



Way of the Cross

Jesuit Refugee Service





This photo and cover photo:

The Way of the Cross, Yei, South Sudan. (Angela Hellmuth — Jesuit Refugee Service)



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PRELUDE:

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." ...

Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me."

He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will."

When he returned to his disciples he found them asleep. He said to Peter, "So you could not keep watch with me for one hour?"

Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:37-41)

Reflection: Christ calls us to keep watch. Let us accompany Jesus on this journey as we watch and pray over all that is going on with many of our sisters and brothers around the world.

STATION ONE: JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus called Messiah?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” But he said, “Why? What evil has he done?” They only shouted the louder, “Let him be crucified!” When Pilate saw that he was not succeeding at all, but that a riot was breaking out instead, he took water and washed his hands in the sight of the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. Look to it yourselves.” (Matthew 27:22-24)

Reflection: The Syrian tragedy has been deepening since early 2011. What started as a call for reforms by some Syrians has escalated into a full-scale conflict. The international community has not yet succeeded in creating the necessary conditions to halt the tide of bloodshed despite the desperate pleas of a majority of Syrians for an end to the conflict.

One third of the Syrian population is in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Those forcibly displaced either within the country or across the borders total nearly eight million people.

Dare we wash our hands of their plight like Pilate, or shall we immerse ourselves in solidarity — remembering that these injustices can be addressed?

Lord, may we not wash our hands of our brothers and sisters in Syria, and may you rain down upon them with all of the love and peace you were denied in your condemnation.

All: Our Father.



JRS emergency services for displaced people in Syria. (Jesuit Refugee Service)



STATION TWO: JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and carrying the cross himself, he went out to what is called Golgotha, the Place of the Skull. (John 19:16-17)

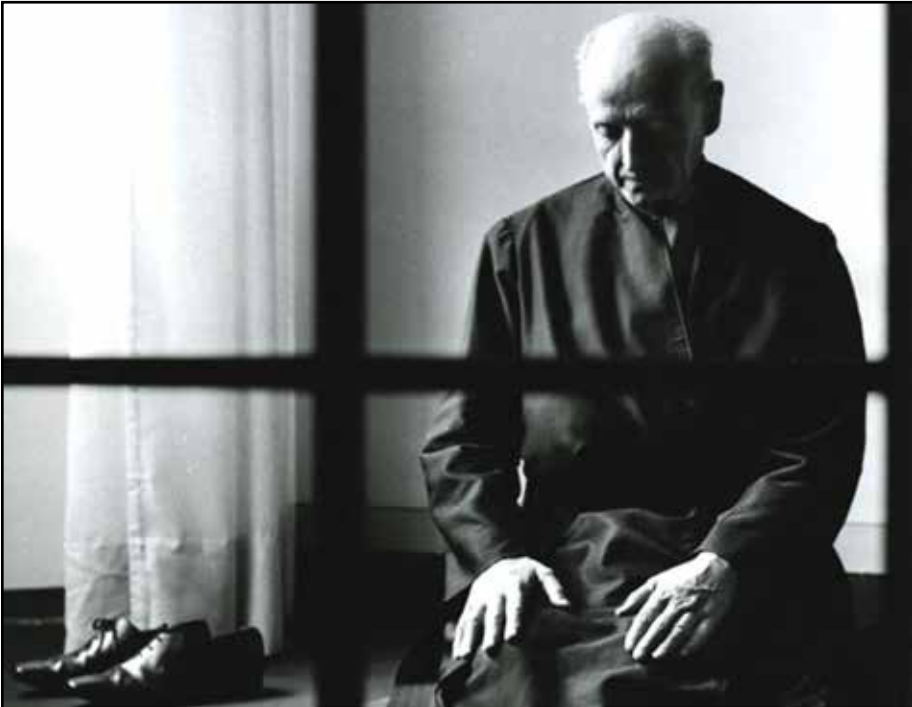
Reflection: Jesus bore the ultimate cross for us. We are asked to bear crosses in our everyday lives for others. Let us look to Fr. Pedro Arrupe S.J., who was so “struck and shocked by the plight” of the Vietnamese Boat people in the wake of the Vietnam War that he was moved to found Jesuit Refugee Service.

