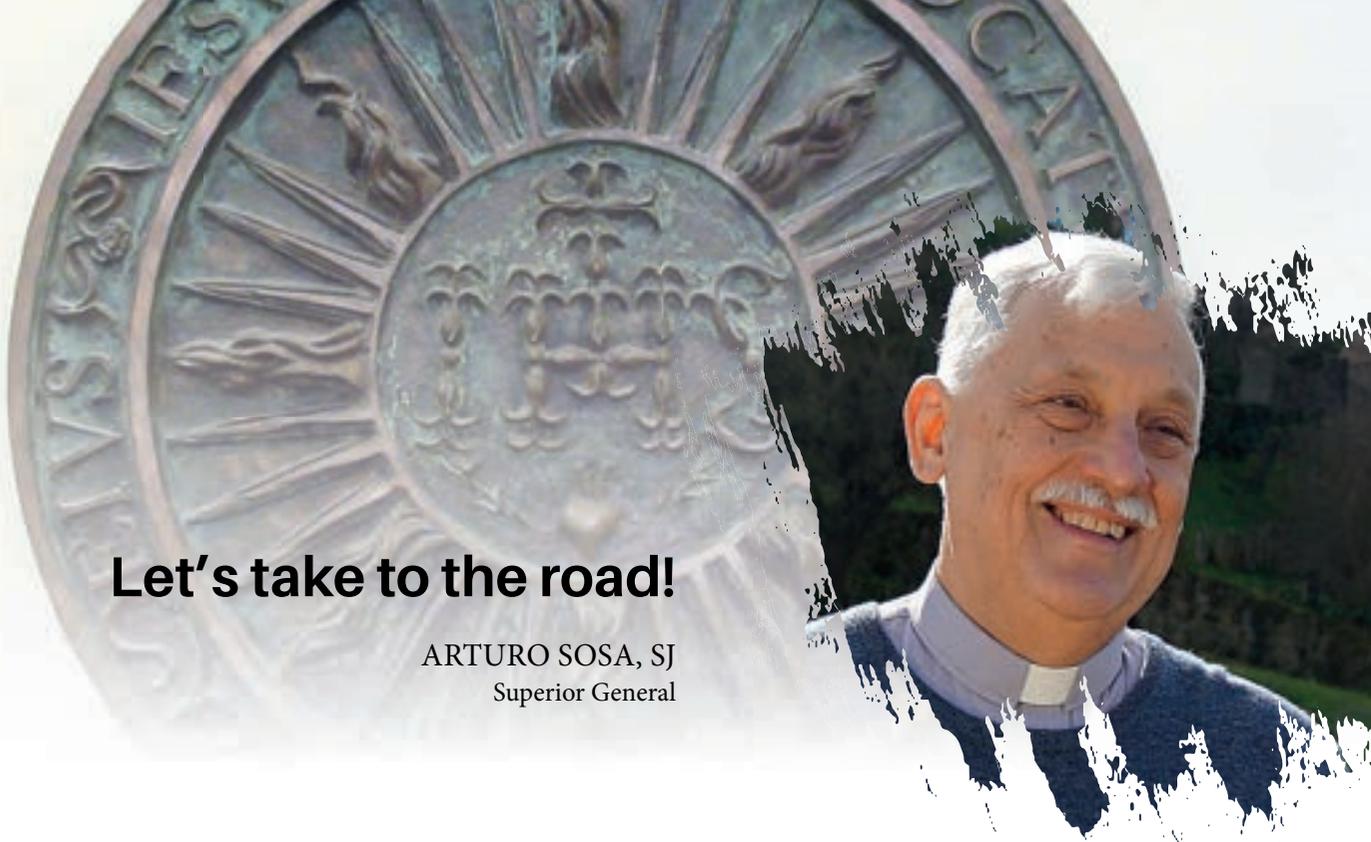


## SECTION 3

### Other topics



- ▶ **My commitment and challenge: Gender equality in Latin America and the Caribbean – Colombia**  
María del Carmen Muñoz Sáenz ..... 146
- ▶ **“No one should ever make us despair!” – Austria**  
Mathias Moosbrugger ..... 149
- ▶ **A meeting place for Christianity and Zen – India**  
AMA Arokia Samy ..... 152
- Prayer for the Ignatian Year** ..... 155
- Let’s keep in touch with each other!** ..... 156
- Vocations** ..... 158



## Let's take to the road!

ARTURO SOSA, SJ  
Superior General

I have experienced important changes in the course of my life. The deepest changes were those that came unexpectedly, without my seeking them or even desiring them. Meeting Jesus of Nazareth personally was what opened the door to the most profound and unexpected transformation in my life.

Jesus approaches, makes himself known and touches the deepest fibre of the heart of each person. The meeting is complete if I allow myself to contemplate Jesus as he walks among his people doing good; as on the cross he gives his life with an open heart from which flow blood and water, life and spirit. To contemplate the crucified one is to meet the risen one, the victor over death. To contemplate boundless love, shown on the cross turns my meeting with Jesus into an experience of life without end.

Contemplating the crucified and risen one puts before my eyes all human being and the planet that we inhabit. Meeting Jesus inevitably leads me to go out and meet others wherever they may live. I find myself needing to open up to the rich diversity of human beings and to enter into open dialogue with their cultures. Out of communion with Jesus is born the fraternal community that discovers its *raison d'être* in the service of his liberating mission. This is where I find myself to be a participant in the reconciliation of all things in him.

My contemplation of Jesus crucified and risen gives me the opportunity to change my way of seeing the realities in which I am immersed. It changes my way of grasping the meaning of the Covid-19 pandemic that has shaken all humanity with consequences that will be with us for a long time. The pandemic has dashed the hopes of the young and

increased their uncertainty as they look to the future. It has not only unmasked social structures that cause so much injustice and inequality but has widened the divides between social strata, peoples and nations. The pandemic has not slowed down damage to nature, nor is it strengthening a commitment to policies that would begin our reconciliation with the environment and make of the planet earth a shared home where we could live with dignity and democratically as a reconciled humanity.

This 2022 edition of the annual magazine *Jesuits* arrives in the middle of the Ignatian Year. Drawing inspiration from the great transformations experienced by Ignatius of Loyola throughout his life, it seeks to make us more aware of the opportunities for a personal meeting with Jesus Christ that can be found in the events that surround us. Testimonies from companions in many parts of the world give us signs of how to walk the pathway to God and show it to others.

The mission that flows from the contemplation of the one who is crucified and risen now calls us to participate in great and necessary transformations of the Church and of society, opening new spaces for the participation of women and nourishing the hope that lives in the heart of young people of all races and cultures. Let us take to the road alongside those whose rights are being denied, following the inspiration of the Spirit.



## Friendship changes your vision

PIERRE BÉLANGER, SJ

Publisher

One day in January 1975, he came out of the Montreal airport during a snowstorm. He was put in a taxi and ended up in front of the Provincial Curia Building, swept away by the blizzard and barely able to stand upright in his first attempt to walk on ice and snow. He admitted it later: he then thought about going back to Africa right away!

His name was Groum. Groum Tesfaye, the first Ethiopian Jesuit, my first African friend. And, almost 50 years later, he is still one of my best Jesuit friends I have ever had. Groum was the first person of color I would spend time with, living in the same community. Over the decades, our friendship has grown despite the geographical distances. I saw him again in Rome and I was so touched by what he was doing. At the request of Father Arrupe, he had just opened the *Centro Astalli*, a hospitality and friendship centre, for refugees who, at that time in Rome, were mainly Ethiopians. Then I visited him when he had become the superior of the Jesuit community in Addis Ababa; and more recently in Bahir Dar, in the north of the country, where he was dedicating all his energy in establishing on a solid foundation for a school dedicated to the poor of the region.

I have been reflecting and praying on the *Black Lives Matter* movement and the many instances of racial discrimination that have made the headlines. I realized that my view of people from other nations, especially Blacks, was benevolent because Providence had given me the opportunity to build friendships, with Groum certainly, an African, and also with several Haitians.

Not often do we get positive images of Haiti; and this can have an effect on the way we see the Haitians. I have also had the chance to meet some extraordinary

Haitians. To mention just one, I can talk of my friend Désinord Jean, who was the director of *Radio Soleil*, the Catholic radio station in Port-au-Prince. For a dozen years we worked together, he, a diocesan priest, and I, a Jesuit, on the development of Catholic radio in Haiti. One day, somewhat to his surprise, Désinord was called to the episcopate... and so now I have a 'bishop' friend in Hinche.

The Ignatian Year reminds us of the event of Ignatius' wound in Pamplona, at the source of the conversion that allowed the founder of the Society of Jesus to "see all things new in Christ." But it invites us to realise that although Ignatius did great and beautiful things for the Lord, he did not accomplish them on his own. It was by befriending his first companions in Paris that he created a new environment for the message of the Gospel. These first Jesuits identified themselves as "friends in the Lord." They could also consider themselves "Companions of Jesus." Indeed, this is like on the roads of Palestine, when Jesus had gathered his disciples, men and women, and offered them a friendship which, sustained by the Holy Spirit, allowed them to see and then do so many new things.

As you read the individual and institutional testimonies that we are offering you in the midst of the Ignatian Year, I hope that you will find a taste for following in the footsteps of Ignatius and his companions. Their vision was transformed by the friendship that united them and allowed them to "see all things new." I wish you that experience: the gaze of friendship.

*Pierre Bélanger*

# Entering the Ignatian Year

## A call to embrace the radical newness of Jesus Christ

ABEL TORAÑO, SJ  
Coordinator of the Ignatian Year – Province of Spain



***For the first time in 14 months, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Fr. Arturo Sosa, had the chance to leave Rome after being confined to the city by the pandemic. The occasion was certainly worthwhile. He joined the Spanish Province for the official opening of the Ignatian Year, an experience of conversion and time to go deeper in faith.***

***The Jesuit who coordinates the activities of the Ignatian Year for the Province of Spain, Abel Toraño, tells us how the theme “Seeing all things new in Christ” resonates with him, as he is close to Ignatius by virtue of his country of birth but also because he is a master of novices.***

At the start of the fifth centenary of his conversion, Ignatius’s wound brings to mind three words which gently but steadily intermingle and help me to understand my own life.

The first is *abandonment*. Or maybe not. Maybe it’s actually the opposite: *non-abandonment*. Thinking of someone like *Íñigo* who was mortally wounded brings to mind the fractures in my own life. Although they left me feeling dejected and alone, the certainty that someone who

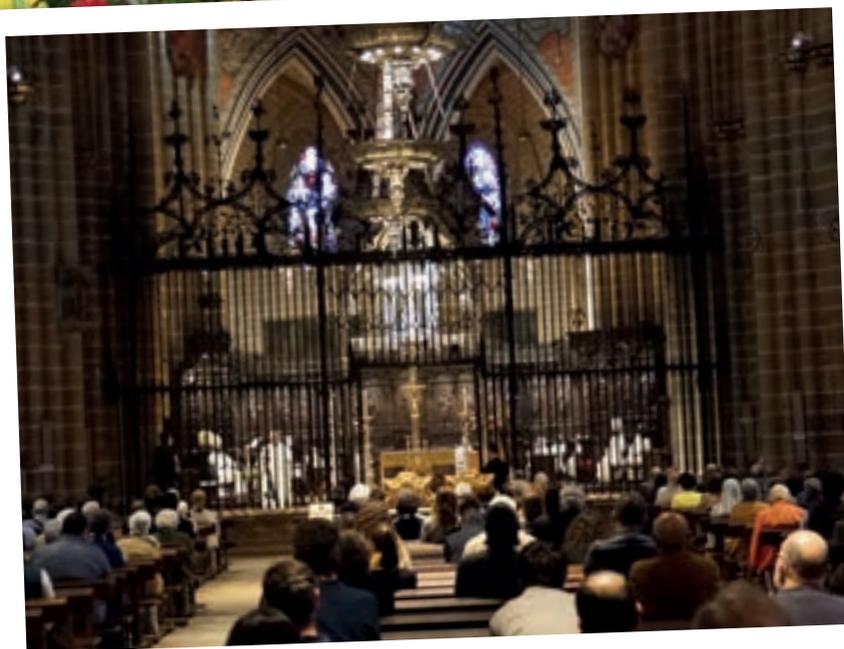
loves and cares for me dwelt within me, was a call to keep going and be patient. Yes, today we are all despondent, but we are not abandoned by a God who loves us and who seeks us out in the very place where we are hurting.

The second word is *journey*. No one would ask a man wounded in both legs to get up and walk. But the first journey is perhaps the most important: the journey within ourselves. Loyola would be a time to turn inwards, to ask



questions about what can truly fill up our lives. Deep inside himself, Ignatius would discover a powerful new ideal for his life in Jesus. That ideal would gradually take over the rest of his existence. Ignatius started his journey without a clue about the phases he would have to go through, the cities where he would find shelter, or the people he would meet along the way or those who would turn out to be kindred spirits. He went from one surprise to another, step by step, in the strong conviction that his only prospect was Jesus and his mission.

The third word is *encounter*. *Íñigo* met Jesus inside himself at Loyola and soon began to search for him in the outside world, in Jerusalem. On his pathway of abandonment to God, Ignatius gradually discovered the presence of God in everything: in the poor in hospitals, in beggars and pilgrims and exploited women and street children, in Europe and across the length and breadth of the world, in those who did not believe and in the Church, where he found his best friends in Christ.



**From the homily of Fr. Arturo Sosa, Superior General, for the inauguration of the Ignatian Year, Cathedral of Pamplona, Navarra (Spain,) 20 May 2021.**

### **Thanksgiving**

St. Ignatius tells it in his autobiography:

“On the day when the bombardment was expected, he confessed to one of his companions in arms. After the bombardment had lasted a good while, a shot struck him on one leg, shattering it completely.”

Tradition has placed this event on 20 May 1521, 500 years ago today. Therefore, our first reaction to this anniversary is one of astonishment and gratitude. We owe multiple thanks: to God, who blessed and accompanied the journey of this “young adult” Inigo until his death in 1556. To the Jesuits who have preceded us, for transmitting from one generation to the next, through the generations, the charism of the Order founded in 1540. To all the other men and women who have been and are living witnesses of the spirituality inspired by the life of Ignatius of Loyola. During these five centuries, the Holy Spirit has been present giving light and strength to our predecessors. All these deserve our heartfelt thanks. (...)

### **An opportunity for conversion**

Like St. Paul, Inigo acknowledges that he was a sinner, a sinner saved by Christ. Moreover, he gives thanks to God for his conversion and his new life. The newness, as for all converts is, above all, Jesus Christ, the person of Jesus Christ. No more is Ignatius indifferent to whether he lives without Christ or with Him. This is the difference between before and after. The novelty of the Lord is decisive; it is what will decide his future. To be with Him, to know Him, to love Him and to follow Him is what makes him realize that he is no longer the same, and that this newness is worthwhile, that his life is at stake. Ignatius then allows himself to be led by God. This meant that the young Basque would no longer want to be the protagonist of his future, nor seek his own glory. He allowed God to guide him, as he would admirably do when writing the book of the Spiritual Exercises. (...)

### **Seeing through the eyes of Christ**

“Seeing all things new in Christ” is the motto we have adopted for the Ignatian Year 2021-2022: Thanks to



the newness that Jesus Christ brings with His life and His message, everything else takes on a new meaning, when you look with him, from his viewpoint. It is not that life loses its hardness or its difficulty – we are living it all over the world with the pandemic, that is so harsh and makes life difficult to so many millions of people – but, seeing all things new in Christ, we find a way of dealing with it (...).

The newness of Christ that led Ignatius to work so that the Kingdom of God would become more manifest, is the same one that, in this Ignatian Year, we hope will lead each one of us, Jesuits and our friends, in our mission within the Church.



## Ignatius' companion, Francis Xavier, is not forgotten



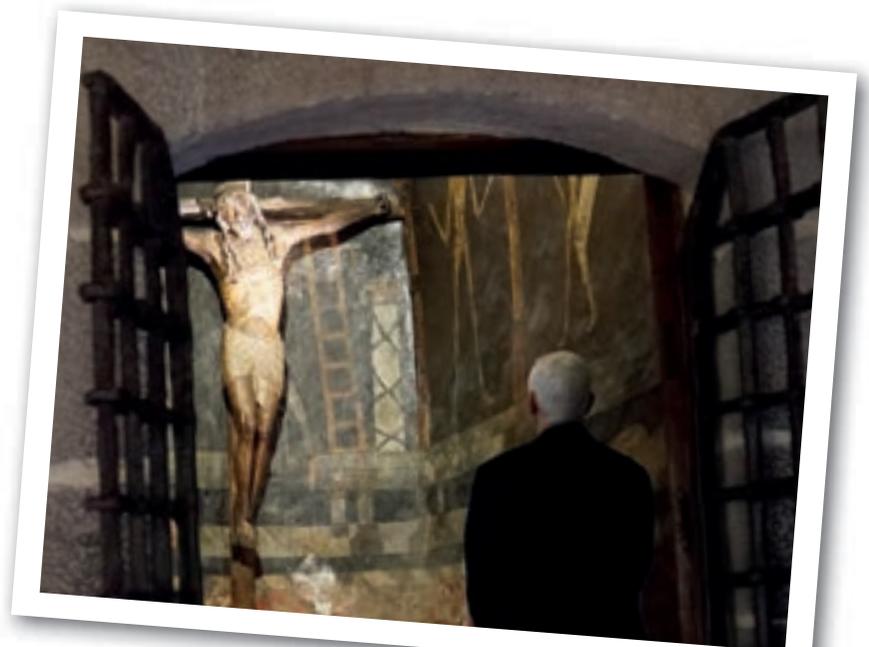
stopped off at the shrine and castle at Javier. He met the community that runs the spirituality centre there as well as the Spanish Jesuit novices from Bilbao. We can see him here on his visit in the photographs in front of the castle, but also in prayer in the Chapel of the Smiling Christ, an evocation, already on the cross, of the victory of the Crucified over evil and death.

In terms of history, the Ignatian Year draws our attention first to the Battle of Pamplona in 1521: 500 years ago.

But it will also provide an opportunity to remember that on 12 March 1622, St Ignatius and his early companion, St Francis Xavier, were canonised together: 400 years ago.

Francis Xavier also followed an unusual journey. He sensed a call to see his life, his Christian commitment and later his missionary activities through new eyes. Alongside Ignatius, he will help us to enter into the spirit of the Ignatian Year.

On his way to Pamplona for the launch of this jubilee year, Father General Arturo Sosa,



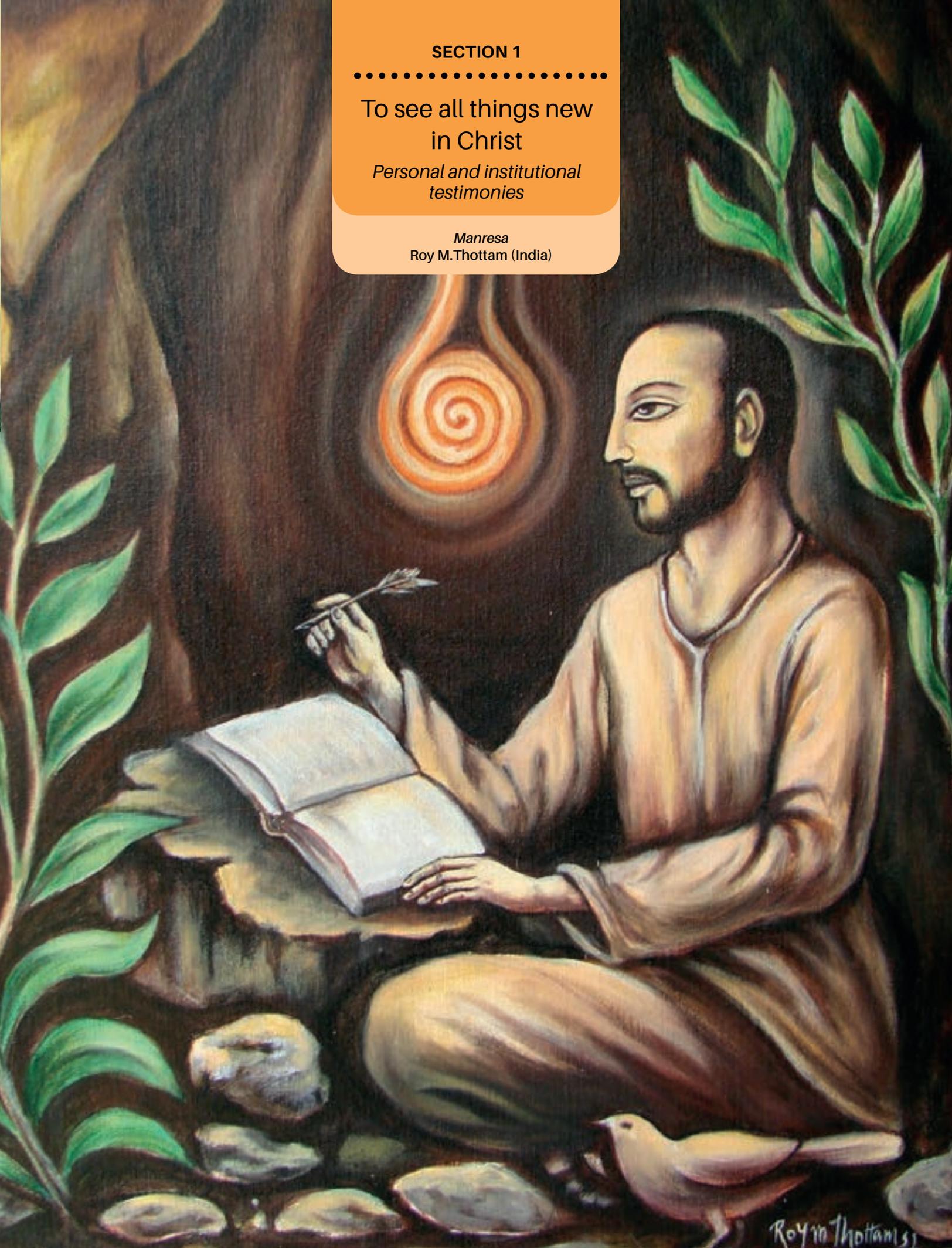
SECTION 1



To see all things new  
in Christ

*Personal and institutional  
testimonies*

*Manresa*  
Roy M.Thottam (India)



Roy M Thottam 51



## Finding the crucified Christ in the migrants

PRAKASH LOUIS, SJ  
Patna Jesuit Migrant Service  
Patna Province



*The spiritual experience  
of giving relief to migrants  
on their journey.*

Finding God is one of the fundamental spiritual paths laid out by Ignatius to help everyone to discern God's presence, to find God in all

things, reaching out to a difficult and diverse, a grace-filled yet a groaning world. Finding God in everything is rooted in our growing awareness that

God can be found in every one, in every place, in every situation, and in everything. When we learn to pay more attention to God, we become

more thankful and reverent to him and to his creation.

Concretely, we find God at work and in worship, in normal and difficult circumstances, in our success and failures, in our togetherness and loneliness, in our pains and pleasures, and thus in the world at large. Not just the Jesuits but all those who were introduced to Ignatian Spirituality have tried to integrate finding God totally and fundamentally in their daily lives. For those of us who were involved in responding to the migrants who were forced to return home from where they were eking out in India, it was finding the crucified Christ in the migrants.

The Book of Deuteronomy narrates the existential and spiritual experience of our ancestors by stating that Yahweh migrated with the people, carrying them along the way and going ahead of them to show them the way. Moses says, “the Lord your God... went before you in the way to seek you out a place to pitch your tents, in fire by night and in the cloud by day, to show you by what way you should go” (Dt 1:32–33). Further, the book states, “he executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing” (Dt 10:18).

Thus, the God we believe in was a migrant himself and understands the sufferings and the hardships the migrants are subjected to. We, Indian Christians who accompanied the migrants who were forced to return home due to the pandemic, found Jesus’ consoling and comforting words, “Come to me all who are weary and are burdened; I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28). In April 2020, when we began to provide relief to the millions of innocent and distressed migrants, we found strength and sustenance in Je-



The God we believe in was a migrant himself and understands the sufferings and the hardships the migrants are subjected to.



sus, who was subjected to passion and death like a criminal.

The migrants who faced untold agony and anguish, distress and defeat, motivated the Church in general and the Jesuits in particular to accompany them. In collaboration with the Varanasi Diocese, the Patna Jesuits provided relief to over 21,000 families and responded to over 14,000 migrants on the road.

We agonised with the migrants undergoing agony and misery for no mistake of their own.

When we distributed food to the migrants they said, “We did not have food for many days; you have come like God giving us food.” But we in turn found in them the crucified Christ. This is all the truer of women who were being supported by their husbands’ salary and had nothing to feed the family when the father was forced to go back home. They themselves saw the crucified Christ in their crying malnourished children. And I remember this toddler who became an orphan when, returning with his migrant mother, the woman died of exhaustion on the road. This shocking incident reminded me of the cry of the crucified Christ, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me” (Mk 15:34).

Fr. Julian, who distributed relief to the migrants in Cantt Railway Station along with Fr. Susai and a government official, a Hindu, stated, “In the migrants, I found Christ exhausted by the weight of the cross.”

The Bishop of Varanasi, Rt. Rev. Eugene Joseph, captured the experience of accompanying the migrants by the Christian community as follows: “The situation of the helpless migrant labourers is like that of Jesus himself who had to fly to Egypt to save himself from a different ‘plague.’ Rejection, passive indifference, hunger and thirst, homelessness, the fear of the impending death, that the Son of Man suffered is a prelude to what the migrants of Indian labour class suffered. Uncertain of being received in their own village, they groped through the darkness of the night, heat and dust of the day as it were in a new Exodus. As followers of Crucified Jesus, we, Christians, drew closer to those abandoned and crushed by dejection and fear.”

We learned a pastoral lesson in accompanying the migrants: for



us, this was not just a relief work but a personal, pastoral, and spiritual response to be with the afflicted humanity. We see immense possibilities for accompanying the high-risk persons and families in the future too. In the midst of distress, defeat, and death, we find rays of hope: “Your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (Mt 6:8). With this trust and confidence, we have initiated self-employment programmes for the migrants.

prakashlouis2010@gmail.com





## Having in mind the dalits and the transgenders

C. JOE ARUN, SJ  
Chennai Province



***LIBA, a Jesuit Business School that  
walks with the excluded.***

He is a faculty member who teaches finance. He comes from a conserva-

tive Hindu family. Recently trained on Ignatian discernment, Professor

Lakshmi Narayanan says, “Ignatian discernment has changed the way I



*LIBA pupils with the Dalits.*

make decisions. Now I have learnt to recognise internal movements, orientations, and intentions, while making decisions. I see things differently now. Even my teaching is different.” He says that he has become an Ignatian though he is a Hindu.

Loyola Institute of Business Administration (LIBA), in the Jesuit Chennai Province (CEN), one of the premier business schools in India, implements the *Universal Apostolic Preferences* (UAPs), particularly, “walking with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice.” The institution has reoriented the ways for the students to learn and for the professors to teach. The orientations of the UAPs have changed the approach of what a business school should do in the formation of future business leaders. The faculty and students use the method of spiritual conversation for decision making.

And some professors have published research papers in professional journals on the use of this method. This has made an enormous impact in the lives of both faculty and students.

“Although I am a Catholic by birth, the exposure I got to the UAPs of the Jesuits has changed my view of life. Now, I see Christ differently. The content and method of my teaching have changed. I tell the students that making impact in the lives of people is more important than merely making profit,” says Dr. Siluvai Raja, who teaches entrepreneurship in LIBA.

Catherine Alex, in her MBA second year, says, “Every day, I see the Ignatian quotes displayed all over the Institute and the UAPs that inspire the Jesuit Fathers. Unconsciously they have entered into my heart and now I am convinced that I should do something different with my life to help the poor and also to care for the earth.”

“ Ignatian discernment has changed the way I make decisions. ”

The students spend time in Dalit villages for a rural immersion experience to understand the pain of the marginalised. That has a great influence in their learning through different courses. Last year they went to villages near Harur Mission of the Chennai Province. During their reflection sharing, many students said that they had seen what real life of the poor Dalit women and children was and how it made an impact on their

learning. Elma Evangeline, a second-year student, said, “The plight of the poor Dalit children we saw in the school in Harur changed me totally. It was a conversion of heart; I am a new Elma now. When I will work in a company, this experience is going to guide my life in the business world.”

In addition to focussing on nurturing rural entrepreneurs and supporting Dalit women, the C.K. Prahalad Centre for Emerging India of LIBA has opted to work with the transgenders. After her training in computer technology skills, Gayathri, one of the transgenders, says, “I was a sex worker. For me every day was hell. I said ‘enough is enough.’ I wanted to start a new life. So, I joined the skilling programme of LIBA, and I learnt how to use a computer. I am so happy that now I have got a job in Chennai Metro Rail. I have no words to thank LIBA: it has given me a new life. For me, LIBA is a god who showed me a way.” LIBA’s working with the transgenders has made an impact among students and faculty. A faculty member said, “I always had a fear of seeing any transgenders; I thought they were not normal people. I hated going near them. When I was asked to assist in the skilling programme, although initially I hesitated, I began to like them and the energy with which



they work is very inspiring. I see them differently now.” Some students of LIBA who helped in the training said that it had led to a personal conversion, and they changed the way they had seen the transgenders. One of them said, “When I go to the business world, I will make sure that I employ transgenders in the company where I work.”

