



In all things to love and to serve
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Irish Jesuit Mission Office Newsletter

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Vision

A just and humane world based on Gospel values and Ignatian Spirituality.

Mission

The Irish Jesuit Missions supports Jesuit works in the service of poor and marginalised people, particularly in Africa and Asia.

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Learning to Make a Living and a Difference

Photo: Happy students at their new Loyola Jesuit Secondary School in Kasungu, Malawi

After several years of an empty plot and then three years of busy construction work, Loyola Jesuit Secondary School (LJSS) has finally moved from dream to reality! In early September, 123 girls and boys (61 girls and 62 boys – good gender balance!) enrolled in Form One/ Grade Nine in the new school of the Zambia-Malawi Jesuit Province. All are boarders with 11 teachers housed nearby on campus.

Simon Makuru SJ, a Malawian Jesuit, is Head Teacher, and Ken Simalalo SJ, a Zambian Jesuit, is Chaplain. More Jesuits will join the team as LJSS adds a new year of students over the next few years.

Quality education for young girls and boys

When we first talked about a secondary school in Malawi (one of

the poorest countries in the world, with less than 30 per cent of the youth attending secondary school), the expectation among many here was quite simple: “Oh, you Jesuits will found a private school just for boys and locate it in the capital of Lilongwe!”

Well, as a matter of fact, LJSS is co-educational from the start and located in a poor rural area 120 km from the capital! And it is not private but “grant-aided” – we cooperate with the Government of Malawi that pays salaries of teachers. That means that the fees are low and thus more accessible to families of lesser means. At about USD 500 per year, we are building an endowment fund to support those who are unable to afford that fee.

LJSS works closely with the government which sends the teachers,

A Word from the Director



We wish all our friends, both near and far, peace and best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. In this season of goodwill we recognise that in the newborn Christ we are one family united by bonds of faith, love and service in different parts of the globe.

Our newsletter tells stories of our friends and works in Japan, Malawi, Singapore and Uganda.

The stories of our missionaries in the Far East remind us of over 120 Irish Jesuits who went to Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore. Their work has often remained hidden and unknown in cultures which are primarily non-Christian but the impact of their witness and quiet service has borne so much fruit. They have been servants of dialogue between cultures and religions, and bearers of respect and peace between peoples of different backgrounds.

This dialogue between cultures and religions is so important today with religious extremism driving violence and hatred between peoples. The horrific massacres in Paris and Mali executed in the name of religion points to the continual need for building understanding between diversities of peoples. Our missionaries are bridge builders, agents of peace. Their work is an inspiration to all who try to build reconciliation in our world today.

Pope Francis asks us to be peace builders: "Everything is lost in war. Everything is gained with peace. Peace is a gift of God which today too must find hearts willing to receive it and to toil to be builders of reconciliation and peace. It is impossible for peace to exist without dialogue. All the wars, all the strife, all the unsolved problems over which we clash are due to a lack of dialogue. When there is a problem, talk: this makes peace".

I wish you the gift of peace this Christmas in your hearts and in your homes. Thank you for your faithful support of our missionaries and works over the years. May God bless each one of you.

Happy Christmas.

assigns 60 per cent of the students, and designs the curriculum. We are encouraged by the fact that the best secondary schools in Malawi – with the highest scores each year – are grant-aided Catholic schools conducted by well-established religious congregations eg. Marist Brothers, Teresian Sisters.

Religious instruction and ethical well-being

We are very clearly a Jesuit school, guided by our Jesuit pedagogy, to graduate girls and boys who will be: "women and men with and for others." One of our mottos says it very clearly: "Come to Loyola Jesuit Secondary School to learn not just to make a *living* but to make a *difference*!"

Not all of our students are Catholic, but we are a Catholic school. An optional early morning Mass (6.50 am) is offered during the week, and so far we find most of the students are very happy to participate. On Sundays all students must attend a religious service – the main Catholic Mass or other services of their choice. The Malawi educational curriculum has a clear place for religious instruction as well as courses that emphasise ethical well-being.