Fr. Arrupe allowed himself to be moved by the suffering of others, and took up the challenge — however burdensome — of helping others.

He did not turn away. By whose suffering have we been struck? By what injustice have we been shocked? Will we choose to take up the challenges of our times?

Lord, may we be “struck and shocked by the plight” of our brothers and sisters worldwide and follow in the steps of Fr. Arrupe as we humbly bear the cross that awareness brings.

All: Our Father.



Father Pedro Arrupe, then Superior General of the Society of Jesus, founded Jesuit Refugee Service in 1980. (Jesuit Refugee Service)



STATION THREE: JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
(Matthew 5:3)

Reflection: Overwhelmed by the weight of the suffering He must carry and the difficulty of his journey, Jesus falls to the ground. He carries with him the anguish of the thousands of vulnerable migrants who risk their lives each year to escape their homeland in hopes of the basic necessities of safety and work. He carries with him the story of Cristina, a migrant JRS met at the Kino Border Initiative in Nogales, Mexico.

After coming to the desperate realization that she could not afford basic necessities in Mexico, Cristina decided to flee to the U.S. in the hopes of securing work. Her coyote said it would take only five hours to cross the desert, so she brought no food or water for the passage. Her group was caught the second night, and she fell and injured her leg while trying to escape.

The border patrol ran by her, and she was not seen while they gathered the other migrants and began to leave. She knew that she was well hidden, but how would she find her way out of the desert? The guides had run away, she was injured, and had no food or water. She called for help, and when they did not hear her, she struggled to her feet and hobbled after them. She would become one of the 250 migrants who died in the desert in 2010. In 2012, 463 people suffered a similar death.

Lord, we pray for vulnerable migrants that you may grant them strength and safety in their journeys, and we pray for open hearts to understand their desperate motivations.

All: Our Father.



Individuals pray after a JRS/USA chaplain celebrated Mass for detainees at the Service Processing Center for detained undocumented immigrants in El Paso, Texas. (Christian Fuchs — Jesuit Refugee Service/USA)

STATION FOUR: JESUS MEETS HIS BLESSED MOTHER

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Then Simeon said to Mary, “You yourself a sword will pierce, so that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed.” (Luke 2:35)

Reflection: Every year, thousands of asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants flock to Malta, a small island off the coast of Italy. These travelers face challenges ranging from forced detention to lack of access to social services. In a reflection, Katrine Camilleri, formerly of JRS Malta states:

“Asylum seekers in Malta are detained for long months in very tough conditions. As a lawyer, I offer them information, advice, and legal assistance and I lobby for improved protection procedures.

“My work ... has brought home the painful realization that often there is little or nothing I can do to ease detainees’ suffering. This is hard to accept, so hard that at times I am tempted to give up, to turn away from the pain and to live more comfortably.

“Often, the only thing that keeps me going is the image of Mary at the foot of the cross. I am sure she must have been dying to tear Jesus off the cross, to do something for him, but she was helpless. The only thing she could do was to be there, so there she stayed, although it must have been the most difficult thing she ever had to do.

“Like Mary, being there is often all I can offer, and I have realized that this presence is precious. More than that, it is a source of many blessings. Just as streams of living water flowed from the cross of Christ, the detainees have been a never-ending source of enrichment for me.”

Lord, grant us the strength to recognize our limitations and the courage to offer our humbled presence to our brothers and sisters in need.

All: Our Father.



