

# STUDIES

IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

THE “JESUIT” IN JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE

WILLIAM R. O’NEILL, SJ

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THOMAS H. SMOLICH, SJ

54/1 SPRING 2022

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STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS is a publication of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States.

The Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality is composed of Jesuits appointed from their provinces. The seminar identifies and studies topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially US and Canadian Jesuits, and gathers current scholarly studies pertaining to the history and ministries of Jesuits throughout the world. It then disseminates the results through this journal.

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**54/1 • SPRING 2022**

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## *a word from the international director of the Jesuit Refugee Service...*

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) holds a unique place in the mission and ministries of the Society of Jesus. It is the only Jesuit ministry that reports directly to the superior general. Structured as a federation, JRS is uniquely present in all six Jesuit conferences around the world. Serving over a million forcibly displaced people in fifty-seven countries, it arguably engages more people than any other Jesuit organization.

This current issue of *STUDIES*, with a reflection by Fr. William R. O'Neill (UWE) on the "Jesuit" dimension of JRS, is the second time that JRS has been the focus of a *STUDIES* article. In December 2005, Fr. Kevin F. O'Brien (UEA) marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of JRS with his essay *Consolation in Action: The Jesuit Refugee Service and the Ministry of Accompaniment*.

Fr. O'Brien's article told the beginning of the JRS story. JRS's charism drew from the roots of the Society: the Spiritual Exercises, the choice of ministries as described in the *Constitutions*, and the priority of "helping souls" in ministries of consolation as the foundation of JRS's *sine qua non* of accompaniment of those we serve. Fr. O'Brien stressed the genius of Fr. Pedro Arrupe (1907–1991) in imagining something new from these roots. He notes that in the final talk that Fr. Arrupe delivered before his stroke—a talk recently cited by Pope Francis (see: n65)—Fr. Arrupe reminded the first JRS team in Thailand that "the elasticity of this experimentation and risk-taking should be all in one direction—the direction pointed out by the Holy Spirit."

Nearly two decades later, Fr. O'Neill tells the story of an established ministry that must continually reflect on and renew its mission, and must do so for several motives, including maintaining

Jesuit presence, responding to the growth of forced displacement around the world, and promoting faith in humanitarian service.

In his essay, Fr. O'Neill emphasizes the *via media* that JRS has chosen—that JRS is neither secular nor confessional—which allows us to draw on our Christian and Jesuit history to take the faith experiences of those we serve seriously. In his words, JRS is both “Catholic and catholic.”

That said, this *via media* requires ongoing reflection and renewal of our connection to the Society, and Fr. O'Neill highlights JRS's living of the Spiritual Exercises and our expression of the Society's contemporary call to reconciliation as fundamental links to the Society's mission.

It strikes me that the *via media* should be the path of all Jesuit ministries, including parishes and spiritual centers, where we often work with those on the peripheries of faith and inclusion. Note too that being “Catholic and catholic,” drawing on the Exercises, and engaging reconciliation exemplify the first of the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs), “showing the way to God,” promulgated by Jesuit General Fr. Arturo Sosa in June 2019.<sup>1</sup>

These practices in turn lead us to the discernment and choices required to implement the other three preferences, “walking with the excluded,” “journeying with youth,” and “caring for our common home.” Finally, each Jesuit ministry is called to imitate Matthew's scribe of the kingdom, called to use treasures old and new (Mt 13:52).

In Kakuma/Kalobeyei, where Fr. O'Neill works, and in urban areas and camps around the world, JRS accompanies, serves, and advocates with and for forcibly displaced people. This work is fundamentally built on hope. Toward the end of this essay, you will meet Charite Lobo. He reminds us that JRS and other Jesuit ministries do not bring hope; rather, we encourage and empower the hope already alive in those we accompany across the spectrum of Jesuit apostolates.

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<sup>1</sup> For information on the Universal Apostolic Preferences, please go to the international website of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), <https://www.jesuits.global/uap/>.

As Fr. Arrupe desired, JRS continues to experiment and to take risks. We can do nothing less for and with those who have risked all to seek life. Thank you, Bill, for helping us to remain faithful to the Holy Spirit's call.

*Thomas H. Smolich (uWE)  
International Director, Jesuit Refugee Service  
Rome, Italy*

PS: As n41 below reminds us, Fr. General sees JRS as a global priority for missioning Jesuits. If you would be interested in being part of JRS on a temporary or long-term basis, please contact me at [international.director@jrs.net](mailto:international.director@jrs.net). Thank you!





# CONTENTS

I. SECULAR OR SECTARIAN? .....	5
II. <i>CATHOLIC AND CATHOLIC</i> .....	6
III. TELLING OUR STORY .....	11
IV. A JESUIT MISSION .....	17
V. VISIONS AND REVISIONS .....	22
VI. THEOLOGICAL POSTSCRIPT .....	30

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# The “Jesuit” in Jesuit Refugee Service

William R. O’Neill, SJ

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*The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) has outgrown its humble origins. Yet growth brings its own challenges and one may well ask how a large, professional humanitarian organization, drawing staff from multiple religious traditions, remains “Jesuit.” JRS’s mission of accompaniment, service, and advocacy preserves Fr. Pedro Arrupe’s founding vision by integrating the heritage of Catholic social teaching and Ignatian discernment.*

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**F**r. Pedro Arrupe (1907–1991), the twenty-eighth superior general of the Society of Jesus (1965–1983), founded the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) on November 14, 1980 in response to the plight of Vietnamese refugees. Fleeing their war-ravaged homeland, hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese set out on small boats across the South China Sea only to face threats of pirates, storms, dehydration, and hunger. Many did not survive. Others found themselves confined in camps of first asylum in Southeast Asia, awaiting resettlement elsewhere.

Fr. Arrupe sought “to bring at least some relief to such a tragic situation” by mobilizing the global resources of the Society of Jesus; it was, he said, “a challenge to the Society we cannot ignore.”<sup>1</sup> Over

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<sup>1</sup> Pedro Arrupe, SJ, “The Society and the Refugee Problem,” To All Major Superiors, Rome, November 14, 1980, *Acta Praepositi Generalis*, 1980 – Pro Societate: 319–21, at 319, [https://arrupe.jesuitgeneral.org/uploads/la-compagnie-et-le-probleme-des-refugies/19801114\\_refugees\\_ENG.pdf](https://arrupe.jesuitgeneral.org/uploads/la-compagnie-et-le-probleme-des-refugies/19801114_refugees_ENG.pdf). Fr. Arrupe wrote that the response of “some 20 major superiors” to whom he had sent cable messages sharing his distress about “the plight of thousands of boat people and refugees. . . . was magnificent. Immediate offers of help

the next decades, JRS would expand and consolidate its mission, responding to civil strife in Central and Latin America, Southeastern Europe, and throughout Africa. JRS has long outgrown its humble beginnings. Officially registered as a foundation of the Vatican City State on March 19, 2000, JRS operates today in fifty-seven countries, serving over a million refugees and other forcibly displaced persons in conflict zones, refugee camps, cities, and detention centers. Post-secondary education and livelihood initiatives promote gender equity while other programs offer psychosocial support, health care, legal assistance, protection, care and inclusive education for children with disabilities, and humanitarian relief.

In all its programs, JRS promotes social reconciliation through its threefold mission of accompanying refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, serving them, and advocating for justice on their behalf. And the need for such a mission has never been greater. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that current levels of displacement are the highest ever recorded. Some 82.4 million people have been forced from their homes, including nearly 26.4 million refugees, about 41 percent of whom are under the age of 18. At least 48 million have been internally displaced and 4.1 million are in the process of seeking asylum. Already victims of ethnic cleansing, mass expulsion, and environmental degradation wrought by climate change, the majority of refugees, about three of four (15.7 million), subsist in protracted situations like that of Kakuma, where I serve.<sup>2</sup> Living in such camps without any prospect of a durable solution to their plight, refugees like

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were made in personnel, know-how and material; supplies of food and medicine as well as money were sent; direct action was taken through the mass media to influence government and private agencies; services were volunteered in pastoral as well as organisational capacities, and so on" (319).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Global Trends in Forced Displacement – 2020," <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/60b638e37/global-trends-forced-displacement-2020.html>. The Kakuma Refugee Camp in northwestern Kenya was established in 1992 with the arrival of the "Lost Boys of Sudan," followed by Ethiopians and Somalis. Today, the Kakuma Camp and the associated Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement are home to some 218,380 refugees from 22 different countries. UNHCR, *Monthly Operational Update* (August 1–31, 2020), [https://www.unhcr.org/ke/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/09/UNHCR\\_Kenya\\_Kakuma\\_August\\_2021\\_Monthly\\_Operational\\_Updates.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/ke/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/09/UNHCR_Kenya_Kakuma_August_2021_Monthly_Operational_Updates.pdf).

Mama K., mother of a severely disabled child, are rendered supplicants, dependent on humanitarian aid for their most basic needs.

