



Prophetic Witness for Universal Communion
Mission in Conflict Zones and Healing

“Prophetic Witness for Universal Communion – Mission in Conflict Zones and Healing.”

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SEDOS

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Editorial



Dear Members and Readers,

The July - August 2024 issue of the SEDOS Bulletin covers the second part of the Residential Seminar that was held at Ariccia on the theme,

“Prophetic Witness for Universal Communion: Mission in Conflict Zones and Healing”, from 6-10 May 2024. It contains primarily the psychological and spiritual approach to the theme. SEDOS had invited the Jesuit Refugee Service team (JRS) to come as it has a vast knowledge and experience in dealing with these aspects.

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international faith-based organization currently working in over 50 countries. As a global ministry of the Society of Jesus and inspired by the compassion and love of Jesus, JRS is dedicated to accompanying, serving, and advocating for refugees and forcibly displaced individuals, empowering them to heal, learn, and determine their own future. Eric Goeh-Akue, SJ, head of JRS says, “Our approach is holistic, addressing psychosocial well-being, gender responsiveness, safeguarding,

community empowerment, and environmental stewardship as key for rebuilding lives and preserving dignity. Within this framework, we prioritize four programmatic areas for our mission, emphasizing Mental Health and Psychosocial Support.”

The first presentation the JRS team gave was by Eric with Katharina on, “The Psychological Approach to Missions in Conflict Zones.” The presentation focused on reflection on psychosocial determinants of mental health in settings of conflict and the importance of the human rights approach to the mission to protect the well-being of vulnerable refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. Eric also talked about the importance of self-care and mechanisms to protect the staff’s well-being within their program.

The Second presentation was delivered by Eric with Amaya Valcarcel, on the same theme, “Prophetic Witness for Universal Communion: Mission in Conflict Zones and Healing” but from the spiritual point of view, focusing on the Spirituality of Nonviolence.

This presentation delves into the JRS’s approach, through the lens of nonviolence and spirituality, emphasizing the transformative impact of accompaniment and compassion.

According to Eric, “JRS’s nonviolent spiritual



approach in support of forcibly displaced individuals which envisages compassion, solidarity, and justice. It echoes Pope Francis' call for unity and humanity in confronting the global refugee crisis, emphasizing that it is not merely about migrants, but more especially about our shared humanity. As we work together, let us strive to dismantle walls and embrace a collective identity of "we", encompassing all of humanity."

Sheila Kinsey, FCJM, in her presentation on the theme, "The Spirituality of Nonviolence as Prophetic Witness for Universal Communion: Mission in Conflict Zones and Healing", shared her own experience and the experience of others on violence from her early childhood and how she had been motivated to work for the mission of nonviolence. She summarised her presentation in the following words, "On the spiritual journey of Integrity for Nonviolence, we are guided by our compass to God's grace and mercy. In this session we will explore the implications of our desire to be persons of integrity and to practice nonviolence in a way that is reflective of our contemplative and active stories. Our lives are to be the passionate prophetic witness to nonviolence and to engage others in nurturing and healing our precious world."

This issue also contains the experiences of the participants in the form of reports submitted by the different language groups who addressed the process of healing in conflict situations. While reflecting on their own missionary life, they were inspired and motivated to work for universal communion by becoming prophetic witnesses.

I am sure these presentations will inspire and motivate all our Members and Readers to be prophetic witness while the whole world is in the grip of various conflicts and enormous suffering. May Jesus who suffered and died for love of others, enlighten and guide us so that we can truly follow him.

John Paul Herman SVD
Director of SEDOS



Morning Prayer

Psalm 100

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his^[a];
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the LORD is good and his love endures
forever;
his faithfulness continues through all
generations.

The Word of God: Isaiah 61: 1-5.

Litany: Beatitudes of Reconciliation

Blessed are those who are willing to enter into
the process of being healed,
R./ For they will become healers.

Blessed are those who recognized their own
inner violence,
R./ For they will come to know non-violence.

Blessed are those who can forgive self,
R./ For they will become forgivers.

Blessed are those who are willing to let go of
selfishness and self-centeredness,
R./ For they will become a healing presence.

Blessed are those who listen with compassion,
R./ For they will become compassionate.

Blessed are those who are willing to enter into
conflicts,
R./ For they will find resolutions.

Blessed are those who know their
interdependence with all of creation,

R./ For they will become unifiers.

Blessed are those who live a contemplative life
stance,
R./ For they will find God in all things.

Blessed are those who strive to live these
beatitudes,
R./ For they will become reconcilers.