An oasis of learning in a very poor neighbourhood

When you enter the LJSS campus – coming through a very poor neighbourhood of the Kasungu municipality – you will see the fully constructed buildings of Phase One: administration block; conference hall; eight classrooms with additional science and IT labs; temporary library; girls' and boys' dormitories; kitchen/dining facilities. The sports fields are appearing and already getting good use. Phase Two will see more classrooms and dormitories, and three major buildings: chapel, clinic and Jesuit Residence.

"Come to Loyola Jesuit Secondary School to learn not just to make a living but to make a difference!"

LJSS has been blessed from the start with generous benefactors. The worldwide Society of Jesus has assisted through donations from many Provinces and Mission Offices. Father General Adolfo Nicolas has made significant donations. Some national Catholic Bishops Conferences have contributed, and foundations in Europe and the USA have designated funds for specific purposes. And hundreds of individual donors from across the globe have made contributions, large and small.

Fr Peter Henriot SJ is currently in Kasungu, Malawi following 21 years as Director of the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection in Lusaka, Zambia. Fr Pete brings us up to date with developments at Loyola Jesuit Secondary School.



“You People Are Good News”

Photo: The Irish group with Ocer Campion Jesuit College staff and students

In accompaniment and solidarity

Last October, during the school mid-term break, volunteer representatives from the five Jesuit colleges in Ireland took part in a formation visit to Uganda. It is a programme in accompaniment and solidarity with colleagues in the wider Ignatian family. This is the second venture in collaboration with Ocer Campion Jesuit College, Gulu, in this calendar year led by Brid Dunne, Irish Jesuit Missions (IJM) Development Education Coordinator. Here is her reflection.

Education is pivotal

Fr Valerian Sharima SJ, superior of the Jesuit community, proclaimed: “You people are Good News”, as we departed the Jesuit Community in Gulu after an awe-inspiring visit to Ocer. ‘Ocer’, the Acholi word for “He is Risen”, is a most appropriate title for this school.

From the ashes of 20 years of war in the region, the Jesuits of the East African Province have established a school. Now in its fifth year, Ocer is a beacon of hope for the future, and a physical sign of the risen Lord.

A co-educational boarding school set circa 7 km from the main town of Gulu, Ocer caters for up to 500 boys and girls. A major percentage of these students are supported through scholarships or bursary schemes. The 20-year war devastated the education system in the area. Because of insecurity, families were forced to leave their homes and live in internally displaced peoples’ camps. This created a culture of both dependency and fear. There was little investment in youth or infrastructure in the following years.

As the region rebuilds itself from the legacy of the Lords Resistance Army, education is pivotal to its progress. While poverty is still widespread, human resilience is tangible as families re-orientate their lives from the day-to-day survival of the displacement camps towards optimism for the future of the region. Ocer, the only Jesuit College in Uganda, is part of this regeneration.

Giving the gift of presence and time

The aim of the formation visit programme is to support staff – in both Ocer and in the five Jesuit colleges in Ireland – in expressing the global reality of Jesuit school ethos. Particular attention is paid to the Jesuit characteristic of education “the faith that does justice”. Arguably it is easier to speak about, than live this ethos. These staffs take part in a profoundly formative experience when they open themselves up to the sharing of ideas and realities. The representatives from Ireland and staff of Ocer give the gift of both presence and time to accompany one another on a journey towards greater understanding of our global human family.

A one-day seminar is facilitated, where teachers from both provinces share concepts and ideas under the umbrella of Jesuit education. The message that rings clear is that the issues are the same, but the scale is different. Every school is supporting students with personal challenges: trauma; poverty; mental health issues; gender issues; different ranges of ability. However the numbers of students affected, level of trauma, severity and resources differ greatly. Ocerians reside in the shadow of war, in a poor region, and while we can understand the statistics, meeting individuals builds our ability to empathise with their human story, and changes us as individuals. This was the experience of the Irish teachers, most especially when accompanying their colleagues in the classroom.

A story of hope and vision

Ocer is a story of hope and vision for the future. Under the leadership of Head Teacher, Br. Masereka Godfrey, it is a project in sustainability. The development of a school farm will lead to a source of food and fuel for the compound. Solar electricity harvests a natural resource to meet a need. “There is hope for the future, and for Ocer”, according to Godfrey. This collaboration between the Eastern Africa and Irish Province is a mutually beneficial programme where lay people and Society of Jesus learn from each other and are formed as a result.