If, then, "the needs" remain "dramatically urgent," so too does Fr. Arrupe's call: "I have no hesitation in repeating what I said at our Consultation: 'I consider this as a new modern apostolate for the Society as a whole, of great importance for today and the future, and of much spiritual benefit also to the Society.'" <sup>3</sup> Surely, JRS's modern apostolate has borne much fruit. Indeed, in recent years, the UNHCR has recognized "the important role" played by Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) like JRS "in the overall humanitarian effort today."<sup>4</sup> Yet JRS's very success begs the question: has our "overall humanitarian effort" come at the price of sacrificing Fr. Arrupe's original inspiration? FBOs, after all, are often hard pressed to say what role faith plays in their efforts, and we might well ask what difference religious difference makes. For non-governmental actors, as Alasdair and Joey Ager argue, have become so "enmeshed within intergovernmental structures and governmental agendas" that "the principles and policies of humanitarianism" are "increasingly articulated in secular terms."<sup>5</sup>

In founding JRS, Fr. Arrupe did not intend that it would "become a big operation." To fulfill its mission, JRS would endeavor "to work mainly through men in the Provinces themselves" while allowing some degree of collaboration "if, however, its work increases."<sup>6</sup> But the caveat proved true: the sixteen million refugees of Fr. Arrupe's day were but the first wave of massive refugee flows. "Tragic situations" multiplied so that collaboration became indispensable. Today, the sixty-five or so Jesuits assigned to JRS globally—a number remarkably consistent over the years—constitute less than two percent of JRS's increasingly large

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<sup>3</sup> Arrupe, "The Society and the Refugee Problem," 320.

<sup>4</sup> See the UNHCR, High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, "Background Document: Faith and Protection" (November 29, 2012), <https://www.unhcr.org/50aa5b879.html>; David Hollenbach, SJ, *Humanity in Crisis: Ethical and Religious Response to Refugees* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2019), 47.

<sup>5</sup> Alastair Ager and Joey Ager, "Faith and the Discourse of Secular Humanitarianism," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (Sept. 1, 2001): 456–72, at 457, cited by Hollenbach, *Humanity in Crisis*, 47.

<sup>6</sup> Arrupe, "The Society and the Refugee Problem," 320–21.

professional staff, itself drawn from many differing faith traditions. Not only Christians but also Buddhists, Muslims, other believers, and even agnostics collaborate in JRS’s mission. In our formal orientations for national staff, I have met with committed Syrian Orthodox Christians, Buddhists, and Muslims, while the refugees we serve and our “incentive staff” — refugees collaborating with JRS—here in the Kakuma/Kalobeyei refugee camp include Muslims and Christians of various denominations. Globally, seventy percent of those whom JRS serves are not Christian.

Moreover, the values inspiring JRS—dignity, solidarity, participation, hospitality, compassion, hope, and justice—are themselves broadly humanitarian; one need not be Catholic, Christian, or even a believer to embrace them. As lay collaborators play an ever-greater role in leadership, even Jesuits may question just how “Jesuit” JRS is today. To be sure, similar questions have arisen with respect to many traditional Jesuit apostolates, most notably institutions of higher education, and here, too, differing answers are given. For some, “Jesuit” signifies exercising a measure of control or influence; for others, adopting a particular pedagogy or curriculum. Still others appeal to a distinctive spirituality or ministry.<sup>7</sup> In a similar vein, we may ask whether “the help” offered by JRS to the forcibly displaced, in Fr. Arrupe’s words, is not only “material” but distinctively “spiritual.” Or has the “secular idiom” of our humanitarian efforts effectively displaced JRS’s spiritual heritage?

These were among the questions posed for me when I was first appointed to JRS’s international “Mission and Identity” team in September 2019. This *STUDIES* article is a humble, first attempt to respond to these questions and, in particular, to reaffirm the integral role played by JRS in fulfilling the Society’s apostolic mission. It remains “of much spiritual benefit . . . to the Society.” What I say is merely a beginning, and others no doubt will say more and better.<sup>8</sup> Others too will be better placed than I to offer comparative assessments of how

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<sup>7</sup> See Michael J. Buckley, *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections in a Jesuit Idiom* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> I wish to express my debt to Frs. Lasantha De Abrew, (SRI) and Tony O’Riordan (HIB), for their insight and support in pursuing this inquiry. I am indebted as well to the contributions of Noelle Fitzpatrick, national director for JRS in South Sudan, and Fr. James Hanvey (BRI), secretary for the Service of Faith of the Society of Jesus.

“Jesuit” inflects our differing apostolic works—that is, our universities, secondary schools, parishes, social ministries, and so on. But for now, I will devote this brief sketch to exploring the sense of “Jesuit” in the Jesuit Refugee Service—that is, how “Jesuit” qualifies both our humanitarian efforts and our distinctive religious mission. I turn, then, to one critical aspect of this mission, our “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Co 5:18), and conclude with a few reflections on my own Jesuit ministry in the Kakuma/Kalobeyei refugee camp.

## I. Secular or Sectarian?

**I**n what sense is JRS’s mission distinctively Jesuit? How we answer falls under three broad heuristic perspectives or types.<sup>9</sup> According to the first, secular type, JRS differs little from any other implementing partner of UNHCR. As one humanitarian leader noted, what matters is “need not creed.” JRS’s humanitarian mission is governed by what the UNHCR describes as “globally accepted humanitarian partnership principles”—for example, basic secular norms of impartiality, non-discrimination, transparency, and so on.<sup>10</sup> So too, Christian religious affiliation is immaterial in its service, accompaniment, and advocacy. And while religious motivation may inspire personal commitments, piety is not policy: professional metrics of responsibility and competence prevail. Religion is left to the private sphere; the public, professional realm is disenchanting.

The second type is sectarian, where JRS is faith-based all the way down. Like other sectarian faith-based organizations, JRS would view its “primary activity as being to support the religious life and holistic development of [its] adherents.”<sup>11</sup> Here, creed determines mission

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<sup>9</sup> The UNHCR background document, “Faith and Protection,” broadly distinguishes “implementing partners” whose “primary activity is humanitarian” from other “FBOs and local faith communities” who “view their primary activity as being to support the religious life and holistic development of their adherents” (4).

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR, High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges, “Background Document: Faith and Protection,” 4–7.

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR, High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges, “Background Document: Faith and Protection,” 4.

and membership and inspires JRS’s projects and programs. Christian stories, tropes, and symbols inform its praxis. Where its projects and programs overlap with those of secular humanitarian organizations like the UNHCR, cooperation remains strategic. To this end, sectarian rubrics prevail, distinguishing what we do from other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), since our accompaniment, service, and advocacy tell a Christian story: they bear a Catholic (Jesuit) imprimatur. An agnostic or Muslim may be invited to the table, but only as guest—the prayer before meals will be Christian.

## II. *Catholic and catholic*

The third type, which I believe the practice of JRS exemplifies, is a *via media* or “middle way” between the first two—a perspective that is neither secular nor sectarian but both *Catholic*, with a capital C, meaning “borne in a distinctive religious spirituality,” and *catholic*, with a lowercase c, meaning “universal,” as in the original Greek. With the secularist, we may say that JRS is governed by humanitarian norms of impartiality, non-discrimination, transparency, and so forth. Need inspires JRS’s accompaniment, service, and advocacy, and JRS responds indiscriminately to the suffering and passion of the world. But the universal (catholic) norms or values inspiring JRS’s professional praxis are themselves rooted in the Catholic creed. Yes, our humanitarian efforts rest in what the Universal Declaration calls our common “faith” in dignity and human rights.<sup>12</sup> Yet the Declaration itself offers no foundational justification. Indeed, our common faith itself is rooted in our distinctive religious and secular “grounding reasons”—what the philosopher John Rawls calls an “overlapping consensus” of comprehensive traditions.<sup>13</sup> And such grounding reasons

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<sup>12</sup> See the preamble to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>. For an excellent account of the origins of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, see Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House), 2001.

<sup>13</sup> John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2005), 133–73; Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*, 3rd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).



give rise to a family of interpretations—for example, Catholic social teaching, Islamic or Buddhist rights rhetoric, and so on.

For this reason, we need not assume that the humanitarian values of dignity, solidarity, participation, hospitality, compassion, hope, and justice depend upon a purely secular justification. Christians, like Jews, believe in God's creation of a "thou" to hear God's word.<sup>14</sup> For Muslims, we are God's "vicereagents" on earth.<sup>15</sup> Many other religious traditions, including indigenous traditions, likewise affirm our common faith in the universal "dignity and worth of the human person."<sup>16</sup> The Dalai Lama, for instance, interprets dignity in terms of our "innate capacity" to love, which gives rise to "an ethics of universal responsibility" in Buddhism.<sup>17</sup>

Secular reasoning, to be sure, also gives us reason to believe. Immanuel Kant famously describes persons as "ends in themselves" who can never be treated merely as means to another person's ends.<sup>18</sup> But we need not assume that appeals to dignity depend upon an apodictic rational justification.<sup>19</sup> Like Matthew's steward (Mt 25:14–30),

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<sup>14</sup> In the words of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, "man and woman, because they are free and intelligent, represent the 'thou' created by God." See the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 36, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\\_pc\\_justpeace\\_doc\\_20060526\\_compendio-dott-soc\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html).

<sup>15</sup> See Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, *Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam*, August 5, 1990, <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/instreet/cairodeclaration.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Preamble, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

<sup>17</sup> See Elizabeth W. Collier and Charles R. Strain, eds., *Religious and Ethical Perspectives on Global Migration* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 189. The authors note that for the Dalai Lama, our "innate capacity" to love gives rise to "an ethics of universal responsibility" (189), where we "come to see the need to care especially for those members of the human family who suffer most" (His Holiness the Dalai Lama, *Ethics for the New Millennium* [New York: Riverhead Books, 2001], 162–63; see also 64–68).