This Congolese woman and her four children were detained for five months before being released to live in an “open center” on Malta. (Alexandra Pace/UNHCR)

STATION FIVE: SIMON OF CYRENE BEARS THE CROSS

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. (Luke 23:26)

Reflection: Beginning in 1983, Sudan endured a 22-year civil war that displaced nearly four million people. As men, women, and children fled their homes to escape from the violence, they were forced to rely on the kindness of strangers to survive their journeys of exile. Cesaria, a 41-year-old refugee, reflected:

“There have been lots of problems in my life, but I find God in my prayer and God gives me relief. I know God is with me. Let me give you an example. When we escaped from the war in Kajo Keji, [South Sudan] we left with no food. Starving—we were starving.

“One night, we met a woman in the bush, a local in the area through which we were fleeing, and this woman gave us a goat so that we would not starve. Can you believe it? A goat! For me, it was a sign of God’s care, and I never let my children forget it. They all remember when God sent an angel so that we would be properly fed. It kept us going until we arrived in Uganda.”

Lord, may you remind us that you have called us to carry your cross and ease the burdens of your people just as you called Simon.

All: Our Father.



Pope Francis greets refugees at Jesuit Refugee Service Italy's Centro Astalli soup kitchen, where 400 refugees are fed daily. (Alessia Giuliani/Jesuit Refugee Service)

STATION SIX: CHRIST'S FACE WIPED BY VERONICA

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

If one who has wealth sees a sister or brother in need and refuses them compassion, how can the love of God remain in that one?
(1 John 3:17)

Reflection: When Veronica sees Christ's bloody face, she makes the bold choice to reach out and embrace him in his vulnerability and suffering. She allows herself to connect with and confront his pain. The simplest act of wiping clean a bloodied face takes tremendous courage, and we reflect now upon all the times we have been too afraid to reach out as Veronica did.

Where do we see Christ's bloody face in the world?

(pause for reflection)

Lord, open our eyes to see your suffering face in our brothers and sisters in need, and grant us Veronica's courage to help.

All: Our Father.



The JRS clinic is the primary source of medical and psychological care for an average 70,000 detainees each year at the Bangkok detention center. (JRS Thailand)

STATION SEVEN: JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Yet it was our infirmities he bore, our sufferings that he endured.
(Isaiah 53:4)

Reflection: Fr. Mark Raper S.J., former JRS International Director reflects: “Surely the only way to learn about the hope of a refugee is to listen to him or her. Our biggest temptation on seeing the distress of the refugees...is to begin projects, to give material things, to decide what the refugees need.

“They often arrive in exile without shoes, with only one torn shirt, hungry and without a clear plan. But they did not undergo this experience in order to get a shirt or shoes. Their human experience calls for respect. They are traumatized by violence, lonely, rejected, exhausted in body certainly, but also exhausted by losing their place in a stable society, and sometimes feeling guilty about what they did in order to survive.

“They want to be understood, to be heard. Their frequent question is: Why is God doing this to me? They have a right to ask this question. But it cannot be asked unless someone listens. This is our primary role, to listen to the questions, to the longing and the fundamental human need of the refugees.”

Where have we acted in our lives without first listening?

All: Our Father.



JRS Colombia accompanies formerly displaced residents in communities along the rivers Calima and Choco outside of Buenaventura. (Christian Fuchs — JRS/USA)

STATION EIGHT: JESUS COMFORTS THE WOMEN

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Jesus turned toward the women, saying, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.”
(Luke 23:27-28)

Reflection: In his compassion, Jesus asks the women to weep for the most vulnerable members of society in his time — women and children. Today, conditions have not changed, and of the 45 million refugees and displaced persons in the world, 80 percent are women and children. Positive changes have been made, but women still face the most poverty, lack equal access to education, and are at greater risk for human trafficking.

