



In all things to love and to serve
In all things to love and to serve

Irish Jesuit Mission Office Newsletter

Issue 17 – Spring 2016

Contents

- Year of Mercy: Advancing Education for Refugees
- A Challenge of Mercy in Cambodia
- “Be Merciful, Just as your Father is Merciful”
- South Sudan: Education is an Act of Mercy
- Mission News

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.

To learn more about our missions or to make a donation, please contact:

Director: John K. Guiney SJ

Irish Jesuit Missions,
20 Upper Gardiner St.,
Dublin 1,
Ireland.

Tel: + 353 (0) 1 8366509
Email: mission@jesuit.ie
www.jesuitmissions.ie

Republic of Ireland CHY 19577
NI Trust Number XR302213

For more information on the issues in this newsletter, visit:
www.jesuitmissions.ie



Photo: JRS/Mercy Through Learning. Rose is the headmistress of the JRS nursery school which serves 100 students from the host community in Maban, South Sudan.

Year of Mercy: Advancing Education for Refugees

In recent days, the world has witnessed increased displacement of thousands of people due to conflict going on in various countries. And while disruption to normal life, deaths and massive suffering are the most noticeable consequences of conflict, equally grave is the loss of educational opportunities for affected populations.

Mercy in Motion campaign

At the moment, more than 60 million people are in displacement the world over with at least half of them being children, and therefore, the need for education for persons in displacement is great. In response to the unveiling of the holy Year of Mercy, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) decided to extend its educational support to refugees by launching the Global

Education Initiative, to increase the number served in its educational projects by 100,000 from the current 120,000, to 220,000 by the year 2020.

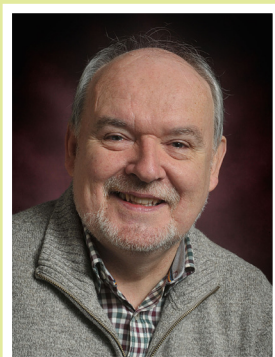
In a private audience with JRS staff in November 2015, Pope Francis encouraged the initiative by saying that to “...give a child a seat at school is the finest gift you can give”.

Mercy in Motion campaign is therefore an advocacy and fundraising platform, with the target being to raise \$35 million to support its educational projects in the next five years.

An investment in peace

Education is usually among the first casualties of war or conflict. As a

A Word from the Director



I wish all our friends in different parts of the world a blessed and happy Easter. The Easter message is full of hope and consolation for all people even in the midst of suffering.

This year we celebrate the Jubilee Year of Mercy. In a recent interview Pope

Francis spoke about his personal discovery of God's mercy in his own life and calls for a "Revolution of Tenderness" during this Year of Mercy. It will encourage more just, tolerant and patient relationships between individuals and nations. Tenderness, he recounts, expresses the female face of the Church and when we are open to this revolution of tenderness we ourselves become more tolerant, more patient and more tender. People are no longer treated as objects but as children of God.

In our Spring Newsletter we highlight the works of mercy in many and diverse Jesuit activities around the world. From Asia to Africa to Europe, Jesuits and lay colleagues put mercy into motion amongst those who are most forgotten. Giving a child a place in school or enabling a refugee to find a home is not only a work of mercy, but also a work of justice.

Mercy and justice are two sides of the same coin. When they unfold together into the fullness of love they heal and restore broken hearts and broken relationships.

Easter is a time of new hope and good news for our world. When we tell the stories of our brothers and sisters who work to bring consolation to the vulnerable and excluded, we are inspired and uplifted. They are surely making the world a better place.

Easter is also a time to give thanks to all our readers who support our Jesuit works through prayer. To all who support our works materially and financially we say **THANK YOU**. Together we are indeed making our world a kinder place to live in.

You and all your families are in our Masses and prayers this Easter. **HAPPY EASTER.**

result, refugees' children are forced to cut short their studies, while others do not even have the opportunity to go to school. Entire generations are often at risk of losing their right to education, which in turn limits their chances for integration and contribution to the host communities.

Similarly, for those who eventually return home, they are limited in terms of what they can contribute in building their nations, and most importantly, to sustainable peace. It is for these reasons and others that JRS has long considered education a life-saving intervention and recognise it as a lasting contribution to long-term durable solutions to conflicts: an investment in peace.