<sup>18</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (1785), trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 429.

<sup>19</sup> Modern Kantian theorists like John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas have come to recognize the limits of pure reason in practical argumentation. Where Rawls appeals to an overlapping consensus of comprehensive traditions, Habermas looks to the formal/pragmatic presumptions of discourse—and these very pragmatic presumptions, I have argued, leave room for religious justification or religious grounding reasons. See William O'Neill, SJ, *Reimagining Human Rights: Religion and the Common Good* (Washington,

Archbishop Desmond Tutu draws on both sacred and secular reasoning: “[a]partheid treats human beings, God’s children, as if they were less than this. It manipulates persons and treats them as if they were means to some end. Immanuel Kant declared that a person is always an end, never a means to an end.”<sup>20</sup>

Now, modern Catholic social teaching likewise appeals to both theological and philosophical grounding reasons. Catholic social teaching bears a family resemblance to other sacred and secular traditions; but as in all families, it retains its distinctive character. For Catholic beliefs and their mode of expression—for example, Pope Francis’s encyclicals—constitute JRS’s distinctive way of being *catholic*. Drawing upon both Scripture and Tradition, Catholic social teaching thus underscores the communitarian dimension of implementing a human rights regime.<sup>21</sup> Where regnant liberal rights theory gives pride of place to negative liberty—what we are free *from*—Catholic social teaching emphasizes the conditions or capabilities necessary for realizing dignity-in-solidarity: not only civil liberties, but security and subsistence. These, too, are basic human rights and not mere “favours done by the holders of power.”<sup>22</sup> Similarly, correlative duties entail not only the “negative” duty of forbearance or non-interference, but also the “positive” duties of provision and protection.<sup>23</sup>

In the Church’s social teaching, liberties are thus bonded by the political common good, and in particular by the structural imperatives

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DC: Georgetown University Press, 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Desmond M. Tutu, *Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speeches*, ed. Muthobi Mutoatse and John Webster (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 160.

<sup>21</sup> See Second Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, “Introduction,” *Justice in the World* (1971), in David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, eds., *Catholic Social Thought: Encyclicals and Documents from Pope Leo XIII to Pope Francis*, 3rd. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016).

<sup>22</sup> R. J. Vincent, *Human Rights and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 17.

<sup>23</sup> Catholic social teaching thus recalls African conceptions of rights—for example, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere’s *haki za binadamu* and Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s appeal to *ubuntu*.

of guaranteeing the rights of those most vulnerable—our “option for the poor.” In this spirit, we must ask: whose equal dignity is unequally imperiled? Whose equal rights denied? Catholic social teaching bears a family resemblance to other interpretations of our “common faith,” but integrating a comprehensive set of rights, negative and positive, with the common good, gives us a distinctive “squint” at refugee policy—one embracing the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and victims of famine or generalized violence who fall outside the official purview of international refugee law.

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*For dignity always appears  
in local garb; human rights  
are not self-interpreting  
but must be culturally and  
religiously integrated.*

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We may say, then, that the Catholic Church’s distinctive social teaching grounds our common faith in catholic humanitarian values. And just as justification may be religious in inspiration, so too is the motivation of our humanitarian efforts. For grounding reasons typically move us to act—they become, in Max Weber’s words, “exemplary or binding.”<sup>24</sup> Even secular philosophers like John Rawls recognize that in contemporary, pluralistic polities, motivation to respect dignity and rights may depend upon distinctively religious beliefs.<sup>25</sup> In his most recent, “post-secular” criticism, Jürgen Habermas writes in a similar vein that “the liberal state depends in the long run on mentalities which it is unable to generate from its own resources.”<sup>26</sup>

And such mentalities—religious attitudes and beliefs—specify our grounding reasons. Universal norms or values are concretized in the religious stories, symbols, and tropes that constitute our “moral imaginary”—how we interpret our lifeworld. For dignity always appears in

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<sup>24</sup> Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber*, trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 147.

<sup>25</sup> “The roots of democratic citizens’ allegiance to their political conceptions,” writes John Rawls, “lie in their respective comprehensive doctrines.” John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, with “*The Idea of Public Reason Revisited*” (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 153.

<sup>26</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “Reply to My Critics,” trans. Ciarin Cronin, in *Habermas and Religion*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (London: Polity, 2013), 347–90, at 348.

local garb; human rights are not self-interpreting but must be culturally and religiously integrated.<sup>27</sup> After all, our common faith is storied—embodied less in abstract humanitarian precepts than in parables, *hadith*, and proverbs that offer to refugees “guidance, compassion, consolation and hope” in their darkest hours.<sup>28</sup>

The “Jesuit” in JRS is thus at play in the justifications invoked, motivation for mission, and in JRS’s interpretative repertory.<sup>29</sup> To be sure, not all elements need be present in every program or explicitly acknowledged in collaboration. But their interplay defines JRS’s practice: what we do in accompanying, serving, and advocating for the whole person—material and spiritual—and all persons.<sup>30</sup> And always there is a *magis*, a divine invitation and demand that presumes even as it transcends accepted humanitarian norms. We will touch on this surplus of

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<sup>27</sup> See O’Neill, *Reimagining Human Rights*, chapter 1.

<sup>28</sup> “During the session [on the role of faith-based organizations (FBOs)], NGOs recognized the importance that faith plays in the lives of conflict and disaster affected communities, and the role and influence of faith communities and faith based organizations in protection. Faith helps people cope with trauma; it validates their humanity; informs their decisions and offers guidance, compassion, consolation and hope” (Linda Bartolomei, Rapporteur’s Report, UNHCR’s Annual Consultations with NGOs, CICC, 28–30 June 2011, Geneva, Switzerland, 11, <https://www.unhcr.org/ngo-consultations/ngo-consultations-2011/2011-Rapporteurs-Report-final-with-cover-page.pdf>).

<sup>29</sup> What we say of JRS typifies other religiously affiliated institutions. Consider the analogous case of a Jesuit Catholic (Jesuit) university. Rather than speaking univocally of the “idea” of a university, we may distinguish a “family resemblance” of institutional practices based upon the interplay of justification, motivation, and interpretation, as follows: (1) the constitutive aims and ideals of a university—for example, rigorous scholarly inquiry, academic freedom, promotion of justice, and inclusive education—find ultimate justification in religious attitudes and belief; (2) such aims and ideals, grounded in Catholic belief, are regarded as exemplary or binding, for example, in hiring, retention, and promotion, and the choice of research programs; and (3) religious beliefs, symbols, and tropes form, in part, the interpretative horizon of our practices while themselves being reflexively subjects of critical inquiry. For universities inspired by the vision of St. Ignatius, faith thus seeks understanding across disciplinary specializations even as understanding engages faith across religious traditions. For the formative/performative role of Ignatian spirituality in Jesuit education, see Buckley, *The Catholic University as Promise and Project*.

<sup>30</sup> On this point, see Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (March 26, 1967), 14, [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_26031967\\_populorum.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html).

meaning in the next section; for the moment, though, I want to consider the practical implications of our threefold hermeneutic of justification, motivation, and interpretation for JRS's humanitarian mission.<sup>31</sup>

### III. Telling Our Story

Our mission, we argued, is neither secular nor sectarian. For we have good religious (Catholic) grounding reasons for abiding by (catholic) humanitarian norms of impartiality, non-discrimination, and so on. Catholic belief in the *imago Dei* justifies and motivates our humanitarian mission. And just as religion inspires our humanitarian efforts, so our humanitarian efforts draw upon religious stories, tropes, and symbols. Indeed, impartial respect for refugees implies that we identify, sympathetically, with *their* beliefs, including their religious beliefs. In accompanying refugees, we must come to see the world from their perspective, not merely generalizing our own.<sup>32</sup> Not only accompaniment, but service and advocacy for rights imply such sympathetic recognition, although not necessarily agreement, with the faith traditions of those whom JRS serves.

Our very humanitarian mission then demands more than the vacuous, "liberal" tolerance of secular NGOs that would dismiss religion or relegate it to the private sphere. Rather, JRS's mission *as* humanitarian (Catholic and catholic) presumes a basic religious literacy—a deliberative tolerance that recognizes the place of religion in stories of displacement. Respecting young Somali single mothers caring for their children with disabilities in Kakuma implies respecting the Islamic faith that

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<sup>31</sup> Practical criticism entails a threefold hermeneutic of justification (grounding reasons), motivation/explanation (exemplary or binding norms), and interpretation (morally relevant action-descriptions). On this point, see William O'Neill, "The Distinctiveness of Christian Morality: A Dispute Revisited," in *Philosophy and Theology* 7, no. 4 (Summer 1993): 405–23.

<sup>32</sup> Bernard Williams interprets Kant's maxim of respect for persons as implying that each person "is owed an effort at identification" in virtue of her intentions and purposes. Bernard Williams, "The Idea of Equality," in *Problems of the Self: Philosophical Papers 1956–1972* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 236–37; "Saint-Just's Illusion," in *Making Sense of Humanity and Other Philosophical Papers, 1982–1993* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 135–50.

sustains them. Here, we must accompany them in their own stories, honoring dignity in local garb. Professionalism demands no less.