To sum up, the UAPs help the students and faculty to see everything from a new angle. I believe it will have a huge influence in the corporate world where they will be involved. As

a Jesuit working in a business school, I make every effort to keep the UAPs as points of reference and horizon in guiding the faculty and students. I tell them, “In a Jesuit Business School, the life of the poor and marginalised must be at the core of the formative process throughout the MBA course.” They understand this and in fact they align with this vision. This provides me with a new way of seeing my “life mission.”

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## My commitment to an ecological vision for a better world

LANCY D'CRUZ, SJ  
Gujarat Province



*Reflections on a personal  
“eco-journey” as a path  
for mission and social redemption.*

I find it difficult to believe that I actually grew up not in a real forest but in the concrete jungle that is Mumbai!

There are pros and cons of living in a big metropolis. And yet, I believe that the “seeds of eco-sensitivity”

were sown in us by my grandfathers! Looking back today, I am amazed at the biodiversity crammed into their

backyards... and the plants that overflowed from my dad's balcony!

In fact, some of the special moments of my childhood “calling” have linkages with nature. My first sojourn into Gujarat was in the final year of high school, when as a lad of fifteen. I was taken by the Jesuits from my school in Mumbai to the adivasi (aboriginal) mission of Jhagadia in the neighbouring state of Gujarat. The only memories I have of the camp to the Jesuit mission among the tribals in the Talasari area (close to Gujarat) the next year were those of amazing sunrises and sunsets! My three years of studies in life sciences at St Xavier's College (Mumbai) were peppered with trips to the hills. Perhaps that widened my appreciation for “Life”! It was only years later, when I reached Gujarat to become a Jesuit, that I was asked to “specialize in ‘botany’ or, put my way... ‘to fall in love with plants’”!

Life in the Society of Jesus seemed to build on this! One of my



nascent experiences as a second-year novice was the six weeks spent in the Gamit tribal villages of Unai, in the bosom of Mother Nature. The other stand-out experience (at the end of formation) was the three weeks spent in the valley of the great

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I was deeply privileged to be ordained a priest in the fields of the tribal village of Pitadra.

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river Narmada, in one of the 19 villages, that was going to be submerged under the waters of the mighty Narmada Dam. Two things touched me – the sheer poverty of the adivasis and the richness of their knowledge of plants!

I believe the strengthening of the intellectual dimension of the eco-calling took place during philosophy and theology. I began to look at the ‘eco’ dimensions of every Scripture course. It was no surprise then that I defended my own ad-grad thesis titled



“LIFE-Life-life,” under the mentorship of Fr. Vincent Braganza, instead of defending the traditional theological treatises!

The stirrings of the possibility of an “ecological priesthood” became stronger in theology, thanks to my fascination with the French mystic and scientist Teilhard de Chardin! I was deeply privileged to be ordained a priest in the fields of the tribal village of Pitadra. The next morning, totally unplanned, I travelled to Ahwa, a small town up the hills, where I celebrated my first Mass for the Dangi tribals at Deep Darshan High School. It is difficult to describe

what happened that evening at Sunset Point, a spur of rock overlooking the valley below! The blazing sun dipping into the cupped chalice of the mountains was the most profound of “benedictions” in my life!!

Teaching botany at St. Xavier’s College in the city of Ahmedabad, Gujarat, did enhance the eco-dimension of my priestly ministry. The Jesuits entrusted me with a dream project of setting up “ecological niches” on campus! Within two years, there came a “beckoning,” this time to begin my doctoral studies. Looking back today, one sees the guiding hand, finding a PhD

guide, the decision to work with the Vasava tribals in the sprawling forests of Dediapada (around 260 km. from the city of Ahmedabad), and the mentoring of expert botanists! A project from a government agency, the Gujarat Ecology Commission, and later help from my own Gujarat Province and from ALBOAN enabled the setting up of a network of tribal medicine men which later evolved into *Aadi Aushadhi* (AA – “Original Medicine”).

Helping AA to take wings and grow has been possible only through networking and collaboration from the very outset. Non-government



*In all his pastoral and educational work, Lancy D’Cruz encourages others to protect and cherish the environment.*

organisations like MANTHAN and JEEVAN TIRTH and the ever green colleagues Francis and Himmat have been partners, nay guardian angels, in AA’s journey from traditional medicine to livelihood generation, to biodiversity documentation and conservation, to setting up the first indigenous women’s bakery, to organic cultivation, to setting up Farmer Producer Organizations.

The eco-engagement at St. Xavier’s College, Ahmedabad, meanwhile brought me into contact with two Jesuit “eco-angels”: Rappai

Poothakaran, who set up “Tarumitra Gujarat,” and Robert Athickall with his creative eco-retreats in the oasis of Tarumitra (in the northern Indian Patna Province), that paved the way for what is today’s Gujarat Jesuit Ecology Mission (GJEM).

To do justice to the GJEM would be impossible through this article. Suffice to say that inspired by the Society’s documents and *Laudato Si*, the GJEM attempts to link Jesuits working with ecology, linking diverse ministries through collaborative eco-actions stemming from an eco-con-

version and empowering lay leadership and collaboration, always with the emphasis on setting up a network rather than a set of Jesuit-manned institutions.

The eco-journey of my life has indeed been, and still is, an interweaving of the mystical, social, intellectual, and collaborative strands that continues to give rise to a fresh, creative, and evolving eco-commitment!

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## School ignited with Ignatian light

ALFRED TOPPO, SJ  
Madhya Pradesh Province



***Platinum Jubilee of Loyola School,  
Kunkuri, Jashpur, Chhattisgarh  
(1947-2022).***

The initial process of evangelisation among tribals in India was that the Good News got transmitted through

relatives who had already received it. In late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Good News of the Ranchi

Jesuit mission crossed its territory to Oraon tribals of the kingdom of Jashpur through their relatives. The



The education ministry is a means for us to be salt, light, and leaven.



liberative Good News was so powerful that tribals walked hundreds of miles to receive it. A series of persecutions followed their journeys, but only to strengthen their faith.

In 1905, Jesuits sought permission for promoting their evangelization work from the king of Jashpur. They opened centres in remote villages. These became centres of primary education, health care, and village

development. They were the first tribal schools. However, only a few children managed to pursue their high school in Ranchi. The need of a high school was felt. In 1947, Loyola School at Ginabahar (Kunkuri) became the first high school for tribals. It soon became a centre of education, catechism, and vocations. Many students became government officials, catechists, religious, and priests. The clergy of Ambikapur, Jashpur, and Raigarh dioceses in tribal

areas came from this school. Moreover, of the present Jesuits of Madhya Pradesh Province, 47% come from this school. It still remains a source of vocations.

The school has a glorious past. However, the Platinum Jubilee makes the school reflect on how it is relevant today. Is it able to facilitate a process of “seeing everything new in Christ?” Is it able to make the present stakeholders







social harmony among villages; it is a great opportunity for students to experience what this value means for society. It also promotes sporting talents of young people.

**Mission oriented Jesuit community**

Jesuits of Loyola school, though involved in education, undertake spiritual outreach programmes in nearby villages, parishes, and religious houses. They share God through Eucharist, recollection, retreats, talks, and guiding pious associations. The rector expresses his satisfaction that all Jesuits make themselves available for the programme. It orients communities for mutual sharing of God experiences. Experiences in school are shared with people and vice versa. The principal says that “students and people living nearby are blessed because they interact with many Jesuits. They share and foster life in students and people around.” He continues, “Jesuits do not teach just the assigned subjects, but while teaching their subjects they constantly promote life. They inculcate in their students Gospel values towards creating God’s Kingdom. We try to radiate Christ through our life and work.”

The approach which brought glories in the past still continues with new dimensions. The Jesuit charism has still kept up its saltiness, light, and leaven to empower students and other stakeholders. They, in turn, bring newness in their life, family, and society. School channels God’s graces for personal and societal development. It continues promoting life, faith, and knowledge among people, especially the tribals for “seeing everything new in Christ.”

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“light,” “salt,” and “leaven” for the society? Jesuits are missioned; hence they have no choice other than to do good. We have received a mandate from Jesus Christ for establishing the Kingdom of God. The education ministry is a means for us to be salt, light, and leaven to reach this end. Our teaching, animation, mentoring, and administration encompass Gospel values leading to seeing everything new in Christ. The salt within us is still salty; light is still burning and leaven still empowering life.

**Formation for Mission**

Jesuits here are imbued with Ignatian spirit and tradition for animation and mentoring. They envision a holistic formation of their students. They constantly accompany them in their human, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual formation. They make students recognise in themselves and others the image of God. This recognition of the divine has become a means of fostering social and religious harmony. Jesuits witness that accompanying care transforms the whole perspective towards life. Such care melts estranged relationships and fosters harmony.

**Christian formation**

Over 60% of the students are Catholics, and about 70% of them stay in hostels. Daily activities foster a process of spiritual formation. Daily Eucharist, *Examen*, triduum, recollections, rosary, and other devotions lead them to an experience of God. Regular participation in pious associations like *Crusveer* and CLC animates them to visualise everything new in Christ. Apart from these, Jesuits’ accompaniment plays a vital role in their formation. A Jesuit confides, “While interacting with students, I affirm in them the presence of the divine. This affirmation helps them to see everything new in Christ.”

**Oscar Sevrin Memorial Hockey Tournament**

Bishop Oscar Sevrin, S.J., the first Bishop of the Raigarh-Ambikapur diocese, gave spiritual and social leadership to tribals, consolidating their faith and education. In his memory, Loyola school has organised the *Oscar Sevrin Memorial Hockey Tournament* every year since 1978. On average, 60 village teams participate in it. It fosters



## An eye opener

SAMBORLANG NONGKYNRIH, SJ  
Kohima Region



### *My first steps in Jesuit life.*

“Don’t you want to become a priest, son?” asked my dad. As a child, I innocently responded “YES.” However, as a teenager my life was in

real contrast to this “Yes.” I failed to live even a normal Christian life. I did not put my best in my studies, so my performance in the final matricula-

tion public exam was far from satisfactory; I expected that I would fail. The reputation of my family was at stake and this terrified me.



This fear left me with no other choice than to turn to God for a miracle, and it happened... I passed!

What next? I thought. I remembered what I had answered my dad... A priest maybe. I had heard about the Jesuits and I thought that, maybe, it could be the place for me. My family and relatives had heard that the Jesuits go through a long formation and take many years to become priests. And so, they discouraged me from joining the Jesuits. My mom, finally but reluctantly, agreed. I still remember how she cried and, grief stricken, would not talk to me

when I left home. But my dad, on the other hand, encouraged me to go ahead and to become a good Jesuit priest. He has been the source and inspiration of my vocation. For the first time I would stay away from my close-knit family web. I was like the proverbial frog getting out of the familiar pond.

I joined the Society of Jesus in 2018, beginning with the first stage of training, the “novitiate.” During the first year, the Society guides us in a one month Ignatian retreat, the Spiritual Exercises. The retreat really opened my closed eyes of narrow-

“ This spirit of *magis* has helped me to be more efficient in all the activities I do and makes my life more meaningful in my journey towards God. ”

mindfulness and self-centeredness; it helped me to see more deeply the marvels of God in everything. Moreover, it taught me that my life



*Scholasticate in Mumbai where Sam is now studying.*



From the parental family to the Jesuit family.



is to love, praise, and revere God. This new approach to life definitely changed me and helped me to see God in all things. It also brought me to better perceive the significance of God's creation and taught me to be more caring towards other creatures. More interestingly, the *Universal Apostolic Preferences* (UAPs), which came up a year later, also highlighted the priority for the care of our common home. They helped me to see God's creation from his perspective and to integrate it in my daily life.

The Society also taught me to imbibe the spirit of the *Magis*, "More or Better." I remember my novice master, Fr. Gregory, encouraging me, "You can do better Sam. We, Jesuits, always aim for the *Magis*. We have no room for mediocrity." This spirit of *magis* has helped me to be more efficient in all the activities I do and makes my life more meaningful in my journey towards God.

In the novitiate, we also had special intensive experiences. For instance, a "work experiment." We

had to work seven or more long hours a day. This identified us with the poor, the neglected, the working man, and enabled us to understand their struggles. It was tough at times, toiling from morning till evening, on a frugal meal, just like any other laborer. We also had the opportunity to serve the sick through the "hospital experiment" with the Mother Teresa sisters. The second UAP (walking with the poor, the outcasts, and those whose dignity has been violated) rightly took a concrete visage through these experiments and therefore helped me integrate in my personal life the love and respect for the poor.

The three perpetual vows, poverty, chastity, and obedience, set me free and enable me to serve in the mission of God wholeheartedly. For me, the vow of poverty in particular doesn't restrict only to how much I have (be it materials, privileges, opportunities...) but is about what I do with what I have and about using them in as much as they help in achieving God's will and not using

them if they hinder or are not useful for the same.

After two years of novitiate training, I feel strong and firm spiritually in my vocation and can see the finger of God leading me on the right path. My second stage of formation thus continues now in the South Asia West zone juniorate, in Mumbai, India. Here I see God's guiding hands more clearly through my superiors and confirm my vocation to the Society of Jesus. More importantly, the UAPs have helped me as a "junior" to focus my studies on the needs of the apostolate.

Now after the short span of three years in the Society of Jesus, I look back at myself and, surprisingly, I see many new things. Three years have transformed me and enabled me to look at the world and the future in the Society of Jesus with the new eyes of optimism and hope. I am grateful to God for bringing these transformations in my life.

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## The story of a crazy idea

NIKOLAAS SINTOBIN, SJ  
European Low Countries Region



***The spiritual reality television show that has proved a hit in a secular context.***

Peter was covered head to foot in tattoos: not the usual look for an R.E. teacher. And at a very young age, he

had ended up in a gang. Then, several years ago, he had watched a Dutch television reality show I had been

part of. That series turned Peter's life round. Although then well into his 30's, he resumed his secondary school



*Title of the programme: In Search of God.*

studies, since completing them was a requirement for studying... theology.

There was nothing normal about the series. It was a religious or, to be more accurate, an Ignatian reality television show. In 2013, after some soul searching, I and two other Jesuits and two women who are experienced spiritual directors had taken up the challenge of giving the Spiritual Exercises in an abbey to celebrities from the Low Countries. Everything proceeded as normal: the retreatants being in silence and isolation and re-

ceiving individual accompaniment. But 30 television professionals were also present, discreetly filming everything, including the spiritual accompaniment sessions. The upshot was a fascinating, five-programme series: it was funny, rather lovely, but, above all, had striking spiritual depth. The series was broadcast at peak viewing hours on Dutch state television. A second series followed a year later. Each time, during the weeks of broadcast, thousands of people took part in an Ignatian retreat offered simultaneously on the channel's digital platform.

Over the course of the following years, I have been delighted to hear numerous testimonies like Peter's. The impact of this programme was, and still is, significant. It was instigated by a Dutch evangelical television channel that wanted to familiarise its viewers with Ignatian Biblical prayer. It chose the unusual format of a reality television show because this allowed it to reach a larger and non-denominational public, and in particular the fans of celebrities. Their gamble paid off. During the weeks of broadcast, many radio and TV reports covered the

programme, which was also discussed in the Netherlands' main newspapers and magazines. What is the explanation for this?

The main reason reveals a great deal about the spirit of our age. The evangelical channel displayed astonishing pastoral boldness in isolating stars from the world of showbiz, fashion, or sport during seven days and nights spent in total silence. And this for a programme whose substance was the polar opposite of their normal lifestyles. What's more, the channel dared



“ In our fast-changing post-modern culture, it is both possible and desirable to innovate and to venture out on paths previously unexplored. ”

to entrust one of its flagship shows to the Jesuits, a group with whom Protestants have not always had the best of friendships in past centuries. That takes some doing. The second reason was that the result was of undeniably high quality. The experiences and testimonies of the celebrities were very compelling for the simple reason that, to their amazement, they had experienced a genuine spiritual journey. That didn't escape notice. Lastly, but by no means least, the programme came up at a time when Dutch Protestants were increasingly hungry for spirituality.



Ignatian spirituality seemed to fit the bill rather well.

That was 10 years ago now. For me, that experience marked a personal turning point in my life as a Jesuit. I was able to see for myself the value of creativity and apostolic audacity. In our fast-changing post-modern culture, it is both possible and desirable to innovate and to venture out on paths previously unexplored. To my surprise, the digital world and the media in general have become my main area of activity. Within a broader perspective, I think that this experience has also led to a change for the apostolate in its current form in our region (the European Low Countries, including Flanders). The digital apostolate has become the area

in which our small group of Jesuits is most invested. Companions of all generations work together with a team of professionals. We also rely on the regular involvement of dozens of volunteers in the Ignatian family.

It is striking to observe just how much a strong ecumenical interaction has developed from this presence in the online world. We don't hide our Catholic identity. Yet in the Low Countries above all, we are reaching more Protestants than Catholics. The internet, after all, has no walls. The chairman of the board of our spirituality centre in Amsterdam is Protestant, as is the young journalist who works for our team full-time. For both, an experience of the Spiritual Exercises was the

key to their committing to work with us. Our teams of spiritual directors are equally ecumenical. Some of our digital retreats are given by Protestant pastors. Without denying our differences, we are making a conscious effort to gather together Christians of different denominations. Long-standing prejudices are giving way to rapprochement through an encounter with the Lord made possible by the Spiritual Exercises. And this applies to those who have been Christians "forever," just as much as to newcomers like Peter.

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## The diary of a cannon ball

JAD-BÉCHARA CHÉBLY, SJ

Beirut (Lebanon) – The Province of the Near East



***In a country hit by a deep economic and political crisis, as well as the tragedies of the Beirut mega-explosion and the pandemic, the story of a priest heartened by the strength of youth and faith in the risen Christ.***

Just days after the explosion, considered the third worst in the world, in Beirut on 4 August 2020, I celebrated

my sixth year of priesthood. On that day, however, the broken bread was not inside the Church: it was scat-

tered, crushed, shot to smithereens in the streets of Beirut. The broken bread belonged to the casualties



feeling I have, and an aftertaste of bile, a raw, burning rage and a sense of being imprisoned. Yes, imprisoned. I feel hostage to a never-ending present, the prisoner of a present which has no yesterday. It has been swept up along with the debris of a city that no longer exists. This present is cut off from any possibility of “tomorrow.” I feel enslaved by the oblivion of the present, this eternal beginning. Like a modern-day Sisyphus, I am forced to push *ad vitam aeternam* the boulder of a reconstruction that is no longer the synonym of life but of a death anchored to an endlessly repeating present, akin to a never forgiven sin. Reconstructing Beirut today is not about choosing life but choosing oblivion.

This year my priesthood bears the colours of failure, of a fall, a defeat, an enforced stay in bed, a radical change of life, dreams, desires, in short, an upheaval. The very upheaval

whom we counted in their hundreds! The broken bread was that lost old woman with a stunned expression on her face, squatting on the debris of what had once been her home. The broken bread meant the boundless smiles of our young volunteers whose generosity could only be compared to those words of Christ at the Last Supper that I, his priest, have repeated tirelessly for the last six years:

“Take this, all of you and eat of it. For this is my body!”

I am 43 years old, and since I came into this world, everything has been about rebuilding, accepting, rebirth, the marvel of a people who lick their wounds, get back on their feet, start to walk and forget, only to then repeatedly make the same mistakes all over again! Bitterness is the



that has just shaken the country has also rattled my priesthood. It has called into question what I assumed, until that fateful moment, were solid convictions, striking my priesthood down, for its legs, so to speak, have been shattered by a cannon ball. Simultaneously, this has laid waste to priestly ambitions, dreams and vanity.

My priesthood, my life, my commitment, my mission, my people and my country... are all caught in this whirlwind of a year with no end! The year 2020 began with the revolution of 17 October 2019 and still has not ended, if we count the disasters rather than the months. This is the year of every conceivable sorrow: revolution, inflation, monetary devaluation (our currency has now lost 100 per cent of its value), money stagnating in banks, a political deadlock in national government. Then to cap it all came two further setbacks: the explosion that destroyed Beirut and



our last hopes, and a pandemic which has reduced human relationships to timid smiles concealed behind masks and the fear of a death which stalks the labyrinth of the ruined, impoverished cities of a blighted nation.

This year, I celebrated my priesthood surrounded by sacks of rice and sugar, amid food parcels and pre-packed sandwiches destined to feed those who no longer have anything. This year, my priesthood is bit-

ter with the tang of scattered, innocent blood yet it is also seasoned by the spirit of love and generosity of the hundreds of young people who have responded to this crisis.

My priesthood is vested this year with the fullness of its meaning thanks to those young people who teach me today and always the meaning of giving. My priesthood has recovered all its meaning through an invitation to give without



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My priesthood has recovered all its meaning through an invitation to give without counting the cost or expecting anything in return.

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most awful part of the human condition, a path that leads towards an encounter. And even if the utter uncertainty of the present moment remains, it is accompanied, nonetheless, by the imminence of encounter. This encounter with Christ occurs through the young, those who no longer aspire to re-build but to create, who do not seek to repair but instead to build.

And in a Lebanon still prostrate in its bed, I raise my eyes towards Jerusalem, the place of all new beginnings.

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counting the cost or expecting anything in return.

And it has discovered its full meaning by vowing to dispense with the prefix “re” in “re-born,” and to jettison the “again” in “getting up again”. It has taken the firm decision to be born into the Life that can only flow from a genuine conversion that is triggered by a cannon ball. That ball then turns into an Easter moment, a present open

to a future that is radically different, a life that is radically other, that does not dream of immortality, or the endless eternity and Life with all the changes and surprises it brings. My cannon ball brings me face to face with my own understanding of the death and Resurrection of the Lord, of Christ, the Verb of God. He, who is the Word through whom creation was made, plants in the very heart of despair, the



## Love that restores dignity

GONÇALO FONSECA, SJ  
JRS-Syria – Damascus



***A personal account of taking part in a JRS mission in a war-torn nation.***

Syria has been, for me, a mysterious source of discoveries of veiled places of humanity and a genuine school of heart. I saw life and death, love and

hate, hope and despair, faith and fear dwell side by side in almost every instant of my days in Syria.

I have been guided through human landscapes that I never even knew that exist and my own geography of comprehension of human



drifter searching for a place to belong. The strive for peace and hope is also a pursue to recover dignity.

To restore dignity is a deed that entails a joint participation. It needs someone who, at least, recognizes the humanity of the other, so that his or her dignity is stated. JRS, by fulfilling its mission, humanizes those who are accompanied, served, and represented; and by humanizing the most vulnerable and deprived of their essential human rights, JRS participates in the restoration of their dignity while contributing for a more peaceful and just society.

This insight regarding the restoration of dignity was strengthened by a specific experience, a life experience.



This insight regarding the restoration of dignity was strengthened by a specific experience, a life experience.



being found new paths and transformed everlastingly my journey in life. Remembering the book of Hans Urs von Balthasar *Seeing the form*, on theological aesthetics, I believe this transformation comes from being transported by Love, the concrete love of God in the form of Christ. The Love that is patient and kind, and rejoices with the truth. It always protects, trusts and hopes (St Paul, 1 Cor 13).

*Love that protects* could be one way to interpret the JRS mission of which I have had the privilege to be part. The statement says that JRS exists to “*accompany, serve, and advocate*” the cause of refugees and other forcibly displaced people, that they may

heal, learn, and determine their own future. It plays an unimaginable role in restoring dignity.

Dignity is the quality of being worthy, honored, or esteemed. The first article of the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” from the Declaration of the United Nations in 1948, accentuates precisely that *all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights*. The Syrian war, as all the wars, and its devastating consequences ripped people’s dignity, if not their lives. When someone is dehumanized (i.e. deprived of human rights like liberty, freedom of expression, security, shelter, education, access to health services or basic needs) his or her dignity is negated and the person becomes a



In Syria, I did not feel safe all the time, but I always felt protected. Strange contradiction! In fact, the context has not been safe, and some situations I went through were particularly threatening; however, those with whom I worked – or I am friends with – always took on a starring role to protect me, grounded for sure on respect, but also out of love. Love and protection are interchangeable in their definitions. In my limited capacities I also perceived myself protecting – loving – them.

A very distressing episode led me to new understandings about restoring dignity. In a routine military check point, me and a couple of friends were stopped. Nothing unusual, but that day, for whatever reason, the military decided to extend the interrogations and requests of documentation in a way to humiliate. They searched, inspected and exposed, with the arrogance of “power.” I saw my friends, impassive, being ripped from their dignity and dehumanized. They were resigned to their fate. Me, terrorized, was getting ready for the same. I did not even think to protest. I knew that the consequences could be, at least, very unpleasant.

When “my turn” arrived, my friends realized that I would experiment the same humiliation they have just gone through. They rose from their dehumanization, regained their voice that was wiped off, stood between me and the military and protected me, despite the possible consequences of that rebelliousness. They, who have stoically accepted their fate, couldn’t accept that I would have a similar experience. Somehow, we all were let go unscathed.

A deep silence covered us. Shame, fear, relieve, incomprehen-

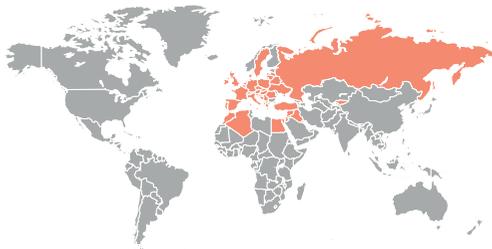
sion. Hopelessness wildly inhabited that silence that was broken sometime later by a nervous ice-breaking joke. I also experimented, though, a sense of beauty which I understood only later on.

With some “distance” but still coated by the emotions, I grasped the mysterious beauty from that event; by protecting me, out of love, they restored their own dignity that was ripped off just moments before; by safeguarding me from being dehumanized they upheld their humanity illuminating the dark paths of injustice. They became more dignified and more human.

I understood that Love also restores or renovates one’s own dignity. I understood anew how Christ, loving the humankind on the cross, not only repaired the humanity corrupted by sin, but elevated His humanity to the fullness of fulfillment. I understood anew that the course of my own humanity – and vocation – assumed new scales as, not only did I recognize myself all over again as a loved one, but I also learned new measures of love.

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## **“Adore and Trust”**

JOSÉ MARÍA RODRÍGUEZ OLAIZOLA, SJ  
Province of Spain



***An Ignatian Adoration initiative.  
A contemporary take on a shared  
thirst for God***

Two years ago, a group of us composed of Jesuits and lay people came together with the idea of setting up

a prayer meeting in Madrid. It was designed to be open to anyone: people of all ages and states of life. And

the idea was to reflect both modern sensibilities and the richness of Ignatian spirituality.

Regarding the first point – modern sensibilities – we observed that many young people were looking for places offering adoration. This is a type of prayer that not everyone experiences in the same way, but which does express the fullness of the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. It also expresses our need for signs, the importance of having specific places to meet up in, and an awareness that he is the one who unites us. That is why we considered this option right from the start.



This is proving to us that there is a shared hunger for meaning, for the presence of God, for intimacy with him, and also for interpreting life through the eyes of faith.



With regard to Ignatian spirituality, we chose to make this period of adoration a time of guided contemplation. That would mean it was not only a time of silent prayer, but an opportunity to pray with the Gospel in Ignatian fashion. Thus, it would become a time to embrace the Word, and reflect on reality through the eyes of faith, aware it is filled with God's presence.

Thus the format came together easily. Following a few words of welcome and an invitation to be silent, we begin with the preparatory prayer – which is always the same – and a petition which varies in each meeting. Next, the Blessed Sacrament is

exposed. Then, we read the Gospel chosen for that day, followed by a brief reflection or homily. Afterwards, a few prayer points are offered to help to guide us through the contemplation. These points, in the style of the Spiritual Exercises, are an invitation to contemplate, touch, feel, see, or listen to everything described in the Gospel scene. This central section is followed by a prayer or poem that we all recite together, and after that comes the colloquy. This is always a time to request or offer prayers or express thanks for what has been prayed for. Then, to wrap things up, a blessing is imparted to those present, and the Blessed Sacrament is replaced before the final song.

The music is very important. A group of Jesuits and lay people provide music throughout to help us to enter into prayer, varying songs featuring repetition with others more narrative in style. The entire meeting lasts 45 minutes. For the title of these gatherings, we took inspiration from the famous prayer of Teilhard de Chardin which reflects so well this balance between the spiritual journey, life, and prayer.

We began in October 2019, and the response, right from the start, was surprising. We held “Adore and Trust” meetings on Wednesdays every fortnight. Each time, more and more people turned up, until the church of San Francisco de Borja (*St. Francis de Borgia*) was full. And that's how we carried on for five months, until lockdown forced us to stop. We began again in September 2020 and the response continues to be positive. More and more people join us at every gathering and are finding through this initiative a way to pray. The themes each time allow us to go deeper into different aspects of the life of faith. Thus we have been able to hold meetings looking at vocations, forgiveness, healing, friendship, silence, the Beatitudes, and conflict. All of this is designed to help people afterwards in their daily life.