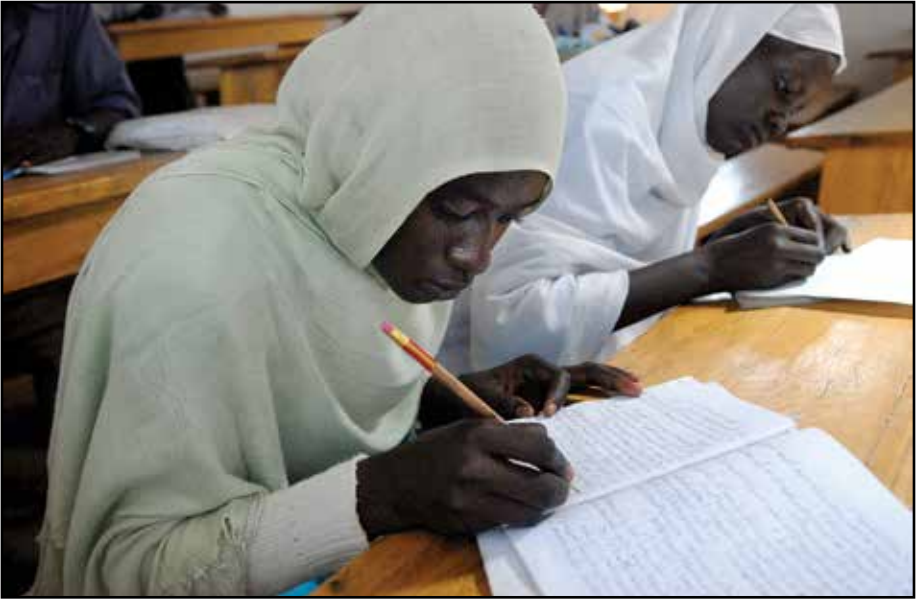
Rosalie, formerly with JRS Namibia, brings this cold statistic to life:

“Chatting with one girl at the Osire Refugee Camp, I find out she is nine years old, and she lives with her sister. To my question of ‘Where are your parents?’ she just shakes her head to give me the message that she does not know. I think about this little girl in a foreign country with no parents, how hard can life get?”

“Who is there to take proper care of her? Who is helping her with homework? Who will make sure that she has something to eat and drink before going to school, and that she is properly dressed? There are so many other students just like her, she is just one of them.”

Lord, we pray for women and children around the world. You asked us to weep for their oppression, and we pray that we may see their gifts, their strengths, and their plight as you do. We pray for the wisdom to break down the structures that oppress people based on gender, and we ask that you protect this overwhelming majority of the displaced population.

All: Our Father.



Students at a JRS secondary school in the sprawling Goz Amir Refugee Camp, about six miles from Koukou, Chad. The camp is home to 25,000 refugees, primarily from the Darfur region of neighboring Sudan. (Christian Fuchs — JRS/USA)

STATION NINE: JESUS FALLS A THIRD TIME

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

“Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?” And the King will say to them in reply, “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers or sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:37-40)

Reflection: Many refugees now live in urban settings and cities across the world — Johannesburg, Bangkok, Panama City, Rome — host thousands of urban refugees living in shantytowns. Barred from legal employment and social services and often targets of xenophobia, urban refugees are forced to hide in the shadows. They truly represent “the least of Jesus’ sisters and brothers.”

A reflection from Angela, a refugee in Johannesburg:

“Life is hard here. I am alone. My husband died. I have no brothers, no sisters. I have two girls. I have to do it all myself. We have no money, no job, we don’t have food. I sometimes ask God how I left one place so bad to come here and now I am alone. I have nobody.”

God continues to enter our world with all its wounds and brokenness. The eyes of urban refugees throughout the world call out to us, asking us to be the heart and hands of Jesus who emptied himself, casting his lot with the most marginalized among us.

All: Our Father.



A refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo receives assistance from the JRS urban refugee program in Johannesburg. (Christian Fuchs — JRS/USA)

STATION TEN: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Then they crucified him and divided his garments by casting lots for them to see what each should take. (Mark 15:24)

Reflection: Every year thousands of asylum seekers flee to the United States after facing great persecution in their homeland only to be interned and stripped of their possessions and dignity.