(Sisters of St. Joseph, Concordia, Kansas (USA))
[Litany: Beatitudes of Reconciliation](http://ccvichapel.org)
 [\(ccvichapel.org\)](http://ccvichapel.org)

Intercessions

- We pray for an end to all forms of violence:
harsh words, racial hatred, structural
injustice, weapons of war, cold indifference...
That our homes, nations and all countries of
the world be communities of PEACE.
(Moment of silence)

O Lord, hear our prayer, O Lord hear our
prayer. Come and listen to us.

- For political and religious leaders: that they
commit themselves to overcome SYSTEMIC
INJUSTICE through promoting education for
all and at all levels of society; through
appropriate housing, through creating equal
opportunities for all in matters of
employment and that they work for the
abolition of nuclear weapons. (Moment of
silence)

O Lord, hear our prayer, O Lord hear our
prayer. Come and listen to us.

- For SOLIDARITY in our global human
family. That we may work together to protect
the most vulnerable and the who suffer most
from conflicts and war, from the
consequences of climate change. (Moment of
silence)

O Lord, hear our prayer, O Lord hear our
prayer. Come and listen to us.

- For Pope Francis. That we may heed and respond his appeal for evangelical nonviolence in the Church, in our congregations and institutes, in civil society. (Moment of silence).

O Lord, hear our prayer, O Lord hear our prayer. Come and listen to us.

- For all religious, for priests and for bishops who have failed to make known Jesus' message of non-violence and of unconditional respect and love for every human person, friend and enemy alike. We pray that God's Spirit of wisdom, audacity, resilience may enkindle their hearts and our hearts with divine love, and renew our commitment to walk in Jesus' footsteps and continue Jesus' ministry of healing. (Moment of silence)

O Lord, hear our prayer, O Lord hear our prayer. Come and listen to us.

- For our congregations and institutes that we may welcome and celebrate the variety of Christ's images among us and that we may act together to face all forms of violence. (Moment of silence).

O Lord, hear our prayer, O Lord hear our prayer. Come and listen to us.



- For a growing and increasing appreciation of the EUCHARIST as the sacrament of non-violence, as the pledge of universal communion, as commitment to an evangelical way of life where the greatest is the smallest, where to serve is to reign and where to give one's life with love and out of love is to find it. (Moment of silence).

O Lord, hear our prayer, O Lord hear our prayer. Come and listen to us.

OUR FATHER.

Concluding prayer

O God, Lover of Life, you continue to create and give life to this beautiful world, of such a wide and rich diversity. Send your SPIRIT OF UNITY in our midst, that diversity may not bring division, strive nor hatred. May your risen Son, your Servant of nonviolent love, fill our hearts and minds with HIS PEACE. We ask you this in his name, who lives for ever and ever. Amen.

Song of Saint Francis.

1. Make me a channel of your Peace:
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
Where there is injury, your healing power,
And where there's doubt, true faith in you.
2. Make me a channel of your peace:
Where there's despair in life, let me
Bring hope;
Where there is darkness, only light,
And where there's sadness, ever joy.
3. O, Spirit, grant that I may never seek:
So much to be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love with all my
soul.
4. Make me a channel of your Peace:
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
In giving to all that we receive,
And in dying that we're born to eternal
life.

Embracing Humanity

The Mental Health and Psychosocial support of Jesuit Refugee Service

1. Introduction

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international faith-based organization operating in over 50 countries. As a global ministry of the Society of Jesus, inspired by the compassion and love of Jesus for the poor and excluded, JRS is dedicated to accompanying, serving, and

refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers. The session will cover World Health Organization statistics and key facts regarding mental health difficulties in conflict settings, the main values and principles of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in humanitarian contexts—including “do no harm,” building on community strengths, and prevention strategies to reduce mental health risks. We will also discuss the importance of self-care and mechanisms to protect staff well-being within our programming.



2. Jesuit Refugee Service Mission and Priorities

2.1 A Holistic Service: *Cura Personalis*

JRS was founded on November 14, 1980, by Fr. Pedro Arrupe, Superior General of the Jesuits, in response to the plight of

advocating for refugees and forcibly displaced individuals, empowering them to heal, learn, and determine their own futures. Our holistic approach addresses psychosocial well-being, gender responsiveness, safeguarding, community empowerment, and environmental stewardship, all essential for rebuilding lives and preserving dignity. Within this framework, we give a strong emphasis on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support.