There are three very interesting community elements in this initiative. The first, as indicated earlier, is the diverse range of people who feel called to take part, something of a revelation of the richness of the Church. People of all ages attend, and they come from very different contexts in





Madrid, including lay movements, parishes, religious families, and various kinds of spirituality. This is proving to us that there is a shared hunger for meaning, for the presence of God, for intimacy with him, and also for interpreting life through the eyes of faith.

The second element concerns the sum of individual charisms required to form a team. The group who prepares “Adore and Trust,” comprises Jesuits and lay people, both male and female. The task of preparing the meetings, including the organisation, music, and inviting people along via

the internet, is shared out among the whole team. And that is how this is becoming an experience of service and mission where the talents of individuals are at the service of a joint venture.

The last element is its adaptability for other settings. It is remarkable how easily this type of initiative can be copied elsewhere. And in fact, in this second year, that’s just what has happened. At least two other Spanish cities (Barcelona and Oviedo) have started up their own events along the same lines. Due to this, we’re sharing resources and suggestions for prayer

between us, in order to yield greater fruit.

At the end of the day, the idea of “Adore and Trust” is simple. It doesn’t involve any new discoveries. It is about finding the balance between age-old formats and the vocabulary and issues relevant to people today. This is so we can fortify our faith and help our lives and missions be inhabited a little more by God.

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## Breaking the downward spiral of poverty

KISS FERENC, SJ  
Hungarian Province



### *Ministry among Gypsy people in Hungary.*

According to estimates made at the 2011 census in Hungary, some ten percent of the Hungarian population belongs to the Roma or Gypsy minority – making it the largest minority

group in Hungary. Roma and Gypsy people and families live in deep poverty in Hungary. That is why the Jesuits in this country participate in multiple endeavours to assist them.

The Roma and Gypsy people in Hungary were present among the many different nations and ethnicities that lived in these lands throughout the centuries. There were times when



a community with a positive ethnic identity instead of shame. In many cases it is difficult for these young people to go back home, as their parents might feel that they have betrayed the family, that their own children look down on them, since they got higher education. And it is truly a challenge to love and respect your parents when you can hardly have a conversation with them at a family meal, because they can't understand what you are studying or cannot help you with it. Often the standards and cultural level required in the capital are very much different from the normal way of living in the poor village where you come from. So when you go home, you feel you can no longer fit in.

The JRRC tries to support these youths to represent their ethnic group in mainstream society, so as to break the stereotypes and encourage these young Roma intellectuals to go home and to face the challenges over there,

they were met with suspicion; at other times they were sought after for the trades and crafts that they brought to the villages where they went. With the disappearance of these crafts and the evolution of the society from the eighteenth century, they were increasingly seen as a “problematic people.” There were efforts to assimilate or integrate them, more or less aggressively. During the Socialist era, most of the Roma men were employed (at least officially) and almost all children were schooled – although heavily segregated and receiving a lower standard of education than in the schools for the majority.

Even before the end of socialism in Hungary, mining and other industries shut down. Generations have grown up since then in deep poverty, living from unemployment and child benefits.

Breaking the downward spiral of inherited poverty and helplessness from their forbearers, but without breaking up the family bonds and those of the community, is the challenge that makes the difference between assimilation and integration.

The Jesuit Roma Residential College for Advanced Studies (JRRC) opened in 2011 for talented Roma and Gipsy youth who attend university in the Budapest area. The students not only live in the residential college, they participate in courses and community programs as well. The aim is to foster





and at the same time to help and motivate their own communities. Mostly, these families are Christian, and God is in some way important to them, but they do not attend church. One of our colleagues told us how thirty years ago in their village the old sacristan would chase the Roma and Gipsy children away from the church with a whip. There are many wounds to heal and much need for reconciliation. In the Residential College there are evening prayers and catechism groups, and the Holy Mass is celebrated; students and co-workers are invited. Hopefully these will help us grow together as part of the same Church, which is the body of Christ.

In 2020 the Hungarian Province also started to work in a village, Arló, to carry out the “Redeveloping Villages Programme” of the Hungarian government, which is co-financed by the state and the European Union. Our partners are the Charity of the Hungarian Order of Malta and the

Franciscan sisters who have been helping the people in Arló for two



To support these youths (...) so as to break the stereotypes and encourage these young Roma intellectuals to go home and to face the challenges over there.



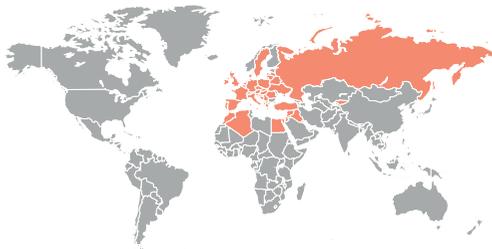
decades. Our program focuses on the families with children under the age of three. In many cases, by the time they go to nursery, the kids have lived in an environment that has not been helpful. Some houses don't have electricity, most of them don't have water pipes. The children have to bring water

home from the well in buckets. In the wintertime they also go out to gather wood. Quite often, families of six or eight live in a single room.

Our colleagues help in the local school and visit the families regularly. We try to show them possibilities, give them motivation, open places where it is possibly to study, to do sports, to learn to play music or dance, all this strengthening the community. There is also much work to be done for reconciliation between Roma and non-Roma people.

As Jesuits helping people to “see all things new in Christ,” we hope that the JRRC could inspire the Roma youth and be an important member of the ecumenical Christian Roma College Network. We hope also that we can be an inspiration and a good partner for the growing number of villages participating in the “Redeveloping Villages Programme.”

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## Building new bridges

LAURENT SALMON-LEGAGNEUR, SJ  
Collège Matteo Ricci, Brussels  
French speaking Province in Western Europe



***A regency lived at the heart of cultural difference:  
to teach, yes, but also to learn at the school of Christ.***

Regency, the stage of apostolic commitment in formation, is usually a period where Jesuits discover new things. A double portion of new things has

certainly come my way during mine. I am discovering a new country (Belgium), a new city (Brussels), a new community and meeting a great many

Belgian companions whom I had not come across after the EOF (Western Francophone European) Province was established in 2017. Like so many



of us called to leave our homeland, I am also discovering an unknown system of administration and political culture. And, as a secondary school teacher, I am learning to work in an educational system I knew very little about until now. Yet at the end of the day, all these new things are just par for the course in the life of a Jesuit.

about the creation of the *Collège Matteo Ricci*, the Provincial told me that he wanted to send me as a teacher to the new school when it opened in September 2019. On top of this came the context of the pandemic we have been going through since Spring 2020. This has also brought its fair share of novelties.

However, I am also dealing with another “first”, one which I was initially far less prepared to handle: the creation of a brand-new institution.

Barely two months after the first official announcement

So here I am on an adventure where all things are new, and in a state of constant flux. Should I take this as a wry invitation to see all things, which are already quite new enough, as even more new in Christ? Two levels of novelty are more than enough for my liking. Do I really need to add a third one into the mix?

Nonetheless, one thing at the start of this experience was not completely new to me. My appointment as a science teacher meant returning to the profession I had practiced for two years in France before entering the novitiate. However, the students I work with today have little in common with those I had eight years ago. Of course, time has gone by since then and now I am more acutely aware of the generation gap. Yet what has really made me



A portrait of Matteo Ricci, the Jesuit missionary to China, drawn by the pupils of Matteo Ricci School.

re-think my approach as a teacher are the immensely varied socio-cultural backgrounds of my current students. Perhaps even more than all my previous pastoral experiences, this regency is revealing to me the extent that the pedagogical relationship largely depends on the search for a shared language, on building a bridge to access a frame of cultural reference that the students may relate to and understand.

Eight years ago, I was working in a cultural milieu very like the one I had grown up in. Reaching out to my students was really not that difficult, and I managed the bridge-building in quite a natural fashion. The only issue was the generation gap. But the task I have today is much harder as three-quarters of the teenagers I teach originally come from Arab or African countries.

Where the culture gap between my students and me is most striking is in connection to the course contents; in other words, finding the topics that interest them, scientific examples that mean something to them, in short, awakening their intellectual curiosity.

What is even more complex (and sometimes, unsettling) is the view that students (and their parents) sometimes have of certain basic elements of education and the learning process. These include persevering with effort, seeing difficulty or failure as indicators of where progress needs to be made and, on more general level, the meaning and modalities of living together or of conflict management. Meeting each other halfway entails walking a fine line with both sides being continually called to adjust their views or rein in their habits. To sum this up, it is basically a constant call to conversion, as much for the teacher as for the students, and sometimes for the parents too.

The person of Christ is close to me in a special way during my teaching experience and practice. It is no

“ A constant call to conversion, as much for the teacher as for the students, and sometimes for the parents too.



longer about seeing all things anew in him but rather about regularly placing myself in the hands of Christ, the teacher and educator of the kingdom. Many parables, types of behaviour or situations in the Gospels as much as in the Old Testament or spiritual writings remind us how much God deals with us “in the same way a school-teacher deals with a child” (Ignatius of Loyola, *The Pilgrim*, ch 3. 27). In the course of my trials and errors as a teacher, I often find fresh inspiration and encouragement in God’s patience with me and his teaching through the stories of the Bible.

Thus contemplating Christ does not bring a whole third level of novelty to my life in Regency, which is already well-stocked with new things. What it does bring is something far better. It renews me in hope, patience and perseverance, the very virtues that I try to foster in my students and that I need so badly myself.

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## The Ignatian background of Filippo Grandi that forged his unswerving sense of dedication

FROM A CONVERSATION WITH STEFANO DEL BOVE, S.J.



*The UN Commissioner for Refugees shares his perspective on life and the world.*

To go through the biography of Filippo Grandi during an interview is an experience replete with surprises. There are many reasons to admire the

journey that, after years of serving refugees and a career in the United Nations, led to Grandi being elected eleventh High Commissioner for

Refugees at the 2016 UN General Assembly. In 2020, the Assembly significantly extended his mandate. Ideally, this interview should be read

“ The roots of the resilience and courage which are the hallmark of his working practice and professionalism are to be found, at least in part, in his Ignatian formation. ”

as the continuation of his autobiography *Rifugi e ritorni*. He wrote the story of his 30-year career in humanitarian work between Lebanon and Italy during the year and a half between starting his current post and finishing his previous one in Palestine with UNRAW (The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East).

In recent months, his job which includes everything from negotiating with the governments of different countries to visiting scenes of suffering linked to immigration, has been caught up with issues linked to the pandemic. In his thinking and his work, he has gone, if such a thing were possible, even deeper. The same is true of his understanding regarding the future of certain global developments.

In this interview, instead of exploring the countless interventions in humanitarian crises or the geo-political situations that are the staple fare of his daily mission, we have looked at his background, and the prime formative influences that shaped his future. We spoke of how his years of formation both signposted and laid the foundation for his future career, and still guide his behaviour today. He draws on them still in his current thinking about

potential key developments of the future.

Filippo Grandi recalls from his many years as a pupil at Jesuit primary and secondary schools one particular episode that symbolises the foresight of the Jesuit model of education. In the 1960s he took an entrance exam to secure a place at the Leon XIII bilingual (English and Italian) secondary school in Milan. Although only a child, he had a clear sense of joining a forward-thinking educational system that was fully equipped to draw out and foster the greatest talents of each individual pupil.

The Jesuits appeared later in his life at the international faculty of the Pontifical Gregorian University, the successor to the Roman College which, since its foundation in 1551, has been an academic institution. Grandi took the university's year-long course in integrated Philosophy,



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Only help that is offered for free can give hope to those struggling to keep afloat amid life's turbulence.

”

which was designed for students like him with a BA degree in humanities. Through his contact with those Jesuit professors, and the Jesuit priests in charge of the Brazilian College where he was then living (it being then the custom for the students at the Gregorian to be paired up with a college), he had the chance to hone the intellectual and philosophical tools

that prepared him to tackle the challenges awaiting him in the future. In addition, the Jesuits also helped him to reflect deeply on the meaning of life.

A third strand of formation also connects him to the Jesuits: his time partnering with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). This enhanced his experience of serving refugees through various agencies over the years that followed, and led him to work increasingly in this field with the United Nations, which he eventually joined.

The roots of the resilience and courage which are the hallmark of his working practice and professionalism are to be found, at least in part, in his Ignatian formation. The remainder is rooted in the faith he experiences through family life. His attitude of respect, service and kindness

towards others is based on a faith that acknowledges diversity and always gives priority to others during dialogue. This is a vital skill for his work with refugees from highly varied socio-cultural backgrounds.

His formation has equipped him for a complex working brief that involves holding in unison the most diverse political, social and economic factors, including the statistical measurement and interpretation of phenomena. In this framework, being able to offer help for free is as crucial as having the authority to act at just the right moment. It also ensures that humanitarian aid remains genuine, straightforward and free from the taint of corruption.

Only help that is offered for free can give hope to those struggling to keep afloat (at times literally) amid

*Camilo Ripamonti SJ, Director of the Astalli Centre, with the UN High Commissioner, Filippo Grandi.*





*The UN High Commissioner Filippo Grandi on a visit to the Astalli Centre, the JRS headquarters in Rome, in April 2021.*



life's turbulence. This is one of the key points of the interview.

But he has learnt many other lessons too and put them into practice. What is unique about the Jesuit method of teaching and pedagogical paradigm is that it explores all points of view, evaluating the potential and even the probable consequences of each one. It is also highly attentive to the complex interplay of historical events, and provides hope, fosters humanity, opens up new prospects and empowers people to begin to make new plans and dream.

One trait Filippo Grandi has borrowed from the Jesuits is a certain pragmatism: how to be lucid yet tenacious in dealings with the powerful on whose decisions the state of the poor is largely dependent.

He has to speak on their behalf and ensure they get whatever they need to survive in material terms. Filippo Grandi always tries to ensure in his work that he has direct contact with the lives and hardships of the people he helps. Unfortunately, not everyone does this. He explains: "There is always a danger that we may not see the people we are looking after. I'm always trying to find ways to do this and check out our charitable work on the ground." During negotiations, he often remembers his schooling which encouraged him to always seek creative solutions, blend courage with innovation, and uphold solid values, particularly honesty.

We also touch on a serious issue: by and large public opinion has lost sight of the great state of despair in the world. Meanwhile,

all too often we find ourselves facing situations including personal ones which, on the face of things at least, seem to deny there is a God. Only his solid formation and grounding in the faith have enabled Filippo Grandi to survive or rather to withstand these kind of situations without succumbing to despair or allowing this excess of violence and evil to cancel out or deaden his sense of hope and perspective on life. This too is a small yet grounded way of managing to see "all things anew in Christ." This, St. Ignatius emphasised, is an approach to life that is constantly charitable, compassionate and fraternal.

*Translation by  
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## Life Lessons

BERNARD PAULET, SJ  
He died in Paris, on 25 October 2020  
French speaking Province in Western Europe



*When he was named as the new Superior of the Jesuit community of Saint Ignace in Paris, Fr. Bernard Paulet decided to introduce himself to his community by sharing some personal memories which had led him to “see all things anew.” Only a few weeks later, he died of a heart attack. The impact of his memories still resonates, both in his community and further afield.*

## First memory – Haiti

While I was in Haiti, on voluntary service overseas as an agronomist, I was dispatched to a remote area of the bush. My job consisted of transporting pigs across the countryside in order to restock pig farms. There was one village which I had to return to from time to time on particular business. We were training people, encouraging them to work. I quickly observed a woman, sitting at ease at her window. Whenever I arrived, she was always there, tilting back and forth in a local variety of rocking chair. Her nonchalance irritated me. I went over to see her, saying, “So, grandma, what do you spend your time doing?” It was then that I learnt a lesson. I noticed that she was holding a rosary in her hands. She explained to me that due to an illness she was unable to move. Every morning, she settled at her window, from where, she said, “I watch the world go by. I see the village. I imagine everything that is going on and I pray. I offer all your work to God who is good.” End of story.

I shall never forget that woman who led me, just like that, right back to the heart of things. I had arrived there filled with a great desire to serve. I was already mulling over a potential vocation, having plans for great deeds. And, what that woman was saying to me was: “Bernard, do you pray? Will you ever know how to pray enough?”

## Second memory – In the novitiate

From an early age, I’ve been a reader, eagerly devouring the quality press. Long before entering the Society of

Jesus, I subscribed to the magazines *Études* and *Christus*. I was particularly keen on Emmanuel Mounier and had collected all his writings. I used to visit the Association of his “Friends.” Indeed, I was one of them. Yet as soon as I entered the novitiate, I had to let go of all that. In the hope of keeping the connection going, I did ask my novice master if, perhaps, my subscription to the famous *Bulletin* might continue... I should also confess that I dreamt up another even better solution. I scribbled a rough draft of a letter addressed to Emmanuel Mounier’s wife, whom I knew. In this, I deployed all my rhetorical skills to persuade her to offer a free subscription to the novitiate, purely for my own enjoyment. But I ripped up the letter and sent quite another which was frank and clean, cancelling my subscription without further ado.



Am I ready to die? Am I really that free?



I shall never forget the reply that arrived for me at the novitiate. No news of a free subscription. Instead, the reply was immensely thoughtful, saying in a nutshell: “For the reflections of one man to stay alive, they must help his fellow men to embrace their commitments with a whole heart, and surrender entirely to their own vocation. Good luck!”



## Third Memory – Réunion Island

This happened when I was now a Jesuit and living on Réunion Island. One day a sharp pain pierced my side and arm. I felt breathless and, immediately afterwards, rather worried: I had an inkling these could be the symptoms of a heart attack. Returning to the house, I asked the cook to call the hospital and ask the Jesuit Father there, an elderly man we had a high regard for, if he would kindly allow me to lie down on his bed. I lay there, waiting for the ambulance. Father sat down in a chair next to me and said nothing. I started to chat with him and he replied, “Do rest. I am praying that God may want to keep you and take me instead...”

I am thankful for those words. They were a lesson to me. This man was ready to die! I re-evaluated all I held dear in life. And that day I learnt to ask a new question: Am I ready to die? Am I really that free?

*Translation by  
Elizabeth Twiston-Davies*



## What is this for?

GEORG NUHSBAUMER  
Kardinal König Haus, Vienna  
The Central European Province



***A reflection on the process of founding the Jesuit Central European Province***

Give this a go! Imagine how you would feel if someone said to you, “You’ve adapted,” or “You’ve changed,” “You’ve

matured”? Each of those statements might affect you in various different ways, and organisations, when under-

stood as living social systems, react in a similar fashion. These three areas of adaptation, change and maturation,





crop up whenever organisations are helped through a process of change. That certainly was true of the process of founding the new Central European Province.

Being “at the service of the universal mission” is the goal guiding all reflection about and re-structuring of the Jesuit Provinces worldwide. Since 2017, the Provinces of Germany (Sweden), Lithuania-Latvia, Austria and Switzerland have been restructuring, on the conscious understanding that this means amalgamating into one Province. On 27 April 2021, the Cen-

tral European Province (ECE) was established.

Father General’s instruction that the point of restructuring was “to serve the mission better” helped us time and again to keep the process on track and focussed on our core purpose, and influenced how the restructuring was implemented. That is why the steering group decided to follow an organisational model comprised of four separate levels (see the MCV graphic) which puts an organisation’s *raison d’être* (i.e. its purpose) at the heart of all other considerations. Using this model as a basis gave us the chance to thoroughly explore the process from a spiritual angle. Our aim was to seek together whatever within the circumstances might prove to be God’s will.

The concept of mission as the *raison d’être* of the new Province of Central Europe was our compass, pointing us in the right direction vis-à-vis how to move the process ahead

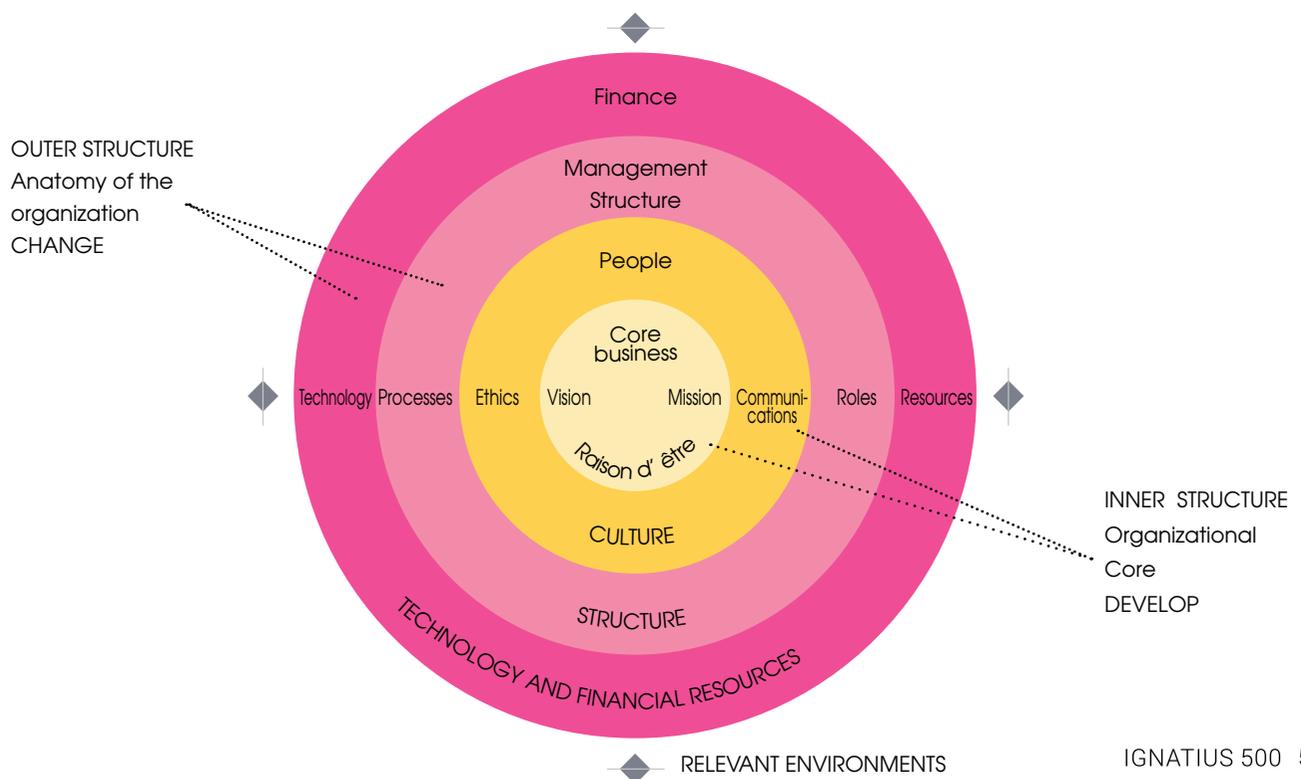


It was about combining 36 communities rather than four Provinces.



and set up new structures. What guided us throughout was the question: “Where and how can the presence of Jesuits and their partners be relevant and effective today?” We identified three major areas in response: spirituality, education and social/ecological concerns. These areas were formulated at workshops about the future and at a provincial symposium. That process and those areas played a critical role in the decision to organise the Province’s leadership structures around apostolic areas rather than according to regional criteria. At the same time, it became apparent that this preference for apostolate was not going to be established just the once through the

### MCV Organizational Model



creation of new structures but needed to become part of a continuous process in the course of all our planning and apostolic activity.

One concept that defined with particular clarity the process of transition towards one shared culture in the new CE Province was that it was about combining 36 communities rather than four Provinces. This is illustrated in the map specially drawn up of the

steering group met up in various places in each of the countries involved, and always held meetings to discuss the issues at hand with local Jesuits. A joint booklet was put together for saying Grace in all the languages of the Province: German, English, French, Latin, Latvian, Lithuanian and Swedish. One meeting for all the Jesuits in formation focussed exclusively on the creation of the new Province. Elements of Ignatian spirituality including silence,

discernment, community discernment, and spiritual conversation, were brought into the planning process and the meetings.

The innovations introduced by the new Province are particularly apparent in terms of the *administration*. One new feature is the role of the delegates who are assigned to the different areas of apostolate and Jesuit life. They oversee the overall mission of the Society of Jesus, the life we hold in common as companions on a mission of justice and reconciliation, the strengthening of our community life and positive co-operation with our mission partners. This is basically an attempt to configure the structures of the Province around the concept of mission. A great deal of time and effort went into setting up the legal framework and

developing a workable administrative structure for the new Province. In order to get an overview of all the new Province's resources, both at a *technological and a financial level*, an internal audit was held of all the communities, institutions and works. A working group

“ We identified three major areas in response: spirituality, education and social/ecological concerns. ”

implemented the necessary administrative framework for the Province.

In the process, it became clear time and again that in the four areas of the Province, various different steps needed to be taken at organisational level. Some things needed to be tweaked and changed. Many others will only develop in the fullness of time as and when new things grow and consolidate. However, the tension between these different steps and varying speeds of change was all part of the dynamic of the process. Nonetheless, with all this, an approach that allows this kind of journey to turn into a spiritual process is vital. This has required us to frequently deploy the art of discernment, have the courage to take clear, unanimous decisions and be decisive in implementing them. At the same time, the process demanded and still demands that all parties involved are open, have the ability to listen to each other and the willingness to trust and to get involved.

Although the Central European Province was officially launched on 27 April 2021, the process of setting it up is not over yet. Tweaks, changes and developments are still going on. The key question “what is this for?” will, we hope, ensure that we continue to listen to God's will in the process.

*Translation by Elizabeth Twiston-Davies*



new Province: it features the locations of the 36 communities but not national borders or the boundaries of the previous Provinces (see map graphic). This amalgamation was communicated and reinforced in several different ways throughout the process. The



## Working as a network yields miracles

ALFREDO INFANTE, SJ  
Province of Venezuela



**The work of the San Alberto Hurtado parish, Caracas, to tackle poverty and violence.**

*“Ever since we began to meet up to support each other and discern together, our understanding of who we are and what we are doing has changed. It is*

*like being able to see again. Having faith in Jesus and spiritual accompaniment have helped us keep going with our educational mission in the middle*

*of the violence.”* Marta Piñango, headmistress of the Luis María Olosó Fe y Alegría School.

St. Ignatius invites us to imagine how the three persons of the Trinity contemplate the face of the Earth in all its complexity and diversity. From this loving contemplation flow the dialogue and internal deliberation of the divine community. This discernment leads to a definite, salvific decision: “Let us redeem the human race.” Then, they decide to dialogue with Mary, the sign of human believers, so the Son may become incarnate, thereby showing us from inside our human nature and the depths of our wounded history, the fraternal path of the sons and daughters of God. That is why experiencing the Spiritual Exercises takes us into the life and mission of Our Lord Jesus Christ, so that by contemplating him, we may know him. By knowing him, we may love him. And by loving him, we may follow him, and by following him, we may be conformed to him, in the

hope of becoming transfigured and “making all things anew in Christ.”

This is the spiritual approach that underpins the experience we are describing here in the parish of San Alberto Hurtado (SAH) in Los Altos de La Vega, a large suburb on the south-western outskirts of the Venezuelan capital, Caracas. This brief introduction to the parish particularly concerns the SAH Educational Network.

To set the scene for us, María Zenaida Rosario, the headmistress of Canaima School, explains how this initiative emerged in the midst of violence:

“It was like being in a war zone. A criminal gang roamed the streets toting long-range weapons. It was an armed occupation. That year – the

end of 2013 and first semester of 2014 – everything changed for us in the neighbourhood. In response, the security forces came in with 500 troops, long-range weapons and war vehicles. Amid the cross-fire, it felt like the days were never ending.

Some families left the community. Others took their sons and daughters out of the area, being afraid that the gangs would recruit children, or even worse, that their children might be killed by the State and labelled hoodlums. The teachers were afraid. So the Jesuit Fathers began to accompany us very closely. We started to meet up in different schools to discern how we could continue our educational mission amidst the violence. That’s how the SAH Education Network emerged: it’s a mutual support network where we discern how to keep going with our educational mission and commit to life in



*Uniting in protest and prayer against violence and in favour of human dignity.*





the midst of so much hardship and violence. Although the violence continues, since then, via joint discernment and the support of our parish priest, we've come together as a group to discern our mission. And, after so many years, we've discovered that working together in a network makes miracles happen."

The first challenge we had to discern for our mission was how to turn our schools into safe spaces, free of violence. One image that helped us and is still helpful is the story of the film *Life is Beautiful*: a father condemned to death in a concentration camp manages to take care of his son's life, protecting him from hardship and violence. That gave us a great deal of insight and challenged us. We began to meet up every week to analyze the context of the violence, discerning the strategies required for us to continue with our mission, since we firmly believe that we cannot become paralyzed by these scenes of terror and death. On the contrary, it is very important to build trust and provide green spac-

“ It is very important to build trust and provide green spaces where our boys, girls and teenagers have the chance to discover that life is beautiful. ”

es where our boys, girls and teenagers have the chance to discover that life is beautiful.