Refugees in the U.S. share their stories:

“The jail guards told us to take off all of our clothes, and then take showers. After showering, I was standing there naked, and then I was given a prison uniform. The whole process was surprising to me, and very embarrassing, but when you’re in jail, you have to do as you are told.” — *a refugee from Somalia who was detained for four months in a California detention center before being granted asylum.*

“I was crying in jail. I was hungry. I was surprised to be in jail. I had never committed a crime, and suddenly I was in jail.” — *an Ethiopian refugee who was detained for six months in a Virginia jail before gaining asylum.*

Lord, help us to recognize the “strangers among us” and to offer welcome to those seeking refuge in our country.

All: Our Father.



A detainee helps prepare for Mass at the Mira Loma Detention Facility in Lancaster, Calif. (Christian Fuchs — Jesuit Refugee Service/USA)

STATION ELEVEN: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

They will look upon Him whom they have pierced. (Zec 12:10)

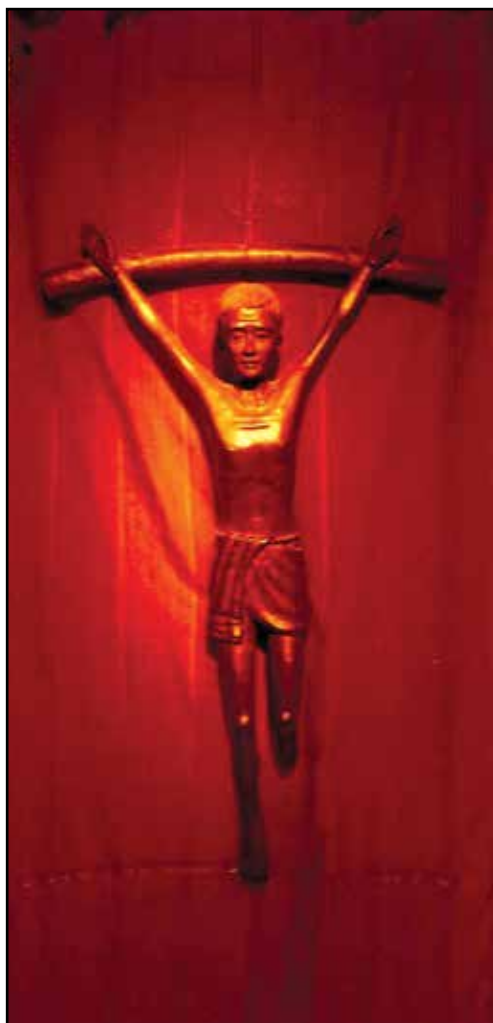
Reflection: Just as Jesus' hands and feet were pierced with nails, many people throughout the world — from Cambodia, to Bosnia, to Angola — have been pierced by the devastating blows of landmines.

Denise Coughlan, RSM, Director of JRS Cambodia speaks of how faith inspires her work to ban landmines:

“I have a very strong belief that the consequence of mercy, charity, and love is justice. Justice demands that you advocate to ban landmines and call the producers to account.”

We call to mind the image of Jesus Christ disabled, living in solidarity with innocent victims of landmine violence.

All: Our Father.



The image of the Handicapped Crucified Christ is born from a people who know too well the ravages of war – war is not over when it is over! Landmines continue to maim and kill for decades. (JRS Asia Pacific)

STATION TWELVE: JESUS DIES

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” It was now about noon and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon because of an eclipse of the sun. Then the veil of the temple was torn down the middle. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit;” and when he had said this he breathed his last. (Luke 23:34, 44-46)

Reflection: Fr. Tony Calleja S.J., a former JRS Regional Director, reflects:

“We must never forget that the life of refugees is really violent. All the same, faced with their suffering, we refuse to believe in irreversible misfortune. We want to respond to the strong hope that lies in the depth of the hearts of the refugees. In the millions, they teach us how to cope with daily adversity. And inspired by our faith, we are prompted to reaffirm life with our actions, particularly when it is under threat.

“In a world that so easily rejects and would like to forget refugees altogether, we are committed to seeking, together with them, justice and the defense of their rights, to tackle the abuses they are subjected to, and the destruction of the very fabric of their lives.

