

Mission Statement

The Jesuit Refugee Service is an international Catholic non-governmental organisation, at work in over 50 countries, with a mission to accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced people. The purpose of JRS UK is to accompany, to serve and to advocate on behalf of all asylum seekers from their first arrival until they are satisfactorily settled. This work is carried out in collaboration with other JRS offices round the world, other Church and secular organisations, voluntary and governmental, which are active in the same field.

Values

JRS is grounded in Catholic social teaching and draws on the principles of Ignatian spirituality in discerning with whom we work. All members share a common set of values and principles concerned with justice, the dignity of the person and a responsibility to carry out the social mission of the Church.

EVENTS

- ◇ **10th Jan 2006**
 Cultural Aspects of Working with Refugees and Asylum Seekers. Course examining preconceptions and assumptions between refugees and service providers. Contact Anna Lodge: 0207 346 6739 or anna.lodge@refugeecouncil.org
- ◇ **9th Feb 2006**
 Refugee Mental Wellbeing Awareness - Refugee Council Course to provide participants with an improved knowledge of refugee mental health issues. Contact Anna Lodge: 0207 346 6739 or anna.lodge@refugeecouncil.org
- ◇ **Sat. 28th Jan. 2006 11am - 5pm**
 DEFY SECTION 9! A working conference for trade unionists, anti-deportation campaigners and anti-racists. Methodist Central Hall, Oldham St., Manchester
 Registration: £5 waged, £3 unwaged.
 Phone Jason Travis Bolton NUT for more information on 07976 476181 or George Binette, CDAS, on 07905 826304.
- ◇ Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics & Public Life presents a seminar series on VALUES IN PUBLIC LIFE.
 ⇒ **Sat. 25th Feb. 2006**
 Values in the Economy: The price of everything and the value of nothing.
 ⇒ **Sat. 20th May 2006**
 Values in the Culture: The Moral High Ground.
 All seminars are from 10am - 5pm. For a booking form contact: Moyra



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I am a UK taxpayer and would like to gift aid my donation to JRS (*Gift aid increases the value of your donation to us by 28p in every pound*)

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Anniversary celebrations

Events take place to give thanks for 25 years of progress and to prepare for the challenges ahead

A lively and diverse group gathered at Amigo Hall, St George's Southwark, on 3rd and 4th November, for the one and a half day training programme for those visiting detention centres. Led by speakers prominent in their respective fields, and refreshed by coffee and biscuits kindly served by



the Irish contingent, the course used presentations and group discussions to cover the legal, psychological and interracial / intercultural issues involved in visiting detainees. **Anna Marie-Gallagher**, (JRS Europe consultant), offered a legal introduction to the subject. She highlighted the tools needed to defend the rights of refugees and to ensure a just asylum process, suggesting that the Government often lowers these rights for those seeking asylum by classing them as 'illegal'. Urging a reassessment of the legal

light that refugees are held in, she said, "The host country has to recognise that this is not an influx of criminals". **Helen Ireland** (AVID) offered a presentation and led practical group exercises in listening to raise awareness of the psychological issues and welfare needs facing those in detention. The exercises included the best ways to build trust and address physical or psychological abuse. On the second day **Naboth**

Muchopa (Methodist Church) led a lively discussion on the issues of racial and cultural identity. He challenged the group to reassess their concept of 'Britain.' The idea that we are 'citizens of the world' was suggested by a number of the audience as a positive way to challenge prejudice. A special thanks to all those at **Akwaba Ivorian United** for providing the fantastic catering, to **Mr Alex Scott** at St George's, and to the guest speakers for sharing their time and expertise.

Fr Provincial celebrates anniversary Mass. On a day when Fr Provincial Michael Holman SJ talked about his pride at the work of JRS, the anniversary celebration mass was held at St. Ignatius, Stamford Hill. With fine music from Bernadette Farrell and the Eastern Area Singers, the mass remembered the 25 years of work achieved by JRS worldwide, and gave thanks for all those involved: refugees, asylum seekers, staff and volunteers alike. Refreshments were offered afterwards, and Br. Bernard Eliot cut the cake



(above) in recognition of his long-standing contribution to JRS. Many thanks to Fr. Provincial, St. Ignatius parish, the musicians and all those who contributed towards the event. Copies of Fr. Holman's homily are available from the JRS office.

Ben Holbourn

As part of the 25th anniversary celebrations, Br Bernard Eliot talks about his time with JRS



So Brother, how did you first get involved in JRS?

JRS was formed in the far east by the Fr. General. I was at the other end, receiving the Vietnamese in London. They were all refugees then, not asylum seekers. This was quite some years before JRS functioned in Europe. A wing at Osterley was given over to the Vietnamese housing (run by Refugee Action). I was in touch with the Vietnamese who worshipped at Maria Assumpta so invited them to Heythrop College (then at Cavendish Square). We played table tennis and badminton! They were very good. A badminton group went to France and won a championship there.

How do you feel JRS has grown in the UK?

Well the whole thing has changed. In 1980 all we were trying to do was *settle* people in London. The government then (and the whole of Europe) were in favour of people coming. But they had a policy of dispersing families all over England, so you'd have a family put into Blackburn, but a sister into Newcastle. There were terrible divisions.