The efforts we are making have been blessed by partnerships with other apostolic works of the Society of Jesus including the JRS (Jesuit Refugee Service), Andrés Bello Catholic University, the Gumilla Centre (CIAS), *Fe y Alegría*, and the youth movement

*Huellas* (Footprints). We have also enjoyed the support of social organisations committed to our dreams. Thanks to this joint endeavor, we have begun to tackle not only armed violence but many other types of violence. These include hunger, which we tackle through soup kitchens and donated food parcels, and healthcare, for which we provide medical day centres and extra supplies of medicine. Meanwhile, for leisure activities, the SAH Integral Pastoral Centre is somewhere children and teenagers can access sports and culture, including music, theatre, dance, painting and so on.

Venezuela has become a valley of tears, yet an energy for life that simply can't be held back has been released in San Alberto Hurtado parish. As a sign of the presence of God, it is calling us to "make all things new in Christ."

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## A new way to handle life and society

### The Loyola Centres' network in Cuba

LUIS FERNANDO DE MIGUEL, SJ (LOYOLA CENTRE, CIENFUEGOS)

MAITE PÉREZ MILLET (LOYOLA CENTRE, SANTIAGO)

The Antilles Province



***After a 60-year gap, the Society of Jesus is resuming its educational apostolate in Cuba.***

To observe that the works of the Society are devoted to education, formation in the arts or encouraging

small business ventures, is hardly original. However, this is new in the Cuban context, where for more than

six decades, education has been the exclusive preserve of the State. Meanwhile, Jesuit activity has been almost



completely restricted to spirituality and parish work. More than 50 years had to go by before the Jesuits and a wide-ranging team of partners could return to the field of education, this time round through the Loyola Centres. This apostolic initiative began at the end of 2013 in Havana, but soon spread to Santiago de Cuba, Cienfuegos and Camagüey. Later two other centres joined us from the neighbourhoods of Juanelo and Diezmero, both to the south of the Cuban capital. That is how the Loyola Network was established.

Each centre has its own history and is autonomous, but is trying, via joint projects, to turn into a place where people can mature into responsible citizens who, from a young age, are committed to their social context. They become so by developing human values and participating in civic life, and a stronger civil society. The list of projects and activities that we carry out is growing by the day, and includes

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What they experience here, almost with a sense of bewilderment, is the freedom to express themselves as individuals.

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extra school tutoring, training in the arts, languages and IT, social analysis and research, and work with families. We also offer training in how to set up small agricultural or manufacturing businesses, plus Ignatian spirituality and courses in inter-religious dialogue. The number of people we are reaching is also increasing.

Those who use the Loyola Centres often speak to us about the experience.

In state schools, they are used to a single, standardised, ideological form of education. What they experience here, almost with a sense of bewilderment, is the freedom to express themselves as individuals. Many make the Loyola Centres their second home. Gradually, from a place of reflecting on Cuba as it is, they adopt new, more dignified ways of interacting with society and life, and desiring societal change.

In the afternoon, some children and teenagers run into the centres drenched in sweat and still in their school uniforms. They are eager to discover something different to what they have experienced at school since the morning. They sense freedom, that there are new things here. Many are not believers but they discover a gateway into the Gospel and learn to dialogue with difference. This is crucial in the broken society in such need of reconciliation that we have in Cuba. Usually, the children and teenagers



offered by “the Church institution,” the permanent difficulty of offering education has faced new and additional challenges in 2020. The most complex? The impossibility of offering face-to-face training in a context where access to technology is patchy and obtaining local sources of funding is difficult. In the meantime, we continue to reinvent ourselves, establishing partnerships with the Society’s other education networks so we may continue to broaden our horizons and become more universal in outlook. This is how, through an educational project that is hopefully transformational and of high quality, we try to continue serving young people, care for the common home, and foster increasingly inclusive forms of social justice.

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are very poor in material terms, and they value the selfless help on offer; something that’s very hard for them to find elsewhere. The villagers who the Loyola Centre supports in their small agricultural concerns express similar sentiments.

Mothers, fathers and even schoolteachers notice the improvement in the academic skills and results of children and teenagers. This is linked to the extra school tutoring. They adopt habits of studying and reading, and show signs of behavioural change, transitioning from being aggressive, apathetic and selfish to becoming more secure and cheerful team-players. The families gradually get involved in their children’s educational process. Parents shift from a lack of concern about their children, to devoting time to their personal maturation. Sometimes this involves acknowledging the need for family counselling.

Across the board, those we help are displaying an increasing ability to work together as groups and learn about dialogue and participation on the basis of their strengths as individuals. Artistic skills are blossoming. People’s aesthetic sense is being educated, and, through a respect for dif-

ference, they are learning to appreciate daily life. We are witnessing the awakening of entrepreneurial instincts, and the generation of life-giving sources of income. The Loyola Centres have gained recognition and trust both in and outside the Church. Hence, growing numbers of State, independent, and Church institutions have formed partnerships based on the aims they share with the Centres.

In a Cuba which historically has regarded as suspect any service





## Being silent in action

STIVEL TOLOZA, SJ  
Director, The Ignatian Youth Network  
Province of Colombia



***Reviving youth ministry through an experience of silence, contemplation and action.***

Missionary youth work today is no mere fad triggered by the explosion of social media. Nor does it exist because Pope Francis, by dint of deci-

siveness and creativity, has potentially inspired the whole Church to notice the young faces in our faith community and the whole world. Neither is

it a trend because one of the Society of Jesus's *Universal Apostolic Preferences* concerns young people. No! Of course not! This call from God for us



to share our mission with young people is far from a passing trend likely to vanish at the first hurdle.

In this sense, the 2021-2022 Ignatian Year, seen in the light of its motto “To see all things new in Christ” entails an interesting challenge for the Ignatian Youth Network in Colombia. It’s a challenge that links it to the group dynamics that may arise with young people in numerous Provinces worldwide. Given this context, let us explore the following question: how can the Ignatian Year and its invitation to see all things new in Christ, shed light on youth ministry?

That question could be answered from many different perspectives. It could even bring us to a crossroads which requires a far broader kind of reflection. On behalf of the Ignatian Youth Network, however, we would like to share one response that relates to the place that experiences of *silence* occupy in the life of the young people who take part in our pastoral youth ministry.

Broadly speaking, many young people associate silence with boredom, monks and monasteries. You only have to look at how challenging

it can be to suggest a time of silent prayer during the retreats we offer young people in our educational establishments. Increasingly, we have to turn to films, games, both educational and spiritual, etc., to ensure that the retreats are not “boring” and therefore lose any appeal for young people.

Of course I’m not for a moment questioning the importance

these more didactic strategies have in helping young people to encounter their Creator, since all such methods can turn into useful resources for this purpose. However, I think it is worth considering the use of silence and its place today in young people’s spiritual journeys, and how such *careful listening* can end up being and continue to be an element in young people’s lives that may galvanise their own personal



conversion and then trigger their firm and courageous commitment to transforming the world.

I do not mean to say by using the expression “silent in action” that all future retreats or Spiritual Exercises held for young people should always be given in complete silence. That would be naïve. In fact, to be in silence, you don’t even need to be in a retreat house in order to hear the birds tweeting, or feel the breeze on your face. Young people can experience silence while travelling on a bus in the city, or while chatting, fraternal fashion, about life in a bar, during a long-awaited concert, or even – and why not – by taking a more contemplative, less superficial look at social media.

In the midst of all this, a pedagogy of contemplative silence invites young people to listen to their hearts and to recognise there the voice of God. He becomes incarnate in the



Ignatian spirituality can lead young people to listen to the deepest parts of themselves and become more open and receptive to serving others.



most sublime of silences, but also in the hustle and bustle of the routines of daily life. Whether it is experienced in a chapel or in the hectic cities we live in, Ignatian spirituality can lead young people to listen to the deepest parts of themselves and become more

open and receptive to serving others amid the challenges and suffering of the present day. That’s even more the case given all the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

What is new, therefore, about our approach here at the Ignatian Youth Network is the call to embrace silence in order to see all things new in Christ, within that silence where God is also revealed to us. Silence, yes, but one that is far from being passive, and further still from being complicit [with injustice]. This, rather, is a silence which becomes an *opportunity* to authentically live out, to a far greater measure, the creation of that future (and present) full of hope to which the Society of Jesus calls us.

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## Get up and walk!

ROBERTO LÓPEZ FACUNDO, SJ  
Province of Mexico



***A Jesuit contented with his mission in Jerusalem suddenly finds he is facing illness, isolation and death. He has to learn to see all things anew.***

Until last year, I was fulfilling the mission assigned to me as director of the Pontifical Biblical Institute (PIB) in Jerusalem and a series of immersion pro-

grammes for Jesuits visiting the Holy Land. Those encounters with the universal Society meant years of joy and pleasure. In fact, everything was going

well until August 2020 when I began to feel physically unwell. My legs stopped working and my body began to swell up in a grotesque fashion. I could not



walk, move or eat properly. I went to the hospital. The diagnosis was devastating for me and for my community: I had severe liver cirrhosis.

Within a few days the illness had begun to destroy my liver and was posing a serious threat to my health. But the diagnosis did not include treatment or any preventive measures, so I was sent to the infirmary for the international Jesuit communities in Rome, to look for options. I went for a week but ended up staying in the hospital for six months. There my life changed radically allowing me to see everything with fresh eyes. In the hospital, I had a very Ignatian experience which invited me to consider my life, all of humanity, the whole Earth in fact, from the contemplative gaze of the Trinity.

During my years in the Society I have lived out my vocation with a sense of certainty, albeit with some natural ups and downs. But I felt secure in what I was doing, my work, and my studies. I was fulfilling the mission I had received, and I enjoyed the community as a place of fraternity. Jerusalem is a place where the wind of the Spirit blows with vigour. The guid-

ed tours for Jesuits starting off in the Ascension chapel were a fantastic instance of universality, of showing the world of Ignatius and Biblical places from many different angles. I was moved by the devotion shown by Jesuits as they walked through the land that had so moved Ignatius. We were moved by the enthusiasm of the PIB-Rome students who took the intensive archaeology and geography course in September and their excitement as they turned up to study at the *Hebrew University* or the *École Biblique*.

For me, all this was an adventure, a passion, an immense consolation, until I fell ill. It felt as though both my legs had been smashed by a cannon ball, leaving me prostrate in bed for six months. This obliged me to rethink everything I had learned, and go from my head to my heart, following Jesus until the end in the style of Ignatius. All the consolation I felt went through a long, tranquil period, ending up as a frightening but real solitude; due to COVID-19, I was allowed no visitors, whether fellow Jesuits or other friends. The questions hit me suddenly, catching me by surprise: Why me? Why liver cirrhosis given

that I was not prone to drinking excessive amounts of wine? And why did the illness progress so quickly that it had led to me being on the emergency list for a transplant?

I had brought neither books nor a PC or an iPad with me... It was a time of Trinitarian encounter: the illness, God and me. But he seemed to be silent in my Gethsemane, and I, who had regarded myself as his friend, felt that I was fading away. He seemed not be listening to my friends who were telling him that I was sick. He seemed to be ignoring them just like Jesus did with those who came to tell him that his friend Lazarus was ill (Jn 11:3). My solitude turned into silence and my silence into darkness. My reasoning and my thoughts no longer satisfied me. Slowly I was dying, and my hopes darkened. In the hospital, displaying good humour helped me relate to others. The patients and nurses asked me thousands of questions and I answered them all. I assumed the role of the good Jesuit who apparently has all the answers. But for myself, I had none. Then one day I said to myself, "And even if you did have the answers, what use would they be?" And so, with

a chill in my soul, I abandoned myself into the hands of the Almighty amid fear, disappointment and loneliness.

Luckily, I got a third chance. A donated liver proved my salvation from Wilson's disease, the genetic illness where toxic and sometimes lethal levels of copper accumulate in the liver. Then, I sensed the Spirit opening a door. This gave me the chance to help others. I heard the confessions of the patients who shared a ward with me and helped them through the Sacrament of Reconciliation from my sickbed. I found the courage to listen to the private, painful and complicated stories of believers and atheists. And that helped life to be less distressing, both for me and for them.

All the solitude and silence I endured, my stifled cries of anguish, my fear of never seeing other people again, all this invited me to look over and re-

“ I had brought neither books nor a PC or an iPad with me... It was a time of Trinitarian encounter: the illness, God and me. ”

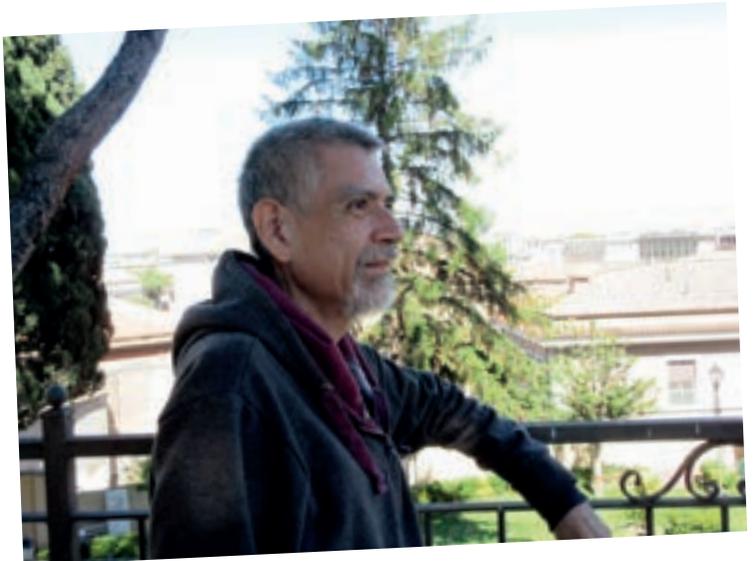
evaluate my whole life in an attitude of trust. I tried to put things in order, to forgive and to receive forgiveness for past wrongs. I allowed myself to weep, to laugh, to accept myself as a hardened sinner, yet one called by Jesus to follow him. I recalled the meditations of my novitiate on Ignatian-style indifference, on not asking for health rather than sickness, on accepting disgrace and humiliation. I learned to adopt

the humility of a patient who is unable to move and who uses nappies. At the same time, I sought to profit from mental prayer to seek, find and fulfil graciously and generously the will of a God who conceals himself in the moments of greatest anguish.

I have been praying and remembering the part of the *Autobiography* where Ignatius speaks of the time he spent in the Holy House as his family home was known. While there, and living in great solitude, he had his conversion. My only support and company has been the company of Jesus. Like Ignatius in Manresa, I have had my frustrations and long nights of prayer. And just like Ignatius, I have subsequently heard the call to get up and carry on.

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*Having faced his end...  
he looked once more  
towards the future.*



## The shoots of the rosebush: Life that is hidden and always new

Province of Mexico



**An interview of Brother Marcos Alonso Álvarez S.J.  
by Germán A. Méndez Ceval S.J.**

*"In every house I've lived in I've planted roses, because the wonder of seeing a plant in bud and flowering helps me*

*to pray. In the house here we have three small gardens, and just now as I wandered over to the roses, I realized that*

*they have flowered all year long, quite as if, what with the pandemic, they were saying, 'We're going to help the Fathers.'"*

For Brother Marcos Alonso Álvarez, who has been a Jesuit for more than 60 years, his experience of life as a religious has been just like the marvel of roses in bloom. In each of his postings the Lord has allowed certain buds to flower in his life and others to fade away, yet the rose has kept the grace of blooming anew.

The desire to serve others arose while he was a teenager. “I approached a nun, Mother Jacinta, and talked the idea over with her. She introduced me to the work of the coadjutor brothers of the Society. I met the brothers, saw what they did, and it appealed to me.”

In 1961, he took his vows. “Then I went off to start work,” [he laughs]. “That was how we did things then. I was a kitchen assistant mentored by the fantastic Brother Luis Escalera, who died recently. When I finished formation, I was sent to the community in charge of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Puebla.”

There, he was part of a ministry providing education to poor children, who, in a sense, were also roses trying to bloom. “I was there for 23 years. I worked in the mornings and in the afternoons, I studied accountancy so that I could support the ministry more effectively. For the last 10 years I was director of administration. With help from benefactors, we were able to keep the project going. It helped more than 1,000 children. We managed to get some businesses to offer the young people opportunities, because they could see they had received a holistic formation. We tried to provide them with the tools that would enable them to get ahead in life.”

“Afterwards, I was sent to the *Ciudad de los Niños* (City of Children) in Guadalajara. There, I supported 130 children aged between 9 and 12 years-old. They came from the street and found living together challenging. They were in a very bad way when they arrived, and needed affection. In

the morning, we would help them to study and in the afternoons we would organize sporting or cultural activities for them. It was really satisfying to see how their way of relating to each other and to their families changed.”

Dispatched to the city of Torreón, an area which is virtually desert, he then helped out in a parish centre that supported *ejidatorios* (members of Agrarian co-operatives). “I went from hearing the shouts of schoolchildren 24 hours a day to immense solitude.” Subsequently, he helped out in another parish as an administrator, minister and bursar: “I had the privilege of living alongside many immigrants who turned up asking us for help so they could keep going.” And so, for 13 years, he watched roses bloom in the loneliness of the desert.

Afterwards, he spent 11 years as an administrator and minister in the Peter Canisius community, an infirmary in Guadalajara. “Supporting our sick brothers and fathers was a lovely job, but heavy going. It made me very sad to see how some Fathers, who had been great teachers, preachers and missionaries, ended up alone. They were not abandoned but they were certainly very alone.” No, they were not abandoned. For they needed the care he offered them, just as roses that produce new shoots in the desert still need to be nurtured.

“Now I am here in the Holy Family community in Mexico City, as a minister and in charge of hospitality. I am very happy. I can no longer work the way I did before but I am still making an effort.” Due to the pandemic, the house has not received any guests recently, but anyone who stays in the community always comes



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I have always thought it so lovely that the Lord lived like this for 30 years and no one knew anything about him. That is how I feel called to imitate Christ.

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back with reports of a very generous welcome and tales of Brother Marcos.

His way of relating to the most needy, of working with a whole heart, is the fruit of the relationship he cultivates with God. “What sustains me is prayer, the Eucharist and the Exercises. For me, God is a Father who loves us all and yet I feel that he has a very special love for me. That is why he has given me the grace to fulfil my vocation. I am very grateful to God because, although I didn’t



deserve it, he has given me the vocation of being a brother. And the Society accepted me just as I am... it didn’t ask any great abilities of me. I am grateful that, as they emphasized in our formation, the life of every

brother is hidden. It is not highly visible in the world. I have always thought it so lovely that the Lord lived like this for 30 years and no one knew anything about him. That is how I feel called to imitate Christ. I’m not bothered about the limelight. What I care about is serving the Lord and being with him.”

“All things seemed new to him...” That was the phrase that Ignatius passed on to Gonçalves de Cámara. In this brief interview, Brother Marcos has made us a gift of his own insight or “Cardoner experience” moment. It implies trusting that God will always bring forth new shoots of life from a rosebush. If shared with the Lord, our life will never become routine. For the Lord never tires of renewing us.

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## A light sparkling in the Honduran shadows

ISMAEL MORENO, SJ (FATHER MELO)

Honduras – Province of Central America



### ***The Jesuit Social Apostolate for a new Honduras.***

*“I’ve never been inside a radio studio but when I listen to you, it’s like I’m hearing my own ideas: you’re saying exactly what I want for my country, for*

*my people. Then, I feel like I should be supporting a radio station which is so courageous, shows such solidarity, and inspires feelings of happiness, trust and*

*a desire to keep battling on. I want the radio to keep growing, keep bringing us social and political commentary, entertainment and happiness, and keep on*



sharing its love with people.” (Quote from a listener).

ERIC/Radio Progreso is our social apostolate here in Honduras, a part of the Province of Central America. Our approach is based on two major principles: firstly, faith in the liberating strength of the poor, and secondly, in the justice that springs from faith in Christ who makes all things new, no matter how seemingly sad or dark.

Radio Progreso was founded in 1956. The Society of Jesus acquired the rights to it in 1970 in order to support adult literacy via radio schools, and to promote liberation via evangelisation and education. We also accompany

ecclesial base communities (*comunidades de base*) and social and popular organisations in their daily hardships and struggles.

Meanwhile, ERIC, *Equipo de Reflexión, Investigación y Comunicación* (The Reflection, Research and Communication Team), was established in 1980 after the onset of the policy of “national security,” in Honduras. This led to the death and disappearance of hundreds of people who had articulated critical ideas opposed to official policies. Forty-one years later, ERIC is still going strong as “a witness.” In 2014, both works merged to form a single apostolic platform for communication and social service. The purpose was to render our work

for truth and justice more efficient in Honduras, a society trapped in devastating cycles of inequality, violence, militarisation, drug trafficking, environmental damage, corruption and impunity. One consequence of all this is the notorious migrant caravans who flee Honduras on unpredictable, dangerous journeys towards the United States.

ERIC/Radio Progreso is a social apostolate which, from a stance of faith, has a place in civil society. Our work is based on social analysis, political education and the transformation of culture. Our priority is helping young people to become a generation committed to faith, justice, ethics and peace. A society where all things and all



“A people that is organised and stands up for its values, for justice, is a people that makes itself respected” (Archbishop Romero). ”

of life may be made new will never develop unless it is solidly founded upon the creative energy of our youth.

ERIC/Radio Progreso is committed, as a social apostolate work of the Society of Jesus, alongside other national and international Church, popular and social organisations, to reversing the causes and momentum of death in Honduras. We do so as part of a Church that listens and searches for answers to the cry of the people. Thus, by recovering her prophetic dimension, the Church is able to bear greater witness to Jesus and his Kingdom, so that the glory of God may shine forth in Honduras, centred on the small hopes and struggles of impoverished women, men, young people and children. They are the most deprived social groups here, and the Jesuits of Honduras have opted through this work to commit to them.

Our central office is in the city of El Progreso, in the Valley of Sula on the north Honduran coast. But we have a nationwide presence, along with other partner organisations regionally and across Central America. Right now, by drawing on our strength in Christ, and together with other groups, we are trying to help in the building of a social, political, cultural and spiritual alternative to the current, elitist, corrupt and exclusion-

ary model of society, which causes inequality and violence.

We aim to fulfil this objective by encouraging a new generation to commit to ethics and politics, and also through partnership with other sectors striving to protect our Common Home. This always involves working to build and integrate a culture of peace and human rights into society, including via social media platforms and networks.

We carry out our apostolate with the support of local communities and the solidarity of those Churches and co-operative organisations that have committed to the process of transforming our communities. We are careful never to accept donations from

any individuals or businesses singled out by the law for violations of human or environmental rights.

Being devoted to defending the rights of the excluded, we appropriate as our own the enlightened words of Archbishop Romero, the saint and prophet of our time and social context: “A people that is not organised is a crowd and can be toyed with, but a people that is organised and stands up for its values, for justice, is a people that makes itself respected” (Homily, 2 March 1980).

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## Christian Vipassana Meditation

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Province of Japan



***An Ignatian path for Japanese people through meditation exercises using awareness not just of mind and thought, but also of body and senses.***

In the middle of our globalizing modern world, we Jesuits are called to show the way to God through

the Spiritual Exercises and discernment; that is the first of our *Universal Apostolic Preferences*. We try to do this

for people not only being attached to worldly materialism, but also being attached to ego-centeredness.



Eating meditation.

Meditation in Hiroshima.



However, we need to apply this Ignatian heritage through suitable ways in a context of inculturation.

For many years, as a Jesuit engaged in spiritual direction, I have been leading 30-day and 8-day retreats of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius mainly for training Jesuit novices but also novices and religious nuns coming from many different congregations. The Ignatian Spiritual Exercises aim to liberate the retreatant from disordered attachment and lead him or her to live a life resonating with God's will with a detached mind. It is not so easy for Japanese to cultivate a detached mind through the traditional Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, which were designed mainly for western people who are intellectually oriented. I gradually realized this point through the experience of directing the Spiritual Exercises to Japanese people.

Japanese mentality is much more oriented to the wholeness of body and mind. So, I developed

meditation exercises using awareness not only of mind and thought but also of bodily sensations and focusing on the senses in a nonjudgmental way in order to cultivate a detached mind more effectively. These meditation exercises are based on Vipassana meditation, which is derived from Theravada Buddhism. Vipassana meditation has now spread all over the world in the form of mindfulness meditation. This form of meditation calms the mind even in stressful situations and offers liberation from various mental sufferings and anxieties.

I use this form of meditation and call it "Christian Vipassana Meditation" based on Christian ideas and biblical thoughts. These meditation exercises are readily applicable to daily life. This nonjudgmental awareness can also foster an *agape* mind, unconditional love, which was taught by Jesus. And this meditation is quite helpful to make Ignatian Spiritual Exercises more universal and effective in concrete apostolic life and work.

The core of the meditation is "being aware of the here-and-now just as it is with no-judgment." More concretely we train ourselves to "being intentionally aware of sensation, emotion and thought in the present moment with no-judgment" so that we cultivate inner freedom and a peaceful mind. We practice this through different types of meditations. We start from meditation on sensations, then we move to meditation on emotions and thoughts. Here is a list of meditations: breathing meditation on abdomen and nostril, body scanning, hand moving meditation, finger moving meditation, walking meditation, listening meditation, looking meditation, eating meditation, meditation of soothing strong feelings, being aware of thoughts as they are, and meditation for *agape* to myself and to others.

I started Christian Vipassana Meditation in 2007 after I experienced ten days of Vipassana meditation in India. I gradually applied the Christian Vipassana Meditation



This nonjudgmental awareness is a way of separating us from ego-centeredness.



to 8-day Spiritual Exercises, and I found its effectiveness for cultivating inner freedom and detachment. This becomes a particularly good foundation for the “Ignatian indifference.”

So far, more than 2,500 Japanese, including not only Catholics but also Protestants, Buddhists, and ordinary people of no religion, have experienced Christian Vipassana Meditation through one-day, two-day, three-day, and eight-day programs.

Vipassana meditation considerably overlaps with agape, uncon-

ditional love, which is taught by Jesus and is the central teaching in Christianity. From the standpoint of Christianity, Vipassana meditation is recognized as being aware of sensations, emotions, and thoughts from the consciousness of unconditional love, agape. We accept our sensations, emotions, and thoughts as they are even though they might be very negative.

This nonjudgmental awareness is a way of separating us from ego-centeredness. Most of us are often caught up in ego-centeredness in daily life because we always think about our own benefits and seek pleasure and avoid pain. This tendency of ego-centeredness often happens unconsciously. Therefore, in order to get rid of attachment to ego-centeredness, Vipassana meditation emphasizes conscious and intentional nonjudgmental awareness. The continuous training of “being aware of the here-and-now with no-judgment” brings us to inner freedom and a peaceful

mind by being detached from ego-centeredness. Thus, the meditation cultivates agape in the depth of our mind.

After 13 years of experience directing Christian Vipassana Meditation applied in the Spiritual Exercises, I could say that this type of meditation might be an effective means to form Japanese people toward holistic integration of body and mind, toward being a person of agape, a true disciple of Jesus. I think this meditation is an instrument of inculturation which shows the way to the authentic God of love for the modern people in the Japanese society.

Christian Vipassana Meditation also opens practical dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism through three-day annual joint meditation sessions since 2017.

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*Walking meditation.*



*Breathing meditation.*



## Springing life to villagers

JÚLIO ANTÓNIO SOUSA COSTA, SJ  
Jesuit Social Service – Timor Leste  
Region of East Timor



***A social Jesuit project in Timor-Leste that brings water and the love of God to many.***

I am the present executive director of Jesuit Social Service – Timor

Leste (JSS-TL). In April 2020 during the upsurge of Pandemic Covid-

19, I went to Tocoluli, a village in Ermera district, where I saw a scene



that occurs nearly everywhere in the country. In fact, I was significantly disturbed as I saw a group of women carrying buckets of water heading towards their house. Minutes later, I got even more concerned as I saw a large number of students, kids in fact, walking towards a nearby primary school carrying 5 liters of water in one hand and books and stationery in the other.

As my curiosity grew, I looked for the cause of such a distressing situation. I discovered that like many other schools, that primary school lacked a basic water facility. Consequently, each student was required to bring 5 liters of water to school daily. These disheartened scenes promptly stirred within me a convincing call to respond to the need of these people. At once, our team decided to implement a water project in Tocoluli, and 5 months later, it was successfully completed. I feel great joy that the students and 62 households now already have access to clean and potable water. Tocoluli is one of 18 localities where JSS-TL has implemented its water projects.

“Normally we would go to the stream down the hill to wash clothes and take a shower. When darkness falls, it becomes really unsafe to walk uphill. Now it is easy because water facility is close to our house,” said Etelvina de Jesus, a mother of seven children.

“As a resident in this area, it was sad seeing the miserable condition of our people. They struggled daily even just for a bucket of water. JSS-TL water facility is such a relief and a life change for many of us, especially women and children. For years, it had been difficult just to get a bucket of water. Now it is easy, water has come to our door, like Jesus



Water has come to our door, like Jesus who comes knocking at our door to give us life.



who comes knocking at our door to give us life,” said Ms. Mikaela, the president of the Ermera Women Association.

Finally, hours of walking across treacherous cliffs and valleys for a bucket of water is over. They can even innovatively use this facility to explore potential income-generating activities like growing crops. Indeed, water not only quenches the thirst but also springs a new hope for a better life.