“We firmly believe that one day they will be transformed into agents of reconciliation for their people. The refugees need people who are bearers of hope. They deserve our most dedicated efforts.”

All: Our Father.



Las Esmeraldas, Ecuador. (Christian Fuchs — Jesuit Refugee Service/USA)

STATION THIRTEEN: JESUS IS TAKEN FROM THE CROSS

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

When the centurion who stood facing him saw how he breathed his last he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

Joseph of Arimathea, a distinguished member of the council, who was himself awaiting the kingdom of God, came and courageously went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was amazed that he was already dead. He summoned the centurion and asked him if Jesus had already died. And when he learned of it from the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. Having bought a linen cloth, he took him down, and wrapped him in the linen cloth.

(Mark 15:39, 43-46)

Reflection: As Christ is taken from the cross darkness settles upon the world, for the Son of God has been slain by the peoples’ hands.

Today this darkness lives on as cycles of violence and oppression continue. And yet, even in the midst of darkness, JRS bears daily witness to God’s presence in vulnerable and forgotten people driven from their homes by conflict, natural disaster, economic injustice, or violation of their human rights. Amaya Valcarcel of JRS International writes:

“I spent a few days in Burundi... . Although brief, the visit shook me as I was faced with the stark reality of people’s capacity for the extremes of good and evil. Images of children wounded by machetes flash before my eyes followed by the recollection of others frantically drinking water after walking for days to reach a feeding center.

“But what really struck me was the strong determination to rise above the circumstances, however tragic they may be.”

All: Our Father.



Praying the Way of the Cross in Yei, South Sudan. (Angela Hellmuth — JRS)

STATION FOURTEEN: JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

It was the day of preparation, and the Sabbath was about to begin. The women who had come from Galilee with him followed behind, and when they had seen the tomb and the way in which his body was laid in it, they returned and prepared spices and perfumed oils. Then they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment. (Luke 23:54-56)

Reflection: The hope and light of the world has been laid to rest, and the women of Galilee and faithful followers ache with despair. Each year, millions of vulnerable brothers and sisters seek refuge in new lands, always clutching the hope of a brighter future.

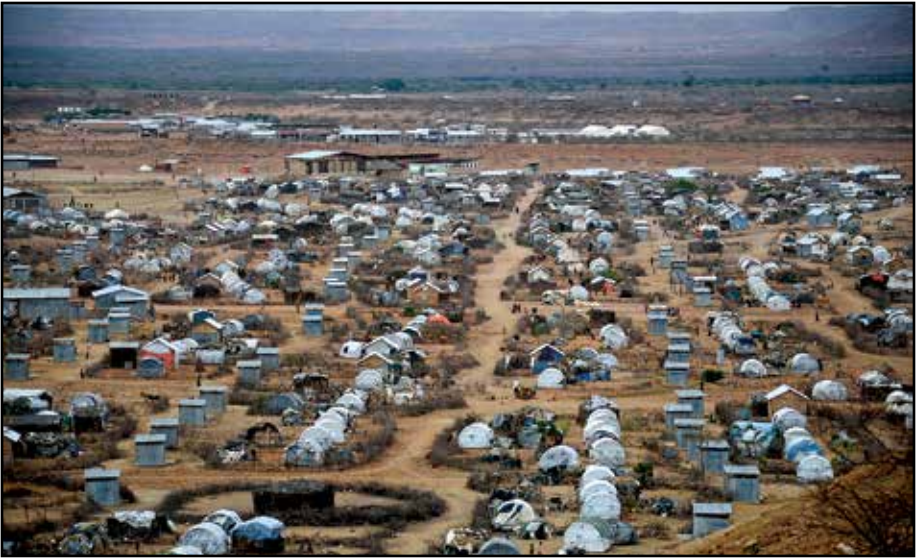
Yet they are often greeted by deplorable refugee camps or urban poverty and denied basic human rights—from the right to work to the right to an identity—needed for survival and a peaceful existence. For them, these conditions form a living tomb.