Likewise, if we in JRS are to accompany others in their stories, then we must know our own—that is, our biblical imaginary, Catholic social teaching, and Ignatian discernment. The latter, in particular, is crucial, for if the Church’s social teaching makes us Catholic, then Ignatian spirituality makes us Jesuit. Ignatian spirituality remains the wellspring of what we do in our mission of accompaniment, service, and advocacy. At the very inception of JRS, Fr. Arrupe appealed to “St. Ignatius’ criteria for our apostolic work and the recent calls of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations. “In the Constitutions,” writes Fr. Arrupe, “St. Ignatius speaks of the greater universal good, an urgency that is ever growing, the difficulty and complexity of the human problem involved, and lack of other people to attend to the need.”<sup>33</sup> Affirmed by subsequent general congregations, these apostolic criteria were elaborated in directives of fathers general—for example, in the four Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs) promulgated by Fr. Arturo Sosa on February 19, 2019: promotion of Ignatian “Spiritual Exercises and discernment”; walking with “individuals and communities that are vulnerable, excluded, marginalized, and humanly impoverished”; accompanying “the young in the creation of a hope-filled future”; and “care for our Common Home.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> In founding JRS, Fr. Arrupe wrote: “In the Constitutions St. Ignatius speaks of the greater universal good, an urgency that is ever growing, the difficulty and complexity of the human problem involved, and lack of other people to attend to the need. With our ideal of availability and universality, the number of institutions under our care, and the active collaboration of many lay people who work with us, we are particularly well fitted to meet this challenge and provide services that are not being catered for sufficiently by other organisations and groups. . . . Furthermore, the help needed is not only material: in a special way the Society is being called to render a service that is human, pedagogical and spiritual. It is a difficult and complex challenge; the needs are dramatically urgent. I have no hesitation in repeating what I said at our Consultation: ‘I consider this as a new modern apostolate for the Society as a whole, of great importance for today and the future, and of much spiritual benefit also to the Society’ ” (Arrupe, “The Society and the Refugee Problem,” 319–20).

<sup>34</sup> Arturo Sosa, “Universal apostolic preferences of the Society of Jesus: 2019–2029,” To the Whole Society, Rome, February 19, 2019, [https://www.jesuits.global/sj\\_files/2020/05/2019-06\\_19feb19\\_eng.pdf](https://www.jesuits.global/sj_files/2020/05/2019-06_19feb19_eng.pdf). In promulgating these preferences, Fr. Sosa built

Grounded in "the ordinary magisterium of the Church," including Catholic social teaching, these renewed "apostolic criteria" are at play in JRS's discerning "the greater universal good" or *magis*. And such discernment (UAP 1), bids us ask: (a) who are "the most vulnerable and excluded persons in our midst"—for example, victims of civil strife or those neglected by others or not adequately served?<sup>35</sup> (b) In light of our commitment to take the victims' side, how can we best serve refugees and vulnerable youth (UAP 2 and 3) given our resources and personnel? And (c), in view of the "difficulty

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upon the apostolic priorities proposed fifteen years earlier by his predecessor, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach (1928–2016). On the connection between JRS and the new apostolic preferences, see Arturo Sosa, "Renewed commitment of the Jesuit Refugee Service," To the Whole Society of Jesus and Partners in Mission, Rome, May 24, 2019, [https://jrs.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019-15\\_24May19\\_ENG.pdf](https://jrs.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019-15_24May19_ENG.pdf):

The 35th General Congregation (GC 35) in 2008 reaffirmed the service of migrants, refugees, the internally displaced, and victims of trafficking, as an apostolic preference of the Society (GC 35, d. 3, 39, v.). Eight years later GC 36 called upon the Society to respond the call of Christ [*sic*] who summons us anew to a ministry of justice and peace, serving the poor and the excluded: "Among these various forms of suffering (that) have appeared with consistency from many of our Provinces and Regions (is) (t)he displacement of peoples (refugees, migrants, and internally displaced peoples): In the face of attitudes hostile to these displaced persons, our faith invites the Society to promote everywhere a more generous culture of hospitality" (GC 36, d. 1, 25, 26).

This love of the Society for the poor and the excluded, expressed in deeds more than words, has been most recently confirmed by the process of discernment that led to the promulgation of the Universal Apostolic Preferences, among which is our commitment "to care for migrants, displaced persons, refugees, and victims of wars and human trafficking" ("Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, 2019–2029," Letter of Arturo Sosa SJ to the Whole Society, 19 February 2019). The Society has accepted as a mission of the Church through the Holy Father to "continue to help create conditions of hospitality, to accompany all these people in their process of integration into society, and to promote the defence of their rights" (*ibid.*). (2)

<sup>35</sup> I understand "victim" here in objective, moral terms—that is, to indicate those whose basic human rights have been threatened or denied. Victims have suffered, but by no means does that render them subjectively passive. Justice must begin with recognizing victims, but it ends with restoring agency through specific and systemic redress. Victims may then become, subjectively, survivors or, in Angana Chatterji's words, "victimized survivors." See Angana P. Chatterji, P. Shashi Buluswar, and Mallika Kaur, eds. *Conflicted Democracies and Gendered Violence: The Right to Heal: Internal Conflict and Social Upheaval in India* (New Delhi: Zubaan Books, 2016), 273n3.

and the complexity of the human problem involved,” how can we best redress the systemic causes of victimization, understood as the “economic, political, and social structures that generate injustice”?

As Pope Francis urges, to heed the “cry of the poor” is to heed the “cry of the earth”—for example, of climate refugees fleeing ecological degradation (UAP 4).<sup>36</sup>

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*JRS may in this way become a privileged locus of living, interfaith dialogue in which strands of differing traditions are interwoven in a common practice.*

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By its very nature, then, JRS responds integrally and comprehensively to forced migration, embracing both humanitarian care (specific redress) and developmental concern for justice and reconciliation (systemic redress)—goals which may otherwise be at odds.<sup>37</sup> For JRS, refugees are never merely passive “beneficiaries” of humanitarian aid, but sisters and brothers, in Simone Weil’s words, “exactly like me,” albeit “stamped with a special mark by affliction.”<sup>38</sup>

As the history of JRS reminds us, discerning the *magis* is not done once or once for all. In the words of JRS’s charter, “Within the Ignatian spirit, JRS welcomes the involvement of lay persons and cooperation and partnership with religious congregations. ‘All those engaged in the work [of JRS] should exercise co-responsibility and be engaged in discernment and participative decision-making where it is appropriate.’”<sup>39</sup> And increasingly, such discernment,

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<sup>36</sup> Sosa, “Universal apostolic preferences of the Society of Jesus,” 1–6.

<sup>37</sup> See United Nations, *Global Compact on Refugees* (New York, 2018), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/5c658aed4.pdf#zoom=95>; UNHCR, *Kenya Comprehensive Refugee Programme, 2019–2020: Programming for Inclusive Solutions and Sustainable Development*, <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/Kenya%20Comprehensive%20Refugee%20Programme%20%282019%29.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> Simone Weil, “Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God,” *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1951), 115.

<sup>39</sup> The Charter of the Jesuit Refugee Service, no. 13, Rome, March 19, 2000, p. 3, [jrsmalta.jesuit.org/mt/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/08/1-JRS\\_Charter-lay-out-201108.pdf](http://jrsmalta.jesuit.org/mt/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/08/1-JRS_Charter-lay-out-201108.pdf); GC 34, d. 13, no. 343.



in Fr. Sosa's words, "enters into dialogue with other religions and with all cultures."<sup>40</sup> Indeed, precisely in claiming the place of religion in displacement in fulfilling the last three apostolic preferences, JRS fulfills the first, becoming truly catholic by embracing other seminal traditions, both sacred and secular.<sup>41</sup> Here, where the secularist excludes religious belief and the sectarian insists on a univocal religious perspective, a Catholic/catholic perspective proceeds by analogy. Catholic faith itself underwrites JRS's catholic, interfaith collaboration in mission. And such ecumenical/interfaith collaboration is mutually illuminating, each tradition enriching the other in practical pursuit of the *magis*. Pope Francis's recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* exemplifies such a Catholic/catholic perspective, drawing upon the wisdom of "brothers and sisters who are not Catholics: Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu, Mahatma Gandhi and many more."<sup>42</sup>

JRS may in this way become a privileged locus of living, interfaith dialogue in which strands of differing traditions are interwoven in a

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<sup>40</sup> Sosa, "Universal apostolic preferences of the Society of Jesus," 2.

<sup>41</sup> Fr. Sosa reaffirmed the mission of JRS in terms of the universal preferences: "JRS is a ministry of the Society of Jesus, and its role as part of the Society is clear. The ministry of JRS can inspire us to live the Universal Apostolic Preferences, drawing on the spirituality that motivated Father Arrupe to accompany the forcibly displaced, to give hope to young people, to shine a light on the connection of displaced sisters and brothers with the care of our earth" (Homily, JRS 40th Anniversary Mass, 14 November 2020, <https://jrs.net/en/news/the-audacity-of-the-impossible-father-general-arturo-sosa-sj-on-jrss-mission/>). See also Sosa, "Renewed commitment of the Jesuit Refugee Service": "I ask members of the Society and its partners, especially those in leadership roles, to participate in the implementation of the JRS vision of inclusion and integration of refugees, and to engage in JRS challenges of renewed governance and participation in the Ignatian heritage. This mission of JRS must be shared by all our institutions, whether they are academic, educational, social, intellectual, pastoral or spiritual. They can all contribute to the accompaniment and service of refugees. I also wish to emphasize that, as a ministry of the worldwide Society, JRS should be regarded by Major Superiors as a ministry sustained by Jesuit personnel, especially when a Jesuit seeks to discern a call to service in JRS (3)."