Besides public health, agribusiness, and social innovation, one of our main missions is to provide basic water facility to isolated communities in remote villages. As JSS-TL has been working on water project since 2013,



we also realized that water scarcity and poor sanitation lead to common preventable diseases like cholera, diarrhea, dysentery, hepatitis A, typhoid, and polio in the communities. These health issues could easily be solved just with the presence of basic water facility. So, our water project addresses the water shortage problem and generates a solution to social problems. It unites and builds strong bond among communities from different groups.

“Our village was once so divided due to personal interests and political affiliation. Thanks to JSS-TL we are now united and work together as one community. This unity is a life-changing experience for us and our children,” said one of the beneficiaries. These simple words echo the Jesuit vision of “seeing all things new in Christ.”

Since its independence, the Timorese government has been trying to improve the livelihood of its people, but the meager development and access to basic services are heavily concentrated mostly in the capital, Dili. People in rural areas are often forgotten and more vulnerable to economic exclusion. Consequently, even after 19 years of independence, some rural residents still lament that the independence only benefits urban societies.

It is the desire of the JSS-TL team to contribute, no matter how small, to the realization of the goals set forth by Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030. Inspired by the vision of the national development plan, JSS-TL hopes to participate in developing the country’s social capital, infrastructure, and economy. In union with the government’s vision, and with renewed zeal and vigor, we work in four key areas of social service that identify JSS-TL as Jesuit apostolate in Timor-



Leste. Our mission goals are ways to embody the social vision and the loving acts of Jesus Christ – our ultimate model for social action. Guided by the vision-mission and goals of the Jesuit Region in Timor-Leste and aligned with the Jesuits’ *Universal Apostolic Preferences*, we are poised to offer our services to the people of our country.

After being in JSS-TL for one year, I strongly believe that God is

present in the unexpected moments and among the ordinary people in our lives. Thinking back on my experience, three questions remain important in my mind: What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What will I do for him?

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## The miracle of the pandemic for Rhon

RO ATILANO, SJ  
Philippine Province



***Puhon online community: an initiative “in God’s time” that made it possible for a youngster to find Jesus and become a Christian.***

In the first installment in the Lord of the Rings trilogy, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Frodo Baggins, who was overburdened by the responsibility of being the ring-bearer, told Gandalf the Grey: “I wish the ring had never

come to me. I wish none of these had happened.”

“So do I,” said Gandalf, “and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All you have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to you.”

We all wished that this pandemic never happened and that everything would go back to the way it was. A lot of people have already lost their jobs, livelihood, and even loved ones. Economies have collapsed like never seen before. More and more people are getting desperate, depressed, and even suicidal.

But then, for some, this crisis is a blessing in disguise. Such was the experience of Rhon Lamurin.

After returning back from my Holy Land pilgrimage in March 2020, my twelve co-pilgrims requested that we should continue celebrating our daily Masses while doing our required 14-day quarantine at our respective homes and facilities. We tried celebrating the Mass online using Facebook, but it could not bring us all together. A friend suggested Zoom so that more people could be accommodated at the same time. She told me that her son Isaiah could help me. This is how I met Rhon.

Isaiah introduced me to Rhon, JJ, and Nathan. These four college students offered to host my daily online Masses for my co-pilgrims. They prepared the PowerPoint slides for the Mass readings on a daily basis. They also invited more friends to join. Over time, it has grown into an online community, which they named the Puhon Initiative. *Puhon* is the Cebuano word that means “in God’s time.” The activities have also



He was searching for God, but it was God who actually found him first.



evolved from daily online Masses to weekly catechism sessions and charity programs.

One day, Rhon called me asking me to baptize him. I was surprised. I did not know that he was not Catholic all those times while hosting my online Masses. He said he was inspired by my homilies and the presence and devotion of other Mass attendees. I decided to meet up with him face to face for the first time.

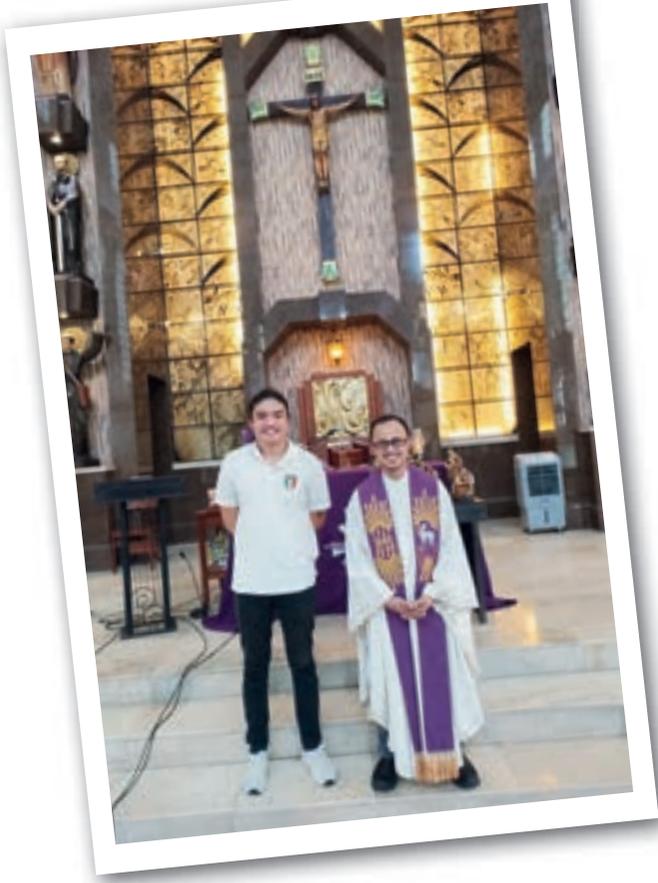
At that time, he was not in his best situation in life. He was just evicted from home by his own father for a misunderstanding. Rhon had to walk for 14 kilometers in the evening looking for a place to stay. His girlfriend’s family rescued him and booked him an inn. Rhon felt that it was the lowest point in his life. He had no money, no home, and no family. His mom was sick. He remembered the parable of the prodigal son, only that he was not the prodigal one in his own story. He cried.

I listened to Rhon, trying my best to console and encourage him.



*Rhon and his girlfriend, Bea.*

After pouring out his resentment, anger, and disappointments in life, he thanked me for meeting him in person and for giving him the opportunity to serve God. He said that he was searching for God, but it was God who actually found him first. He was lost, but the pandemic has brought him to the Eucharist – to God.



I was amazed by his story. I never thought that a beautiful and inspiring story such as this was unfolding before us while we were diligently doing our daily online Masses. I remember the invitation of Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation *Christus Vivit* and how he challenges us to listen deeply to young people and accompany them on their journey. Young people wish to be listened to more rather than preached at. It is true that the best way to evangelize the young is to show Jesus to them through our actions.

I don't know exactly how my actions or words have inspired Rhon. What I am sure about is that this is a miracle of God's grace. We were all struggling going through this pandemic, including myself. Yet, God continues to transform our adversities into something grace-filled in order to lead us back to him.

Rhon reminded me of the baptism. I told him that we would schedule the rite when things would get

better for him, for his dad, and for everyone.

A few months later, things got indeed better. During his baptism, Rhon shared that he has forgiven his dad completely. He has no resentment whatsoever in his heart but just overflowing gratitude. He thanked God how his story turned out into something beautiful in the midst of

a pandemic and how he was able to see all things new in Christ. It is true that, often, no one is able to stop a crisis from happening, but just like Frodo, challenged by the advice of Gandalf, Rhon has decided what to do with the time that is given to him. For Rhon, this crisis has brought him to God.

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## Navigating beyond boundaries

COMMUNICATION TEAM  
Province of Indonesia



***Delivering good-quality education to those “on the other shore” of the digital world.***

Imagine how St. Francis Xavier and other European missionaries back in the day established communication with local inhabitants.

It must have been messy and confusing in a foreign language. How does meaningful interaction happen in such circumstances? How did

they convey the abstract concept of Christian faith to the local people, and how did they adapt it to the local culture?



In his novel, *Mataram: A Novel of Love, Faith, and Power in Early Java*, historian Anthony Reid describes the love story, set in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Java, between a British crew member and a Javanese woman. Java had been acquainted with traders from Arabia, Portugal, the Netherlands, and China. While Hinduism and Buddhism were still dominant, Islam had begun to attract many, gaining the trust of the people. Christianity was still in the early stages of its introduction. To this, Reid adds the political rivalries of the palace, with the characters of the novel involved in overwhelming interaction. Sri, the Javanese woman, and Thomas, the British crew member, encounter each other holding on to

their own baggage. It is Sri who navigates the barriers of language, culture, ideology, and history. Courageously, she bridges the differences, reaching mutual understanding and maintaining the diversity in their lives. Thomas can see beyond his British comfort zone.

### Refugees and citizens

Elizabeth Maria Quendangen, a volunteer for the Jesuit Refugee Service Indonesia in Bogor, experienced that same puzzling but enriching interaction in this day and age. She is an Indonesian language teacher for refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran,

Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Congo, and Eritrea, with some of them lacking English language skills. Then she met Bashir Sakhizada, an Afghan refugee, who speaks Indonesian after living in Bogor for some years. He helps Elizabeth teach the Indonesian language to his fellow refugees.

“I’ve learned a lot from them, their customs, culture, the way they think and tell stories about their life in their home country,” says Elizabeth. Knowledge of basic Indonesian is necessary for the refugees in their interaction with the locals. The children master the language faster than the adults, despite uneasy interaction with the local Indonesian children. Little by little,





Despite the pandemic and shortage of online learning facilities, the teachers are not deterred from providing quality education.



they are able to easily move beyond borders and live together as fellow citizens of the world.

**Far, remote, and secluded**

Reliansius Pasangka, a volunteer with Jesuit Service for Papua, experiences the creative cultural interaction with his students from Public Middle School No. 1 of Tigi, Waghete, a small town in an inland mountainous area. Due to the influence of local language, the Indonesian language has several different dialects. Rely is aware of this different dialect he speaks with his students and had to take this into account to help them. They cannot write and read in Indonesian, not even do basic counting. The teachers rarely come to teach in this remote area, and the students do not learn much. The problem of access for remote areas contributes to this unresolved issue.

Bonaventura Jaqlin and Franki Dogopia are two of Rely’s students. They are happy and enjoy Rely’s way of teaching. They want to be teachers.

Rely supports his students with additional lessons after school and uses a projector to show the world outside mountainous Waghete. “Although I’m sick and tired, I want to be with them and to be the answer to their needs. I am proud of being with them when the others quit,” he says. He believes that the remote location should not prevent the students from dreaming big and having open minds.

**Pandemic and poverty barriers**

The pandemic caused chaos and disruption in the learning process of students in the Catholic Primary School of Kaliwinong, Central Java. The school is run by Kanisius Educational Foundation, entrusted to the Indonesian Jesuit Province. Teachers, students, and parents are confused with online learning. In this poor rural area, most parents cannot afford smartphones and internet plans for their children’s online classes. Teachers have to navigate skillfully between poverty and the needs of their students. They send the learning material

to the students’ houses. Then they give their lessons online for those who have internet access. The next day, they pick up the homework from all and can give additional help to those who were not online. Despite the pandemic and shortage of online learning facilities, the teachers are not deterred from providing quality education. In fact, they are more determined to take a more personal interest in the education of their students.

The mission of the Society of Jesus for justice and reconciliation asks us to see with fresh eyes the learning process as a cultural encounter between individuals for a common just good. Elizabeth is aware of the injustice and suffering of her refugee students. Rely is aware of the unequal access for students and teachers in remote areas. Confusion and poverty can limit online learning. Despite all this, their encounters are a journey of navigating differences and going beyond boundaries to reach a common goal – as citizens of the world and a people of God.

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## “Father, you have no idea what’s going on in a factory”

KIM TAE-JIN, SJ  
Jesuit Mission in Cambodia



*The incarnation experience of a Jesuit working anonymously in a factory alongside exploited workers.*

I met SreyTot on a Saturday in early 2016. She was a garment worker in TuolPongro industrial complex. “In

our factory we can’t go to restroom whenever we want to.” She added, “We get fired if we don’t work over-

time.” I responded angrily. “What? They can’t do that. It’s a violation of human rights! Go report to the



union.” Closing her eyes tight, she turned her head and retorted, “Father, you have no idea what’s going on in a factory.”

For many years, I used to visit TuolPongro industrial complex every weekend. I was getting closer to Cambodian laborers’ life, I thought. But SreyTot made me realize that I had been living in a safe castle such as church, a university, and the Society of Jesus. So I could not see the workers as they were.

In the second week of the Spiritual Exercises, the Son looks down upon the world and insists on descending there. Now I think I got a glimpse of why. The only way for him

to deeply understand, sympathize, and save human beings was undoubtedly Incarnation: to work and live in the same place and in the same way as human beings do.

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Labor workers were like fruit flies caught in a spider web.

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I heard the whisper of Holy Spirit inviting me to be with factory workers, but I was afraid. Not because of harsh working conditions. Labor protest in 2014 turned into a bloodshed after the government used military force, resulting in five deaths and tens of injuries. The government has been keeping a watchful eye on labor groups since then, especially on the foreigners who approached laborers.

In October 2018, I got a job at a factory. Nobody except the factory manager knew that I was a Catholic priest. During the first four months, I worked in a warehouse. When 13 meters high containers arrived, we would open the back door, unload large rolls of fabric, carrying each roll

on the shoulder. Later, I was assigned to a packing department where I put the final products into plastic bags, then into boxes, and moved them into a container.

Sewing machine operators were often forced to work 11 to 12 hours a day in order to fill the quota. They had to risk their job if they wanted to take sick-leave or take kids to hospital. Customarily, each line was given two restroom tickets. More than two persons cannot go to a restroom at the same time in order to keep the workflow going. The line-manager's coercive attitude made it difficult for them to exercise their legal rights to take sick leave or paid monthly holidays.

Labor workers were like fruit flies caught in a spider web. Poor, rural families send their kids to cities to make money. They lie about their age to work in a factory. Out of \$250 they earn working overtime, they send \$200 home. With this, their parents manage to pay off their debt, feed and educate the younger children. Three to four workers share a \$30 room and eat three meals from food carts every day. They leave behind home and family, miss educational opportunity, live a life bound to a sewing machine, spend their youth to get old, only to barely improve their

and their family's lives. Watching them in a factory, I realized what was essential for them: literacy, hygiene, health, and stable income.

In January 2020, I quit the factory to open a night school, RUOM (together), offering literacy classes. Laborers come at 6 pm after 10 hours of work; we eat, laugh together, and study Khmer alphabet.

Recently I resumed teaching East Asian philosophy at Royal University of Phnom Penh. My wish is that the student workers would continue to meet and pursue their activities on their own.

Jesus' Incarnation includes betrayal and suffering. So does mine. I thought spending time together with laborers had made me close to them, but I was a stranger after all. I have lived in Cambodia and spoken their language longer than they have, yet I could not be one of them.

As in Jesus's Incarnation, death comes at the end, dying of the former self. Through incarnation as a factory worker, my body was born anew. Syrigmus and insomnia that had been killing me for years were gone and replaced by shoulder pain and itchy skin, probably due to heavy fabric rolls and toxic environments.

I could not see before why they could not go to restroom, why they had to work overtime, why they got sick so often, why they drank beer, why they sang karaoke at the top of their voice after work, why they wore heavy makeup and revealing clothes, why they could not read and write, why they could not save money... On the other side of the wall, there was a spider web. Now my eye sees it. It became visible when I set foot on the same ground as they stood on and looked at them face-to-face, sweating the same sweat.

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## Antiracism in the heartland

The love of Christ impels us

WINNIE SULLIVAN AND LISA BURKS  
St. Francis Xavier (College) Church, St. Louis, Missouri  
United States Central-Southern Province



***Ignatian parishioners answering the call to fully live the Gospel as a multicultural, antiracist, and faith-filled community.***

The year was 2014, and St. Louis, Missouri, was making internation-

al news – for all the wrong reasons. A small suburb in north St. Louis

County, Ferguson, had been the scene of a police shooting: A Black

youth, Michael Brown, was killed by a white police officer, and the majority Black community had erupted in tense nightly standoffs with a heavily militarized police force. Daily protests blanketed the metropolitan area, in the heart of which stands St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, or the College Church, as it is more familiarly known. From that vantage point on the campus of St. Louis University in the city's midtown neighborhood – an integrated central corridor that serves as a demarcation between the predominantly Black north side of St. Louis and its majority white south side – parishioners watched the nearby events unfold and felt called upon to respond.

St. Louis has long struggled with its racially charged history. Similarly, the narrative of the Jesuit order and its institutions in St. Louis is complex. There's the legacy of slavery, i.e., the arrival of Jesuits in 1823 with enslaved Africans in tow whose uncompensated labor would be relied upon to help establish the Missouri mission. Juxtaposed to that legacy is a history of Jesuit ministry to Black Catholics in St. Louis, a ministry that



Parishioners are increasingly intentional about infusing all church activities with a spirit of antiracism.



encompassed, at one time, the spiritual care for the city's entire Black Catholic community. Among those ministers were Jesuit priests who championed racial equality and fought for the integration of St. Louis University, making it the first university in a former slave state to admit African American students. Grounded in this history, carried forward by a thirst for social justice, and informed by a spirit of reconciliation and communion, College Church parishioners formed their response to the unrest in Ferguson.

Following close upon the tragedy of Michael Brown's death, a group of parishioners – most of whom had been active in the parish's Social Ministry Commission – came together to form the Racism and Reconciliation Committee. While its members seek to deepen their own awareness and understanding of racism and the structural components of our society that preserve it, this committee has served as the primary outward-facing vehicle for the parish's antiracism efforts. It provides opportunities, for those within the parish and beyond, for education on topics related to racism; it plans activities to celebrate the contributions of Black Catholics; and it offers forums – frequently in collaboration with a neighboring, predominantly Black parish – for cross-racial dialogue. Among its most popular and recurring programs is the *Lenten Racial Justice Journey*, which extends the invitation to pray the *Examen* after daily engaging carefully curated materials (articles, videos, and podcasts) on the theme of racial justice.

By 2018, parish leadership sensed a need to direct a more focused scrutiny on the structure, services, culture, and environment of the College Church toward the goal of becoming an antiracist congregation. The lessons of the Ferguson uprising were sinking in, only to be compounded later by the lessons of 2020 and the serial killing of unarmed African Americans around the nation. To undertake this internal institutional appraisal, the parish created an Antiracism Team. With the assistance of the Crossroads Antiracism Training Organization, focus groups were organized to assess parishioners' views and experiences relative to racism. Members of the Antiracism Team underwent training, offered by Crossroads, designed





ing all church activities with a spirit of antiracism. “This is an opportunity to see how we enable racism and white supremacy, even when our intention is to be inclusive,” says Katie Jansen-Larsen, parish administrator. “We want to understand how we limit God and God’s abundant love and determine how we can more fully acknowledge the gifts of all.”

Developing partnerships has been a critical component of the growth of antiracism efforts at St. Francis Xavier. Collaboration with the North City Deanery, its member parishes, which represent the concentration of predominantly Black parishes in St. Louis, and the deanery’s Interracial Relations Committee has led to a greater awareness of the rich history of African American

to dismantle racism and made use of a self-evaluative tool to enable the process of change. As a consequence of that training, antiracism has been incorporated as a priority into the

parish strategic plan. Members of the Antiracism Team are exploring ways in which to conduct a parish racial equity review, and parishioners are increasingly intentional about infus-



Catholics and functions to ensure accountability, on the part of College Church, to the broader community. Productive relationships have also been forged with the St. Louis archdiocesan Peace and Justice Commission and its Office of Racial Harmony, as well as with other community partners who work to impact public policy in support of disadvantaged and marginalized people.

Inspired by its pastor's homilies that decry racism and mindful of the hard truths uncovered by the Slavery, History, Memory, and Reconciliation project, College Church parishioners strive to answer the call to fully live the Gospel as a multicultural, antiracist, and faith-filled community.

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## “Praying for the Church and the Society” ... and its “action component”

JAMES F. JOYCE, SJ  
United States East Province



### ***A Jesuit infirmary that has found many ways of “walking with the excluded”***

The Society of Jesus nowadays brings forth four *Universal Apostolic Preferences*. Though we feel at the Murray-Weigel/Kohlmann Hall Jesuit

Community in the Bronx, New York, that we do have a part in all of these, here are some of our experiences in “walking with the excluded.” Maybe it

is not the first image that you would have of a community that includes six Jesuit brothers and fifty-five priests who, for the large majority, have as

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Faithfulness to our mission certainly provides opportunities that continually renew our community.

”

their primary assignment *to pray for the Church and the Society*.

This phrase has been used forever in the catalogs of the Society for men living in infirmaries or whose health situation prevents them from usual ministries. And so we do, in our community: We pray for so many intentions recommended to us. Prayer for the Church is, of course, universal, for *all* the people of God. Prayer for the Society is specifically for our Order’s intentions. And in its broadest vision, St. Ignatius sent us to spread faith in Jesus among all, no matter their state or condition.

To keep our prayer alive, we stay up-to-date with matters of marginalized folks in the neighborhood, the city, the country, and the world. In fact, we have an enormous amount of international experience among us. We pray... and as far as we may be able, many of us seek for our contemplation to have an action component. Prayer and action open our eyes so that we can see further, deeper, more humanly all that surrounds us, with the eyes and hands of Christ.

Prior to COVID, we felt highly connected to our city’s Nativity model schools. Eighth graders from Brooklyn Jesuit Prep and from St. Ignatius School in Hunt’s Point, South Bronx, would come for Mass and lunch and then talk about their high-school projects with us.

And so, we have assisted in having the children of our health care workers and staff apply to St. Ignatius. One of these young women, a Ghanaian, received the *magis* award, top student for her grade in the first semester. Bro. Jerry Menkhaus also tutors the students there by zoom. Helping with disadvantaged students has also been a part of the work of Dan Fitzpatrick and the Brooklyn Prep alumni who fund “HAP Scholarships” for needy students at our area Jesuit high schools. We would also regularly empty our pockets of change and dedicate it to tuition assistance at the school. We invite our visitors to donate as well, and we collected \$5000 in ten months!

Many of the men celebrate weekend Mass calls at various parishes, many of which had a significant population of marginalized folks. A few examples: George Quickley to Harlem and Jack Podsiado with Garifuna people in Brooklyn and the Bronx. At home, Fr. Brendan Scott





teaches English as a Second Language to our workers, most of whom are from the Caribbean or Africa, and he helps prepare them for their citizenship tests as well.

Our men correspond with imprisoned people, including fellow Jesuit Fr. Steve Kelly, who is doing time in jail for activities opposed to weapons of mass destruction. In conjunction with a group of disabled advocates, and at the request of the state Catholic Conference respect for life coordinator, we made our voices heard to point out that doctors have enough resources to care for the dying without legalizing physician assisted suicide. Our state senator agreed that, if the bill were to reach

committee, she would bring forth the testimony of Fr. Myles Sheehan, M.D., who has been a (voting) resident here.

For very practical local assistance, Bro. Marco Rodriguez brings no longer needed clothes and other useful articles to Part of the Solution (P.O.T.S.), a multi-service program around the corner that was founded by Fr. Ned Murphy. Currently they serve mostly immigrant folks. Some of our men have served as sponsors working their 12<sup>th</sup> step for Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous, and some are available for Al-anon members, too.

We certainly have enough to occupy us in the *Universal Preference*

of “walking with the excluded.” Faithfulness to our mission certainly provides opportunities that continually renew our community. We feel that we are very much in the spirit of John Courtney Murray, Gustave Weigel, and Anthony Kohlmann, the three Jesuits for whom our community is named. Murray was a major influence on the Vatican II documents, particularly on religious freedom; Weigel was a pioneer in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue; Kohlmann helped establish the inviolability of the seal of confession in law.

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## To be actively and explicitly anti-racist

SAN JOSE CORE COLLABORATION (Collaborative Organizing for Racial Equity)  
Jesuits West Province



**The experience of three very different schools in Northern California, all fighting against racism.**

*“Anti-racist work has been of most importance at Cristo Rey San Jose. Doing this type of work allows us to have real and serious conversations with each other, educate ourselves, and find possible solutions and/or offer support to families within our community.” – America Banderas, 11<sup>th</sup> grader*



We long for the conversion of hearts and minds to demands of love and justice.



While San Jose has eight Jesuit works, we have traditionally operated in isolation despite proximity, serving overlapping populations, and sharing the same mission. In 2020, after joining to discern how to meaningfully live out the *Universal Apostolic Preferences* (UAPs) based on the needs of our communities, we understood that to walk with the excluded meant to be actively and explicitly anti-racist. Born of this discernment was CORE, Jesuits West Collaborative Organizing for Racial Equity, a toolkit and anti-racist framework used in Jesuit institutions from Alaska to Arizona. In San Jose, we have utilized this strengthened partnership to share resources, build relationships with local community organizations, and plan events aimed at educating our communities on anti-racism. In the CORE collaborative, we long for the conversion of hearts and minds to demands of love and justice; we acknowledge the work of truth and reconciliation within our own Jesuit ministries; and ultimately, we hope to carry out our apostolic call-

ing to build beloved communities of mutual belonging and universal kinship.

Jesuits West CORE anti-racist work has come to fruition at Cristo Rey San Jose Jesuit High School (CRSJ), a college preparatory school for historically underserved, majority Latino, families. Emely and America, two of our Ignite Fellows, intern in the Campus Ministry office as community organizers. They, with the *Impact Social Justice Club*, organized events to educate peers on systemic racism and taking action, including a training on how to have conversations calling out anti-Blackness in their own families and communities. Emely and America partnered with the local organization *People Acting in Community Together* (PACT), and were trained in engaging in 1:1 meetings and relational trainings, both designed to build kinship and network for racial justice. In turn, they have helped to train other high schoolers on how to hold such important meetings. Nine CRSJ

students partnered with Bellarmine Prep students to host anti-racist voter education nights in English and Spanish, to help Californians understand ballot propositions, and to address how systemic racism manifests itself in many policies. All 115 CRSJ juniors participated in a retreat using the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice sessions to learn about environmental injustice, immigration policy, and anti-racism, as well as taking action to promote the dignity of life through kinship, policy, and digital activism.

Bellarmino College Prep, founded in 1851, has traditionally served middle-upper class families. Despite achieving greater student representation in recent times (currently 52% People of Color (POC), 48% White), systemic challenges remain to achieve true equity and inclusion. This year, its faculty participated in reflection days focused on addressing issues of race, identity, and inclusion after reading challenging testimonies of POC students and

faculty. These conversations centered in the question: “How are we called to collectively foster genuine, respectful, inclusive, and authentic interactions among each other to create a unified, loving community that is free from bias and prejudice?” Furthermore, Bellarmine’s Unity Council, composed of students from various cultural, religious, and racial backgrounds, is organizing a student-led *Racial Justice Teach-In* to share their personal stories about race, engage in dialogue, explore equity and inclusion, and empower its community to act, impacting Bellarmine’s community and beyond.

Sacred Heart Nativity Schools (SHNS) serves historically marginalized, immigrant, and low-income families. All 82 middle school students identify as Latino and Black. SHNS teaches an anti-racist curriculum, woven throughout various subjects, to give learners the tools and vocabulary to critique racist structures and disrupt systems of oppression. Specifically, eighth graders delve into meanings of race, culture, and identity in a class created for them

to explore their most authentic selves before attending high school.

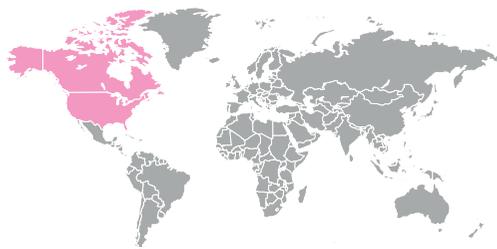
Although most work happens internally, our Jesuit institutions partner with and for each other in an effort to create lasting change. Amanda and Kelly partnered to create *Ignite*, a four-day conference for high school students to learn community organizing skills rooted in identity, power, and anti-racism to take skills back to their schools and communities. After *Ignite*, students from across the Province decided to implement CORE through the voter education initiatives mentioned above. Moreover, students are preparing to meet with California senators to promote just immigration

and housing advocacy. Additionally, Carlos and Amanda partnered with the *Ignatian Solidarity Network*, hosts of the *Ignatian Family Teach-In*, one of the largest Catholic social justice gatherings in the U.S., to hold workshops about diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism (DEIA). Carlos and Amanda presented *How to Build a Culturally Responsive Catholic Schools*; hosted a panel of DEI practitioners to discuss the graces and desolations of this ministry; and ran *Norm Setting for Culturally Responsive Conversations*. Furthermore, Amanda hosted a nationwide workshop centered on creating brave spaces for dialogue following the attacks on the U.S. Capitol in January 2021.

We are committed to continue this collaboration among San Jose Jesuit partner institutions in the work for anti-racism. Our goal remains to form youth and adults to follow Christ’s call to love one another and seek justice in society.