All over the country?

Yes. The local people were very friendly, but the refugees were always so lonely, surrounded by a different climate and unfamiliar language. So lonely that they came back to London. They were happy to be at Heythrop with people speaking Vietnamese. And the bus fare was only 10p on Saturday!

You don't speak any other language, yet seem to get on so well with everyone.

More by luck than anything else, and good will on their part!

Is this idea of accompaniment the most important for you?

Well I wouldn't say I accompany them; the aim is to help them accompany each other, putting people in touch with each other. That's certainly valid now as it was in the 1980s. It can be terribly lonely to be a refugee, especially as a single man.

What are your hopes for the future with JRS?

That depends very much on manpower and finance! It'd be very nice to have a real centre for refugees from all countries, providing food and so on. I'd rather have a drop-in centre than accommodation; you'd be able to deal with a lot more people. Also if you have a day centre you can invite volunteers to meet the refugees; it'd be better for integration. A residential place would be by its very nature exclusive.

Finally, how much cake will you be having at the anniversary celebration?

None! It will be quite challenging there; there'll be some people there who were present right at the beginning of the work. But it's great to have the support of the Provincial.

JRS UK joins AGM in Rome

The JRS Annual General Meeting in Monte Cucco (Rome) on 18th - 23rd October was attended by the members of JRS UK. The meeting aimed to deepen and make more visible the spirituality of working with refugees and asylum seekers.



NEW ASYLUM POLICY: SECTION 9

The Government aims to pressurise 'failed asylum seekers' to return to their country of origin through Section 9 of the 2004 Asylum and Immigration Act. It does this by withdrawing all state support and threatening to take children of asylum seekers into care. The Refugee Council reports that support has already been withdrawn from 17 families and a further 70 families are nearing the end of the process. **See events (pg 4) for details of forthcoming campaign.**



Most of us know Heathrow from the inside – the check in desks, duty free boutiques, coffee bars, and airline lounges, the holidaymakers and businessmen passing through from every corner of the earth. It's a bit different on the outside; out here it's the windswept, concrete acres of car parks and runways, the bitter taste of exhaust fumes, the whine of jet engines. And the immigration detention centres.

Harmondsworth and Colnbrook detention centres house their own version of Heathrow's United Nations of visitors. These are the ones who have little or no choice about their destination, the ones who aren't travelling with their

Reflection on the JRS Experience - David Townsend

One thing is clear: **refugees are dangerous people.**

All governments instinctively realise this fact. Why else do nations and their media treat refugees as unwanted criminals, the source of all the evils in the countries they enter?

Refugees rewrite the history of the world, from the point of view of the dispossessed and powerless. Refugees enable people, like myself, to begin to reconfigure our own lives. Refugees are dangerous since they mediate **conversion**, change. And personal change implies change in all and every aspect of life. For many, this

families, the ones who are never sure what tomorrow will bring.

For the detainees whose weeks turn to months in their shared cells, life is a grim combination of numbing monotony and near-permanent uncertainty. The hours are spent wrestling with the demons of frustration, fear, boredom, optimism, bewilderment and despair; deportation - or release - can come without warning. Many of them are from countries where unconditional hospitality to the stranger is a reflex, and perhaps the greatest shock for them is being confronted by a culture - our culture - where the stranger is more often than not imprisoned until a way can be found to move him or her on.

The JRS mission lends a unique perspective to the urgent questions raised by mass global migration. This mission, to accompany, serve and defend the refugee, has helped me realise that the answer to these questions lies not so much in party policies, charitable gestures or welfare legislation. It lies in understanding that there is a

is a most disturbing reality.

This is, of course, a highly charged spiritual process of conversion and adjustment to the call of that Divine Reality Christians call 'The Father'. The call is to see every human being as a sister or brother, children of the same 'Father', to remove violence far from ourselves.

Refugees reveal the sin of the world, and what the violence of sin does to human beings, ourselves included. Despite the good efforts of many intelligent, well-

qualified and well-motivated people striving to improve society, refugees reveal the rottenness at the heart of all systems. Above all refugees reveal, to those who dare to be touched by them, the complicity, of all people, myself

Harmondsworth in all our hearts; and that we first have to unlock that and recognise - and celebrate - our common humanity before anything can change, or indeed, before anything in this life can make much sense at all.



Michael Coffey

PRESS STATEMENT.

Africans deported from Spain and Morocco risk death in Sahara.

These include pregnant women and children.

Upon expulsion from Spain, the Moroccan authorities immediately undertook mass deportations.

For further information, please contact JRS UK Office or go to the Press Releases section of our website: www.jrsuk.net

included, in this sin of the world. Refugees reveal a task still to be accomplished.

So, my refugee friends, whom I deeply admire for your incredible courage, resilience, creativity and humanity, a huge 'Thank You'. Your retention of your own humanity despite your often appalling treatment and experience is, for me, a

mystery of the power of God's tremendous loving compassion in your lives, and is a challenge to a world so clearly in need of loving compassion. I thank

my Jesuit superiors and JRS for allowing me the opportunity to meet you, to know you, and to be touched by you. Above all, thank you, my refugee friends, for befriending me.

"So, my refugee friends, a huge 'Thank You.'"