



JRS Europe

Serving Forgotten Refugees

Jesuit Refugee Service www.jrseurope.org

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'Angel' collects UN Award

At a ceremony at the UN Refugee Agency headquarters in Geneva, JRS Malta lawyer Katrine Camilleri was presented with the 2007 Nansen Award by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres.

"We are all privileged to be able to give the Nansen Refugee Award to an angel," António Guterres said before handing over the award.

'Asylum Monologues', JRS UK

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Dr Katrine Camilleri receiving the Nansen Award, Photo S. Hopper, UNHCR

"JRS works to turn strangers into brothers, boundaries into gateways, and frontiers into a place of meeting, where all are accepted and respected. That is why I work with JRS and that is why this is really an award to JRS"

On accepting the award Katrine paid tribute to JRS Malta and every member of JRS around the world. "JRS works to turn strangers into brothers, boundaries into gateways, and frontiers into a place of meeting, where all are accepted and respected. That is why I work with JRS and that is why this is really an award to JRS", said Dr Camilleri. The annual award comes with a medal and a cash prize of US\$100,000. Katrine told the UN Refugee Agency she plans to use the money to consolidate JRS projects and develop new services. These services include information DVDs in different languages to reach asylum seekers, especially women, with a low level of literacy; a legal fund to help asylum seekers access courts; and funding to train cultural mediators.

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Information and application forms for the **student journalist prize** are available on the JRS Europe website, www.jrseurope.org.

Competition for aspiring journalists

JRS Europe is inviting aspiring journalists to investigate the reality behind the headlines by asking students across Europe to write an article of no more than 1,200 words on the theme 'Access to Asylum'. Three winners will be invited to Brussels to attend a prize giving ceremony in the European Parliament while the overall winner will be invited to a refugee camp in Malawi as the guest of JRS Southern Africa. The deadline for entries is 22 February 2008.

"We want to encourage young people to engage with the problems refugees and asylum seekers face accessing asylum in Europe and help dispel myths and misconceptions", said Fr Jan Stuyt, Director JRS Europe.



Photo: Nina Rücker, Germany

100th anniversary of JRS founder

London, UK

The 100th anniversary of the birth of Fr Pedro Arrupe, the founder of JRS, was marked by celebrations across Europe.

The British Province held a series of special events in south west London on Saturday 10 November 2007. From drama to films, personal testimonies to Mass in the Church of the Sacred Heart, the day was organised jointly by Jesuit Missions and JRS UK.

Throughout the day, visitors were able to view an exhibition of photos by Isabelle Merminot, in which she had recorded the effects of detention on asylum seekers and refugees. Films about the life of Fr Arrupe and about refugees were shown during the afternoon, and live music was provided by the Acholi Choir, made up of refugees who had fled from Uganda. This was followed by emotional personal testimonies by two detainees who had been assisted by JRS-UK.



Refugees tell their personal stories to Claire Lawrence, JRS UK



The Acholi Choir

The British Provincial, Fr Michael Holman SJ, celebrated Mass and delivered a powerful homily on Fr Arrupe. He concluded that it was a combination of his compassion, his conviction the Jesuits should help form 'men and women for others', and his companionship with Jesus that made him such an influential and charismatic person.

Mass was followed by supper and a dramatic presentation by Actors for Refugees of their 'Asylum Monologues'. Four actors, accompanied by a guitarist, articulated the authentic words of individuals who had come to the UK seeking asylum. In presenting the harsh realities they faced, they left the audience physically moved by the performance.

Elsewhere in the province, Fr Arrupe's life, work and teachings provided the basis for assemblies in Jesuit schools on 14 November, and Jesuit parishes celebrated special Masses in gratitude for the late General.

Ged Clapson, British Province

Bilbao, Spain

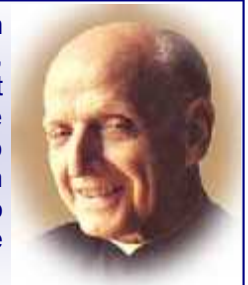
From 12 until 14 November, JRS International marked the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Father Pedro

Arrupe, with a Spiritual Journey to his birthplace in Bilbao. The events brought together volunteers, ex-volunteers, collaborators and friends of JRS over the years. The celebrations kicked off with a photographic exhibition in the Museum of Fine Arts called 'The look of Arrupe'. This exposition continues until 16 December. On 13 November, Father General Peter-Hans Kolvenbah presided over a conference entitled 'The figure and the message of F. Pedro Arrupe'. On the 14 November, the day of the centenary, the Bishop of Bilbao, Monsieur Ricardo Blázquez celebrated the Eucharist in the Jesuit Church. Later that evening, a concert with the Ludwig orchestra from Pamplona was held.

To mark the occasion, the JRS International office published a booklet of Jesuit reflections. The 44-page booklet is published in English, French, Italian and Spanish. Copies of the book are available on the JRS International website: www.jrs.net.