<sup>42</sup> Francis, *Fratelli tutti* (October 3, 2020), 286, [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201003\\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html).

common practice.<sup>43</sup> In our practice of hospitality, for instance, Muslim refugees may be inspired by the central role of the *Hijrah* in Islam. In a similar vein, a Mahayana Buddhist may seek to imitate the compassionate path of the *Bodhisattva*. Christians “pass over” to the side of the poor and vulnerable stranger as did Luke’s Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25–37). Our stories rhyme, or bear a family resemblance, in rationalizing action and practice. And *our* story itself warrants such living dialogue. In Luke’s parable, after all, it is the schismatic Samaritan, the despised “stranger,” who teaches the lawyer the meaning of the law—that is, the great commandment of neighbor-love and hospitality.

An agnostic, too, would be invited to such a comparative dialogue, bringing his or her trove of beliefs, tropes, and symbols to our common discernment and participative decision-making. Our *via media* thus embraces differing creeds or no creed. But just so, it excludes implicit bias, whether sectarian or secular. Just as accompaniment precludes homophobia, patriarchy, or religious bias, the latter understood as imposing my religious beliefs, so too it forbids bias against religion. As we noted above, reverence for the deepest beliefs of another need not imply agreement. Rather, sympathetic recognition rules out what the sociologist Robert Bellah calls “Enlightenment fundamentalism”: an overriding hermeneutics of suspicion that pre-judges another’s religious beliefs as primitive, inferior, or irrational in comparison with my own.<sup>44</sup> Such bias betrays our professional humanitarian role, since I will not serve well if I believe that Mama K.’s hope, inspired by her Islamic

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<sup>43</sup> Where ultimate grounding reasons—doctrine, understood in cognitive-propositional terms—differ, stories, tropes, and parables play a mediating role in rationalizing (motivating) action/practice as a common good. Our practices—what we do—are storied and may thus bear a family resemblance. For differing conceptions of the relation of doctrine and practice, see George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age, 25th Anniversary Edition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> Robert N. Bellah, “Confessions of a Former Establishment Fundamentalist,” *Bulletin – Council on the Study of Religion* 1, no. 3 (December 1970): 3–6. Bellah describes “Enlightenment Fundamentalism” as “the view that science and historical scholarship have effectively disposed of fallacious religious beliefs.”

faith, is necessarily misguided or unenlightened.<sup>45</sup> Finally, we can share a common meal only if we allow for blessings of many faiths.

## IV. A Jesuit Mission?

Our Catholic/catholic variation on mission best describes what we do as JRS. As such, JRS is not simply a secular implementing partner of the UNHCR; nor is it enough to say that some Jesuits serve or retain a measure of control. Neither do sectarian rubrics prevail. Rather, "catholic" humanitarian norms of impartiality, non-discrimination, and transparency, are themselves grounded in Catholic creed. Belief in the *imago Dei* provides ultimate justification for JRS's mission; motivates its accompaniment, service, and advocacy; and shapes its moral imaginary — its interpretative repertory. And the threefold hermeneutic plays out in a distinctive Jesuit idiom — for example, in Ignatius's apostolic criteria of discernment and in our apostolic preferences.<sup>46</sup>

Yet there is still a *magis*. In founding JRS, as noted above, Fr. Arrupe emphasized that the service rendered by JRS is "not only material," but also "human, pedagogical and spiritual."<sup>47</sup> What Pope Francis calls the "profoundly Christian and Ignatian" inspiration of JRS presumes, even as it transcends humanitarian norms, a dialectic grounded in the spiritual pedagogy of Ignatius's Exercises.<sup>48</sup> For the Exercises not only affirm our "common faith" in dignity and human rights but also ground that faith in the distinctive invitation and command of Christ. For JRS, "walking with refugees" begins here, in the Exercises.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> We must, then, guard against any reductive conception separating humanitarian professionalism from what we profess in mission: JRS's practice of accompaniment, service, and advocacy cannot merely be reduced to a set of technical skills, as crucial as these might be. What we do in JRS must be grounded in Catholic social teaching and Ignatian discernment.

<sup>46</sup> See Buckley, *The Catholic University as Promise and Project*.

<sup>47</sup> Arrupe, "The Society of Jesus and the Refugee Problem," 320.

<sup>48</sup> Francis, "To the Reverend Thomas H. Smolich, SJ, International Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service," Rome, October 4, 2020, <https://jrs.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Pope-Francis-Letter-to-JRS-40-Anniversary-2020-400dpi.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> See <https://jrs.net/en/home/>. Adherents of other faith traditions in JRS may in-

Let me briefly elaborate. In the First Week of the Exercises, Ignatius invites us to consider the sin of the world. Today, with Pope Francis, we lament the “cruelty of the world” that has forcibly displaced so many of our “brothers and sisters.”<sup>50</sup> In the face of the world’s suffering and passion, Ignatius places us before the crucified Christ as we ask, “What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ?”<sup>51</sup> Ignatius himself places us with Christ poor; and the martyred university rector, Fr. Ignacio Ellacuría (1930–1989) develops Ignatius’s “composition of place” by posing the First Week colloquy in terms of the crucified people.<sup>52</sup> For today, as Pope Francis reminds us, Christ is crucified on many an obscure hill; we cannot see him, save in the crucified people.

Now JRS responds to the *imago Dei* in its mission to the crucified peoples, the refugees of our times. And such a response, as we noted above, is mandated by the Church’s social teaching. In Camus’s words, we must “take the victim’s side.”<sup>53</sup> Our common faith in human dignity and rights underwrites our response to the sin of the world—that is, our mission of accompaniment, service, and advocacy. But how we

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voke a similar surplus of religious meaning in their accompaniment, service, and advocacy. Their deep aspirations play a role analogous to St. Ignatius’s Exercises—Muslims, Buddhists, and others also exercise their faith without becoming anonymous Jesuits! And it is this storied interplay of living, mutually nourishing faith traditions that our Jesuit Catholic tradition embraces.

<sup>50</sup> Francis, “Homily of Holy Father Francis,” Visit to Lampedusa, “Arena” sports camp, Salina Quarter, Monday, 8 July 2013, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130708\\_omelia-lampedusa.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130708_omelia-lampedusa.html).

<sup>51</sup> *Spiritual Exercises* 53, hereafter abbreviated *SpEx*; *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary*, trans. and ed., George E. Ganss, SJ (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 1992), 42. All quotations from the *SpEx* are from this edition.

<sup>52</sup> The Colloquy of the First Exercise places us before the Crucified Lord. In Dean Brackley’s reading of the *Exercises*, we respond to the Crucified Lord in the crucified people (*SpEx* 53). See Dean Brackley, SJ, *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times: New Perspectives on the Transformative Wisdom of Ignatius of Loyola* (New York: Crossroad, 2004), 40–41; Jon Sobrino, “Companions of Jesus,” in Jon Sobrino, Ignacio Ellacuría et al., *Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 3–56.

<sup>53</sup> Albert Camus, *The Plague*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 230.

respond—how we take the victims' side—demands more. Where in the First Week, human rights and correlative duties are generalized for all, the Second Week of the Exercises bids us respond to God's unique invitation and demand: What, we ask, have *I* done for Christ? What am *I* doing? What must *I* do?

On this point, the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner (1904–1984) distinguishes general or "essentialist" moral duties governing the First Week of St. Ignatius's Spiritual Exercises from the "formal-existential" summons of the Second Week.<sup>54</sup> And our graced response (election) unfolds as we "put on Christ" (Ga 3:27) in the meditations of the Third and Fourth Weeks. For we are called uniquely, each by name, but always in solidarity to "build up the Body of Christ" (Ep 4:12). Accompaniment, service, and advocacy thus become our way not only of taking the victims' side, but also of taking it as our own. Like the Good Samaritan, we must "pass over" to the world of the poor (Lk 10:34) and thus become, in the words of Archbishop Saint Oscar Romero, "incarnate in their world," even to the point of "sharing their fate."<sup>55</sup>

Catholic social teaching, we might say, answers the lawyer's question: "Who is my neighbor?" For "love," writes Scripture scholar Wolfgang Schrage, "does not follow the dictates of convention and prejudice but dares to ignore them, dares with sovereign freedom to surmount

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<sup>54</sup> For Rahner, a formal, existential ethics of discernment in the Second Week presumes, even as it transcends, the general ethical principles and norms at play in the First Week. See Karl Rahner, "On the Question of a Formal Existential Ethics," in *Theological Investigations* 2, trans. Karl H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963), 217–34; "The 'Commandment' of Love in Relation to the Other Commandments," in *Theological Investigations* 5, trans. Karl H. Kruger (New York: Seabury, 1966), 439–59; "Theology of Freedom," in *Theological Investigations* 6, trans. Karl and Boniface Kruger (New York: Seabury, 1974), 178–96; "Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God," in *Theological Investigations* 6, 231–49; "The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola," in *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, trans. W. J. O'Hara (London: Burns and Oates, 1964), 84–170; *Spiritual Exercises*, trans. Kenneth Baker, SJ (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 114–35. See also Philip Endean, "Karl Rahner and the Ignatian Exercises," *The Way Supplement* 88 (Spring 1997): 55–65.