Encounters with God in Japan

Fr Donal Doyle SJ has lived and worked in Japan for over 50 years. He is a recipient of this year's Presidential Distinguished Services Awards that recognise those who have served Ireland with distinction whilst living abroad. Fr Doyle established an Irish Studies Programme at the Jesuit Sophia University which encourages students to visit Ireland and make valuable connections in business, administration and the arts.

Fr Doyle explains his faith in the culture of encounter that has underlaid his mission in Japan for over half a century.

Why Japan?

Whenever I meet someone in Japan I am always asked: "How long have you been in Japan?" When I tell them, their next question is: "Why did you come to Japan?" I always answer this latter question in the same way: "To meet you!"

For a Japanese, an encounter with another person for the first time has a kind of mysterious element to it. The word in Japanese for 'encounter' is *Deai*. I like that word, because I feel that God has led me to Japan through providential encounters.

Fr Pedro Arrupe SJ, once Vice Provincial of Japan, spoke about the delicate sensitivity of the Japanese and their natural goodness and courtesy. He said that they were a gentle people who placed great importance on the feelings of others and were good listeners. He pointed out that they felt close to nature, and that they were not embarrassed by silence. He wrote that the Japanese had curious minds and would not be won over by reason alone, but also by *cariño*, using the Spanish word for 'affection and warmth'.

Xavier had called the Japanese: "the best people we have ever discovered." When I reflected on my first 'encounter' with Xavier in Belvedere College, Dublin and then on my experience of many other nationalities while studying in Aix-en-Provence, France, and the fact that I could get on well with them, the Japanese international province began to take on a special meaning. I prayed and discerned for a long time before leaving for Japan in 1958.

Faith refining in a non-faith environment

In 1977, I was moved to Tokyo and asked to be Rector of the Theologate and taught part-time in Sophia University. These were young adults, and I enjoyed the challenge. Very few of them have any 'religious belief'. Yet they are good people who care for others, who are polite and courteous and kind in their daily life. I found that in

dealing with them I was becoming more aware of the presence of God in each one even though they themselves were not aware of God's presence in themselves.

I think most Japanese think there is 'something/some mysterious power out there', but they are not too interested in finding out. I notice that when you tell a person that 'they are never alone and that God dwells in them', this gives them consolation. I have found that my own faith is being refined all the time by living in this non-religious, non-faith environment.

The individual Japanese is a wonderful person, but Japanese society can be very non-spontaneous and formal, particularly in human relations and in their extraordinary work ethic.

Many difficulties and great spiritual consolations

In a letter Xavier sent from India in 1552, he exhorts his companions in Rome to send many companions to Japan: "where they will encounter both many difficulties and great spiritual consolations." How true those words of Xavier are!

Looking back on these 50 years in Japan, I thank the Lord for the wonderful Novice Master I was blessed with, Fr. Donal O'Sullivan, the Jesuit who opened my mind and my heart to the wider world and set me on the road to spiritual discernment. I thank the Irish Province for the support and encouragement it has shown me from the beginning. I thank my parents and family who with great love and understanding have always shared in my missionary life in Japan. I thank the Japanese Province, which is so international and Japanese at the same time, for accepting me as their brother.

I thank the Japanese people for everything that I am today.



Uncle Gerard: the Gregarious Missionary



Fr Gerry Keane SJ returned to Singapore after a visit to Ireland last September.

Here his proud nephew Patrick Lambe recounts fond memories of his Uncle Gerard's visits to Thurles, Tipperary across the years.

Cool, alternative, novel and fun

“Christ on a bike!” – or, a priest on a Honda 50 in Ireland was rare in 1970’s Ireland. Well in Tipperary anyway. I suppose it was summer 1974 when Uncle Gerard was on one of his visits to Ireland. In my hometown of Thurles, he appeared up the lane unannounced and under the radar as usual. He took the windy mountains’ road from Limerick to Thurles. No one knew who it was until he lifted the helmet and beamed a big smile.

Then after we all sat looking at him for an hour, he said in his calm quiet voice: “Take it for a spin”. I think I was eleven – this was some laugh, we had a long lane up to the house so we spent the afternoon wobbling and weaving up and down, my first and last time riding a motorcycle. To us Uncle Gerard was alternative and novel and fun and didn’t wear a collar, so the contrast was refreshing and “cool” in Ireland of the time.

