



Goodbye to a Dear Friend

For more than a decade, Winnie Ryan was the heart of Irish Jesuit Missions (IJM), brightening the office with her warm smile and infectious laugh. As Finance and Office Manager, she supported and encouraged the whole team, who were inspired by her dedication to her role and her commitment to the people we work with.



*In Loving
Memory*

She summed up her philosophy in her own words, saying 'Above all, I believe in people!' Because of her own inherent sense of fairness, Winnie felt an affinity with the work of the Society of Jesus and felt there was a reason why she found her way into the organisation. As someone who hated injustice, she valued the way the Jesuits challenge it. She was also motivated by her sense of responsibility to others, which is a cornerstone of the Jesuit ethos. Winnie played an integral role in IJM in providing encouragement and support for Jesuits and volunteers overseas, something that is as important to the success of projects as providing funding.

In her ten years at IJM, Winnie collaborated on a host of projects with Irish Jesuits overseas, building lasting working relationships and friendships with the global Jesuit community. One project that she

Winnie Ryan
pictured at her
desk in IJM in
2015.



said she got a lot of satisfaction from, involved a visit to Zambia to set up a financial management system for a Jesuit organisation there. She said it left her with a "huge respect for and a real understanding of what it means for a person to be called to service."

We are heartbroken to say goodbye to Winnie, but her positive influence on our office is felt by all us, every day.

We will remember her beautiful smile, energy, humour and enthusiasm for all she did, even as we mourn our loss. We will keep her daughter Julie-Ann in our thoughts and prayers

Winnie Ryan passed away on Sunday 17th November 2019, after a long illness. *May she rest in peace.* ☺

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A Word from the Director

Gratitude is the theme of the Christmas Edition of our newsletter. It is the greatest grace we can pray for and receive, according to our founder, Saint Ignatius. To have a grateful heart is indeed a blessing.

We want to show our appreciation to the many people who have made a significant contribution to our work recently. Thank you to everyone who has loyally supported us over the years and to those of you who were inspired to donate for the first time by our October emergency appeal for the South Sudan floods. Your generosity has helped to improve or even save the lives of people who are living at the margins, in some of the poorest and most

deprived areas of the world. Our colleagues in South Sudan, Noelle Fitzpatrick and Tony O'Riordan SJ wish to pass on their sincere thanks for the assistance you have given them during this devastating crisis.

Being thankful is something that our donors Martin and his wife Laura have practiced since 1988 when he was the recipient of a heart transplant. They have shared their gratitude for this miracle with the world, and have this year bought new computers for Ocer Campion school in Uganda. Our piece about Eoghan Keogh, chaplain at Belvedere College illustrates how his gratitude is the motivation for the fundraising he and the boys do for us.

Another young person, Sarah from Milltown has raised money for refugee girls after a change of perspective made her feel grateful for the opportunity to go to school.



We are thankful to all of you for your help. Someone we really want to share our gratitude for in this edition of the newsletter is our colleague and friend, Winnie Ryan who passed away in November, and is sadly missed by all. She lived life to the full and with such positivity and gratitude each day.

Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year +

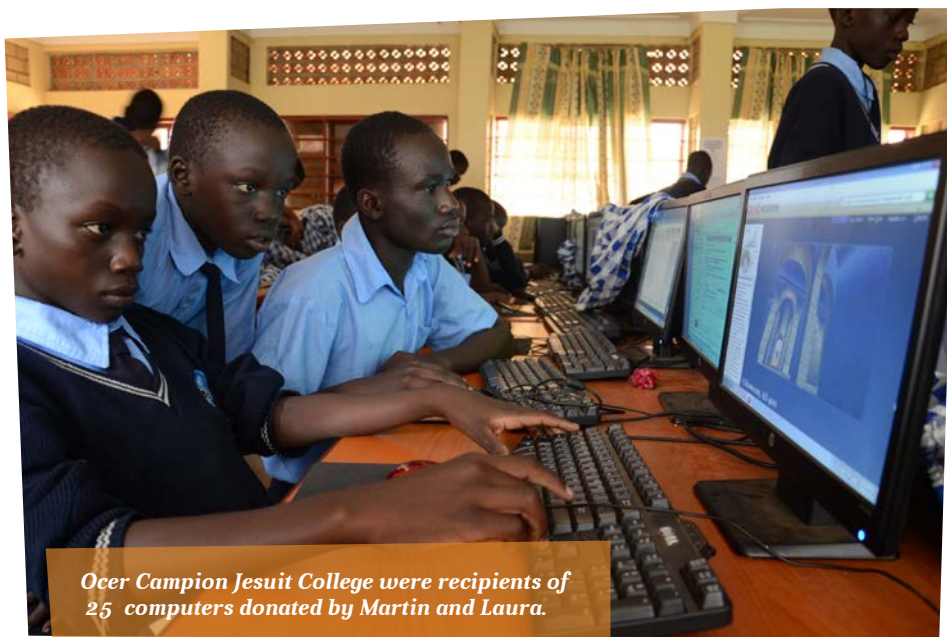
Fr John K. Guiney SJ | Director

Gratitude for a Second Chance at Life

Irish couple Martin and Laura gave the gift of computers to a school in northern Uganda and are regular donors of Irish Jesuit Missions. Their generosity is a reflection of their gratitude for Martin receiving a heart transplant in 1988 which saved his life.

Students in Ocer Campion Jesuit College in Gulu, Uganda now have 25 new computers for their school, thanks to the generosity of an Irish couple. Martin and Laura have been loyal supporters of Irish Jesuit Missions for many years, and have donated to several of our projects. They have a long history of giving to charity, which started when they were first married.

Their children have had the ethos of giving instilled in them from a young age, when the family began to buy chickens and goats for people in developing countries, from the Irish charity Bóthar.



Ocer Campion Jesuit College were recipients of 25 computers donated by Martin and Laura.

Gratitude for a heart

More than 30 years ago, Martin was one of the first people in Ireland to undergo heart transplant surgery. Aged just 47, he had been diagnosed with the heart condition cardiomyopathy and was forced to take early retirement from his job as a teacher. His surgery in The Mater Hospital made him one of the first people in Ireland to receive a heart transplant. Its success has added years to his life and it is gratitude for this and the “many blessings” that the family has received that has inspired he and Laura to give back to those who are in need.

“We have so much to be grateful for”, says Laura. “Thank God, Martin got a heart transplant in 1988. No money could buy that, and helping others is our way of thanking God and the donor family. People don’t realise how much good a little sacrifice can do.”

Ocer campion jesuit college

Ocer Campion Jesuit College is a co-educational boarding school which opened in 2010 in Gulu, in the north of Uganda. The school was set up to give children in the region, which was badly affected by the violence and chaos caused by Joseph Kony and his Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), the chance of a decent education and a positive future.

The college has a dedicated teaching staff and students, and is achieving academic excellence, but has been hindered by a lack of resources, including an adequate number of computers. Before Martin and Laura made their donation to Ocer Campion, the computer laboratory had very few machines and some students were trying to learn how to use a computer by following their teacher’s written instructions on a blackboard. Their gift will have an immense and lasting impact.

Legacy of gift

Laura told us a story that indicates what motivates her and Martin to be so generous with their money. One day she was in the local branch of her bank, getting a draft for a donation. “You again” said the manager who had to come to sign the draft. He told Laura he had just returned from holiday, to which she replied “Your holiday is done and dusted but this draft and the good it will do will be there long after me.” He smiled and had to agree.

Akumu Lillian, a Senior 6 Student in Ocer Campion was asked about her opinion about the new lab and she said, “Now the computers are fast. Before it used to take so long to open a file, or to save a document. Also you would find about six students crowded on one computer. Now every student can use his or her own, which makes learning easy.” +

Thanks for the Flood of Support

The response to our emergency appeal for the flooding in South Sudan was overwhelming. Tony O’Riordan SJ and JRS are very grateful for the support.

Devastating flash floods displaced hundreds of thousands of people in South Sudan earlier this year, putting lives in danger and cutting people off from food and shelter. The situation is now improving. Your generous donations have helped significantly but the destruction caused by this crisis will not be fully resolved for a long time.