Education within conflict

It is also notable that many conflicts today are taking longer and longer to resolve, with UNHCR statistics showing that people are spending an average of 17 years in exile! And although many displaced persons have found a place to rest—at least for the time being amongst local communities in Africa, Asia and Europe—there are others still within their own countries living in internally displaced camps. In these circumstances, the children are faced with many barriers to learning such as lack of schools, overcrowding in a few available schools, lack of teachers, and language barriers.

"Education is usually among the first casualties of war or conflict. Entire generations are often at risk of losing their right to education, which in turn limits their chances for integration and contribution to the host communities."

Schools offer children protection from trafficking and forced recruitment (by armed gangs), a sense of normalcy especially after going through the experience of war, and imparts important values such as peace, justice and reconciliation.

Undoubtedly, education helps restore human dignity while at the same time empowering uprooted people to take charge of their lives both in exile and upon returning home. In several places such as South Sudan, former refugees who benefited from education scholarships while in exile have gone back to help rebuild their country.

Through the Mercy in Motion Campaign, JRS hopes to ensure that the right to education for thousands of displaced children and young people is restored and protected.

Beatrice Gikonyo is Regional Advocacy Officer, Jesuit Refugee Service Eastern Africa.

A Challenge of Mercy in Cambodia

Deirdre Ryan from Tipperary is working as a volunteer teacher trainer in Cambodia with Fr Ashley Evans SJ at the Xavier Jesuit School. She writes about her new life.

In May 2015 I made the decision to volunteer overseas. I applied for a placement through Viatores Christi (VC), with no particular destination in mind. I did however, have a wish list.

I wanted to step outside my comfort zone and experience a new culture. I wanted to be challenged. I wanted to be engaged in work I found meaningful and worthwhile. I also wanted to work with people who have not had the same opportunities I have had and by my presence hopefully contribute to positive change.

I knew very little about Cambodia or its people then.

To embrace the unfamiliar

Those first few weeks were all about getting to know the routines, the geography of the immediate environs, adjusting to community living and battling with the Khmer language. But now, when I feel like my progress is at a standstill, I remind myself that back then, many conversations in English left me baffled – strange sounding place names, references to other communities, other projects and even people's names.

I have been very happy here in the village of Phnom Bak from the start, but looking back I see that the settling in has been a gradual process. And that the process speeds up the more open I am to embrace the unfamiliar.

The town of Serei-sophon is 7 kms away, a long walk

in the afternoon heat, attempted only once and a more manageable, enjoyable cycle. Apart from the beautiful wooden church built on stilts, I initially felt it hadn't much to offer. I saw only the rubbish that is scattered almost everywhere. At some stage, I stopped seeing the rubbish first and began noticing the people, the beauty in the buildings, and appreciating the liveliness and busyness of the streets. Now to me Serei-sophon is a town full of life, full of character that I am enjoying slowly getting to know.

Cambodian days and nights

Living here alongside our international community, I work in the community building with them and with the Khmer staff that includes teachers, office staff, our cook, our cleaner and our guards. Early on, I spent a few days working from my room planning, evaluating and studying Khmer. It was possibly the most challenging time I've had since I arrived.

When I think about how relationships have developed and how colleagues are becoming friends, I am grateful for the advice given during our VC training—in development work, there is little you can achieve sitting on your own, at your computer. These days I tend to do most of these things in the teachers' room, in the company of others.

The evenings are quiet. The sun sets around 6.30pm now, it was before 6pm when I first arrived. The Cambodian sunsets are amazing. Like everything you have on tap, it is now something I expect every night, but it never fails to take my breath away. And when there's a full moon, it hangs in the sky like a giant golden bauble. At night the sound of children is replaced with the almost deafening lullaby of crickets and geckos.

"Where are you going?"

Once you walk outside the gates and set foot in the villages, you realise immediately that there is no isolation here, unless it is self-imposed. The people are curious, a greeting is often in the form of the question: "Where are you going?" Smiles are given readily—laughter even more so—particularly at this volunteer's poor attempts at communication, a good natured laughter.

I knew very little about Cambodia and its people before I came here and I still have a lot to learn. But I have started the journey.