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## Beyond the fear

BIANCA LOPEZ

Cristo Rey Atlanta Jesuit High School Alumna  
United States East Province



I went into Cristo Rey Atlanta not wanting to be there because it was taking me away from what I knew. The fear of the unknown scares us, and it scared me because I had no idea where Cristo Rey was going to lead me. As time passed, I realized

that this was the right path for me to take and that, even though I did not know it, it was going to lead me to something great.

During my time at Cristo Rey Atlanta, I learned about the Jesuit

values. The idea of being a man or woman for others was something that stuck with me during my time at Cristo Rey. There are always moments in which I feel this principle because it is who I am. I have grown to be someone who reflects on

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Being a man or woman for others was something that stuck with me.

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her actions and how they impact all my surroundings. Now that I am at Boston College, those same principles continue to surround me.

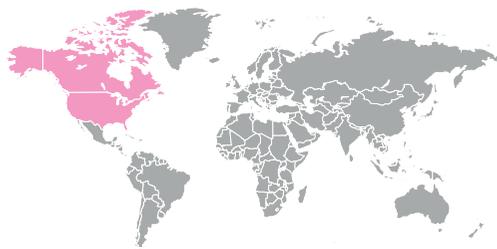
When I was younger, I wanted to be a doctor. Then, going into college, I was a nursing major, but realized that I was not completely in

nursing because I wanted to explore more. Now I am a sociology major looking forward to a job where I can use my skills to help people. I learned that dreams change, but they can lead to greater things in life that we cannot even imagine. I think back to when I was beginning my journey at Cristo Rey Atlanta and how I did not

want to go because I was afraid of the unknown. I felt the same way when I did not know what path I was going to take after leaving nursing. The fear of the unknown holds us back, but when we break past that, we are able to serve and be there for others.

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## She finally smiled

ROBERT BRAUNREUTHER, SJ  
Campion Health and Wellness Center – Weston (MA)  
United States East Province



I took seven trips to Haiti with Boston College Students. The final one for me was around 1993. It was our last day, before flying home to Boston. It was late morning, about one half hour before our departure for the airport,

and I was working at the home for abandoned children.

One of Mother Teresa's sisters handed me a baby, and said: "Father, get her to smile and she'll live." Talk

about pressure! I had a half hour to get her to smile. She was about thirteen months old and so beautiful. If you were to design a Haitian baby-girl doll, this is the way she would look: mocha-colored, silken baby



“Father, get her to smile and she’ll live.”

skin, lovely curly black hair, kind of chubby, with enormous black eyes. I walked up and down with her in my arms. Every time I would raise her up and put her face in front of mine, she would quickly glance away, avoiding any eye-contact.

Now, we had one old wooden rocking chair on the porch, and we would all take turns resting in it when

our legs were tired. Usually, you got about fifteen minutes in it. Finally, I got my turn. I sat down with her in my arms, and I started to rock. After a few minutes I would raise her face up to look directly into my face, about ten inches away, but she would, once again, quickly look away.

After a while, in desperation, I thought of a lullaby, in my father’s Palatinate (Pfalz) dialect, which he would sing to us when we were little, especially if we were sick. I started to hum it to her. Now, I am blessed with a deep, rich, bass voice, so when I hummed my chest vibrated. She was lying on my chest and she began to feel the vibrations. After just a little

while she started stirring in my arms, on my chest. I waited a little while and then I risked raising her up in front of my face. This time she looked into my eyes and smiled, such a lovely, sweet smile. I am tearing up as I write this for you. Success! According to the sister this meant that she wanted to live, and she would live. It was the first step in overcoming her instinct of having been abandoned. Hallelujah!

Our mini-bus came. It was time to go to the airport.

May God bless her, and the people of Haiti!

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## Accompanying youth in a rollercoaster

CALEB MWAMISI

Communication and Research Officer - AJAN

Nairobi, Kenya



***An initiative to educate and empower African youth so they can live purposefully.***

It is a sunny Friday afternoon in Eastern Nairobi in early December 2020, when a car ferrying a team of trainers

from the African Jesuit AIDS Network (AJAN) snakes its way through a muddy path to a primary school. Gun

shots will often rend the air in the area as police pursue criminals who retreat into the densely populated slums after

their unlawful activities. As the principal of the school receives us, she summarizes the task at hand but underscores the challenge that her students face daily: recruitment into Gaza. Gaza has nothing to do with Palestine but is rather a criminal gang known for violent robbery, rapes, and other mayhem in Nairobi and a few other Kenyan towns.

As the AJAN network undertakes to educate and empower African youth to remain free of HIV/AIDS and to make use of the gift of life to live purposefully, it is inspired by the gospel of John: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). One of its programmes, AJAN HIV and AIDS Prevention

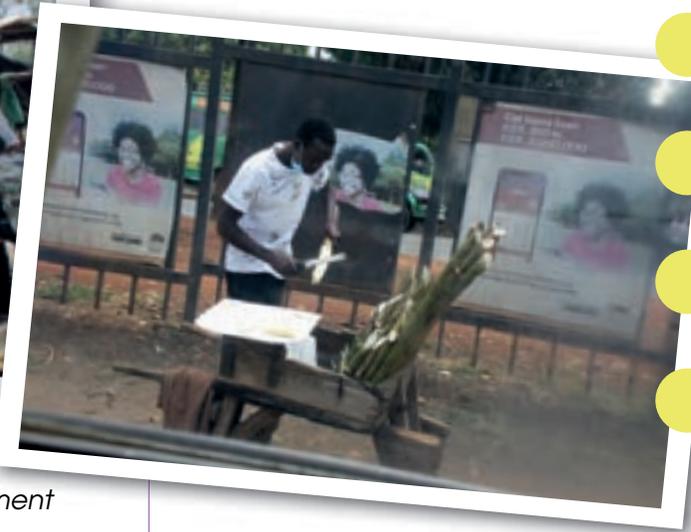
Programme for Youth, “AHAPPY,” is aimed at reducing vulnerability and contraction of HIV by youth between the ages 10 and 24. Through it, AJAN works to promote the holistic development and achievement of a young person’s fullest potential through *cura personalis*.

After prayer and introductions, trainer Steve Arodi begins to engage students. “How many want to share their life dreams with us?” Many hands shoot up with students expressing their admiration and desire to pursue such careers as aviation, engineering, and health, among others. “What can stand in the way of your dreams?” he probes further. “Ball,” says a boy, and the rest of students break out in laugh-

ter as the word used in slang refers to pregnancy. Many other threats to the realization of dreams are mentioned, as are HIV and AIDS, leading to a discussion about the causes, the spread, symptoms, implications of contracting the disease, prevention, and treatment of the disease. However, besides giving information about prevention of HIV, the trainer reminds the students that it is possible for an infected person to live a victorious life.

“Is there anyone here who can sing or rap?” another trainer asks. As the students hesitate to respond, he asks a related question: “Who is your favourite rapper?” “Tupac Shakur,” a girl enthusiastically offers, and she is joined by a few others shouting the





Young people face the threat of unemployment or work that is precarious.

same name. This opens further debate where the trainer leads the kids into critically dissecting the life of the said rapper. It emerges that Tupac was shot down in Las Vegas in 1996, a death which was attributed to his aggressive music and gangster enemies. Dying in that violent manner at only 25, the students agree, is sad and unfortunate. “His dreams were dashed,” another girl observes. The trainer allowed the young people to express themselves, taking advantage of certain interventions to lead the conversation to another level.

“Is there someone, you feel, that disappointed or hurt you at some point in your childhood or even more recently?” trainer Rosemary asked, shifting gears. After a little bit of hesitation, students weighed in, lamenting about their parents, teachers, boy-friends, girlfriends, and so on. Their disappointments range from neglect by parents, physical abuse or simply punishment, unreciprocated love, and so on. The trainer then gave an exposé suggesting that what may be considered love by underage people was simply infatuation. She further argued that a young person needed to understand their emotional self and develop emotional intelligence.

A healing session summed up the day. The students were allowed a

silent moment to review their lives thus far. They were then asked to look at their own actions and those of others and to write their thoughts. They did this sitting individually. They were then asked to consider forgiving themselves and others. It was a personal *examen*. When done, they dropped their crumbled papers into a furnace to signify the end of an era. They were then led in prayer by Fr. Ismael Matambura, the director of AJAN.

There are limitations to AJAN’s outreach. The absence of counsellors to help students who may have psychological needs is a huge problem. The fact that students spend most of their time in homes which are inaccessible to AJAN staff is a challenge. “Covid-19 has also impacted student lives negatively because being away from school means spending time with the wrong people. There are a considerable number of cases of pregnancies with some rather grim situations, like the same boy getting three teenage girls pregnant. We all have a herculean task now of rescuing the lives of the youth by changing their mindsets”, said Sr. Rose Macharia of Sisters of Mercy – Kenya.

“ We all have a herculean task now of rescuing the lives of the youth by changing their mindsets. ”

At the end of the session, Fr. Ismael asserted that “the healing session enabled students to reflect and find themselves and God. They could then make a commitment to living decent God-fearing and purposeful lives. This spiritual exercise has a cleansing effect on the hearts and souls of participants.”

AJAN visits in schools highlight the implementation of the *Universal Apostolic Preferences*, which invite accompanying young people in the creation of a hope-filled future and to walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice.

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## Strengthening and empowering

The mission of the Jesuit Urumuri Centre, Kigali

ERNEST NGIYEMBERE, SJ  
Rwanda-Burundi Region



***Journeying with the youth and marginalized towards a hope-filled future in Rwanda.***

The *Universal Apostolic Preferences* of the Society of Jesus and the theme of the 2021-2022 Ignatian Year are

at the core of the mission of the *Jesuit Urumuri Centre* (JUC). Founded in 1992, JUC is the social apostolate

centre of the Society of Jesus in Kigali, Rwanda. In its relatively short history, JUC has undergone transformation

and conversion. Thankfully, through the UAPs and the Ignatian Year, it is called, once again, to conversion and “to see all things new in Christ.” JUC journeys with the youth to create a hope-filled future, seeks reconciliation and justice for the poor and the marginalized, and works for the protection of our common home, thus, showing the way to God.

Rwanda is a young country. Recent statistics show that 40% of the Rwandan population are young people, aged between 14 and 35 years old with an average age of 20. The Rwandan youth faces many and intertwined challenges. Adolescents in high schools are confronted with the problem of school dropouts and high rate of teenage pregnancies. Young university graduates face unemployment and underemployment, which expose them to illegal or forced labor, prostitution, and human trafficking.



... they were pleased to learn that the contribution to the country’s development can be done within the construction of the kingdom of God.



In collaboration with AJAN (African Jesuits AIDS Network), JUC helps teenagers in high schools to change their bad habits, through programs that focus on good character formation. Forums on issues

such as HIV and AIDS, drug abuse, and teenage pregnancy prevention are introduced. Life skills, good and moral decision making, and social-coexistence are also discussed. These are done through a program called *AHAPPY Generation*. There are many stories about the positive impact of the program.

One school teacher described the program as God-sent. He told about a problematic student whose mother constantly begged the school to discipline him. Steps were taken... However, the needed behavioral change came after the student joined the *AHAPPY Generation* program. The once problematic boy is now a well-behaved, most animated, and creative student. This is one of the many instances showing JUC journeying with the young to channel their energy towards beneficial activities rather than destructive ones.





A female student testified that the program helped her make new good friends. Above all, she learnt how to fight stigma against HIV-positive members of her community and, at the same time, protect herself from being infected with the virus, which, sadly, continues to spread among the youth. Testimonies like these are encouraging and urge us to do more.

JUC also journeys with young unemployed university graduates for the construction of a hope-filled future. These graduates include citizens of Rwanda and Burundian nationals living in Rwanda as refugees. JUC has put up a *Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Programme*. Participants gain knowledge and skills that equip them for business, putting God first. In their testimonies they stated that they were pleased to learn that the contribution to the country's development can be done within the construction of the kingdom of God, and that they cannot reach their business goals without involving God. Learning of the necessity for fraternity and collaboration with others is another

important aspect of the programme. Young people need to dream *together*, in order to build a common and sustainable future without leaving or marginalizing anyone.

In this spirit, JUC supports those left to the margins. The Covid-19 pandemic threw many families into extreme poverty. JUC assisted the most hit families in suburbs of Kigali by providing food packages and funds to pay their rent. Many breadwinners of the families are street vendors, or day-to-day workers who could not do anything due to the total lockdown. These people are now being trained in baking, hairdressing, and tailoring. Among the beneficiaries there is a mother of seven who sold vegetables on the street and whose husband has been suffering from mental illness for a long time. Also a family man who said, "Imagine sitting at home, without a job, with 10 family members depending on you. You can imagine how helpless and hopeless I felt." These people expressed their gratitude to God and to the Society of Jesus.

Furthermore, JUC is committed to the safeguarding of our common home. For this reason, in October 2020, it held an African Great Lakes Regional Conference to mark the fifth anniversary of the publication of *Laudato Si'*. The goal of the conference was not only to keep the message of the encyclical alive but also to further disseminate its message among the youth, politicians, scholars, and activists who live and work in the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

All in all, the JUC's activities are geared towards strengthening and empowering young people and women. They are the ones who have a crucial role to play in building a society with a future filled with hope, where justice and peace prevail. They are our key partners in responding to the call we received from Christ, to partake in his mission of saving the world.

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## A Jesuit scientist and the Spiritual Exercises

JEAN-BAPTISTE KIKWAYA, SJ  
Province of Central Africa



*Experiencing science in a state of openness to the spiritual dimension in order to enter into relationship with God.*

I am an astronomer. Once during an interview in Los Angeles about Jesuit names being assigned to craters

and particular geographical forms on the Moon, a journalist asked me a question that focused my mind on

my identity not only as a scientist but above all as a Jesuit: “Why are so many Jesuit names linked to the



moon?” A French Catholic journalist also asked me the following question, along the same lines: “The Jesuits have always been a major presence in the field of astronomy. How do you explain that?” What emerged clearly from both questions was the link between science and Jesuit identity. So, is there a Jesuit approach to being a scientist?

I do not think that there is a particularly “Jesuit” way to be a scientist or in fact of conducting any other kind of activity. Science certainly has its own methods which need to be respected. Yet in my humble opinion, what a Jesuit does have is an attitude or unique interior disposition which defines how he practices his profession, and that applies, therefore, to science.

In answer to the first question, I referred to the sense of real-

ity and truth that experience brings to the process of acquiring knowledge. Both those things go beyond knowledge itself to open up other dimensions of life. The experience that someone gains when their starting point is knowledge of science and knowledge of their Christian faith brings him or her a certain consolation and reasons to live. This is the point where the various intersections between the experience of knowing God and experience in terms of scientific knowledge become apparent. In fact, if you go into acquiring knowledge of science and of your faith in any depth, you will find you are not facing a choice of “either one or the other.” Instead, both will help you to gain a better understanding of the world around you and your own life. The experience you gain, whether in the field of science or in relation to the faith, will allow you to understand yourself, understand

other people, and also to understand the world. What I observe about a Jesuit’s approach to science is thus an openness towards the question of transcendence in other areas of life.

As for the Jesuit presence in astronomy, first of all I explained that Jesuits are not only involved in astronomy but also in countless other fields of knowledge. I think this derives from the importance placed on “knowing” in Jesuit formation. But this does not only mean “knowing” in the sense of studying or acquiring knowledge for knowledge’s sake. That would be too external a process. In Jesuit formation, knowing is first and foremost about the shared experience of “living”, “being a companion” and “feeling”. When a Jesuit longs to know God, he does not try to study him from the outside. His aim is to enter into relationship with God and to live out and articulate that relationship.

The same is true of every other field of knowledge ranging from mankind to the universe. This kind of knowledge is intimately connected to an experience, which in turn enriches knowledge. The question to ask is what is the source for a Jesuit of this enrichment?

The answer lies in the Spiritual Exercises, St Ignatius's legacy to us Jesuits, but also to the Church and the world. Indeed, in the first week of the Exercises, St Ignatius invites the retreatant to consider the reality of their sin, and the restorative mercy of God. Once made a new creation, the retreatant can respond to the call of Jesus, who invites him or her to share his life and follow him. But it is impossible to hear this kind of call unless you spend a long time in the presence of Jesus, coming to know him intimately through the meditations and contemplations, and thus getting used to his "style."

This process of intimacy takes place in a conversational setting. The retreatant should not try to approach Jesus in an "intellectual" way, by viewing him like a subject to master and then convey to other people. It is instead more akin to a conversation during which the retreatant reveals the truth of who he or she is: their cultural background, personal story, knowledge, and questions. That is how he or she is called to "experience Jesus," something which can then become the basis of their spiritual life.

The Jesuit, meanwhile, structures his life around this experience of an intimate relationship with Jesus, who inspires everything he does, including



In Jesuit formation, knowing is first and foremost about the shared experience of "living", "being a companion" and "feeling".



his apostolate, his relationships with the people of God, and his studies. Thus, as a scientist and Jesuit sustained by the Spiritual Exercises, what interests me is the experience I acquire through practicing my profession. This transcends any "external" knowledge of my research field or the results it may yield to place me in a more universal context that encompasses all other aspects of life. These



include respect and love for God, for human beings, the world and nature, and my commitment to being what I am, a Jesuit and a scientist. And that is just what I dare to hope that everyone I come into contact with perceives in me, whether they are my colleagues, students, parishioners, or men and women from various places.

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## Crossing the frontier and making a commitment

ALFONSO RUIZ, SJ  
West Africa Province



***The Foyer de l'Espérance (Home of Hope) in Yaoundé, Cameroon.***

My name is Alfonso Ruiz, and I am a Jesuit priest. In 1968, I was sent to

Chad for my regency. For the past 23 years, I have been working with street

children and teenagers, initially in Douala and later in Yaoundé.

When I say, “street child,” I mean a child, male or female, who is under 18 years old and who lives, sleeps, works, eats, plays and does everything in the street. All their family ties have broken down to the point where they either cannot or will not return to their relatives. At this stage in their lives, no adult feels any kind of responsibility towards them. These children *are not in school but are being educated by the streets*, with all the consequences that entails for their developmental equilibrium. There are thousands of these young children and teenagers who are excluded from mainstream society, which ignores, and worse still, rejects them. In poor countries, these children are to be found in every city.

Street life is a *parallel society* that co-exists alongside what we call normal society. It has its own rules and habits, even its own language. And just as parallel lines never meet, neither do these two worlds. They may exist side by side, but they never actually converge. So, if you want to meet these children, you need to cross the *frontier* separating these two worlds.

Of course, this is a sociological rather than a physical border, but it is real nonetheless. Yet approaching the unknown is always a challenge for anyone settled into the “familiar” comfort zone of their day-to-day existence.

In 1998 after I had been in Chad for nearly 30 years, I was sent to Douala and asked to lead the Jesuit community at Libermann Collège. Almost straightway, I noticed the large number of street children begging near the school. Having a little free time, I decided to approach them.

That is how “operation fade-into-the-background” began. What am I talking about? Well, just as cigarette-sellers, the older street teenagers, security guards, trees, piles of rubbish, prostitutes, small restaurants on the edge of the pavement are all part of the everyday street scene and no one bats an eyelid ... I too wanted to just fade into the streetscape and become a familiar sight, even though I was white and in my fifties. I began to visit the streets regularly to meet the children. It was challenging at the start, but after a few months, once we

“ Approaching the unknown is always a challenge for anyone settled into the “familiar” comfort zone of their day-to-day existence. ”

had begun to get to know each other and build up trust, these meetings became something normal, natural, and even expected. So that was my way of “crossing the frontier.”

By 2002, my mission to Libermann College had ended. At the request of the Archbishop of Yaoundé, the Provincial sent me there to take charge of the Diocesan charity “*Foyer de l'Espérance*” (The Home of Hope). I have been its coordinator ever since. For the past 44 years, the stated aim of this charity has been to “re-integrate street children and young people and young offenders from Yaoundé into their families and society.”





As I like to say, this was a job that came to me out of the blue and for which I have had no training, yet it has proven to be a gift from God.

Our work involves trying to support the children for at least part of their journey so that they can re-discover what it is to trust, feel secure and loved. It also means witnessing the huge joy of an illiterate 12 or 13-year old when reading starts to makes sense to them, or watching children trying to juggle and learn other circus skills, and then seeing the happiness on their faces as they put on a show in front of other young people and receive rapturous applause. Another aspect of our work is going to meet the children's families.

Certainly, there are many success stories, but there are also failures, as happens when young people at key points in their lives make, once again, a bad decision. That is when we ask ourselves where we have gone wrong as educators. At times like these, I'm surprised to find myself praying, "Lord, we don't know what to do. Please help this boy. He has as much right to a normal life as many others."

Sometimes, receiving only silence in response is hard to take.

As Jesuits we often use the phrase, *To love and serve in all things*. But sometimes we do not really put this into practice in our lives. Nonetheless, what I can say, hand on heart, is that it would be impossible to keep going for very long at the *Foyer de l'Espérance* if we failed to really live by those words.

After all these years, my experience has taught me that the number of people who are really willing to cross that frontier and commit long-

term to these children and young people are few and far between. I've been hoping for years that the Society would commit to taking on the *Foyer de l'Espérance*. And I'm still waiting. Perhaps the fact our work is so close in nature to the Third *Apostolic Preference*, "Opening up Horizons of Hope for the Young," will facilitate this.

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## Rowing into the deep in Southern Africa

CHIEDZA CHIMHANDA, SJ  
Southern Africa Province



*The challenge of restructuring or rather inventing a new Jesuit Province.*

Older members of the Province looked back and regarded the restructuring process as nothing new. They recalled the work of Fr. Gonçalo

da Silveira, the first Jesuit missionary martyr in Southern Africa. He arrived in Sofala Province of today's Mozambique in 1560 and ended up in

the Mwene Mutapa empire, in today's Zimbabwe. Historians remember the great initiatives of the Zambezi mission team, which arrived by



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The movements of consolation in the discernment process have strengthened union of hearts and minds and deepened our commitment to mission.

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ship and made its way from South Africa, heading north, moving slowly on ox-drawn wagons and having to put up with serious battles caused by mosquitoes and malaria. Many of the missionaries died on the journey. In 1893, the Zambezi Mission was divided into two, with the lower part under the Portuguese and the higher part under the English. These were important founding initiatives of the present developments.

We are rowing into the deep in Southern Africa as we have revisited these early traces of the presence of the Society of Jesus in our region and we have now come together to form a new Province. On 25 March 2021 the Zambia-Malawi Province, the Region of South Africa, and the Zimbabwe-Mozambique Province were united to form the new Province of Southern Africa. This new Province is made up of the following nine countries: Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Eswatini, and Lesotho. Currently, Jesuits are present in five of these countries.

Some members of the Province did not find it easy to move beyond the present and the familiar. Having joined the Society through a particular jurisdiction, some companions highlighted the challenge of moving into unfamiliar territories, into new cultures, and into areas with foreign languages. They felt more comfort in their familiar territories, communities, and works.

Perhaps when discussions about the restructuring of Province boundaries were introduced after General Congregation 35, some companions in southern Africa never thought that our Provinces would be part of this process. We focused instead on the steady increase of vocations. Initial resistances we experienced were along nationalist lines. Some companions complained that the creation of a new Province

would result in a loss of local identities and achievements.

Our discernment process took us through moments of consolation and desolation. Some companions expressed their uneasiness with the restructuring process, regarding it as having been imposed on them. Others resigned themselves to the reality with the hope that they will not be moved to new spaces. Others,



on the other hand, expressed great joy at being brought into closer union with the rest of the companions in southern Africa. They were happy to go beyond national boundaries and experience the international dimension of the Jesuit vocation. The movements of consolation in the discernment process have strengthened union of hearts and minds and deepened our commitment to mission.

An important lesson we all learnt in this process was to listen to each other attentively. We had to have the courage to handle difficult and emotional conversations, but at the end of the day we remained open to embrace the mission of the Lord. It was when we embraced the whole exercise as the mission of the Society of Jesus that we were able to overcome personal attachments and, then, were able to see and to respond to the invitation to the *magis*.

During the Ignatian Year, we have the opportunity to look at everything through new eyes. We became a

big diverse Province made up of nine countries. There was fear of being lost or forgotten in that new big pot, but there was also joy of new experiences and new opportunities. Guided by the *Universal Apostolic Preferences*, we have an opportunity to be renewed and to be re-missioned in our new Province. Many refugees and economic migrants travel long distances in search of greener pastures in South Africa. As we have become a bigger Province, we now have the opportunity to draw on the expertise of a wider pool of companions as we set up our desk which will handle issues of migration. This new initiative will bring us closer to the vulnerable. The new Province has an opportunity to participate in promoting the care of the environment as we will respond to the impact of deforestation, mining, and global warming. The Society of Jesus in Southern Africa will accompany many young people through Ignatian spirituality as they seek meaning in life and as they make decisions in their lives. The support for young people which used to be

provided within the extended family networks is no longer available because of broken family structures. Through our schools and through the youth ministry, we will have contact with many young people.

Our partners in mission were not involved much in this discernment process. Perhaps this was a reflection of our own discomfort and fear about the restructuring process. Now that the new Province has been inaugurated, we have not left our partners in mission behind. They too had anxieties and fears. We are journeying with them peacefully.

Initial teething problems were embraced with courage and faith as we constantly reminded each other that there are now new ways of doing things in the new Province. The change will be gradual. The wheel is turning. We are rowing into the deep.

