

Oranges and Biscuits



Every Wednesday at 3pm the orange is waiting for me. Several segments have been prised apart and sit, neatly arranged on a plate of peel, on a numbered table in what looks like a doctor's waiting room.

I've been kept waiting in the Visitor's Lock for twenty minutes, been frisked and had my fingerprints scanned (twice). I've had to deposit all my belongings in a locker, which is now out of reach, behind two doors that have no handles. Mobile phone, wallet, house keys - for me entering IRC Colnbrook is the Full Monty. A taste of what everyone else here has gone through. It's only temporary, after all. They'll let me out. I'll get my stuff back. To tide me over I've got the orange.

Hormoz started bringing the orange the week after I brought the biscuits. Exchanging gifts is important. Hormoz is better at this giving thing than I am. One day our discussion suddenly veered off religion, his family and the next letter to his lawyer - and got onto biscuits. Having established his favourite kind I brought along a packet with the intention of handing them to him. The biscuits never had a chance. Bagged, logged and tagged, they were removed for inspection. Can one frisk a biscuit?

I signed a form, which I gave Hormoz, and which could be submitted, the following Saturday, in exchange for the biscuits. In Colnbrook, even a small gesture takes on a certain monumentality.

I'm paid to write and tell stories in a university. My card says I'm a Lecturer in Modern History, but basically that's what I do. At Colnbrook I'm the student.

I learn about daughters off in the world doing impressive things, about a struggle involving three government departments and a couple of embassies.

Occasionally Hormoz stops and says "But I'm doing all the talking; let me hear about you!" I quickly get us back to him. By now the stories are familiar, but always unbelievable. Yes, they *did* say a decision would be reached soon. Yes, they *did* say that 18 months ago. Yes, you haven't seen your daughters that you love in over a year. He can't believe it. Neither can I. But the repetition reassures us. We can't believe it happened that way. But it did. It was like this...

On my first visit I was chaperoned by Anne Elisabeth. She introduced me to Khaled, a Libyan. He told me his story, then asked 'Why do you want to come here?' Anywhere else, that might be considered brusque. Instead it set me at ease; it's exactly the question I would have asked. It doesn't mean that I have an answer, though. Basically I'm curious. And I talk too much. It's good for me to shut up and listen now and then. I know nothing about the asylum system. Hormoz is teaching me.

Quite what I bring to the table I'm not sure. But something gets through. Biscuits for oranges.

Dr Jonathan Conlin teaches history at the University of Southampton.

This April 26th he will be running the London Marathon to raise money for JRS. You can sponsor him at:

www.justgiving.com/jonathanconlin

Or by sending a cheque to the JRS office. Please let us know that it is marathon sponsorship.

God has blessed me since I arrived in this country.

I am Sri Lankan. I claimed asylum when I arrived in the UK on the 18th of September 1999.

My first interview for my asylum claim took place in Liverpool on 19th January 2001. After attending the interview I received a refusal letter from the Home Office. I appealed. There was no reply and my solicitor advised me to leave the matter to one side and to continue my studies.



My solicitor wrote several letters to the Home Office to grant me permission to work; all were refused without any explanation. Since November 2004 I have been reporting monthly to the immigration authorities.

My aunt, who has been my guardian since I arrived in the UK has helped me to continue my studies, including a BA in Business and Finance and level 2 and 3 accountancy exams.

I first met JRS in November 2007.

My first contact was to attend the JRS founder's 150th anniversary celebration. I visited the JRS office and was offered voluntary work. I worked once a week on Thursdays and managed to continue my studies.

My contacts with other asylum seekers like me have been very rewarding. I came to know a lot of their problems and we comforted each other by (cont.page3)



London Marathon For JRS



Hello, my name is Mary and I am running the London Marathon for JRS Hardship funds.

This will be my first marathon and I am currently up to 16 miles in my training. The training is difficult but I believe the sense of achievement and money that I have raised will make it all worthwhile on 26th April 2009.

