



In all things to love and to serve

Irish Jesuit Missions Newsletter

Issue 20 – Spring 2017

Contents

- “Go to the frontiers” exhorts Jesuit Pope
- An amazing couple of months in Cambodia
- Door to door on a Buffalo
- The Irish Jesuits in Hong Kong: 90 years on
- 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.

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John K Guiney SJ meets Pope Francis at the Jesuit General Congregation 36
Image: CNS/Itua Egbor SJ

“Go to the frontiers” exhorts Jesuit Pope

An historic meeting in Rome

Pope Francis, the first Jesuit Pope, addressed the members of the General Jesuit Congregation 36, called GC36 in Rome. It was the first time a Jesuit Pope had addressed a General Congregation. It was indeed special. He spent an hour addressing the members and two hours answering questions.

His core message to the Jesuits was to exhort them to be men who bring consolation to the people of God, to go where people are hurting and bring them hope in their suffering.

It was a momentous occasion to have a Jesuit Companion who is also

the Pope, advising his Companions to live their Jesuit vocation in the footsteps of St Ignatius our founder, by always discerning the good Spirit in their lives and work.

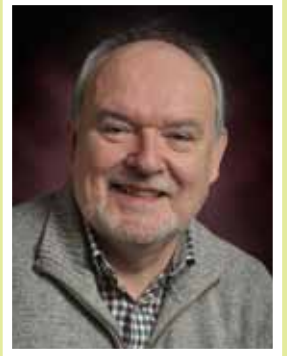
Election of a new Father General

Before the historic visit, the election of the new Father General took place on the 12th day after a week of prayer and ‘murmuratio’—consulting with one another in one to one conversations.

Fr Arturo Sosa SJ from Venezuela was elected. The choice was a special one because he is the first leader of the Jesuits to come from the southern hemisphere. It also seems a wise

A Word from the Director

It is always a blessing to visit our missionaries and works in the field. The occasion of visiting our Companions in Hong Kong, Cambodia and Singapore occurred in the month of February 2017. In Hong Kong we have six members and many are active—John Russell, Alfred Deignan, Seán Coughlan, Harry Naylor, Seán Ó'Cearbhalláin—aged 80 to almost 104 years of age. Our oldest missionary Joe Mallin SJ, continues to be hale and hearty. Since 1926, 106 Irish missionaries went to Hong Kong. Their work in education, spirituality, spiritual formation and social justice has had a lasting impact. Profound gratitude amongst the alumni of our colleges and other works is always openly expressed and they delight in having them, in the fragility of their old age.



Our sole missionary in Cambodia, Ashley Evans SJ has done trojan work in setting up Xavier Jesuit school—the first Jesuit school in Indo-China. With Irish teacher volunteers, local staff and the Presentation Sisters, new educational opportunities, especially for girls, are being created in rural villages of North West Cambodia. Gerry Keane SJ from Limerick is our sole surviving missionary in Singapore. Amidst health challenges, he continues from his wheelchair to be a witness of Irish Jesuit missionary availability and generosity in Singapore and Malaysia. The great impact of our missionaries has been to nourish local vocations to develop and continue the work of the Church in these countries. It is also a great joy to witness lay missionaries and volunteers, men and women, collaborating in the Jesuit works.

Easter is a time for rejoicing in the good work God is doing and wants to do through us all. Through each one of you and by your spiritual and material support we are able to support our men and women on the frontiers.

I wish you a very happy Easter Season and let us keep each other in our prayers.

decision because the majority of active Jesuits now live in Central and Latin America, Asia and Africa.

In the 476 years since its founding, the Society of Jesus has convened only 36 General Congregations. A General Congregation is always summoned on the death or resignation of the head of the Society—the Superior General—to choose his successor, or when the General decides action is needed on serious matters that he cannot or does not want to decide alone. In December 2014 Fr Adolfo Nicolas SJ announced his intention to resign and GC36 was called to elect a new Superior General.

Companionship, the greatest gift

A number of guiding documents ensued including one on mission and governance. However, the greatest gift of attending such a rare gathering was the experience of companionship—being friends in the Lord across the frontiers of the world. Two hundred and fourteen members from different provinces and regions attended. In such diversity of cultures, colours and ideas there was a real sense of unity in mission and solidarity. There was a real sense of joy in being called to make the world a better place through the inspiration of the gospels and the spirituality of St Ignatius and Companions. It was indeed a blessed occasion for all.

Rowing into the deep together

The logo for GC36 was inspired by Pope Francis' message to the Jesuits on the 200th anniversary of the restoration of the Society of Jesus in 2014. He urged Jesuits to discern in difficult times; to be receptive of and obedient to the will of God; to row with him in the service of the Church as Jesus called to his disciples: "Put out into the deep."



On the logo, the flame above the cross represents "a fire that kindles other fires," a link to Decree 2 from GC35. IHS represents the Society's boat in the Church, the waves are the sea, the cross the sail where the Spirit blows, helping members of the Society and their collaborators row into new frontiers with the faith that does justice.