In this perspective, “The Psychological Approach to Missions in Conflict Zones” will reflect on the psychosocial determinants of mental health in conflict settings and the importance of a human rights approach in protecting the well-being of vulnerable

Vietnamese refugees. Fleeing their war-ravaged homeland, hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese faced threats of pirates, storms, dehydration, and hunger while crossing the South China Sea. Many did not survive, and those who did often found themselves in camps awaiting resettlement. Moved by compassion, Fr. Arrupe affirmed that this as “a challenge to the Society we cannot ignore” and firmly believed that love for God must lead to concrete acts of love and justice for the marginalized. Thus, he initiated a thorough Ignatian discernment involving the universal Society, with a priority on “helping souls” and a commitment to serve wherever needed for the greater service of God. Consultation with the

United Nations and other experts was also part of this discernment process to ensure an appropriate response.

Through this discernment JRS founder acknowledged the Society response should not be *“only material: in a special way, the Society is being called to render a service that is human, pedagogical and spiritual,”* reflecting the Jesuit tradition of education and care for the whole person. Indeed, he strongly stated, *“We are not concerned just with the survival of refugees, but with their full development. Our apostolate should therefore aim at improving the quality of refugee work already being done rather than adding our name to the list of existing agencies.”* This call reflects the Ignatian characteristic of *Cura Personalis*, or care for the whole person, by emphasizing individualized attention, the importance of considering all facets of a person's life and needs, and respect for the dignity and well-being of each individual.

2.2 A ministry of Compassion and Healing

Over the decades, JRS expanded its mission, responding to civil strife in Central and Latin America, Southeastern Europe, and Africa. Today, JRS operates in 58 countries, serving over one and a half million refugees and other forcibly displaced persons in conflict zones, refugee camps, cities, and detention centers. Our team includes approximately 11,500 collaborators from various nations, fostering an inclusive environment that welcomes individuals from diverse cultural, religious, and secular backgrounds.

In all these diverse contexts, JRS is dedicated to accompanying, serving, and advocating for refugees and forcibly displaced individuals. Our mission is to help them heal, learn, and shape their own futures. By accompanying individuals on their journeys, JRS empowers them to recover from past traumas, acquire new skills, and reclaim control over their lives. Through our advocacy efforts, JRS amplifies the voices of the marginalized and challenges systems of oppression and exclusion.

2.2.1 Our Mission approach

We can identify three core elements of our mission with forcibly displaced individuals:

“discernment, accompaniment, and empowerment.”

a) Discernment: Guiding JRS in both spiritual and practical matters, discernment shapes decisions on whom to serve and how. This encompasses the practice of communal discernment (Discerning Together) to identify:

- **Whom do we accompany:** Who are the most vulnerable and excluded persons in our midst, such as victims of rights violations, neglected by others, or not adequately served?
- **How can we best serve them,** given our resources and personnel? Are there specific needs we are especially well-suited to address, considering our history, material, and personnel resources?
- **Where can we most effectively intervene,** considering longer-term consequences, novel contributions, and the lack of services catered to by other organizations?
- **How can we redress the systemic causes** of victimization in our mission of advocating for the forcibly displaced?

Accordingly, JRS prioritizes situations of great need, places where a more universal good may be achieved, needs that others are not attending to, and situations where it can make a special contribution because of its expertise or established partnerships.

b) Accompaniment: JRS fosters a sense of belonging and dignity for all through accompanying and embracing individuals with open arms and hearts. Rooted in compassion, accompaniment goes beyond mere service delivery to offer companionship, active listening, and solidarity, addressing individuals' personal needs and concerns. It acknowledges the innate dignity of the most vulnerable and excluded persons in our midst, echoing the fundamental belief in divine presence on earth and expressing solidarity and compassion. Sometimes, all we can do is be present, sharing in the joys and sorrows of everyday life together. As strikingly said by Michael Schöpf SJ, the International director of JRS, *“For me, accompaniment is ultimately a form of surrender. You enter into a relationship with a*

person, you become friends and share in some aspects of their life. It could be a detainee who is there for many months, sometimes years, or a migrant who lives destitute under a bridge, with nothing to eat, and who comes to see you once a week. You try to help in a very practical way. But sometimes these situations are so bare – there is so little you can do – that all you can do is to be present.” Furthermore, as share our JRS UK collaborators, sometimes, the unspeakably difficult experiences of refugees may lead us to think that accompaniment is only about trying to mitigate their hardship, frustration, and sadness. But there is much more to accompaniment than this. It is also about joy, about enjoying ordinary moments of everyday life together, laughing and smiling. In such seemingly mundane moments, life is renewed.

c) Empowerment: JRS equips individuals with the tools and resources they need to rebuild their lives and shape their own futures, restoring their self-worth and hope for the future. Providing holistic support, JRS addresses the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of refugees and forcibly displaced individuals. Recognizing the central role of faith for many forcibly displaced individuals, JRS acknowledges it as a source of hope to cope with the trauma of war, loss, suffering, and displacement. Encouraging individuals to share their faith experiences fosters belief, consolation, resilience, and life-giving values in the empowerment and healing process.