JRS International

Pedro Arrupe was born on 14 November 1907 in Bilbao, Spain. He was the twenty-eighth Superior General of the Society of Jesus from 1965 until he was forced to step down in 1983, following a severe stroke. He established JRS in 1980 after witnessing the mass exodus of boat people from Vietnam. On 14 November 1980, Father Arrupe wrote: "Struck and shocked by the plight of thousands of boat people and refugees, I felt it my duty to send cable messages to some 20 Major Superiors around the world. Sharing my distress with them, I asked what they in their countries and in the universal Society (of Jesus) could do to bring at least some relief to such a tragic situation ...". The result was the setting up of the Jesuit Refugee Service. Fr Arrupe died on 5 February 1991.



The challenge of 'voluntary return'

Many refugees dream of being able to return home. Often they have fled from persecution or torture, being fearful of what might happen if they remained. However, if the conditions in their home country improve, the chance of return can offer refugees the opportunity to rebuild their lives peacefully and without fear.

Yet in order for this to occur, the protection and safety of refugees and asylum seekers who choose to return voluntarily must be of the highest priority. Governments have to be able to guarantee care and support, particularly for those who previously suffered from torture or other traumatic experiences.

Voluntary return should always be the choice of the individual. This means that refugees must be given accurate information to ensure they are able to make free and informed choices that keep them and their families safe from harm. There should not be any form of coercion or even financial inducement to return.

In many cases, asylum seekers have high levels of education, talents and abilities. However, while waiting for their asylum decision individuals are often unable to find employment that matches their experiences, or training that can help lead to new opportunities. Therefore, they become de-skilled. To prepare for a potential return to their country of origin, applicants for asylum should be allowed to access education and the formal labour market.

“For those refugees and asylum seekers who do make a free and informed choice to return, it is of extreme importance to ensure that they are thoroughly involved in the return process. Only in this way can voluntary return remain safe, dignified and sustainable.”

Host countries and countries of return have an obligation to ensure that returning refugees have access to appropriate education, employment, healthcare and social services. Under no other circumstances can refugees really be expected to return to a country they may have left many years ago.

Finally, the most important factor to consider is the wishes of the refugees and asylum seekers themselves. They experience the direct effects of return. Although many refugees do wish to eventually return home there are those who do not want to. Governments in the host country and country of return should always respect these choices. But, for those refugees and asylum seekers who do make a free and informed choice to return, it is of extreme importance to ensure that they are thoroughly involved in the return process. Only in this way can voluntary return remain safe, dignified and sustainable.

Philip Amaral, JRS Europe

The trauma of destitution in Italy

On 22 November 2007, a group of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) - including JRS Italy - launched the preliminary findings of research into the conditions of destitute failed asylum seekers in Rome and Lazio.



The aim of the research is to understand the problems these individuals face and use this information to plan how to offer more effective support and assistance in the future. Questionnaires were distributed to one hundred destitute failed asylum seekers with personal testimonies and stories collected from a further fifteen. The assembled press were presented with early findings from the study and heard some individual, often traumatic, case studies.

For many of the individuals – usually young men from Africa and Asia who were smuggled into Italy – the inability to work is the most difficult thing to endure.

The completed research should be available in early 2008. For more information please contact Donatella Parisi, JRS Italy.

AGM 2007 - Ethics in our work

The 2007 JRS Europe Annual General Meeting was held in Samobor, Croatia from 11 – 14 October. Nearly 70 participants attended representing 19 different countries. The circumstances in each European country vary a lot, as do the type of services offered to refugees and asylum seekers in these countries. The size of JRS country teams also varies, from large teams in Italy and Portugal to newer teams in Europe of a few dedicated staff. JRS was pleased to welcome representatives from the offices in Sweden and France, which are continuing to develop new initiatives to respond to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in their countries.



JRS Europe staff at the AGM, Samobor, Croatia

The main focus of the seminar was ethics; Father Paul Pace from JRS Malta led the discussions and produced a booklet containing a collection of texts on the topic.

Working with refugees and migrants becomes more challenging with time, and the ethical dilemmas all JRS staff face in their work and policy making are more and more daunting. Therefore, the focus of the seminar gave all participants the opportunity to reflect on the ethical decisions and judgments they make while undertaking their daily work. To behave in an ethical manner when dealing with refugees and asylum seekers requires more than codes of conduct and accepted guidelines. JRS bases its ethical stance on human dignity and human rights. "Each of us, from the beginning of human existence has been endowed with a human dignity...It is this dignity that makes us unique and at the same time calls to a solidarity with one another", said Cardinal R. Martino – taken from a speech given in 2006 and included in the booklet.

To obtain a copy of the Ethics booklet, please contact JRS Malta.

New International Director

At the end of October 2007, JRS said a very fond farewell to Fr Lluís Magriñà, the JRS International Director.

Fr Lluís Magriñà held the post of International Director for 7 years. He will be replaced by Fr Peter Balleis. All who work in JRS are grateful for the accomplishments of JRS under Fr Magriñà's capable leadership.



Fr Lluís Magriñà, Fr Jan Stuyt (Director JRS Europe) and Fr Peter Balleis

10 New Member States Conference

On 26 October, JRS Malta hosted a conference to conclude a year long project on detention conditions in the 10 European Union (EU) Member States that acceded to the EU on 1 May 2004. These countries are Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Malta.

The final report will be available in December 2007. It will provide information on the administrative detention of asylum seekers and illegally staying third-country nationals and will help sustain a network of organisations working with these individuals in the new member states.



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