

JRS, a Source of my Consolation

Upon my resignation as General of the Society of Jesus, I want to express once again my gratitude to JRS and its collaborators, refugees, lay people, religious and Jesuits. Throughout my 24 years as General, this social apostolate of the Society of Jesus has been a source of deep consolation. The prophecy of Fr. Arrupe in the letter he sent to the Provincials establishing JRS in 1980 has been proven right: assisting refugees *will be a privilege and, in turn, will bring great blessings to ourselves and our Society.*



It has been a blessing and a consolation to witness the positive development of this important mission of the universal Society of Jesus. It is a joy to see how JRS is committed to the *mission of consoling* so many refugees and forcibly displaced people, the poorest of the poor, around the world, especially in camps.

JRS can provide so many different and important services, such as advocacy, but it is essential that its service is carried out directly with refugees in camps, where their hope is under threat. According to St. Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises*, a *consolation* is an increase in *faith, hope* and *love*. JRS plants a seed of hope in the aridness of refugee camps where people's future is so often in jeopardy. This is particularly the case for young refugees in despair who are unable to gain access to education. Day after day, year after year, they see how their lives become more and more hopeless.

It is especially in these camps that JRS becomes an urgent *service of hope* for refugees. Hope increases when we help refugees to have *faith* in themselves and in their futures. It increases when *love is put in deeds* of education and vocational training which transform past and present hatred into life with the wisdom which enables reconciliation and offers them the hope of a different future.

It is because this apostolic work of the Society has been a source of hope and consolation for refugees that it has also been a source of consolation for the Society and for me personally. JRS is a *ministry of mutual consolation* among refugees and their collaborators, all of us together committed in the service of faith and justice.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter-Hans Kolvenbach". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach S.J.

16 January 2008