Why JRS?

I have been fortunate in my life to grow up in a wonderful area with a wonderful family. This is a luxury I am aware is not available to everyone, but should be.

I struggle to comprehend how it feels to be in a position of danger to the extent that you feel the need to flee your home, and these people should be supported in their efforts to find safety.

I hope in some small way my efforts will contribute to the improvement of someone's position.

Mary Kirkham

You can sponsor Mary by sending a cheque to Jesuit Refugee Service (please, clearly state that it is for marathon sponsorship on the back) or do it online through her website below: www.justgiving.com/marykirkham

You might ask why on earth would someone run a marathon

Well for me I really like a challenge! First of all I do not have a runner's body and I can't run fast; that's why I run. Running a marathon is a difficult and significant goal for an average person like me, but when I make it through the full 26.2 miles it will become an extraordinary achievement for me! An average person can do it!



It is not about winning but about the achievement and sense of accomplishment I will get and of course to raise money for Jesuit Refugee Service.

Why JRS?

I am a very fortunate person; neither my family nor I have ever had to flee our country and we never have been refugees, but I know the feeling of being completely on my own in a foreign country, that's why I run for JRS.

Ruta Navyte

If you would like to sponsor Ruta, please go to her website:

www.justgiving.com/rutanavyte

or why not send a cheque to JRS office stating that it is marathon sponsorship.

If time and schedules permit, we would be grateful if you could make it to the London Marathon on 26th of April and offer moral support to our runners.

If you are interested in doing this, please contact Victoire at the JRS office for details of meeting places and times.

A word from a refugee friend

It is very comforting to know that there are people out there who do not condemn us for fleeing persecution from our countries.

We endure loss of creative comforts, separation and dispersal of families, to claim asylum under trying and difficult circumstances.

Participants in the marathon are willing to jog, run and go the extra mile to raise funds on our behalf and for our benefit.

These people are the real heroes, unsung heroes.

Big thank you to the runners and to the supporters of JRS.

God bless you all.

Pedro (Angola)

Any money raised from the marathon sponsorship goes directly to our refugee hardship funds.



Prayer to the Christ of the refugees

Jesus, our Lord and Brother, listen to our humble prayer:
Here we are, your friends, your brothers and sisters,
travelling companions of your refugees.

We remember today another of your friends, who spent his life seeking your face: your servant Pedro Arrupe, 'a FIRE that kindled many fires'. It was he who taught us that you love to hide yourself precisely in those places where humanity's incredible and most spontaneous beauty is denied.

True humanity and the essence of his truth are not on sale in our city centres, but in poor neighbourhoods abandoned in their misery, in refugee camps, in corners of the world where people suffer and are oppressed or excluded. This is where we can meet you and rediscover our own hearts.

It is when we come to the edge, to the border of what is human, that we discover the centre, your centre and our centre.

Your paths are not our paths; your ways of acting are not like ours.

Jesus, our brother and friend, open the eyes of our hearts, so that we may learn to look for you where you really are, waiting and calling for our attention.

May we never pass by without giving you the smile you need, May we never pass by as if you didn't exist, or were invisible in the fine streets of our city.

May we never come to believe that you have less right than we do to live and enjoy.

May we rediscover in you, foreigner, immigrant, refugee, anyone who is somehow 'different', the humanity we are always on the verge of losing.

Like many of the refugees, our brothers and sisters, you had to leave your Hometown in order to be born, to leave your country to survive, to hide yourself to elude the hostile scrutiny of the authorities, to suffer total abandonment on the cross.

All around us, we meet hundreds of our brothers and sisters who have faced and are still facing such experiences.

They can help us to understand you and to see your face anew,

This time with African, Slavonic, Asian features, different from our own.

Guide us, Jesus of 'unattractive appearance', so that we will not lose this great opportunity of meeting you and of changing our hearts at last.

Jesus our brother, change our way of looking at and feeling about our neighbours.