Grade 2 students learn English at Xavier Jesuit School in Cambodia

An amazing couple of months in Cambodia

Aoife Jenkins is a volunteer teacher trainer and English teacher at Xavier Jesuit School in Cambodia. Aoife shares her experience with Irish Jesuit Missions' readers.

The 'right time'

I arrived just over five months ago from Ireland and while it is a cliché, it really has been an amazing couple of months. Despite the many challenges in modern teaching, I have loved my job as a teacher from the day I started my first position as a Biology teacher in Cambridge. I love the students and the fact that every day is different. I had always intended to do some long term volunteering, at some stage, but initially I wasn't sure what I could offer without very much experience so it was only an idea for a few years.

After six years of teaching in England, I felt that it was time to start looking for the right opportunity to pursue volunteering. This research was exhausting, as you have to work hard to avoid profit-making organisations where your fee is the greatest benefit that you bring to the project. Luckily, I was pointed in the direction of organisations like Voluntary Service Overseas, Irish aid and finally Viatores Christi that matches skill sets with placements where you can be beneficial.

The Xavier Jesuit school

The project is a Jesuit run education one with the aim being to have four centres by the end of the 12-year plan. So far there is a community learning centre, a kindergarten and primary school and the latest one is the secondary school where I work.

The aim of the project here is to move from rote based teaching and learning techniques to interactive, engaging and explorative learning.

The secondary school opened its doors to 33 gorgeous Grade 7 students in November 2016. They are the happiest children that I have ever met. I also have the pleasure of running some of the extracurricular activities such as a Science Club and sports clubs. Even in 30 degrees heat, every day they want to play after school.

The students come from the local village and we also have seven students on school scholarships, who are from families living further away that otherwise couldn't afford to send their children to school. The villages around are poor but not in spirit, and the Scholarship girls are no exception to that: they get involved in all the clubs and activities with great enthusiasm.

The students in Grade 7 are a kind, eager and caring cohort. The innate happiness, enthusiasm for learning and life has left me awestruck since I began teaching here. The staff and teachers at the project are a dedicated community and I am very grateful for their kindness and support.

A superpower smile

The people are warm and humble, with a gentleness that is very unique. Despite their harrowing past, the Cambodian people have a special superpower in the form of their warm smile. I don't know anything else that can compare with this heartwarming gesture from a Cambodian.

I struggle to adequately put this experience and the ways it has changed my life into words. But it's been a massive learning curve trying to learn a new language, teach and adapt to a new country and its culture— but an overwhelmingly positive one. I hope I can offer the students here even a fraction of what they have given me in the past months.

Door to door on a Buffalo!

Given the political crisis and famine in South Sudan, Kakuma Refugee Camp continues to receive a massive influx of refugees from that country. The Irish Jesuit Missions continues to support projects in the camp. The provision of Buffalo bicycles is one such project. Michael O. Oyoo writes from Kakuma.

JRS is journeying with refugees

Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya has been receiving refugees from Kenya's neighbouring countries since 1992. There are refugees from countries such as Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, South Sudan and Rwanda. They arrive after going through multiple traumatic events while on the move.

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) journeys with them through offering de-briefing and other types of counselling services upon arrival and during their stay in the camp. This has seen many refugees suffering from trauma find coping skills which enable them to live in the camp with dignity. JRS also takes care of children with cerebral palsy and other cognitive disabilities.

Buffalo is a blessing!

During one of my monitoring and evaluation visits to the JRS service centres, Akim, one of the Community Counsellors remarked: "Buffalo is a blessing!" Buffalo? Buffalo is the brand name of the bicycle type that JRS purchased. Akim and other refugee workers had a list of reasons they said make Buffalo 'a blessing'.

The use of the bicycles has drastically reduced distances and saved time getting from their homes to the refugee centres and elsewhere in the community. They help staff save energy to efficiently serve the community and have time for their families and run personal errands required in the camp.

The Buffalo has increased access to service provision by the refugee community. They have greatly helped the community workers to go to parts of the camp that are not easily accessible, allowing us to serve a bigger population.

This includes responding to calls and even making visits to the beneficiaries/clients over the weekends and out of work hours. For this reason, Buffalos motivate the staff.

Mobilisation and awareness

Professional counselling activities are not so popular within the African context even though communities



Community Counsellors in Kakuma Camp. (Michael Oyoo/JRS)

practise it in very informal ways. The Community Counsellors who have been equipped with the knowledge and skills in counselling and homebased care, have the responsibility to help other members of the community who have been on the move, to settle in and stabilise.

With Buffalos, the Community Workers are able to advocate more for beneficiaries/clients by following up referrals made to other entities—such as organisations and hospitals—making sure that referred cases are attended to and concluded.

Buffalos enhance community mobilisation and awareness. Community Counsellors are able to disseminate information by attending other community meetings in which they make known the services the organisation provides.

Establishing bonds

In a community like Kakuma refugee camp where a large population is made up of women and children, reaching them at their doors establish a bond, the same kind of bond that might have been weakened or lost while on the move. The refugees' instability is not only physical movement, but a psychological one too that constantly tries to meet the past, present and future in a foreign land.