Kindergarten students take a break for a snack

“Be Merciful, Just as your Father is Merciful”

Pope Francis has put it very simply: *“The Church is not in the world to condemn, but to make possible an encounter with the visceral love that is God’s mercy.”* And that is the reason for this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy which he launched at the end of 2015. We have enough of the “lex talionis”: the rule that you pay for an eye with an eye, you pay for a tooth with a tooth. Everything has its price until we feel satisfaction.

Letting God be our judge

In Dublin, Ireland a recent gangland murder resulted in the death of 34 year old Gary Hutch. His mother Kay Hutch said the pain she had endured at losing her son was unbearable and she would not wish it on others. “We do not want retaliation.” she told mourners at her son’s funeral in Dublin’s north inner city. “We don’t wish our pain on any other family. I let God be our judge.”

This was how the newspaper reported it in October 2015 and the message hasn’t changed, even after the murder of Eddie Hutch in February this year. The cycle of revenge is continuing but Gary’s mother wants no retribution. Even though the logic of “gangland” justice is relentless and cruel, a mother at the heart of the conflict doesn’t want more killing. Until the full price has been paid they won’t let up; until satisfaction has been reached. Or until we all feel enough pain to stop the killing.

A mother’s way of thinking

But that’s not a mother’s way of thinking. A mother will stand by her child through thick and thin. A mother will see the good side to a child when everybody else sees the bad. A mother will hold on to the hope that her child may change, may choose a different path and often, a mother will just keep praying that things will come right.

Because a mother has to think that way. How could the person that was once an innocent and helpless infant not still have the dignity and loveliness of their earliest years. How could someone who depended so much on her from birth now be abandoned into the hands of hard people. If only that child could return to their true self, to the beauty and integrity that was theirs in their learning years.

Moments when God speaks eloquently

And that comes close to describing how God loves us and desires us to return to who we really are: loved and cherished down to the very roots of our being. This is the quality and depth of God’s love for us revealed in the Gospels: books of good news. And when you put aside all the other things that crowd out our lives and when

you stand face to face with the great questions of life, the death of a parent, the birth of a child, starting a new job, ending an old one, violent revenge, the message is that God loves and forgives and embraces and reconciles and wants us to know that love and to live out of it. The tragedy is that it seems to take terrible events for us to hear the message. And yet these are the moments when God can speak most eloquently, like a mother amidst all the pain.

Show mercy, release, let go

Well God has rejected that thinking. God has embraced wrongdoing and paid the price demanded. In his person Jesus showed mercy on those who had been condemned. Yes, you’ve been caught in the act; you have to pay the price. But God just asks you to turn back to God and to God’s way of dealing with us. Don’t demand the amount due; release the person from their debt, let them go. Why? Because God has let you go!

It sounds old-fashioned but I like the expression: “Remember your sins”. Remember how far you’ve come since you felt very bad for something you did. None of us is without sin, none of us can cast the first stone. We have to slip away in quiet and leave the condemned with the Lord. It’s not for us to condemn but to remember our own sins, our own weakness: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”



Fr Gerry Clarke SJ, formerly Jesuit Refugee Service, is parish priest at Saint Francis Xavier Parish, Gardiner Street, Dublin.

South Sudan: Education is an Act of Mercy

“I’ve lived through three decades of war and I’ve never experienced as much violence as I did a few weeks ago,” said South Sudanese Sister Elizabeth Waraga, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Education Coordinator who works in Yambio, South Sudan. In January 2016, heavy gunfire between government and opposition forces rained on the small South Sudanese town of Yambio. Sister Elizabeth and her colleagues hid for hours.

Yambio used to be a safe haven for internally displaced persons (IPDs) and for those who have returned but has now been added to the list of the nation’s conflict zones. “We’re all terrified to move, and the threat of sexual violence is more prevalent than ever – armed groups have committed sexual violence everywhere, even invading churches to violate women of all ages. Every night we’re drummed with sounds of guns and some days food is non-existent. It wasn’t this horrible during the war with Sudan. Civilians and the Church were protected and respected by all factions, not like today.

“I wonder what is the future for these young people in South Sudan?” added Elizabeth.

Perseverance amidst growing insecurity

JRS has helped the younger generation in South Sudan to gain access to education for decades. The organisation established itself in Yambio during Sudan’s second civil war. Due to this increasing insecurity, lack of protection, and limited movement, JRS and other humanitarian agencies are struggling to provide an adequate response. But they persevere nonetheless.