Heaviest rain in forty years

In October [2019], heavy rains which were said to be the worst in forty years led to flooding in Maban, and

much of the surrounding region of Bunj was submerged. At 2am one morning the waters entered the Jesuit Refugee Service compound, flooding the classrooms and student sleeping areas. The water affected movement around Maban and left people stranded. Humanitarian activity in the region was curtailed as all refugee camps were cut off due to sections of the access roads becoming too dangerous to cross. The airstrip was also under water affecting the transport of food and essential supplies to the region, and UN aid vehicles were unable to

reach refugee camps as roads were impassable.

The JRS team and students of the centre were working together to overcome the challenges this presented. Refugee students were staying in the JRS compound until the road was made safe, along with local staff members who were displaced.

Situation becomes an emergency

A few days later, the situation had significantly worsened as more rain had fallen. Water levels in the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) compound were more than a metre high, meaning that the premises and all vehicles were beyond use. O’Riordan reported that land in the immediate vicinity of the compound was “a disaster zone”, and an emergency was declared. The humanitarian crisis deepened as thousands of displaced people looked for any

high ground or patches of dry land to escape to, while aid in the region was badly affected as NGOs evacuated their staff for safety.

Climate change effects

The effects of climate breakdown are increasingly evident in South Sudan, with extreme weather events, and irregular rainfall patterns causing droughts and flooding. Due to the country's instability, poverty, low literacy rates and persistent food insecurity, the country and its people are very vulnerable to climate change. Because of a heavy dependence on agriculture, its livelihoods and food supply are particularly susceptible to the effects of climate breakdown and it is poorly equipped to cope with the chaos caused by crises like this one.

Refugee community

Maban is close to the border with Sudan, and has hosted refugees since before South Sudan gained independence in 2011. It is currently home to more than 150,000 refugees and internally displaced people. This population is heavily reliant on aid from humanitarian agencies and is extremely vulnerable. Jesuit Refugee Service in Maban runs teacher training, education and literacy programmes to enable people (from the refugee camps and the host community) to work towards self-reliance. It provides accommodation for students to make it possible for them to attend their classes. The flooding meant that the JRS compound was closed until significant repair work could be carried out.

This was the second time that classes have been disrupted and aid work halted in recent times. In July 2018, the compound was attacked and vandalised, causing serious security concerns and a loss of computers and exam results. Tony O'Riordan SJ stayed in Maban after the attack to ensure that the



Thousands of people, such as this mother and her children, have been forced to seek higher ground. Photo: Jesuit Refugee Service

compound was made secure and classrooms were repaired so that the students could return as soon as possible. This time, he and seven JRS staff members remained in the compound to begin the restoration of the property. Other NGOs in the region have evacuated more than 100 staff members.

O'Riordan said of the flooding "It is overwhelming to see the scale of need, but what concerns me most is the terrible combination of flood, inaccessible populations, hunger, sickness and a reduced capacity to respond. However it is heartening to come from a meeting now with our local psychosocial staff, who are themselves affected badly by the flood but who are ready and willing (and eager) to go among the people in the name of JRS and listen, and do a needs assessment."

A lack of access to shelter and food, coupled with a looming sanitation crisis caused by the flooding, threatened thousands of people's lives. Donations from Irish Jesuit Missions supporters helped JRS to offer food and essential items to people at that critical time, and are being used to rebuild the infrastructure that was destroyed and the supplies that were lost to the water. Thank you to all of you who generously donated to this emergency campaign.

Update from Maban

Tony O'Riordan SJ has updated us on the situation from Maban and expressed his gratitude at the help he and the Jesuit Refugee Service have received.

"Our key priority has been to restore our full range of services following the flood of October 14. By mid-November we had all of our pre-flood services running, having made initial repairs to the compound and the Arrupe Learning Centre so that we could operate again. The biggest challenge we face is the condition of the road which is impeding mobility. Just last week, water levels rose enough to affect some stretches of road making some routine destinations difficult to reach.

We have been addressing the need for food, shelter and basic necessities among the host and refugee population. Food is being brought to remote villages which are still cut off and inaccessible to ordinary vehicles. We are distributing plastic sheeting to provide shelter and help people make repairs, and also giving out non-food essentials including soap and clothing.

Sincere thanks for the various contributions to our appeal following the floods. The solidarity and the practical support is very much valued." +



Girls laugh as they hold chalkboard tablets in a primary school in Bunj, South Sudan, sponsored by JRS. (Paul Jeffrey/Misean Cara)

Schoolgirl solidarity

One of our youngest donors, 12-year-old Sarah from Milltown in Dublin, raised money earlier this year for the education of refugee girls in South Sudan.