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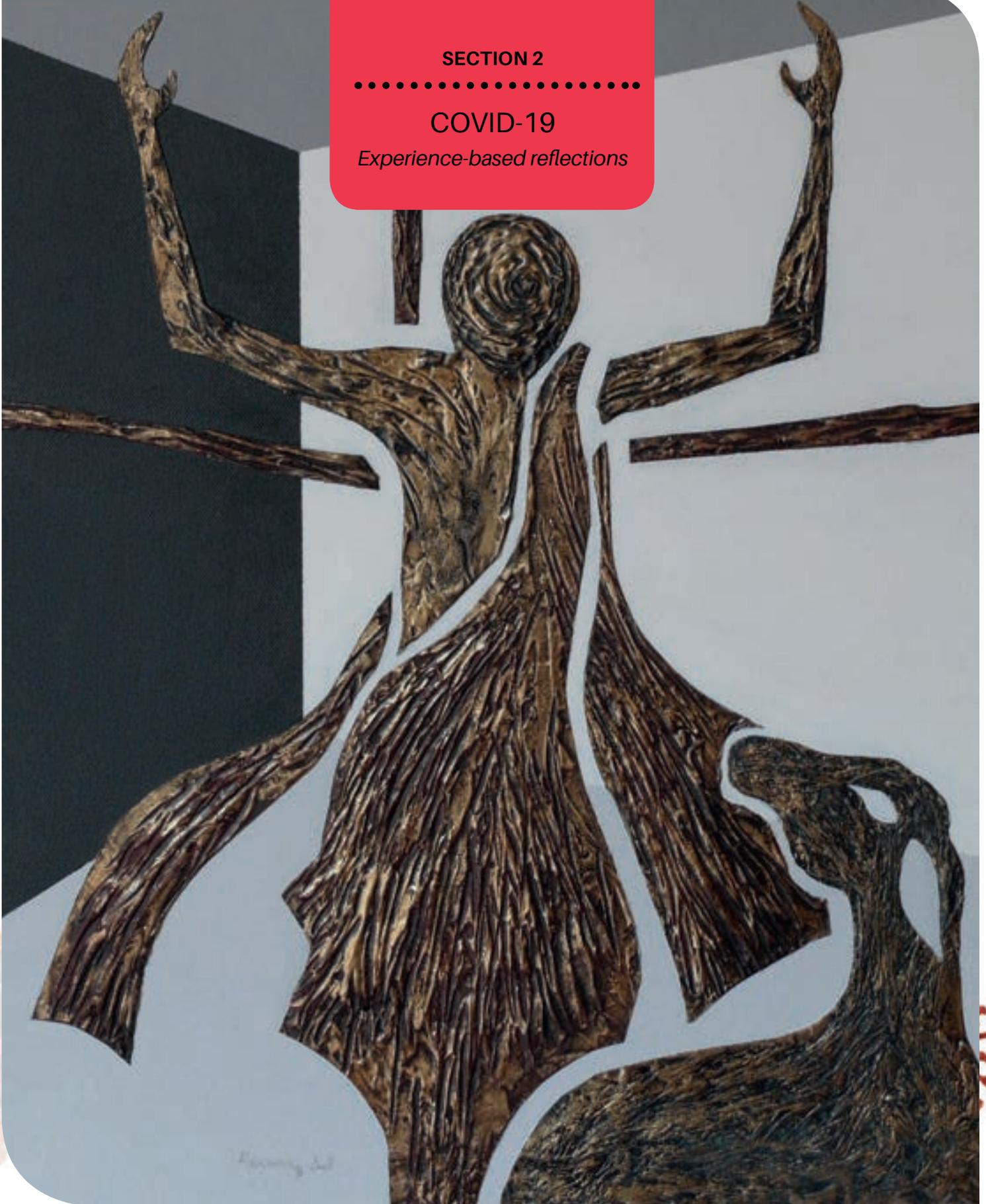


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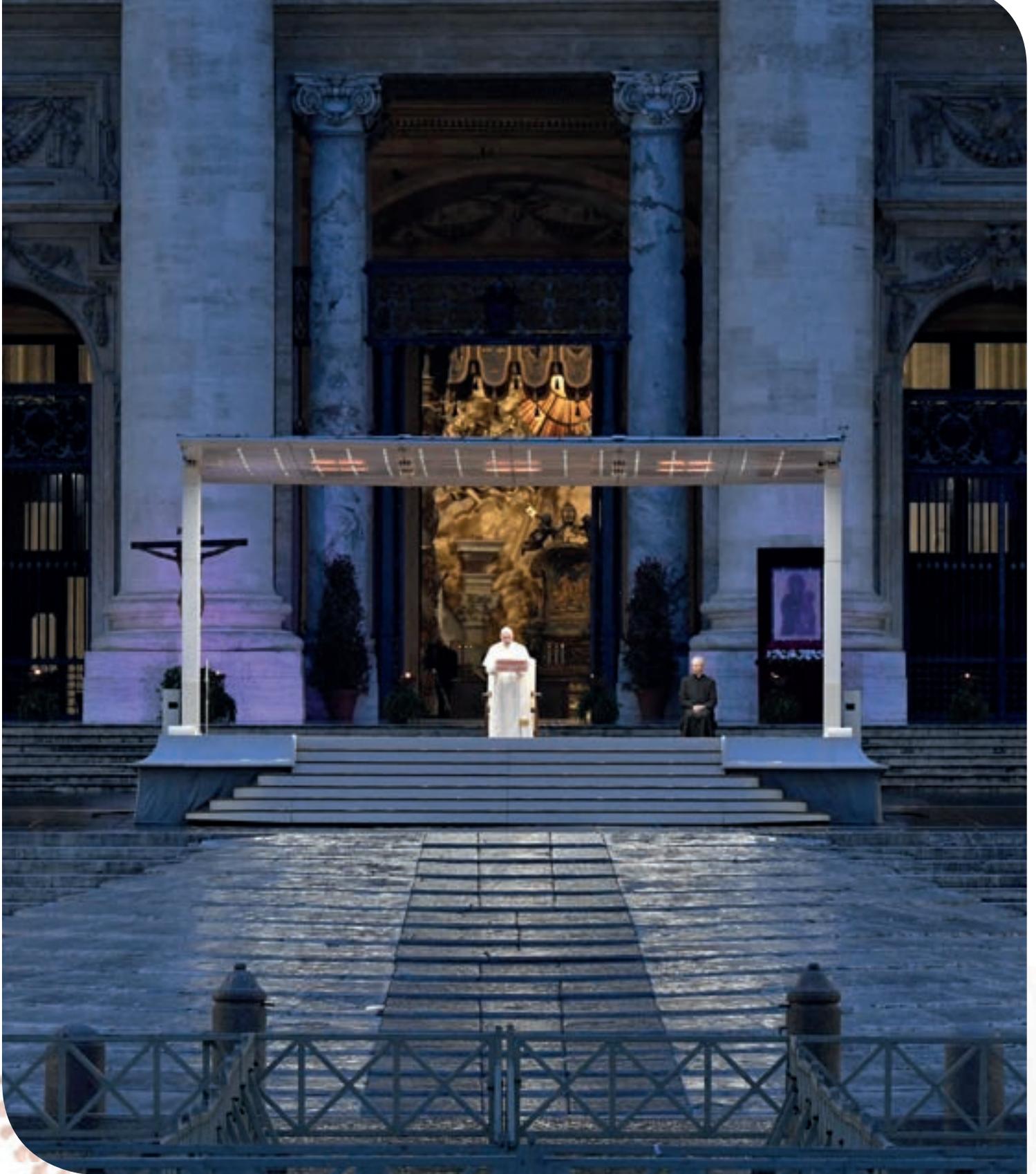
COVID-19

*Experience-based reflections*



*Resurrection*

Alexandre Raimundo De Souza, SJ (Brazil)



“ We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. ”

Courtesy: *America Magazine*,  
USA

(Pope Francis – 27 March 2020)



## Covid-19 and the UAPs

The connection is closer than it looks

PIERRE DE CHARENTENAY, SJ  
French speaking Province in Western Europe



***In the context of Covid-19, the Society of Jesus is inviting us to reflect on the nature of our development and its impact.***

At first glance, the Coronavirus which has brought the world to its knees has little in common with the

*Universal Apostolic Preferences* of the Society of Jesus suggested by Father General Arturo Sosa. This virus

appears to be a scientific rather than a spiritual issue, and the required response also a question involving



The pandemic is urging us to rediscover authentic faith by pursuing Christ, just like a pilgrim who is searching for his route.



medicine, via the vaccines, the economy, via financial support packages for the businesses affected, and politics, in terms of the tough decisions that must be taken.

Yet the truth is rather different, because the virus is not just a medical, financial and political problem. The massive impact it is having all over the world is the result of a shift in our development which has radically changed the nature of creation. In the first place, biodiversity and the relationship between human beings and nature have gone through such a radical change in recent years that species of wildlife, with all the viruses they carry, are now in direct contact with human beings – hence the origin of the transmission of the virus. Secondly, globalization and rapid non-stop travel to just about every point on the planet is spreading the epidemic at a speed that is out of control.

Covid-19 is raising questions about the nature and impact of our development. All these questions have been addressed by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*. This is where the Society's *Universal Apostolic Preferences* come in and have something to say to us, since *Laudato Si'* does not only talk of creation, but also of man's relationship with God, with nature and his fellow human beings. In other words, this encyclical is a source of inspira-

tion for the Society of Jesus, and the *Universal Apostolic Preferences* are a response to this aspiration.

As Father Philip Endean explained to us magnificently in a conference about the UAPs, they are not only potential action points. Above all they are intuitions. As such, they do not necessarily need to be brought to life in the form of specialized institutions. The desire for efficiency so typical of the Jesuits often leads us to evaluate our activities in terms of the institutions we run, with a view to

obtaining tangible results, influencing policy and starting a social movement that can change things.

There is absolutely no doubt that this was true of the 2003 preferences or apostolic priorities formulated by Fr. Kolvenbach. The five areas he sought to draw our attention to were Africa, China, the intellectual apostolate, the Society's educational establishments in Rome and refugees. Obviously, these remain important issues today and we should not neglect them. But what the new



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*The Four Universal Apostolic Preferences*  
 Guy Savi S.J. – West Africa Province.

*Apostolic Preferences* suggested by Fr. Arturo Sosa ask for is an approach that goes way beyond action and institutions, and comes prior to and transcends any sense of having “something to do.”

What this means is embarking on a process of personal transformation that enables us to follow through ideas that we can later share with others. We can help in the fight against Covid-19 if we take the first *Preference* seriously: showing the path to God in the light of discernment. It is our duty to re-centre our lives on God, his creation and our all-important relationship with Christ, and step back from consumerism. Rites which endow us with a false sense of security will not protect us from the virus. On the contrary, the pandemic is urging us to rediscover authentic faith by pursuing Christ, just like a pilgrim who is searching for his route.

By inviting us to show increasing care for the poor and excluded who are not treated with dignity, the UAPs ask us to centre our lives even more around the main victims of Covid-19: the elderly, migrants who lack access to healthcare, and everyone who is isolated and feeling immensely lonely. The various lockdowns imposed upon us are requiring us to form new social networks using all the means available to us through modern technology, starting quite simply with the telephone.

The third *Preference* invites us to focus on the younger generations and re-awaken their zest for the future. For are young people not the sacrificed generation in this age of Covid-19? Even if they are not suffering the most physically, they are suffering culturally and spiritually because they are isolated, unable to meet each other in the classroom

or return to school or university. Given the length of their formation, programmes have been set up to offer them new kinds of support networks.

We have already covered the fourth *Preference*, caring for our common home. This is the most efficient way of fighting against Covid-19 as it is contempt for biodiversity and creation that have created this type of pandemic.

These ideas from the *Universal Apostolic Preferences* can thus provide a major contribution to the fight against Covid-19, especially with regard to the prevention of future pandemics.

Translation by  
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## Coping with the pandemic and the lockdown

ANTHONY DIAS, SJ  
Secretary, SJES South Asia



***About the commitment of the Society of Jesus and ordinary people serving the most affected by the pandemic in South Asia.***

“I AM GOING...” These heartbreaking words scribbled on the suicide note left behind by Devika Balakrish-

nan before her final goodbye conveys the plight of the poor. The student from Kerala (a state in south India)

and the daughter of a daily wager who had lost his means of livelihood, she did not have the means to attend to



her online classes. She had neither a laptop nor a smart phone, and she had been pleading in vain with her father to repair the home TV set. Frustrated and depressed, the young student decided to end her life.

The pandemic and the lock-downs also produced stories that celebrate the triumph of the human spirit. The grit of the daughter of a migrant labourer from Bihar in North India is amazing. Stranded in Gurgaon, near Delhi, with her injured dad, Jyoti Kumari chose a different path. With no hope of public transport, she took the treacherous road to her village by an ordinary bicycle covering a distance of 1,200 km with her dad seated at the back. When news of her feat spread, she began to be mobbed by the media. And Jyoti wondered what the fuss was all about!

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The pandemic and the lockdowns also produced stories that celebrate the triumph of the human spirit.

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Generally, the hospitals are sites of great anxiety for both patients and care-givers. The video of the “dancing doctor” from India’s North-East region went viral as Dr. Arup found a novel

way of cheering up his patients. He decided to imitate his favourite Bollywood actor on the floor of the hospital, in his Personal Protective Equipment suit! His act not only cheered the patients

and the nurses but also invited a phone call from his idol! The Bollywood star was so impressed that he called the medic and told him that he wanted to learn the dance steps from him!





various schools and colleges linked up with other groups that sprang up spontaneously, such as the Stranded Workers Action Network (SWAN), to reach out to the vulnerable and stranded migrants.

Some of our parishes and schools offered shelter to the migrants offering them food, medicines, and other basic necessities before organizing transport for them back to the villages. Some Jesuits offered counseling services to the migrants as well as to other families who were undergoing stress of all kinds. Some of our rural schools and some Jesuit communities offered their space for testing and for quarantining. In order to reach out to the migrants, the Jesuit Conference of South Asia went many steps ahead to start a migrant assistance and information network (MAIN) in the capital.

Public health has emerged as a big issue. The pandemic showed the abysmal conditions of our primary health centres. Lack of equitable access to health care was evident. Hence some of our networks have either started their own campaign or have joined the campaign of other organizations to access health care and to build up better medical infrastructure. There are also campaigns to compel the government to increase spending on public health so as to benefit the poor.

Several of these efforts will be continued in the near future as a modest yet sincere effort to accompany the most vulnerable.

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The lockdown affected the lives of all, but the poor bore the brunt of the impacts. The biggest crisis was the exodus of migrants from urban to the rural areas. Millions of “distress migrants” who are forced to leave their villages in search of livelihood were stranded in urban areas. The sudden lockdown came as a shock. Faced with the prospect of starvation and the fear of contracting the disease, thousands of migrants took to the roads to reach their villages carrying their meager belongings along with them. Images of migrants, some dying on the road and others braving heat and uncertainty, kept haunting the Indian populace long after.

South Asia has high population density and grinding poverty and is a site of growing inequality between the rich and the poor. It is ironic that

while the poor suffered and lost their jobs and livelihoods, the rich were able to cope and the super-rich saw their wealth growing exponentially. However, those who responded to the humanitarian crises were not the government or the big corporations but ordinary people and voluntary organizations with their meager resources but with a big heart.

The Society of Jesus responded swiftly. The migrant centre in Bagai-cha in Jharkhand swung into action, and also the GIAN Migration Network. Not only were the traditional social centres involved but the schools, parishes, and colleges as well. There was also a good deal of networking within these groups, an example of inter-ministerial collaboration. The collaboration extended to other non-Christian organizations. Alumni of



## A home (be)coming at Loyola House

GREG KENNEDY, SJ  
Province of Canada



***A retreat center that turned into a shelter for those experiencing homelessness during the pandemic.***

*“Everything will be alright in the end, and if it is not alright, it is not the end”.*

This declaration of deepest faith is not Julian of Norwich’s, but belongs to a more obscure mystic: Sonny

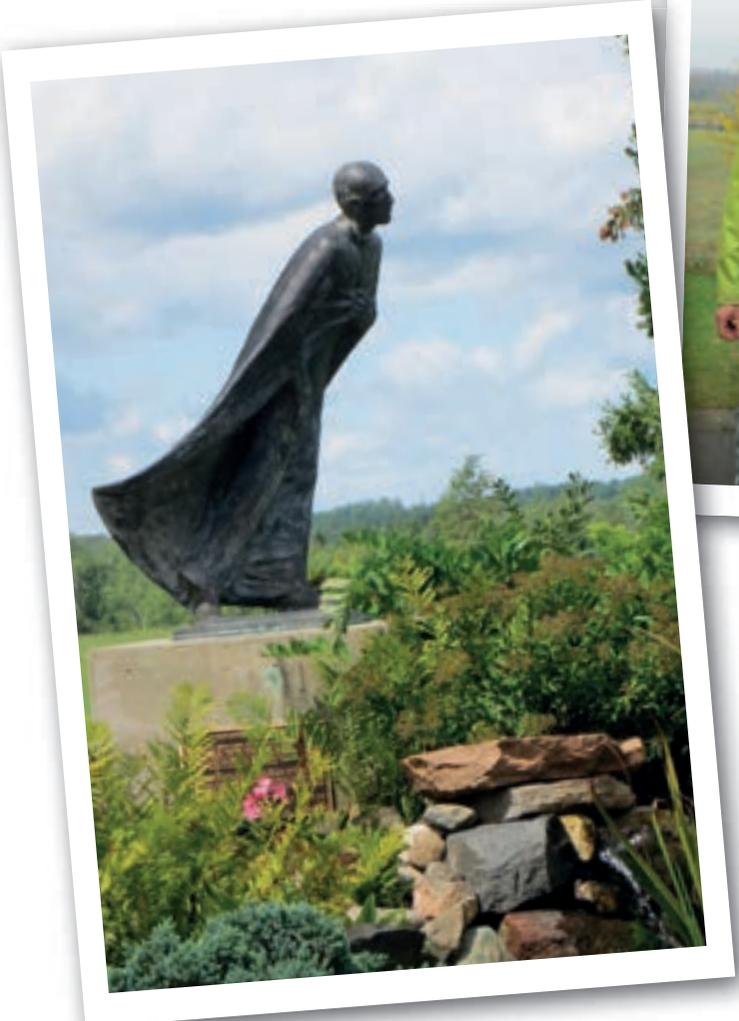
Kapoor, the zealous owner of *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, in the 2012 film of the same title. It is a



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A humbling experience for a Jesuit work accustomed to its own efficacious autonomy and sense of accomplishment.

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comedy covertly Christian in that it tells multiple tales of reconciliation, conversion and resurrection all within a hodgepodge community of fragile people newly lodged at a struggling hotel. The movie has helped me view with grace and humor the ongoing drama of LHSTAP: The Loyola House Supportive Temporary Accommodation Pilot.

Loyola House (LH) of Guelph, Canada, began in 1964 as a week-end retreat center for men. Over the next half century, it would expand its horizons and hospitality to women, makers of the full Spiritual Exercises, trainees in spiritual direction, budding ecologists, Buddhists, musicians and many other groups compatible with its evolving mission (currently: “to cultivate spiritual growth and ecological engagement”). When this 55 year run was stopped short on Friday, 13 March 2020 by Covid, LH sat empty several months, more silent than a serious group of exercitants in the depths of the Third Week.

Silent no more. In August the municipality asked us to open the house to locals without homes. They would pay us rent, but much less than what the hotels were charging them to shelter those experiencing homelessness. The offer was mutually attractive, given the pandemic-punch to the finances of both bodies. Concentric circles of discernment started turning that included the Jesuit community, the LH staff and board, and even nearby householders, many of whom were not enamored with the idea of becoming neighbors to the marginalized. Besides the

rent, we felt grateful for the unbidden invitation to walk with the excluded. The second UAP had come knocking providentially at our door.

And so, we opened up the best, exotic, marigold temporary housing project. Like Sonny in the movie, we began bustling around in a flurry of best intentions to welcome forty people experiencing homelessness, some of whom were dubious of living in a Christian institution. Knowing that love manifests more in deeds than words and that stomachs live close to hearts, the renown LH kitchen (one retreatant famously claimed that “even if I lost my faith, I would keep returning for the food”) swung again into action. The new residents were met with meals that our former retreatants would covet.

Only inches into 2021, a Covid outbreak at LH was declared. This meant isolation for all the residents and a minor crash in our care for our common home (4<sup>th</sup> UAP). Having prided ourselves for years for our waste minimalism, suddenly we had to serve three meals a day in disposable, single-use containers. As I write this, the residents have just passed the 40-day/40-night point of a quarantine which has closed all communal spaces within the house. It has also reduced interchange between the residents and LH personnel practically to zero. Staffed by employees of a local homelessness agency, the project is located in LH but, at the moment, sadly distant from direct Ignatian influence.

Walking with the poor, it turns out, is difficult for many rea-

sons. Feeding and sheltering the vulnerable is fairly straight forward. As owners of LH we are currently succeeding here. But really to walk with our new residents, to share their daily sorrows and joys has become next to impossible under current, lockdown conditions. This is painful for us, as it is in that exchange that the good news gets shared and amplified. Our limitations here stem from the fact that, at the end of the day, we are merely the venue, hosting a mostly autonomous venture run by others. This is a humbling experience for a Jesuit work accustomed to its own efficacious autonomy and sense of accomplishment.

Despite limitations, we feel blessed by the presence of the residents. Testimonies of gratitude and healing (plus reports of minor crises) trickle in. Indeed, even restrictive quarantine in a place so steeped in accumulated prayer seems to be benefitting some of the residents. Still only a quarter of the way into the project, we have learned a great deal, especially about communication and collaboration with partners unfamiliar with our practices of communal discernment. Hopefully, spring will permit the residents to find solace in lending a hand on our ample, organic farm. If the project has not yet realized all our enthusiastic dreams, we continue to hold on to a good piece of mysticism. Our faith remains with Sonny Kapoor’s, certain that, with God, everything ends alright, and if it isn’t quite so at the moment, that just means we haven’t yet reached the end.

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## **“Whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord”**

SYLVAIN CARIOU-CHARTON, SJ  
French speaking Province in Western Europe



***A personal account of the death of eight elderly Jesuits from Covid-19 in Paris, during Holy Week 2020.***

Here I was in Rheims in the Basilica of Saint Rémi before a life-size sculp-

ture of Christ in the tomb. Yet I was not in 1531, but June 2020, sever-

al weeks after the first lockdown in France.

“ To love means to care: during life and after death. ”

I stayed on my knees for a long time in heartfelt prayer before the sculpture. I and the Jesuits of the community where I am the Superior had just experienced the painful loss of eight elderly priests from Covid-19 in the throes of Holy Week.

That protracted contemplation was a time of profound emotion for me. Perhaps my eyes, bathed in tears, received the grace of *seeing death through new eyes*. Facing me was the tragic acceptance of the closeness of death. The crushing weight of the body on the sheet here was the body of Christ himself, the martyred body of Jesus, handled with



such reverence by his discouraged disciples. This reminded me of the extravagant acts of generosity shown at the heart of this new pandemic towards our elderly, dependant priests in our *Maison Soins et Repos* (Care Home). We had been obliged to carry out with our own bare hands activities normally outsourced to undertakers. By “we” I mean one of the auxiliary carers and me. To reduce the risk of infection in the “active” part of the community, I was the only representative of our Community authorised to approach the dead.

Heavy is the corpse that needs moving, preparing in haste and



“ He who entered the tomb pushed away the stone. That kind of strength only comes from Him. ”

draping, as we cannot dress it, in a simple sheet-shroud. These age-old rituals – the shrouding of the face, the sheet, the bandages – are acts of fraternity, acts of humanity on a par with the Gospels. To love means to care: during life and after death.

This body is also the body that we share. Each elderly Jesuit, confined to their room, experienced solitude, prayer, and spiritual communion. I was edified to learn that this Father had called that Father by phone, every day, so they could talk and pray together, even though their rooms were on the same corridor. We decided to offer the Body of Christ in Communion on Sundays, room by room, while the active part of our community had celebrated Mass in the house where the youngest Jesuits were confined. For reasons of safety, they had no contact with our elderly Fathers. During this time while supporting them, I was touched by their extreme spareness of word and deed, perhaps prompted by a natural modesty in their personal witness of faith.

Then I discovered something which I found truly astonishing. Death was nothing out of the ordi-

nary for these men of faith who for 70 or 80 years had offered their lives as a gift to the Lord. Death came to these religious like the snuffing out of a flickering wick. For little is left to purify by fire in a heart, spirit, and body already worked through and wrung out by the Word. Moses saw that, though the bush was on fire, it did not burn up. (Ex 3: 2). What internal battles, either won or lost, lingered within these religious at the end of their lives? I cannot claim to know. I would never dare to say. When death draws close, who dares to speak in the place of another, nailed to the Cross, meaning the Mystery of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus?

All I can do is testify to is what I received during this time of accompanying those whose end was nigh. I saw death with new eyes as the continuation of their gift of self. Perhaps I now understand more clearly the meaning of those words of St Paul:

“For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.” (Romans 14:7-8).

What the Covid crisis revealed in its first blush was the horror of enforced solitude. Being left alone with no company was a cruel ordeal for those who became Covid victims. The same was true for the men and women who could not be there with them, either because the law forbade it or sometimes because they were too cowardly or afraid.

The trial of this pandemic and its consequences, the anxiety it has induced, and its morbidity, have obliged me to progress along my personal journey of accepting my own mortality. Yet it also nurtured a sense within me of the infinite value of Life, and of being a servant of the LIVING God who gives LIFE. He who entered the tomb pushed away the stone. That kind of strength only comes from Him.

St. Ignatius wrote: “God works and labours for me in all things created on the face of the Earth” [*Spiritual Exercises*, no 236]. Several months after that ordeal as I knelt before the body of Christ lying in the tomb, I can safely say that I see death in a new way: as God continuing his work!

*Translation by Elizabeth Twiston-Davies*



## Reimagining Christian Service

ASHLEY WOODWORTH  
Fairfield College Preparatory School  
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Though I have been a Catholic school educator since 2016, my passion for education rooted in Ignatian spirituality was reinvigorated in the summer of 2018 after I was hired at Fairfield

College Preparatory School as the Director of Christian Service.

The sustainability of different school programs across the coun-

try was called into question as the Covid-19 pandemic reached its peak (and continues to be a fluid situation) in the spring and summer of 2020. With that in mind, I began a

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An opportunity to think bigger, to be creative, and to put opportunities for hope into a very uncertain time.

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process of reflection. How could I change the programs being offered through the Christian Service, all of which required intensive in-person commitments on behalf of students and faculty moderators, to provide participants with quintessential “peak experiences” while still keeping them

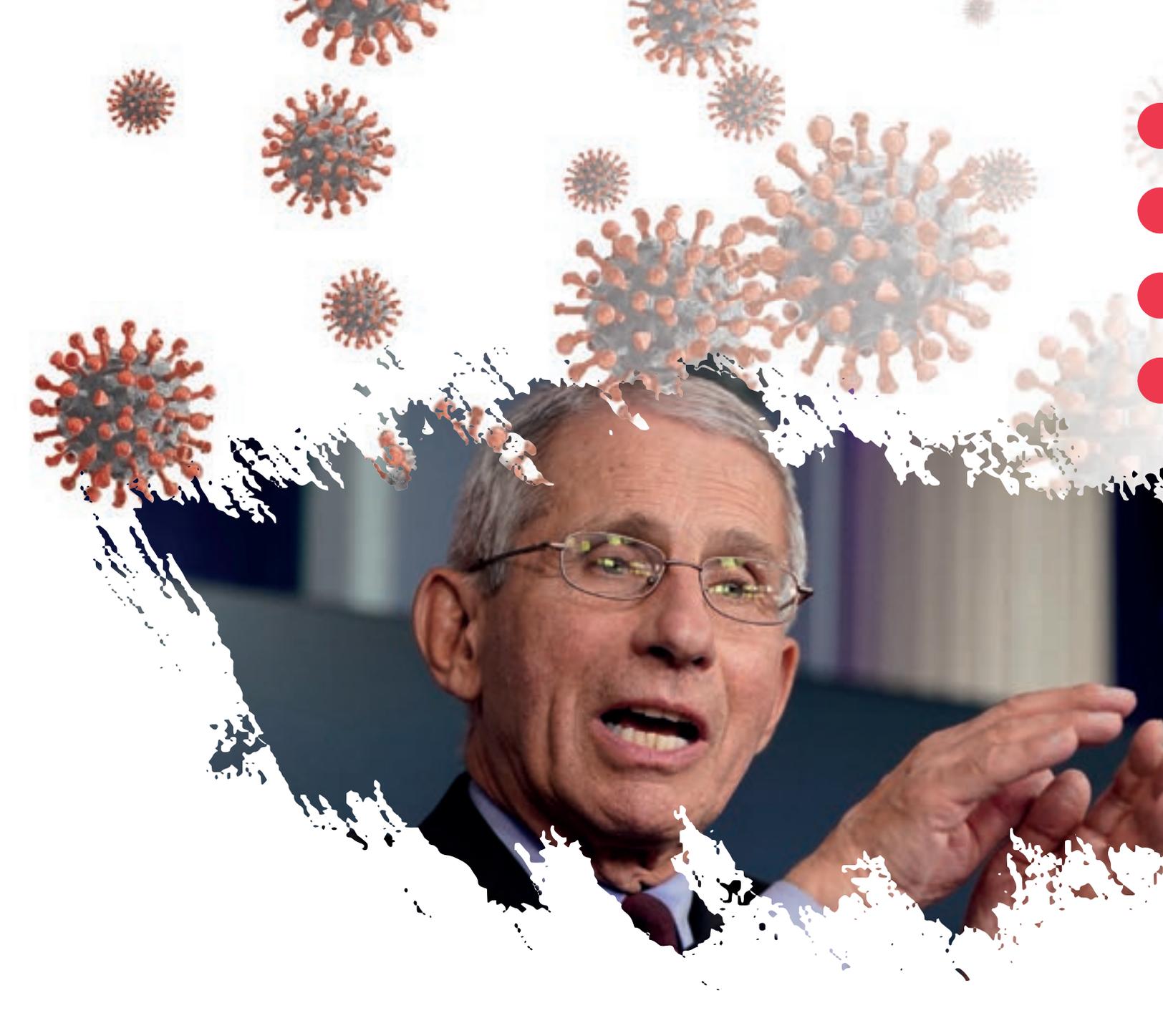
protected? How can service to the community be reimagined in a way that enhances student participation, but can also be done from the safety and comfort of their own homes? It was during this period of ongoing reflection that I realized what I was experiencing was truly the brink of walking together with young people and building a hope-filled future: It was an opportunity to think bigger, to be creative, and to put opportunities for hope into a very uncertain time.

At this very conflicting period where justice-minded and service-oriented young men and women are needed the most as conduits for change, they are unable to be physically present with their brothers and sisters in need here in their local communities, as well as globally. With that statement of great irony in mind, Fairfield Prep has estab-

lished the Ignatian Distance Ministry Program through the office of Mission and Ministry, a fully virtual opportunity rooted in the *Universal Apostolic Preferences* and the Spiritual Exercises, designed for students to foster meaningful connections and relationships with their peers and others outside their school community, to be educated on universal global issues by those who experience them daily, and to be empowered to take action through various forms of activism. The elements of this program provide a unique blend of Christian service, campus ministry, and global citizenship. Though the current pandemic has halted the efforts of thousands around the world in their pursuit of serving others, the mission and ministry of Jesuit education does not cease; it simply evolves.

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## Fighting Covid-19 as a scientist

ANTHONY FAUCI

Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases  
National Institutes of Health, Washington, USA

*Dr. Anthony Fauci, the foremost infectious disease expert in the United States who has served his country during several health crises and once again during the coronavirus pandemic, is an alumnus of two Jesuit institutions. Out of his incredibly busy schedule, he agreed to give a testimony about what he values most from his Jesuit education.*

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I was as much a humanitarian as I was a scientist.

”

“For me, [the Jesuit education] was a solidification and an amplification of some of the principles I learned from my parents, who were very much attuned to responsibility, to society and service to others. So, the idea about service was something that was ingrained with me when I went to Regis High School (New York City). This school was a spectacular experience for me. It provided for me something that has been a major strength that I’ve relied on in everything I’ve done: I learned what I call precision of thought and economy of expression. In other words, know exactly what you’re talking about, know what the question is when someone asks

you, know your audience and give whatever it is you’re going to talk about in a way that’s very economical in words.

And then when I went to Holy Cross (Worcester, Massachusetts), the same principle of service to others, the same issue of precision of thought and economy of expression, intellectual rigor, honesty, transparency – those were the things that were the hallmarks of how we interacted.