In his all too rare visits to Ireland he would bring gifts for the women, dresses and kimonos and shawls, all in traditional far-eastern patterns and styles, silks and satins - beautiful and graceful gowns in fantastic colours. For the men, linen summer shirts with outrageous colours and patterns, only worn in public for a bet!

A gregarious missionary from far-flung places

Our earlier impressions and memories of Uncle Gerard are episodic, for the main part we only ever saw, or knew of his life when he visited Ireland and there were long gaps in between. We were and are immensely proud of him and his pioneering spirit. We loved to tell people of “our Uncle Gerard, a Jesuit priest in Singapore”. Even now in the globalised world of instant communication and fast travel, there is great kudos in having a gregarious missionary in far-flung places, and to have one as cool as Gerry Keane is a bonus.

When Uncle Gerard was in Thurles he would stay for a few days or a week. He loved nothing more than to sit in kitchens and talk into the late hours, and sip the

whiskey, and smoke Consulate – my goodness those all-white menthol cigarettes I remember so well – and the laughing and the smoke-filled room. He never had a tourist agenda, all he wanted was to meet people and spend time together with a: “please, no fuss”.

I remember when he visited in a summer of the late sixties – he was driving a brown Morris Minor. We all piled into it with towels and swimming togs and careered around the roads of Tipperary. He drove us to our cousins in Templemore who had a marvellous garden and swimming pool – well the squeals of laughter can be still heard and the memories everlasting.



Fr Gerry Keane SJ with members of his family

In the heart of his family

Strangely Uncle Gerard didn’t discuss his missionary work at any length with us when he came to visit. He suffered from that false modesty and self-deprecation that we Irish do all too well. Only recently we have become aware of his writing and broadcasting accomplishments in Singapore.

When we approach our last few years, we would all want to have our loved ones close and to spend time just listening and talking and sharing. Gerard is our flesh and blood, our pride and joy, but his true family is with him where he lives and has lived for most of his life, in Singapore, and we thank God for that.

It gives us great peace and comfort to know for sure that our dear and much loved uncle and brother is right in the heart of his family.

Mission News

Kenya

Pope Francis visited the parish of St Joseph the Worker in the slums of Kangemi, Nairobi on November 27th where two Irish Jesuits have worked. "He comes to greet us small people", an old woman remarked to John Guiney SJ. The people were thrilled that the Holy Father visited them!

Cambodia

Volunteer Deirdre Ryan, originally from Tipperary and now living in Dublin, traveled to Cambodia on 10th December. Deirdre will be working with Fr Ashley Evans SJ initially for a 12 month period, doing teacher training at the Xavier Jesuit School project situated in Sisophon.

Lusaka to Dublin

At the annual Memorial Mass in Milltown on the 8th November for deceased Irish missionaries, Fr Joe Keaney SJ gave a reflective homily: "The Land of the Silent". Many great Irish Jesuits have passed on to that place having devoted their whole lives to missionary works, trusting in God's silent plan for their missions in life.

and back again...

Many thanks to the Sandymount Matero Friendship Programme linking the community of Matero in Lusaka with the Sandymount community in Dublin. At their October fundraiser, 250 plates were hung on the railings of Sandymount Green, each plate representing a child

fed by the programme with their picture and name. Over €1600 was collected and word spread about the Programme and its aims.

Zambia

Fr Tony Geoghegan SJ passed away on 15th November having lived and worked as an educator and spiritual director for over 60 years in Zambia. He is buried at Kasisi Mission following the funeral there. May his soul rest in eternal peace.



Fr Tony Geoghegan SJ, aged 84, earlier this year in Zambia

Ireland

Fr Joe Hayes SJ celebrated his 70th birthday on the 18th October and will return to live in Ireland in the New Year. Joe intends to take up an active ministry here having spent over 40 years in Zambia.



Thank you for your continued support. Your contributions play a vital role in our missionary work with the poor and marginalised in Africa and Asia.

If you would like to make a donation by cheque, please make it payable to "Irish Jesuit Missions" and post to **Irish Jesuit Missions, 20 Upper Gardiner Street, Dublin 1**

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