As one Jesuit priest stated, “Wherever suffering is present in the world, there the cross of Christ is mysteriously present...” It is by this cross that light pierces through the darkness as those suffering wait in hope for the joyful coming of the Lord.

Nathaniel, a refugee from Tanzania expresses this sentiment:

“There are many difficulties and little joy for us refugees, yet it is impossible for a Christian to lose hope. The patience and endurance I need come from God. After more than 30 years of being a refugee, I am confident God knows when I will return home to Burundi.”

All: Our Father.



JRS programs serve refugees at Melkadida Refugee Camp, about 70 kilometers from Dollo Ado, Ethiopia. (Christian Fuchs — Jesuit Refugee Service/USA)

STATION FIFTEEN: THE RESURRECTION

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Very early, just after sunrise, on the first day of the week they came to the tomb. They were saying to one another, “Who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?”

When they looked, they found that the stone had been rolled back. On entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting at the right, dressed in a white robe. This frightened them thoroughly, but he reassured them:

“Do not be amazed! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, the one who was crucified. He has been raised up; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. Go now and tell his disciples.”
(Mark 16:2-6)

Reflection: Miriam Wairimu, formerly of JRS Kenya stated:

“Our love for refugees cannot be separated from our concern for justice. Love implies a concrete and absolute demand for justice, that is, recognition of the dignity and rights of one’s neighbor.”

At times, this may seem a daunting task, and yet, as we have seen even when all hope is lost, no stone is too great for God to overturn. But, we cannot do it alone.

In the words of Fr. Pedro Arrupe,

“Pray. Pray Much. Problems such as these are not solved by human efforts.”

All: Our Father.



JRS serves refugees and displaced people in Puerto Pina, Panama. (Christian Fuchs – Jesuit Refugee Service/USA)

Jesuit Refugee Service/USA is an international Catholic non-governmental organization whose mission is to accompany, serve and advocate for the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.

To accompany means to be a companion. We are companions of Jesus, so we wish to be companions of those with whom he preferred to be associated, the poor and the outcast.

JRS services are made available to refugees and displaced persons regardless of their race, ethnic origin, or religious beliefs.

JRS advocates for just and generous policies and programs for the benefit of victims of forced displacement, so that those made vulnerable by exile can receive support and protection and durable solution to their plight can be achieved.

JRS/USA witnesses to God's presence in vulnerable and often forgotten people driven from their homes by conflict, natural disaster, economic injustice, or violation of their human rights.

As one of the ten geographic regions of Jesuit Refugee Service, JRS/USA serves as the major refugee outreach arm of U.S. Jesuits and their institutional ministries, mobilizing their response to refugee situations in the U.S. and abroad. Through our advocacy and fund raising efforts, JRS/USA provides support for the work of JRS throughout the world.

JRS/USA gives help, hope, ear and voice to vulnerable people on the move by being present to and bearing witness to their plight; by relieving their human suffering and restoring hope; by addressing the root causes of their displacement and improving international responses to refugee situations.

JRS/USA inspires the Ignatian family and others to respond together to the needs of refugees and displaced persons worldwide and forges strong partnerships with like-minded institutions and agencies devoted to the cause of refugees and displaced persons.

JRS works in more than 50 countries worldwide to meet the educational, health, social and other needs of approximately 700,000 refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, more than half of whom are women. JRS services are available to refugees and displaced persons regardless of their race, ethnic origin, or religious beliefs.

Approximately 280,000 children, young people and adults receive primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational education services each year. JRS places the highest priority on ensuring a better future for refugees by investing heavily in education and training.

Further, JRS undertakes advocacy to ensure all displaced children be provided with access to quality education. JRS services are provided to refugees regardless of race, ethnic origin or religious beliefs.

Jesuit Refugee Service/USA is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.



back cover: Procession to mark the opening of two schools built by JRS in Markounda, Central African Republic. (Peter Balleis, S.J. — Jesuit Refugee Service)



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