Michael O. Oyoo is JRS Psychosocial Project Director in Kakuma Refugee camp, Kenya.

The Irish Jesuits in Hong Kong: 90 years on

Fr Alfred Joseph Deignan SJ relates the story of the Jesuits in Hong Kong.



The first Jesuit missionaries in Hong Kong, 1927



Frs Joe Mallin, Alfred Deignan and Seán Ó'Cearbhalláin

When we reach the age of 90 we often look back at our life history and marvel at how God has blessed us. The first Irish Jesuits arrived in Hong Kong on the eve of the Feast of St Francis Xavier and said their first Mass the next day, 3rd December 1926, in the Cathedral. Was this God's sign to us to be like St. Francis who had a strong desire to work in China?

This mission was a new challenge to the Irish Province; a new experience to work among poor people speaking a different language, the Cantonese dialect, with different food, customs and weather, often so hot and humid. So different from Ireland.

The people were very poor. There were many refugees from China. They lived in slums, in wooded huts on the hillside or on the rooftops. There was little welfare provided then.

Four pillars of Ignatian wisdom

The Irish Province sent 106 young Jesuits to Hong Kong between 1926 and 1970. Three pillars of the Mission were set up in the early years i.e. Ricci Hall, the Seminary and the schools, which continue to this day. Fr Stephen Chow is now the Supervisor of our schools making them more and more Ignatian. In time a new pillar was added—spiritual formation.

Invasion and surrender

In 1937 the Japanese invaded China. About 50,000 refugees poured into Hong Kong. Fr Thomas Ryan and Fr Donnelly set up the 'War Relief Association'. The Japanese invaded Hong Kong in 1941. The British surrendered. All schools were closed: the Seminary was shelled and our Language School was looted. Fr Gerald Kennedy, a doctor, served the wounded in St Paul's Hospital. The Jesuits were scattered, some to Macau

and set up St Luis Gonzaga School, some went to work in China. Two of those who remained—Patrick Joy and Gerald Casey—were imprisoned by the Japanese but providentially survived. In 1945 the Japanese surrendered and Hong Kong started its recovery.

Recovery, radio and riots

Fr Thomas Ryan was appointed Acting Superintendent of Agriculture. He reforested the hillsides: set up a wholesale market for farmers and helped found the Social Welfare Department and the Housing Society.

In 1947, Radio Hong Kong began broadcasting Catholic Prayers by Fr Richard Gallagher, Fr Thomas Ryan broadcast music programmes and, years later, Fr Ciaran Kane broadcast Morning and Evening prayers and a weekly programme of sacred music called 'Gloria' from 1996 to 1999.

In 1956 we had riots in Hong Kong. It was a rough time for police and people. Youth groups holding Mao's Little Red Book terrified people. Bombs were used. The schools closed as there was a scare that bombs were placed: a worrying time.

MAGIS: for the greater good

The Jesuit story of 90 Years has its ups and downs: Jesuits were always led by the MAGIS, the greater good. It is no wonder that we are filled with gratitude to God.

We have now only six Irish left, one is 103 but God has provided 11 Chinese Jesuits to carry on the work of service to the Church in China and people of Hong Kong. We ask for your prayers for more vocations.

This article is taken from the full version 'The 90th anniversary of the arrival of the Jesuits in Hong Kong'.

Mission News

● Missionaries go to their reward

Three missionaries who served in Zambia have died within a short space of time in Jesuit Cherryfield Lodge in Dublin. On 14th January, Tom McGivern SJ in his 90th year, and Stephen Redmond SJ aged 97, both passed away. Following a short illness, Br Peter Doyle SJ at 85 died peacefully in his sleep on 21st February. May their souls rest in peace.

● Follow up to Jesuit General Congregation 36

Participants from the Jesuit apostolates and schools came together and explored what outcomes from the General Congregation 36 mean for our works in March. The meeting was entitled 'Renewing the Mission of Justice and Reconciliation in Ireland Today - Inspirations from the GC36 Decrees and Documents' and was facilitated by John Guiney SJ, Irish Province delegate at GC36.

● Jesuit education for human rights

Staff at the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection in the Province of Zambia-Malawi were interviewed by Brian Kenny, media producer, about its public education programme on human rights before the Zambian referendum on the Civil Rights Bill last year. Brian shared his experiences and insights with staff at Irish Jesuit Missions, which supports the programme.

● African sounds

Fr Charles Chilinda SJ brought three young musicians Chikuba, Meddy and Mutinta from Zambia to meet staff at the IJM office. They added an African sound to the Novena of Grace music this year at Gardiner Street Church and were greatly appreciated by everyone!

● The Syrian war is now six years raging

As the Syrian war enters its seventh year, the Jesuit Refugee Service is highlighting the stories of Syrian refugees they are accompanying and their hope for the future of their country. Aisha had her baby daughter Fatima in Jordan and is recovering from complications due to a difficult C section birth.



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