<sup>55</sup> Archbishop Oscar Romero, "The Political Dimension of Faith from the Perspective of the Option for the Poor," Address on the Occasion of the Conferral of a Doctorate, Honoris Causa by the University of Louvain, Belgium, February 2, 1980, p. 6., [www.romerotrue.org.uk/drupal/sites/default/files/1980-02-02%20Louvain.pdf](http://www.romerotrue.org.uk/drupal/sites/default/files/1980-02-02%20Louvain.pdf).

the barriers that separate people. A person who loves can see in anyone a neighbor in need.<sup>56</sup> And yet there is a *magis*: for Jesus, in Luke’s parable, asks quite a different question— not, Who is my neighbor? but rather, Who becomes neighbor to the man fallen among thieves?<sup>57</sup> And the question becomes a command: “Go and do likewise!” (Lk 10:36–7). In Gutiérrez’s words, “to be a Christian is to draw near, to make oneself a neighbor, not the one I encounter in my journey but the one in whose journey I place myself.”<sup>58</sup> The lawyer’s first question to Jesus, “teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” is answered by the stranger, the schismatic, who passes over to the world of the “naked, half-dead stranger” (Lk 10:25, 30).

Discerning mission entails, then, not only heeding the exacting essentialist rhetoric of rights and justice in the First Week—the heritage of Catholic social teaching in responding to forced displacement. JRS’s “work with refugees” becomes for Fr. Arrupe, in Pope Francis’s words, itself a “theological place” for our formal-existential response to grace: love, against the grain of the world.<sup>59</sup> For, as Fr. Arrupe reminded us

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<sup>56</sup> Wolfgang Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 74, 76.

<sup>57</sup> In Kierkegaard’s words, “Christ does not speak about recognizing one’s neighbor but about being a neighbor oneself, about proving oneself to be a neighbor, something the Samaritan showed by his compassion.” Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 38.

<sup>58</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Toward a Theology of Liberation” (July 1968), trans. Alfred T. Hennelly, in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, ed. Alfred T. Hennelly (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 62–76, at 74.

<sup>59</sup> Inasmuch as *Catholic* inspiration presumes, even as it transcends *catholic* aims and ideals, other Jesuit institutions may likewise become *loci* for formal-existential discernment. In the words of Fr. Ignacio Ellacuría, “a Christian university must take into account the Gospel preference for the poor” (cited in Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, “The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education,” *The Santa Clara Lectures* 7, no. 1, Oct. 6, 2000, p. 7, <https://www.scu.edu/media/ignatian-center/santa-clara-lecture/Peter-Hans-Kolvenbach-S.J.--%C3%A2%C2%80%C2%9CThe-Service-of-Faith-and-the-Promotion-of-Justice-in-American-Jesuit-Higher-Education-%C3%A2%C2%80%C2%9D.pdf>). As Fr. Ellacuría reminds us, such a preference must be lived. The deaths of the Jesuits and their companions are no small part of what makes the José Simeón Cañas Central American University (UCA El Salvador) truly “Jesuit”: the story of the UCA is inseparable from theirs. It is, after all, *fides*—a living faith—and not mere academic theology that, in Anselm’s words, is *quaerens intellectum*.

at JRS’s founding, “God is *calling* us” through the refugees.<sup>60</sup> The command of neighbor-love in the First Week thus becomes love’s command in succeeding Weeks: “Go and do likewise!” And again, the analogy holds; for the stories of our refugee incentive staff, themselves refugees, attest eloquently to their vocational commitments where faith runs deep.

Muslims, Buddhists, Christians of other denominations—theirs too is often, though they may speak of it in other terms, a history of grace binding us in a solidarity transcending merely professional commitments.

Collaboration in mission, from the perspective of Ignatian spirituality, is thus always already an implicit response to grace as together we pass over to the world of refugees. “Co-responsibility” and “participative decision-making” invite us to a deeper sharing of lives—what I called earlier, a living interfaith dialogue.<sup>61</sup> Our accompaniment weaves a story of stories as I listen to the testimony of Mama K. So too prayer, respecting our particular traditions, binds us in mission as we discern personally and corporately how we live the *magis*.<sup>62</sup> Our explicit pastoral commitments—for example, offering masses in Kakuma/Kalobeyei—become a haven for all we do, a graced solidarity with those we serve.

In this way, we may say in conclusion, JRS becomes a privileged path of living the Exercises, so that the specific mission of JRS in accompaniment, service, and advocacy remains an integral expression of the Society of Jesus’s mission—our “option for the poor” where “the poor” includes all victims of systemic deprivation.<sup>63</sup> JRS is thus incorporated

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*Collaboration in mission, from the perspective of Ignatian spirituality, is thus always already an implicit response to grace as together we pass over to the world of refugees.*

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<sup>60</sup> Arrupe, “The Society and the Refugee Problem,” 321; italics mine.

<sup>61</sup> Governance in JRS must thus attend not only to effective strategic planning but also to fostering a deeper, vocational solidarity through a discernment of discernments: what, we must ask, is God inviting us as JRS, singly and collectively, to do?

<sup>62</sup> While the Ignatian Exercises are Christocentric, the practice of discernment may draw not only upon the essentialist ethics of the First Week but also on the formal, existential ethics of the Second Week—for example, in the compassionate response of Muslims or Buddhists, inspired by the stories, tropes, and symbols of their traditions.

<sup>63</sup> See GC 34, d. 4; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Doc-*

into the Society’s mission to “pass over” to the world of the refugee—an apostolic imperative or “preference” linking the mission of JRS to other Jesuit apostolates, universities, research centers, and parishes.<sup>64</sup> With our companions in mission, we must then collaborate “within the Ignatian spirit,” discerning our place in a world of displacement.<sup>65</sup>

## V. Visions and Revisions: Social Reconciliation

**A**s argued above, discernment is never finished once and for all. Ignatius’s colloquy gives rise to new emphases, and one of the most salient to emerge in recent general congregations is that of social reconciliation.<sup>66</sup> In JRS, accordingly, we speak

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*uments of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg, SJ (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 2009), 298–316, [https://jesuitportal.bc.edu/research/documents/1975\\_decree4gc32/](https://jesuitportal.bc.edu/research/documents/1975_decree4gc32/).

<sup>64</sup> See The Charter of the Jesuit Refugee Service, 1, 11: “The mission of the Jesuit Refugee Service is intimately connected with the mission of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), namely to serve faith and promote the justice of God’s Kingdom, in dialogue with cultures and religions. . . . Jesuit Refugee Service is a work of the Society of Jesus, namely, a work whereby the Society carries out its mission (*Constitutions* 622, 623; hereafter *Const.*), through which it manifests Ignatian values and for which in various ways assumes ultimate responsibility” (pp. 1, 3). Integrating JRS’s specific mission of accompaniment, service, and advocacy with that of other Jesuit institutions—for example, universities, theologates, and research centers—presumes ongoing, collaborative discernment and institutional imagination on the part of Jesuit provincials and directors of JRS. The role of JRS in Jesuit formation remains especially critical.

<sup>65</sup> In November of 2019, “Pope Francis met a group of 48 Jesuits from Southeast Asia during his apostolic visit to Thailand and Japan,” whom he addressed: “For the Jesuits, our work with refugees has become a real ‘theological place.’ That’s how I see it, a theological place. Pedro Arrupe right here in Thailand in his last speech reaffirmed the importance of this mission.” See “Our Little Path: Pope Francis with the Jesuits in Thailand and Japan,” *La Civiltà Cattolica*, published December 5, 2019, last updated April 27, 2021, <https://www.laciviltacattolica.com/our-little-path-pope-francis-with-the-jesuits-in-thailand-and-japan/>.

<sup>66</sup> See GC 36, d. 1; “Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice,” *Documents of General Congregation 36 of the Society of Jesus*, 1/14–8/21, [https://jesuits.eu/images/docs/GC\\_36\\_Documents.pdf](https://jesuits.eu/images/docs/GC_36_Documents.pdf); GC 35, d. 3, n. 56–61; “Call to Establish Right Relationships: A Mission of Reconciliation,” *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, 746–48.



of reconciliation as a constitutive dimension of our mission of accompaniment, service, and advocacy.<sup>67</sup> And here too, our typology of mission comes into play. Take for instance the question of forgiveness. Is it, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu says, necessary for political reconciliation?<sup>68</sup> And if so, does forgiveness fall under the rubric of political expediency? Or does the politics of reconciliation turn on distinctive religious beliefs—for example, a duty to forgive in imitation of Jesus? Does creed, then, trump a victim's moral right to forgive—or to withhold forgiveness? Consider the following responses from our heuristic perspectives of secularist, sacred, and Catholic/catholic.

A secularist perspective would parse reconciliation primarily in political/legal/juridical and ethical terms. For the secularist, religious beliefs, tropes, and symbols are confined to the private realm, and public reconciliation in transitional justice turns on redeeming legal and moral rights. Reconciliation, accordingly, looks to social mechanisms of restoring a rights-based rule of law. Moreover, such mechanisms must allow for both general redress of systemic injustices and specific redress of victims. Regarding the latter, victims must be named and perpetrators held accountable. In such a secularist reading, forgiving the perpetrator can at best be supererogatory—laudable, perhaps, or even politically expedient but neither morally nor legally required. In other words, there is no duty to forgive. Indeed, some offenses may be so grave that they cannot be forgiven.