2.2.2 Care for Collaborators

Within the Society of Jesus, including JRS, there is a growing awareness of our identity as collaborators in a mission where we serve rather than own. Collaboration defines our identity, and we recognize that we are all collaborators, refraining from perceiving others as mere recipients of our mission but as partners in sharing its Ignatian heritage and spirituality. This renewed understanding of our collaborative identity leads us to accept and appreciate the diverse individuals who enrich the common mission, presenting us with the task of discerning together how to integrate them into the apostolates through which the universal body contributes to the Lord’s mission.

Such collaboration emphasizes mutual accompaniment, particularly crucial for both the people served and JRS staff, especially in conflict zones where unique challenges arise. Ensuring the well-being of our staff is imperative, manifesting in practical commitments:

- Supporting overall staff well-being, facilitating a healthy work-life balance, and ensuring their safety and security worldwide through appropriate training and protocols, including evacuation procedures when necessary.
- Promoting the mental, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual health of JRS staff.
- Cultivating a healthy and supportive work environment for our staff.
- Fostering resilience among staff to sustain motivation, productivity, and fulfillment in their work and relationships. Psychological resilience is crucial, enabling individuals to adapt to stress and adversity, contributing positively to their community. We believe that ensuring staff feel safe, cared for, and supported enhances their well-being and resilience.
- Additionally, integrating long-term support and follow-up in crisis response strategies remains essential.

2.3. Mission Programmatic Areas

JRS’s approach to supporting victims of forced displacement is comprehensive, encompassing aspects such as psychosocial well-being, gender responsiveness, safeguarding, community empowerment, and environmental stewardship as keys for rebuilding lives and preserving dignity. Within this framework, we prioritize four programmatic areas for our mission: Reconciliation, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, Education and Livelihood, and Advocacy.

3. The Psychological Approach to Missions in Conflict Zones: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Forced Displacement Settings

3.1. Understanding MHPSS Basics

Mental health is a state of psychological well-being that extends beyond merely the absence

of mental disorders. It encompasses the realization of one’s potential, the ability to cope with normal stresses of life, productive and fruitful work, and the capacity to contribute to the community. This holistic view underscores that mental health is a fundamental part of overall health; indeed, there is no health without mental health. It is influenced by a variety of factors, including socioeconomic, biological, and environmental elements.

3.2. The impact of Forced Displacement: Statistics and Key facts

Forced displacement, especially in conflict zones, takes a heavy toll on mental health. Most people affected by emergencies undergo distress, including feelings of anxiety, sadness, and hopelessness. Over time, these normal responses can escalate into severe mental health issues, with approximately 22% of displaced individuals experiencing mental health conditions like depression, PTSD, and anxiety. The impact of forced displacement is profound, with higher rates of mental health difficulties observed among those who have experienced conflict and displacement compared to host populations. Both past traumatic experiences and ongoing daily stressors contribute to these challenges, highlighting the importance of addressing psychosocial needs to prevent deterioration of mental health.

Psychosocial support plays a crucial role in responding to and preventing daily stressors, while specialized interventions target specific diagnoses. Integrating mental health and psychosocial support into programming can yield numerous benefits, including improved outcomes, decreased risk factors, and enhanced social cohesion among displaced communities. In essence, the statistics and information underscore the urgent need for comprehensive mental health and psychosocial support interventions in humanitarian responses to effectively address the complex mental health challenges faced by displaced populations.

3.3. Navigating Common Acute Reactions to Distressing Experiences

In the aftermath of distressing events, individuals manifest a spectrum of physical, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional responses.

While many individuals improve over time if their basic needs are met and they receive social support, a significant number (approximately 22%, as per DSM-5) develop severe mental health disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and dementia.