It is not the first time that Sarah has reached out to help people in need. A few years ago she got to know a family from Syria who arrived in Ireland as refugees. Their children got into the same school as Sarah, who helped their son with his school work as he settled into his new life.

This experience inspired her to seek opportunities to help children in difficult situations, especially girls. A story on the Irish Jesuit Missions website about the barriers that refugee girls in South Sudan face in accessing education led to her holding a cake sale after mass to raise money to help. Sarah and her family, joined with other parents and children in the parish to hold this lovely community event.

Sarah said that the stories of refugee children changed her attitude and made her feel lucky to be able to attend school when she thinks about girls who don't have the opportunity to do so. We are grateful to Sarah, her family and the parishioners in Milltown for their generosity and kindness, which will help other girls to feel lucky to go to school too. +

“When I was reading about the children of South Sudan having the highest illiteracy rate in the world I felt so lucky to get to go to school and learn.”

– Sarah, 12 years old from Milltown, Dublin

Sowing the Seeds of Commitment to Change

Eoghan Keogh is the Chaplain in Belvedere College.

He has run Lenten fundraising and awareness programmes in Belvedere for South Sudan for several years. Events include a sponsored silence for students, in solidarity with the unheard voices of their fellow students of Jesuit schools in less privileged parts of the world, and a five-a-side football tournament called The African Nations.

“I have always been inspired by Jesuits like Pedro Arrupe and the idea that to live an authentic faith life we must be concerned with those who are marginalised

Sowing the Seeds of Commitment to Change

or materially poor. Arrupe said "Today's prime educational objective must be to form men and women for others who cannot even conceive of the love of God which does not include love for the least of our neighbours".

When I was growing up, we had a Trócaire box and the image of the children on it really moved me. At that age, I had never really connected with the fact that the only difference between me and those children is I came into the world in a different place. Had I been born where they are or even in Ireland at the time of the famine it could be my face on a box in another country.

Therefore, my life and position in this world is a gift, leaving me with the opportunity to use my position of privilege to share and respond in whatever way I can. I feel a sense of responsibility. This is God's gift to me and to not respond in some way would be for me to deny the God I feel has shown me so much love in my life.

Belvedere College's connection with South Sudan was in the school when I arrived. I decided to try to engage my students in a way that enabled them to connect more and to sow seeds of a commitment to people at the margins that may stay with them for life.

Through reflection and actions, we establish a need and try to respond. In terms of structural change unfortunately we make little difference but it challenges my students, and me, to consider our place in the world. My hope is that they might want to respond more and more as they grow up.

I have not visited South Sudan but I am inspired by the work of my friend, Tony O'Riordan SJ who works closely with refugees and displaced communities there. I have experienced life in a refugee camp from a visit to Malawi a few years ago, and the memory of that has solidified my desire to try to respond to the needs of people at the margins in whatever way I can.

Eoghan Keogh is Chaplain in Belvedere College.



I am learning more all the time and, if the truth be told, I get more than I give in terms of gratitude. To be in a position to give is a privilege and an opportunity to find a deep happiness and connection with humanity that many have but few realise sometimes. Connection with South Sudan has had a real impact on my life and my attitude and I am grateful to have it in my life." +



(Photo: Salat Albareed/JRS International)

WINTER BLANKET CHRISTMAS APPEAL PLEASE DONATE

The Syrian war, now in its ninth year, displaced 6 million people internally and turned almost as many into refugees. A million and a half people ended up in neighbouring Lebanon.

The winter can be harsh in Lebanon, with low temperatures and biting winds. In the Beqaa Valley, which is home to many thousands of

Syrian refugees, the altitude makes winter much colder than on the coast, and the weather is severe at this time of year.

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) with support from Irish Jesuit Missions, distributes food and winter clothing to vulnerable students in the schools as the weather worsens at this time of year. We are working with JRS Lebanon to provide the simple gift of warm blankets for refugees in the Beqaa Valley region. Will you help?

This gift will help a Syrian refugee child to cope with a harsh winter in a cold place, far from home.

To learn more about our missions or to make a donation, please contact:
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For more information on the issues in this newsletter, visit www.jesuitmissions.ie



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