I took a very unusual course at Holy Cross, which was promoted by the faculty for people that wanted to be pre-med. It wasn’t all science. I took many credits in philosophy and I took Greek, Latin, French. I went back and looked at some of my old report cards, and the number of courses I took in philosophy was stunning: metaphysics, philosophical psychology, epistemology, logics, ethics and on and on. That was really

good because that mixed with enough science to get me into medical school. When I went into medical school, I was as much a humanitarian as I was a scientist. And that has had a major impact on the direction of my career in medicine, science and public health. I’m grateful to that environment in my training because I carried it with me up to this day in whatever I do.

The liberal arts and the humanities develop you as a person. I am a scientist, so I don’t want the scientists of the world to think I’m bad-mouthing them. But if you just strictly do science, it develops your intellect and your ability to analyze. It doesn’t necessarily make you much better as a person. Whereas if you do liberal arts and humanities, you can do that at the same time as you’re learning science.”

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An abstract painting titled 'The Burning Bush' by Peter Girasek SJ. The artwork features a dense, textured composition of vibrant colors, including deep reds, oranges, yellows, and blues. The brushstrokes are expressive and varied, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is reminiscent of a fire or a burning bush, with the colors blending and separating in a dynamic way. The painting is set against a dark blue background, which makes the other colors stand out prominently.

SECTION 3

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Other topics

*The Burning Bush*  
Peter Girasek SJ (Slovakia)



## **My commitment and challenge: Gender equality in Latin America and the Caribbean**

MARÍA DEL CARMEN MUÑOZ SÁENZ  
Cinep (Research and Popular Education Centre)  
Province of Colombia



*On 8 March 2021, International Women's Day, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus announced the launch of a Commission to explore the role and responsibilities of women in the Society of Jesus. The panel includes representatives from all over the world. This is the testimony from the representative for Latin America.*



I am a Colombian woman with a family tradition of hard work and putting solidarity into action. We live in a country with high levels of poverty, inequality, and few opportunities. All of us have a duty to support each other so that we can help to relieve each others' burdens.

Colombia is blessed with two coastlines. Geographically, we are located in the Tropics, an area which produces some of the world's best coffee. This is also a country of great ecological biodiversity, with a range of ethnicities and a very diverse geography and culture. According to the National Population and Housing Census (CNPV), the population of Colombia is 45 million, of whom 23 million are women.

We are also a nation of believers, with a range of denominations and beliefs, although the vast majority of the population is Catholic. I was brought up in the Catholic faith and, after I met the Society of Jesus at a certain point in my life, my faith turned into a personal experience. This has given me the opportunity to live out my Christian faith in a new, and I would say, more mature way.

I grew up in a macho environment where men dominated conversation and made all the decisions.

Although I have been gradually liberating myself from this, I have never managed to completely free myself from male domination. However, the development and maturation of feminist movements, along with support for women's rights have led to improvements and the overcoming of the patriarchy.

I have had the opportunity to work and share my faith with various parts of the Catholic Church including religious communities like the Society of Jesus and several diocesan groups and organisations. They help the body of the Church by offering different views of the role of women in the Church. On this issue, there are still many challenges to overcome.

For nearly 30 years I have been connected to the Society of Jesus, where a certain diversity of views on the subject of gender is also apparent. Some priests seem to be narrow-minded. Others feel frightened by the power that women may obtain, while others (the majority) are open to establishing equal relationships with women. I have also come across lay Catholics, some of whom are more macho than the priests, but who are open to discussions on gender. That is why I think that right now, given that our support comes from Father Gen-

eral and his partners, there is a strong chance of generating change, not only inside the Society of Jesus but also in the work we are supporting.

My personal apostolic work is centred on a fantastic project, The School of Peace and Citizen Co-Existence. This is part of Cinep, a social ministry of the Society in Colombia. We focus on getting diocesan clergy, religious communities and lay Catholic men and women from all over Colombia to reflect on what the word "gender" means and implies for them. The aim is to gain an understanding of all these different points of view.

I am firmly convinced that the circumstances will arise that will allow us to establish a new way of understanding with our mission companions. That is as true for the Jesuits as it is for us, the lay women and men who work alongside them. All this will be the fruit of a process which is fortunately creating a way forward because we have the backing of decree 14 of General Congregation 34, "Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Society". This does not merely demonstrate an open-minded approach to the reality of woman who are in communion with the Society. It also states that the Society is committed to making amends for the mistakes made in the past.



Certainly, this journey will include many challenges. If this lengthy process is to bear fruit, then great patience, an attitude of listening, of dialogue, and the ability to reflect and exercise discernment with regard to the problems and obstacles that arise will be required from all parties.

Via the Commission set up by Father General to look at the role and responsibilities of women in the Society, and the delegations from the conferences from all over the world, we will have the opportunity to suggest points for reflection and recommend

the strategies and processes necessary to attain the goal for which we are aiming.

It is my responsibility to channel the voices of my sisters in Latin America and the Caribbean to highlight and express the things we find unacceptable in our Provinces, and to provide suggestions which reflect our desires in regard to the quest for gender equality.

*Translation by  
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I am firmly convinced that the circumstances will arise that will allow us to establish a new way of understanding with our mission companions. That is as true for the Jesuits as it is for us, the lay women and men who work alongside them.





**“No one should ever make us despair!”**

MATHIAS MOOSBRUGGER  
Collegium Canisianum, Innsbruck, Austria



***Peter Canisius and the Jesuit vision of the world –  
On the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth.***

The closing years of the 1550s were not particularly pleasant for the Jesuits. Not only did they have to

contend with the death of Ignatius in July 1556, but the previous year Paul IV, a declared enemy of the

Jesuits, had been elected Pope. He sought to take immediate advantage of the Jesuits having no leader



Germany, there were questions to be asked regarding whether Catholicism really still had a future there. And if so, in what form? Yet although he judged Poland to be on the verge of religious and cultural meltdown, it was also for this very reason just where he thought he and his brothers needed to take action. Here, he was convinced was “a vast untilled field for the labourers of Christ,” only awaiting cultivation. In the last letter he wrote General Lainez from Poland on 10 February 1559, he laid great stress on this point, noting, “However much more afflicted and even hopeless things are in the judgment of the world, how much more will it be ours to carry strength to the hopeless because we are of the Company of Jesus.”

It was no coincidence that it was Peter Canisius who, in his letters from Poland at the end of the 1550s, reminded the Superior General that the refusal to slide into despair when facing desperate situations was something of Jesuit speciality. Instead, all hands were needed on deck “without any turning back or excuses,” as the Society’s Constitutions state, so that rays of hope, consolation and trust might shed light on these bleak scenarios. By the age of 17, Peter Canisius had already made a note in Latin in his school textbook concerning the need to persevere amid desperate circumstances. For the rest of his life, that word “*persevera*” would be his motto. As a young man, he had also scribbled the words “No one should ever make us despair!” under a devotional image of the Crucifixion. In 1583, when the sixty-something Canisius wrote a memorandum to the fourth Superior General, Claudio Acquaviva, one of his key counsels regarding the apostolate in Germany was “above all, guard to against the spirit of timorousness and despair.”

by turning the Society into an order in line with his ideas. To this end, he dissolved the first Jesuit assembly to elect a new Superior General and banned all Jesuits from leaving Rome. He resorted to subterfuge to ensure that elections for the next Superior General could not be held until 1558. At the time, no one knew what his real intentions were and whether ultimately, he was planning to strike the Order a death blow. What was nonetheless perfectly clear was that the future of the young Society of Jesus hung by a thread: no one could have predicted Paul IV’s death a year later. In fact, in 1558, practically anything seemed more likely than the Jesuits having a long-term future in the Church.

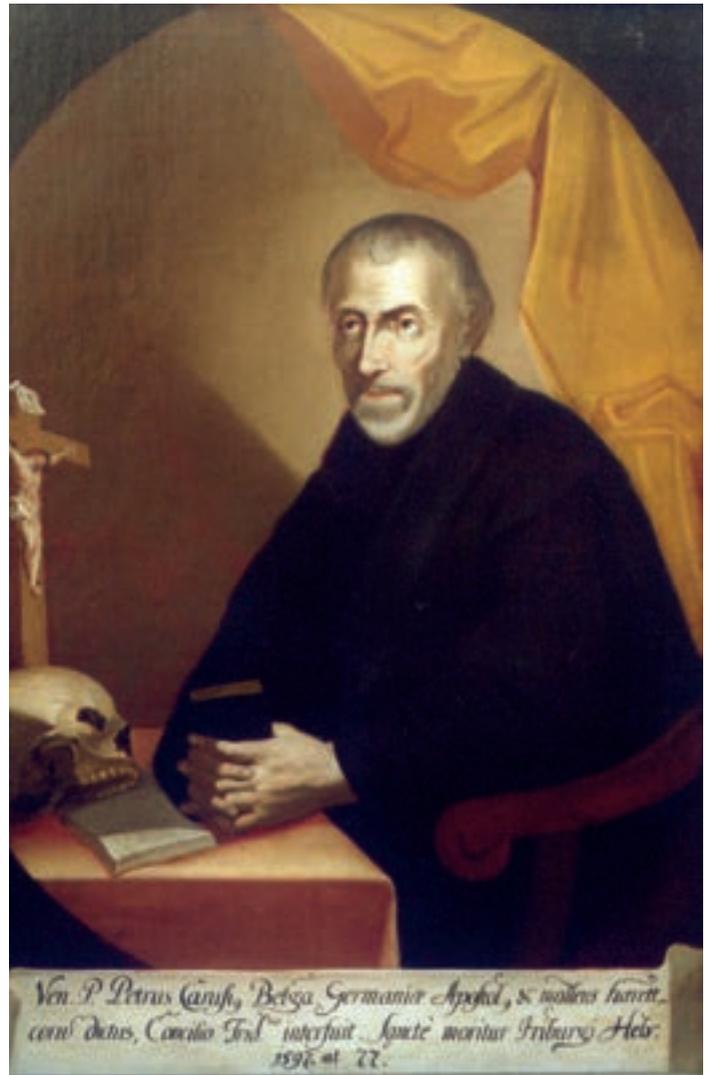
Peter Canisius found himself in Rome right at the heart of affairs when matters took a dramatic turn for the worse. Just weeks before his death,

Ignatius had named Peter the first Provincial of the Province of Upper Germany. In this role, he had attended the thwarted election for the Superior General in 1556, and the subsequent, successful election in 1558. Straight after the election of Diego Laínez, Peter was sent on papal orders on a diplomatic mission to Poland with the nuncio Camillus Mentuati. And so he transitioned straight from penury in Rome to poverty in Poland.

Previously, Paul IV had made his life impossible (alongside that of the entire Society of Jesus). Now his ordeal was the situation in Poland. There, he came into contact with individuals who, he wrote, “were really quite boorish,” and who reserved “any store of love and courtesy they possessed wholly for themselves.” But the main issue was that the local Church had sunk into the ground. He reckoned that in Poland, just as in

He knew from years of personal experience that the Jesuit presence alongside Jesuit resilience in the face of frustration were urgently required, not only in the Rome of Paul IV nor amid the turbulence of Poland, but above all in a Germany rattled by the Reformation. Canisius had become a Jesuit at the age of 22 in 1543, under the influence of that great master of the Exercises, Peter Favre. In the Autumn of 1549, after a few years in Cologne and even fewer in Italy at Messina and Rome, he had returned north, intent on saving Catholicism in the Holy Roman Empire in Germany. Many in Rome, including the Pope, believed this a waste of effort, opining that more than 25 years after the Reformation, there was nothing for the Catholic Church to do in Germany. That in fact, it had definitely missed the boat. Peter Canisius thought otherwise. He thought like a Jesuit. He saw his vocation as being in just the place where the Catholic Church in all likelihood had no future. That was the very spot where he longed to effect Catholicism's renaissance. To that end, he founded Jesuit colleges, wrote books, and preached thousands of sermons over the course of nearly half a century. Then what no one had remotely expected transpired: in all his endeavours, he enjoyed resounding success!

In large measure, it was due to his ministry that German Catholicism had a renaissance in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. That renaissance, furthermore, had repercussions far beyond the German borders. Canisius's refusal to despair over the Church's desperate situation sparked a genuine change of direction. In



1640, the Jesuits published a large and splendid tome to mark the centenary of their foundation. In this, they remarked of Canisius: "To no one as much as him does the Society of Jesus and Catholicism in Germany owe so much."

How right they were!

*Translation by  
Elizabeth Twiston-Davies*

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He saw his vocation as being in just the place where the Catholic Church in all likelihood had no future.





## A meeting place for Christianity and Zen

AMA AROKIA SAMY, SJ  
Madurai Province



***The Bodhi Zendo Centre, 25 years at the service of dialogue, interreligious peace, and self-transformation.***

Bodhi Zendo is Madurai Province's international magnet. It was the first

and the only zen meditation centre in India. I am privileged to be the first

Indian zen master authorized by my Japanese master, Yamada Koun *roshi*.

Yamada Koun belongs to the lay zen movement of Sanbo Kyodan. Sanbo Kyodan's zen masters are now teaching all over the West.

Bodhi Zendo is a centre for Zen training and practice. It has been a ground of awakening and self-realization in the Kodai hills for the past 25 years. It attracts students from all over the world. Of course Indians also, most of them Hindus. Some Muslims also come here. Thus, Bodhi Zendo has become furthermore a dialogue centre in practice. Practitioners find this an ideal place for their *Sadhana* amidst the beauty of lush green valleys. Many find peace of heart in the silence and the communal living.

The centre is open to all spiritual seekers irrespective of religion, nationality, caste, colour, culture, status, etc. Anyone who is sincerely searching in spiritual life is welcome here. Every year hundreds of people come here and find their inner peace. Today it is well known as an International Zen Meditation Centre. The centre can accommodate 35 to 40 people at a time with individual room facilities. So far, the centre has been running smoothly by God's grace and by the generous support of the good-willed people.

We are also running some social projects for poor children and women. The projects are supported by my students and friends. Zen meditation divorced from social issues will be one-sided and blind. Awakening and compassion are the heartbeat of zen.

After finishing my zen studies under my master, I visited the famous Zuiganji in Matsushima accompanied by a Japanese sister, Junko Isshihara, and met Hirano Sojo *roshi*. The *roshi*



made a deep bow to the sister and said, "You Christians, particularly the sisters, are so compassionate, caring for the poor. But unfortunately you do not have enlightenment! We Japanese monks have enlightenment; we talk of compassion but do not practice compassion. If we both Christians and zen people come together, it will be the best for the world!"

The Japanese zen master Dogen wrote, "To study the Buddha Way is to study the self; to study the self is to forget the self; to forget the self is to be actualized by myriad things. When actualized by myriad things, your body and mind as well as the bodies and minds of others drop away. No

trace of enlightenment remains, and this no-trace continues endlessly."

To forget the self means to let go of self-centred egoism and to become a clearance (*Lichtung*) for the beings of the world. For, in zen, the world is the self, the self is the world. The zen experience, for Christians, is to die to our ego and be transformed into the Christic form; for non-Christians it will be to put on the heart-mind of the Buddha. Those who come here are at least a bit transformed when they leave.

My master, Yamada Koun, was marvellously open to Christians and to Christianity. He had said that the meeting of Christianity and



“You have also greatly encouraged the dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity and the building of a peaceful and united world.”  
 (Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.)



Zen was the hope for the modern world. In 1986 I was in Rome. I met Father General’s assistant, Fr. Michael Amaladoss, and told him about the *Roshi* and of his help and guidance of us Christians. That year was the golden jubilee of the marriage of the *Roshi* and his wife, so I said that it would be nice if the General sent a note to them. The General sent to the *Roshi* a fine note of appreciation of his work. Let me quote a few sentences:

“I have heard of your generous and considerate work in guiding people in the way of Zen.... Your enlightened guidance has helped many people to deepen their religious experience and strengthen their lives of contemplation and prayer. You have also greatly encouraged the dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity and the building of a peaceful and united world.” (Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus, 3 December 1986).

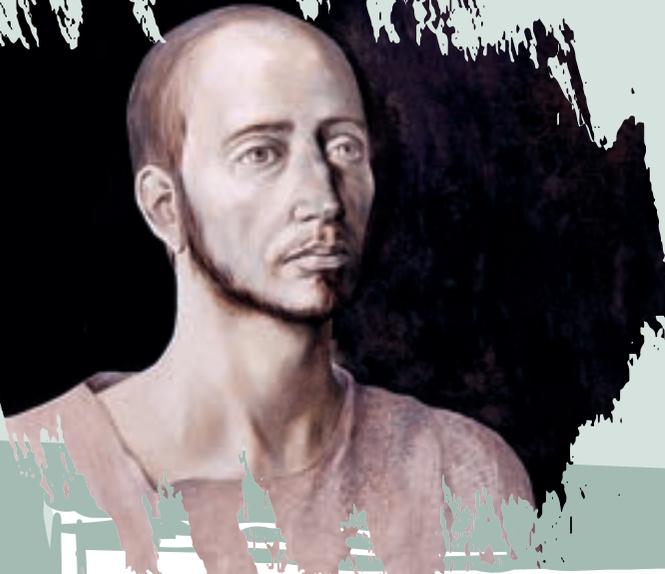


In one of his talks, Fr Enomiya Lassalle, who opened the doors for me to Japan and the zen experience, has said that the future of religion and spirituality will be *advaita* and zen. Zen is a marvellous way of spirituality. It is mystical, it is nature-centred and life-centred, it is playful and humorous, it is also paradoxical in its *koan* practice, a method to bring about awakening in everyday life. Zen is very much earth- and body-centred. The goal of zen is liberation of all beings.

May All Beings be Happy!

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 amasamy@googlemail.com





# Prayer for the Ignatian Year

Loving God,

We come before you asking for Your special grace as we go through the year dedicated to the memory of the conversion of Saint Ignatius.

We remember the battle of Pamplona, the bravery of Ignatius, his recklessness, his ability to relate to his comrades.

We remember his wound; his broken dreams; his apparent failure; the vulnerability of his health; his return to Loyola and the long days of soul searching to try to find his way in life, finally surrendering his life to You as he listened to Your voice speaking to him through his reading, his dreams, his prayers and his imagination.

We remember his journey to Manresa; his inner struggles; his desire to reach out to others, *helping souls* to discover the consolation of Your Risen Son.

We ask, Lord, that you renew, also today, Ignatius' spirit in us.

May we grow closer to his total trust in the Holy Spirit, following Him faithfully, neither running ahead or falling behind.

May we make our own his ability to discern, his courage, his vulnerability, his search for companionship; his openness to young people and his desire to share with them his wisdom.

May we learn from his fearlessness in going forward even if it meant, sometimes, making mistakes.

Grant, Lord, that we may be on fire with his apostolic zeal and full of love for this beautiful but broken world.

Help us, Lord to set aside our narrow views, our preconceptions of ourselves, of each other, of our world and to see everything with new eyes.

Help us to live ever more deeply the Ignatian charism of seeing all things new in Christ, of seeing Your grace at work, even in darkness and suffering.

May this Ignatian Year help us to know Jesus poor and humble, to love Him more dearly, and follow Him more closely.

We ask the intercession of Our Lady of the Way. May she help us journey with Your Son, Jesus, putting our hand in His, stepping out, every day, into the world with a sense of adventure, of love and hope.

Amen.

Merci – **Thank you** – Gracias – Grazie – Danke



General Curia of the Jesuits

**Thank you**

for your interest in the works  
of the Jesuits.

**Thank you**

for being part of the extended  
“Ignatian family”.

*Let's keep in touch with each other!*

For the Jesuits, the Ignatian Year offers an opportunity to commit themselves with renewed ardour to the service of the Church and the world. It broadens their vision to see everything new in Christ.

We want to share this experience with all those who are committed to changing the world, inspired as we are by the insights of Ignatius of Loyola, and eager to adapt them to times and places.

Throughout the year, we would like to keep you informed of the life, concerns and commitments of the Society of Jesus. Stay in touch with us. There are several ways to do this:

- Subscribe to the Newsletter of the General Curia. Register at:

<http://jesuits.global/newsletter/>

- Follow us on social media:



@JesuitsGlobal #JesuitsGlobal  
[Instagram.com/JesuitsGlobal](https://www.instagram.com/JesuitsGlobal)

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**What do you think?**

Would you like to share any comments on  
this issue of *Jesuits 2022* or on one of the ar-  
ticles that touched you in particular?

Send us an email at:

**[annuariosj@gmail.com](mailto:annuariosj@gmail.com)**

We might publish some posts in our next  
edition! Thank you for your participation!

## **On the occasion of the Ignatian Year, why not make a donation to the Jesuits?**

At the end of several of the articles, there is a link to a website.  
Use this link to contact the institutions to offer your services and donations.

You may also contact the Development Office or the Provincial Office of the Jesuit Province  
where you live. Your support will be appreciated.

And, in keeping with a Jesuit tradition that has been in force since the time of St Ignatius himself,  
you can be sure that Jesuit communities regularly pray for their benefactors.





## Vocations

*He was walking with them*  
Denis Meyer, SJ (Lebanon)

*On the roads to Emmaus  
of today, Jesus walks  
with those seeking  
meaning.*





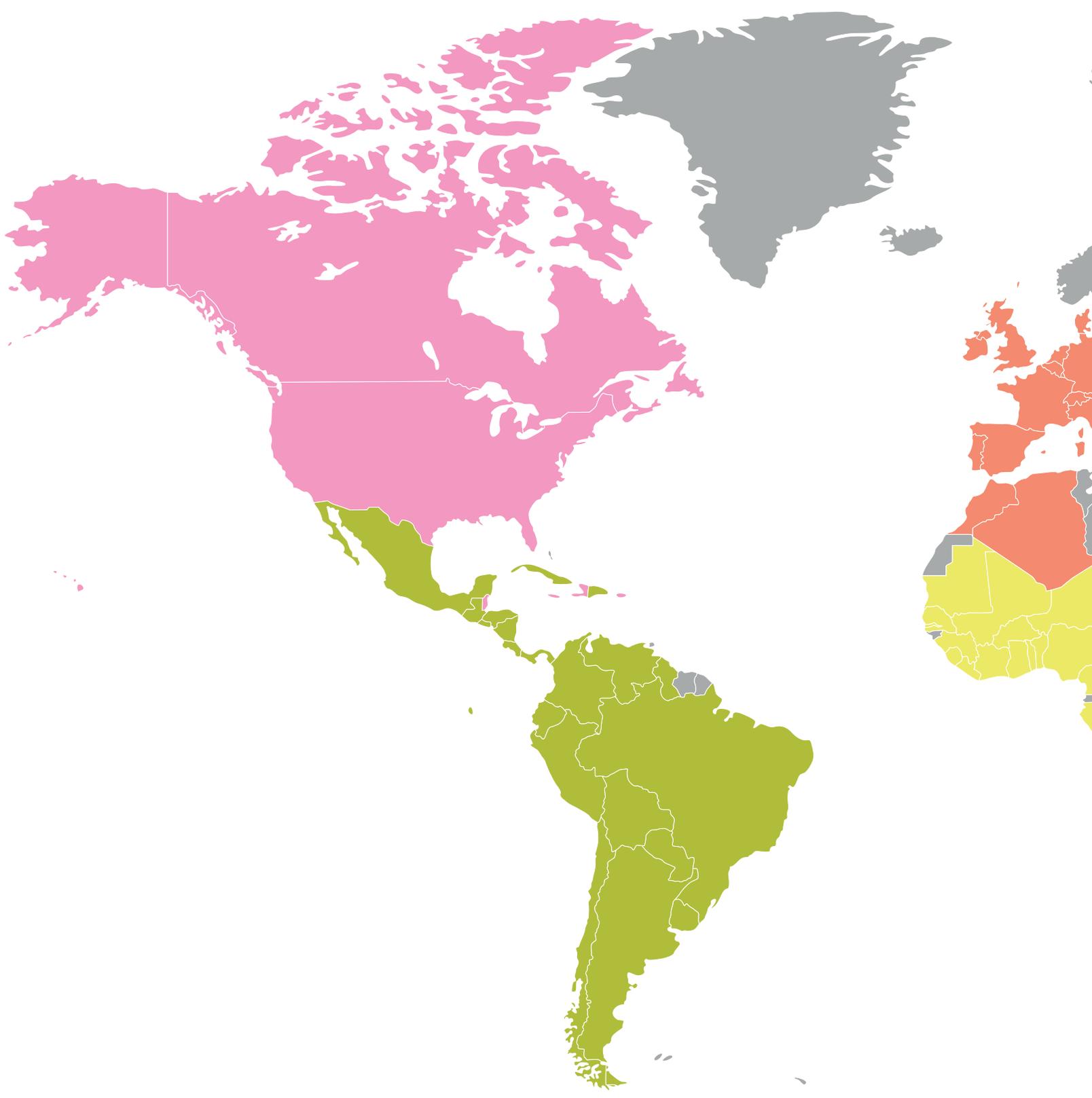
## Do you know someone who may have a call to be a Jesuit?

### If so you could...

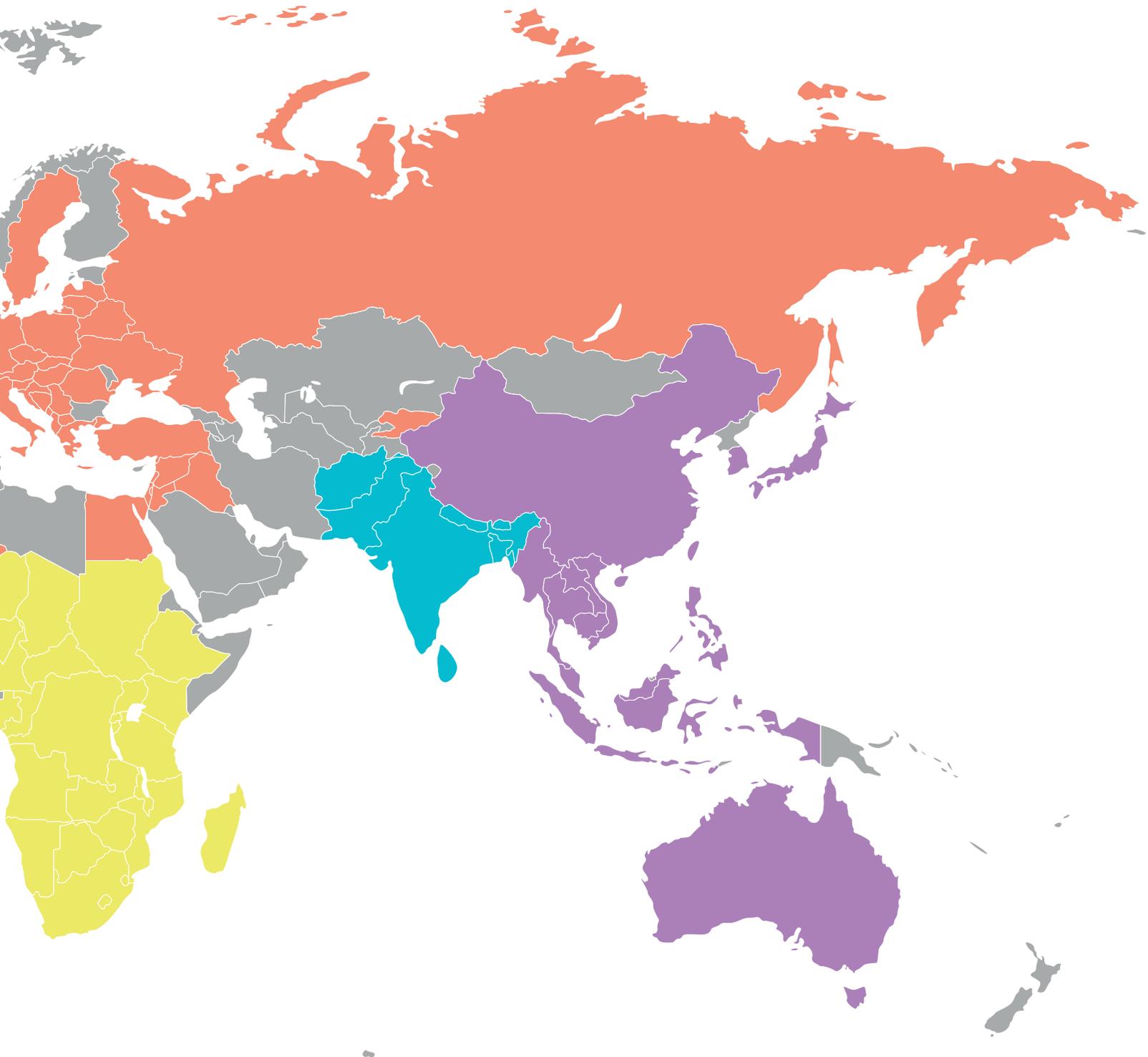
- Guide him to the many websites on Ignatian spirituality
- Give him a copy of this magazine
- Encourage him to contact a Jesuit
- Pray for his discernment
- Give him the URL of the website on Jesuit vocation:

**[vocations.jesuits.global](http://vocations.jesuits.global)**





- Jesuit Conference of South Asia
- Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific
- Jesuit Conference of European Provincials
- Conference of Provincials of Latin America and the Caribbean
- Jesuit Conference of Canada and the U.S.A.
- Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar





Ignatius Soo  
to see all things  
new in Christ