In 2015, JRS Yambio served more than 4,000 people through teacher trainings, scholarships for girls and improving school infrastructure. Throughout the year, enrolment in local secondary schools supported by JRS increased by 80 percent and enrolment of girls by 35 percent.

The organisation hopes to continue these projects and begin to offer vocational skills training courses throughout 2016 to more than 1,300 new students. Schools in Yambio are open but enrolment is low. Many students, Elizabeth fears, are seeking refuge far away.

“JRS support for teacher training is very important even in the midst of this chaotic conflict. Teachers here lack skills, but many people, especially girls, want to study and learn. They trust JRS will keep them in school. We hope peace will come so children can reach their classes.” she said.

Education is a tool for peace in a crisis

JRS believes education must remain a priority even amidst the most severe crises. Education is a tool for peace and long-term development and a basic human right that allows people to improve their standard of life regardless of where they may settle down eventually.

The crisis in South Sudan has entered its third year and the likelihood of peace seems further away than ever. Although government and opposition forces signed a peace accord last year, a new plan to divide the country into a further 28 states and continued violations of the agreement have perpetuated further violence into 2016. Furthermore, both armed groups continue to scale up their weapon acquisition leading to the “expansion of war,” according to a recent African Union report.



A young Sudanese refugee learns the alphabet from one of the teachers JRS trains in South Sudan (Photo: Jesuit Refugee Service)

Multiple armed groups are at fault for atrocious violence toward civilians including the burning of villages, destruction of crops, sexual abuse and child conscription as reported by the United Nations. More than 2.3 million people have been displaced since the conflict began in December 2013.

As levels of displacement from the conflict in South Sudan reach unprecedented levels, the drive for refugees to learn and build a better future continues.

In Yambio, peace talks among local forces are now underway. But JRS urges that sustained, long-term peace will only come from concerted action and compromise from the highest leadership in South Sudan.

Angela Wells, JRS Eastern Africa Communications Officer

Mission News

● A visitor from Monze, Zambia

The Irish Jesuit Missions (IJM) was visited by Bishop Moses Hamungole from Monze, Zambia where Irish Jesuits work in radio communications, education and preserving the music and language of the Batonga people there. The station—Radio Chikuni—is supported by IJM.

● Keeping HIV on the Agenda: Women's Unequal Equality

The annual Irish Aid Fr Michael Kelly SJ lecture on HIV and AIDS took place on Human Rights Day, December 10th, 2015. The theme *Keeping HIV on the Agenda: Women's Unequal Equality* had a video introduction by Fr Michael from Zambia. A booklet on the issue is available free of charge from IJM: contact reception@jesuitmissions.ie for a copy.

● In the footsteps of Ignatius

A Jesuit group of staff from Jesuit works in Ireland are looking forward to travelling to Loyola, Spain in March. The pilgrimage will deepen their awareness of Ignatius' story and the spirituality that underpins the work they are involved in.

● From Cambodia

Fr Ashley Evans SJ arrives in Ireland in June from Cambodia on home leave. He will spend time with his family, staying at the family home in Dublin.

● Thanks to Fr Martin Curry SJ

Martin, or Murt as he is most fondly known, has spent almost 10 years in the Irish Jesuit Mission (IJM) office. He has worked as Missionary Development Officer and supported numerous projects in Africa and Asia over the past 10 years. He was the liaison person between IJM and Misesan Cara.

Misesan Cara is a missionary agency that receives money from Irish Aid for mission works. Martin facilitated through his expertise, patience and endurance, huge funding for Jesuit works in Africa and Asia. He has passed on his skills to our overseas partners through training programmes over the years. His replacement is being recruited at present. We will miss not only Murt's expertise but also his warm companionship and gentle humour in our office.



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**

If you wish to make a donation with a credit/debit card, please contact: +353 (0) 1 836 6509

For donations online log onto: www.jesuitmissions.ie

Your Name:

Address:.....

.....

Contact number: **Email :**

Are you eligible for PAYE Tax Relief for donations? Yes ☐ No ☐

In the interests of privacy and security, all personal information held by IJM is in accordance with the Irish Government Data Protection principles