May we not just say "What a pity", "How terrible", when we hear their stories.

May we see you in these stories and feel in our hearts "Jesus lived like this".

We are not meeting marginalised people, but you, and in this meeting help us to be reborn with a new humanity.

Amen



The prayer was written by the Father General of the Society of Jesus on the occasion of the 100th year celebration of the birth of Fr. Pedro Arrupe (founder of JRS in 1980) which was held in Rome on 14 November 2008.

14 November is also the foundation date of JRS.

God has blessed me since I arrived in this country (cont. from page 1)

listening and sharing our problems. This experience made me to be a happier and a stronger person inside. I welcomed each and every individual that I met at JRS and this enabled me not to bother about my asylum status. I became very busy by getting involved with my studies, voluntary work, and other social and religious commitments. In November last year, I visited my solicitor and asked him to make a fresh appeal. He advised me that he will make a phone call and will find out the present work on my file, which he did. He phoned me to make an appointment to see him with 3 passport size photographs. Soon after that, when I went to report on the 11th of December 2008 as usual, the officer at the desk at the Reporting Centre informed me that I had been granted leave to remain. When I heard the news I was so happy and praised the Lord in silence.

God has blessed me since I arrived in this country and I am really grateful to all who have helped me in many ways. I remember and pray for all asylum seekers whose cases are still pending.

Finally, I express my sincere thanks to all of you at JRS for offering me a part time paid job as an assistant administrator at JRS. God Bless you all.

Alfredene Diluckshun Joseph

Diluckshun joined the staff team at JRS on 26th February 2009



Jesuit Refugee Service, 6 Melior Street, London SE1 3QP

Tel: 020 7357 0974 Fax: 020 7378 1985 uk@jrs.net

www.jrsuk.net

www.jrs.net

hh www.jrseurope.org

www.detention-in-europe.org

What does JRS do?

The Jesuit Refugee Service is an international Catholic non-governmental organisation, at work in over 60 countries, with a mission to accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced persons. In the UK JRS works mainly with detainees and destitute asylum seekers.

Accompanying: being with the individual, befriending him or her but also in some way enhancing that person's dignity and personal growth.

Serving: offering some practical assistance while being with the person.

Defending the rights of refugees: working towards changing qualitatively the person's life for the better by influencing public opinion lobbying and raising awareness about the real hardships that asylum seekers and refugees face in the UK today.

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.

DIARY

4th May 2009 Strangers To Citizens Rally to show support for regularization for migrants who have been in the country for over 4 years with a pathway to citizenship.

We need to demonstrate that there is real public support for this so we need a huge turnout on the day.

6th June 2009 Churches Refugee Network

13th June 2007: JRS Party St. Ignatius Parish, Stamford Hill. For catering purposes, please RSVP to JRS office on 02073570974 or uk@jrs.net

17th – 19th July 2009 National Justice and Peace Network conference

On the Road Together:

A-mazed by Migration

JRS is part of the coalition organizing this conference on the complex issues of migration, helped and supported by input from our speakers who include:

Bishop Patrick Lynch and Don Flynn, and facilitated by Open Space expert **Annette Zero**.

We will explore the question:

People on the move.

How does the church respond in a changing world?

See leaflet enclosed with mailing for more information and cost/ booking.

We wish all our refugee friends and supporters and our readers a blessed and happy Easter!

Did you like this Newsletter?

Spread the word and pass it on to someone who does not JRS.

You can also email us at : uk@jrs.net to receive more copies.

When you have finished reading it, recycle it!

Jesuit Refugee Service

**6 Melior Street
London SE1 3QP**

Tel: 020-7357 0974

Fax: 020-7378 1985

e-mail - uk@jrs.net

website: www.jrsuk.net

www.jrs.net

www.jrseurope.org

www.detention-in-europe.org

- Please add me to your mailing list
- Donation enclosed Amount: £ _____
- 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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