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<sup>67</sup> See Jesuit Refugee Service, "Our Programmes [sic] Priorities and Goals," *Strategic Framework: 2019–2023*, [https://jrs.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/JRS-Strategic-Framework\\_English-1.pdf](https://jrs.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/JRS-Strategic-Framework_English-1.pdf): "Promotion of reconciliation, understood as 'recreating right relationships' among JRS teams, among the forcibly displaced we serve, and between them and their host communities. . . . Provision of quality individual, family and community-based services to reduce suffering and improve mental health and psychosocial well-being. . . . Delivery of education from early childhood to adult learning, with a special focus on holistic, inclusive education and livelihoods programmes that foster agency, impart valuable skills, and nurture hope. . . . Improvement of practices, policies and legislation to ensure the respect and fulfilment of the rights of forcibly displaced persons, to provide needed protection, and to promote the common good."

<sup>68</sup> Desmond M. Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (London: Rider, 1999).

Conversely, for many Christian apologists, reconciliation begins with forgiveness. Here, the religious register, inspired by the example and command of Jesus, predominates in talk of political forgiveness. Of course, one need not be Christian to forgive; but the emphasis often falls on a Christian's obligation to forgive. Indeed, in some sectarian readings Christians fail in their most fundamental religious obligations to the degree they fail to forgive, such that the victim's legal/ethical right to forgive or to withhold forgiveness is subordinated to the Christian's duty to forgive. For some apologists, forgiveness thus becomes the sole alternative to vengeance. Forgiveness becomes part of the public, moral script.<sup>69</sup>

If then the secularist denies or minimizes religion's public role in transitional justice, the sectarian risks further burdening or re-victimizing the victim by imposing a religious burden of forgiveness. Here again, JRS's practice offers a *via media*. For the registers of social reconciliation are distinct, but not separate. To explore this alternative, let us briefly consider the implications of Ignatius's criteria of discernment adumbrated above.<sup>70</sup>

As we saw in our discussion of the apostolic criteria invoked by Fr. Arrupe in founding JRS, the Ignatian spiritual heritage calls us to discern: What is "the greater universal good"? And our discernment is further specified as we ask: (a) Who are the most vulnerable—that is, the systemically deprived who are neglected or inadequately served? (b) How can we best serve them here and now, given our personnel and resources? And (c), how can we best redress the systemic inequities that caused and perpetuate their suffering?

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<sup>69</sup> See Thomas Brudholm, "On the Advocacy of Forgiveness after Mass Atrocities," in *The Religious in Responses to Mass Atrocity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Thomas Brudholm (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 124–56; Katharina von Kellenbach, *The Mark of Cain: Guilt and Denial in the Post-War Lives of Nazi Perpetrators* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>70</sup> What I offer here is a sketch of what reconciliation might entail for JRS in our diverse ministries of accompaniment, service, and advocacy. As such, I do not intend these remarks to be prescriptive.

Now, discernment is no less at play here. Indeed, social reconciliation is less an event than a complex process working variations on these very questions. For social reconciliation entails recognition of the nature and scope of what divides us. Re-conciliation, after all, implies an agreed interpretation of the wrong suffered. Atrocity is only perpetuated if we re-describe genocide, torture, or rape as mere collateral damage in wartime. We must remember aright. So it is that truth commissions, war crimes tribunals, the testimony of international and indigenous NGOs, and indigenous modes of reconciliation provide a narrative documentation of rights abuses—the rupture, estrangement, and social anomie—apart from which talk of re-conciliation serves no practical purpose or result.<sup>71</sup> We must have words to speak of rape and torture. Here, rights recall the horror of the Shoah, the “barbarous acts” that, says the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “outraged the conscience of [hu] mankind.”

We must, then, discern—naming the most vulnerable. The rhetoric of dignity and rights in Catholic social teaching lets us come to see the refugee not as, in Hannah Arendt’s words, a “frightening symbol of difference as such,” but, as argued above, as a sister or brother stamped with the mark of affliction.<sup>72</sup> It is here we must begin. For the very appellation “refugee” used in refugee status determination turns on the finding that he or she has suffered fundamental rights’ violations. Ancillary rights, for example, of nonrefoulement, derive from the manifold injustices wrought by forced displacement itself.

Specific redress follows suit: How do we best serve victims of forced displacement, rape, and torture? If human rights become the lingua franca of testimony—letting us get the memory right—then

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<sup>71</sup> See Patricia B. Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Transitional Justice and the Challenge of Truth Commissions*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011); *Burying the Past; Making Peace and Doing Justice after Civil Conflict*, ed. Nigel Biggar (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003).

<sup>72</sup> Hannah Arendt, “The Perplexities of the Rights of Man,” in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966), 290, 295, 297, 299, 301; Weil, “Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies,” 115.

the duties correlative to human rights— forbearance, provision, and protection— bind us here and now, such that we must “take the victim’s side.” The claims of the Somali mothers to specific redress, for example, to potable water, adequate nutrition, and care for their children, become morally exigent. Such claims are not favors done

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*Indeed, Ignatian discernment ensures that reconciliation will run through our mission of accompaniment, service, and advocacy, rather than being merely added as a novel ministry.*

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to the unfortunate but what rights theorist Henry Shue calls “the morality of depths.”<sup>73</sup>

And the morality of depths demands institutional or systemic redress. Reconciliation, informed by Catholic social teaching and Ignatian

discernment, thus requires not only recognition of the nature and scope of injustice suffered—that is, the interlocking (intersectional) modes of deprivation, and specific redress of such victims as the Somali mothers—but also systemic redress of the causes of victimization—for example, the politics of encampment. Indeed, the Kakuma refugee camp is a microcosm of the plight of refugees in “protracted refugee situations” that conspire to violate the very rights that such camps were instituted to protect.

In Kakuma/Kalobeyei, enjoying the substance of such rights as basic security and subsistence, including nutrition and health care, entails severely restricting liberties of effective participation and employment and freedom of movement. And yet exercising such liberties is critical to asserting and enforcing basic claim-rights. In Catholic social teaching, such basic rights to subsistence, security, and civil liberties are interdependent, such that sacrificing any basic right imperils all.<sup>74</sup> Such trade-offs, however, are inherent in protracted refugee situations like Kakuma where security and subsistence depend upon donors’ good will and the vagaries of states’ strategic interests. Here, refugees become “beneficiaries,” vulnerable not

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<sup>73</sup> See Henry Shue, *Basic Rights: Subsistence, Affluence, and US Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 18.

<sup>74</sup> Shue, *Basic Rights*, 5–87.

only to chronic shortfalls in humanitarian funding but also to what Pope Francis calls the "globalization of indifference." Kenya's recent threat to close Kakuma/Kalobeyei and the Dadaab refugee camp only illustrates the refugees' extreme vulnerability, where the threat of displacement persists in the very places of asylum. On this note, one of the Somali mothers, with a child suffering from severe cerebral palsy, asked: "How can I carry my child to Somalia?"

In this section, I've argued that questions posed by Catholic social teaching and Ignatian discernment in JRS—recognizing the most vulnerable, taking the victim's side, and seeking systemic redress of victimization—are no less germane to our ministry of reconciliation. Indeed, Ignatian discernment ensures that reconciliation will run through our mission of accompaniment, service, and advocacy rather than being merely added as a novel ministry. And just as the grammar of Ignatian spirituality distinguishes essentialist (First Week) and formal-existential (Second Week) discernments, so may we distinguish differing dimensions of social reconciliation.

Reconciliation, we may say, plays out in differing registers. For the ethical demands of integrating justice and peace are seldom fully realized in the legal/judicial order. And always there is a surplus of religious meaning, as in forgiveness.<sup>75</sup> Here, forgiveness falls under the rubric of specific redress, where taking the victims' side presumes that victims have been recognized and often too that perpetrators have been identified. From this perspective, victims are owed repentance and, where possible, restitution, as well as reparation by perpetrators. Moreover, victims' forgiveness is framed by the broader question of systemic redress—for example, the critique of supremacist narratives and ethnic, racial, and gender bias that led to victimization. But the question remains as to whether forgiveness constitutes a matter of political expediency, a moral duty, or a religious obligation.

For the secularist, as noted above, forgiveness may be politically expedient in processes of transitional justice. But the legal/judicial emphasis upon human rights and the bracketing of religious discourse

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<sup>75</sup> See William O'Neill, "Imagining Otherwise: The Ethics of Social Reconciliation," in *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 22 (Fall 2002): 183–99.

would uphold the victim's right either to forgive or not to forgive. Forgiveness, that is, may be morally supererogatory but never demanded: the victim has no duty to forgive and the perpetrator has no right to be forgiven. The sectarian, conversely, may be tempted to conflate reconciliation and forgiveness, so that a Christian, for instance, bears a religious duty to forgive.

Now, what might our Catholic/catholic type say? Here, theologians differ, and I will merely defend the perspective that I believe best suits JRS and what I have said thus far of discernment. For the legal/political, ethical, and religious registers are distinct but not separate. With the secularist, and in light of Catholic social teaching, we would recognize the victim's ethical right to forgive or withhold forgiveness. Here, the perpetrator has no moral claim against his or her victim, since forgiveness is morally gratuitous and thus cannot be exacted: it is, from a moral point of view, supererogatory. But just so, it may also figure as Christian (religious) duty.<sup>76</sup> What is morally supererogatory may thus be entailed by Christian love—a love freely given but uniquely binding.<sup>77</sup> Where moral duties, as we saw, are generalized and bind universally, such religious duties correspond to God's personal call, at once invitation and command—what Rahner distinguished as formal-existential ethics. In the Ignatian tradition, forgiveness is a response to the grace of the Second Week and thus must wait on grace, and may even be the work of a life. At times, to paraphrase St. Ignatius, the desire for the desire may be enough.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Forgiveness poses further questions beyond the scope of our present inquiry. We must decide who can forgive, including whether one can forgive in the name of another; the conditions presumed for forgiveness, including whether and to what degree forgiveness entails recognition, remorse, repentance, and restitution; and what is entailed by the "enacted resolution" to forgive, including whether forgiveness implies forgetting the offense and remitting the punishment. I consider these in the third chapter of *Reimagining Human Rights*. See also Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice in Love* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 169.

<sup>77</sup> For a comparative assessment of forgiveness in different religious traditions, see Mark S. Rye et al., "Religious Perspectives on Forgiveness," in *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, ed. Michael E. McCullough, Kenneth I. Pargament, and Carl E. Thoreson (New York: Guilford, 1999), 17–40.

<sup>78</sup> *Const.* 102.

In forgiving, then, there is no suspension of ethics. The victim recognizes the nature and scope of evil suffered: radical evil is not forgotten and forgiveness does not deny or mitigate the harm—but neither does forgiveness exculpate, since the perpetrator is held guilty. Here, what changes is not the nature of the offense but the victim's attitude toward the offender. The offense is not forgotten but refigured in memory as one is progressively conformed to Christ, as in the Third and Fourth Weeks of the Exercises.<sup>79</sup> I cease to define the offender solely by her offense, just as I cease to be defined by the offense. Rather I choose, in graced freedom, to love my enemy: love is commanded, but always as love and as a personal response to Love. Conceived thus, our distinctive Christian/Catholic duty to forgive presumes the catholic moral right to forgive or withhold forgiveness, where forgiveness is both duty and grace, but grace first and duty as graced.

Distinguishing the registers of our ministry of reconciliation lets us avoid the twin perils of denying the religious import of forgiveness in secular, political discourse, and of succumbing to a sectarian conflation of reconciliation and forgiveness—a “cheap forgiveness” denying the moral legitimacy of anger and resentment after atrocity.<sup>80</sup> So, too, we must be wary of what Jacques Derrida calls the institutional “globalization [*mondialisation*] of forgiveness.”<sup>81</sup> Although the state can administer legal/judicial judgment, it cannot dispense forgiveness in the name of victims. For this reason, only conditional amnesty—not forgiveness—was justiciable in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

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<sup>79</sup> In the Third and Fourth Weeks of the Exercises, the exercitant is invited to “put on Christ” (Ro 13:14; Ga 3:27) as the Gospel story becomes ever more one's own. Memory of suffering (meditations of the Third Week) plays out against the backdrop of the Fourth Week (meditations on the Resurrection) in we might call eschatological anamnesis.

<sup>80</sup> It follows, then, that there are times when one should not forgive—for example, when the victim cannot exercise genuine freedom—emotionally, psychologically, spiritually—in forgiving. On this point, we must nurture ecclesial communities of reconciliation but never judge those who cannot at the present time forgive.

<sup>81</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Foi et Savoir, suivi de Le Siècle et le Pardon: Entretiens avec Michel Wieviorka* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), 104.

Nevertheless, states and kindred institutions like churches can apologize for their roles in perpetuating such systematic distortions as apartheid, antisemitism, and white supremacy. But while such apologies serve as promissory notes for institutional, systemic redress, they do not supplant interpersonal, specific redress. In other words, there can be no collective absolution—no legal/juridical remission of personal guilt for complicity. And yet forgiveness may function as a political balm. As Archbishop Tutu says, there is finally no future without forgiveness, since the registers are distinct but not separate. For example, in the social drama orchestrated by the TRC, perpetrators pled for forgiveness and, at times, received it. In this case, forgiveness, precisely as graced duty, played a political role. And in times of such profound social anomie, even the rule of law may depend upon it.

In JRS’s ministry of reconciliation, catholic humanitarian values are thus realized in a distinctive Catholic and Jesuit idiom, such that the communitarian rhetoric of human rights in Catholic social teaching binds us in solidarity. As the Psalmist says, “Justice and Peace shall kiss” (Ps 85:11). And our Ignatian heritage enables us to see the delicate balance of forgiveness as both right and duty.

## VI. Theological Postscript: Easter Hermeneutics

Which brings us to the central question of this essay: Is JRS still Jesuit? Fr. Arrupe, I believe, would say *yes*, for JRS’s mission of accompaniment, service, and advocacy is justified by the apostolic criteria and universal preferences of the Society’s mission. These criteria and preferences in turn motivate us to walk with the poor and the young who, in Fr. Sosa’s words, constitute “a complementary and interwoven *locus theologicus*.”<sup>82</sup> And as for Fr. Arrupe, Catholic social teaching and the heritage of Ignatian spirituality provide JRS’s interpretative repertory in discerning the *magis* here and now. JRS’s mission thus bears a Jesuit imprimatur: we remain loyal to our spiritual origins in a living, interfaith dialogue with refugees like Mama K. and in our distinctive praxis of reconciliation, which entails recognition as well as

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<sup>82</sup> Sosa, “Universal apostolic preferences of the Society of Jesus: 2019–2029,” 4.



general and specific redress, including forgiveness. Here, neighbor-love inspires our humanitarian efforts even as we recognize the love command as Love's command, binding us uniquely in deeper solidarity as we respond to the God who "is calling us through the refugees."<sup>83</sup>

And it is this latter call/command, so central to our Christian ethics, that I wish to consider briefly as we conclude. I have been serving with JRS since September 2019 and ministering in the Kakuma/Kalobeyi refugee camp, with my dedicated Sri Lankan Jesuit colleague, Fr. Lasantha De Abrew, since July 2020. These months have truly been a grace, but a hard grace, for the suffering is great and often unrelenting. Refugees have become, for many, what the theologian Gustavo Guitérrez calls "nonpersons," who have little claim upon the world.<sup>84</sup> What Hannah Arendt said years ago holds true today: the loss of home and political status is tantamount to "expulsion from humanity altogether."<sup>85</sup> And the exile, for many, is interiorized in desperation, hopelessness. Camps like Kakuma/Kalobeyi lay bare the suffering and passion of the world.

Here, what the UN Declaration affirms as our "faith" in "human dignity and rights" is put to the test. Each child, we say, is precious, endowed with innate dignity. Each is unique, irreplaceable; each worthy of respect. So we say. Yet do we truly believe that stateless children, born in the camp, are equally worthy? Certainly, such faith is belied in the vast inequalities that leave them here, often in absolute poverty and degradation. And yet, remarkably, hope survives. One of my colleagues once reminded me that we, who are privileged even in our service, cannot afford the luxury of despair. Then too, Mama K., abandoned by her husband, has not abandoned her child. Her faith and her love meet the suffering of the world with a passion that St. Paul once called a "hoping against hope" (Ro 4:18).

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<sup>83</sup> Arrupe, "The Society and the Refugee Problem," 321.

<sup>84</sup> Gustavo Guitérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History: Selected Readings* (London: SCM, 1983), 193.

<sup>85</sup> Arendt, "The Perplexities of the Rights of Man," 290, 295, 297, 299, 301.

I must say, it is a hope that I am not sure I possess. And so, I am again drawn to the great parable of the Last Judgment in Matthew (25: 31–46). Like Isaiah, it may seem that “I had toiled in vain, and for nothing, uselessly, spent my strength” (Is 49:4). Often, I must admit, I do not see beyond the hunger, thirst, exile, and illness. But Easter, finally, is about seeing—seeing the truth of Calvary. For we believe that in the silence of Calvary, God’s word of love is spoken, once and for all. Here, in Kakuma/Kalobeyei, in the crucified people, God’s beauty is revealed in the very sign of its negation: love crucified because it is love, and nothing but love. Sometimes, I see the Crucified in the crucified people; and then I see the roles reversed: I thought I was host to the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned. But all the while I was guest and, as such, the one being blessed: “whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40b). “Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt 25:34)—the heavenly banquet!

What simple faith! Yet so very hard to live. Dostovesky’s elder, Fr. Zosima, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, distinguished “love in practice” from “love in dreams.” Love in practice touches the bone and marrow of suffering; it suffers not with pity—that is love in dreams—but with compassion. And it is here that our faith in dignity and our hoping against hope are vindicated. Zosima tells us that we cannot prove the truth of our faith; but we may be, little by little, convinced by actively loving: “Try to love your neighbors actively and tirelessly.” To paraphrase Zosima, “The more you succeed in loving, the more you’ll be convinced,” for it is in the wager of love that faith and hope are born.<sup>86</sup> In the words of a refugee and friend, Charite Lobo, recalled by Fr. Lasantha:

Father, there is no need to be anxious. You fear because of uncertainties. We as refugees experienced these uncertainties from the moment we started running away from our countries. When we took the first step from our

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<sup>86</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamozov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Classics, 1990), 56.

lands, we did not know the future. Those were dark uncertain moments. We lost everything, but God saved us, so still we are living. We do not know the future, but we know that God will care for us. Even when we die, we die with God who loves and cares for us.

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