Below is a list of common acute reactions to Distressing Experiences:

Physical	Behavioral
- Fatigue	- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Headaches	- Changes in eating habits
- Muscle tension	- Changes in other daily habits
- Shakiness/weakness	- Decreased personal hygiene
- Dizziness	- Withdrawing from others
- Increased heart rate	- Dependence on others
- Elevated blood pressure	
- Rapid breathing	

Cognitive	Emotional
- Changes in sleeping patterns	- Difficulty concentrating
- Changes in eating habits	- difficulty making decisions
- Changes in other daily habits	- Memory disturbances
- Decreased personal hygiene	- Flashbacks
- Withdrawing from others	- A false sense of reality
- Dependence on others.	- Amnesia
	- Worrying about an event.

It is important to acknowledge that distressing experiences can profoundly influence spiritual beliefs, potentially leading to one more multiple reaction including:

- Anger at God or a Creator
- Blaming a spiritual entity for the crisis or loss
- Changes in religious or spiritual faith
- Crisis in faith
- Seeking answers or support from faith
- Altered sense of self or inner power
- Loss of meaning

In summary, distressing experiences can elicit a broad spectrum of acute reactions across physical, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional domains. Furthermore, traumatic events can deeply influence spiritual beliefs, precipitating various spiritual reactions. Understanding these reactions, including those influenced by spiritual beliefs, is crucial for providing effective support.

However, **solely adopting a biomedical perspective** when analyzing the consequences of forced displacement may oversimplify the issue and risk undermining individuals' identities and communities. Mental health challenges among displaced populations are influenced by **a multitude of complex factors**, including pre-existing conditions such as extreme poverty, political oppression, severe mental health disorders, and alcohol abuse, as well as emergency-induced problems like family separation, disruption of social networks, increased gender-based violence, and humanitarian aid-induced issues such as the undermining of community structures and anxiety stemming from uncertainty about food distribution and asylum processes. Additionally, both past traumatic experiences and ongoing

daily stressors significantly shape mental health outcomes, with daily stressors posing chronic threats to psychological well-being and potentially diminishing individuals' coping capacities over time.

3.4. Adhering to the Do No Harm Principle

Humanitarian interventions must adhere to the “do no harm” principle, avoiding unnecessary harm even in efforts intended to support affected populations. Moreover, poor practices, such as psychological debriefing that forces individuals to discuss their experiences immediately after a distressing event, can be detrimental. Additionally, needs assessments must avoid overly intrusive questions that may re-traumatize individuals.

Examples of bad practices:

- Psychological debriefing, which involves forcing people to speak about their experiences right after a distressing event, with the misconception that verbal expression inherently helps.
- Similarly, when conducting needs assessments, it is crucial to avoid including sensitive questions such as “*Please tell us about your story,*” “*Why did you leave your country?*” and



“What happened to you and your family?”

A 15-year-old girl who participated in one-on-one counseling sessions with a psychologist expressed her discomfort with sensitive questions, stating, *“To be honest, I really don’t like these kinds of sessions because they ask about sensitive topics related to when bad things happened to me.”*

3.5 Integration of MHPSS into Programming

Effective MHPSS necessitates a collaborative approach across all relief response sectors. Integrating MHPSS considerations into education, livelihoods, and other sectors cultivates resilience and enhances well-being among affected populations.

This integration yields various **benefits**, including enhanced cross-sectoral outcomes, diminished risk factors for individuals and communities, bolstered staff resilience and retention, destigmatization of help-seeking behaviors, and heightened social cohesion and connectedness within displaced communities.

3.6 Examples of Integrating MHPSS

In our mission of protection and healing programming, various initiatives demonstrate the integration of MHPSS principles. From providing MHPSS training for teachers to implementing Psychological First Aid (PFA) for all staff, these efforts address the psychosocial needs of individuals and communities, fostering environments conducive to healing and resilience.

- **Livelihoods:** Integrated MHPSS assists in addressing and managing stressors, building problem-solving skills, and strengthening coping mechanisms, along with enhancing livelihood-related soft skills such as teamwork, confidence building, communication, and conflict resolution.
- **MHPSS training for teachers:** Enhances teachers' ability to create supportive environments for children to learn and thrive, while also promoting self-care, particularly as teachers often hail from affected communities. This can improve outcomes for both teachers and students.

- **Integration of MHPSS, such as Social Emotional Learning (SEL):** Aimed at improving outcomes for student learning and development.
- **Training all staff on PFA:** Ensures that everyone is equipped with appropriate and supportive responses to individuals experiencing distress.
- **HR-related:** Providing PFA for staff care aids in helping staff cope with daily stressors and crisis events, fostering a supportive work environment that promotes staff retention.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Jesuit Refugee Service is deeply committed to compassion, healing and justice. Through collaborative efforts, we accompany, serve, and advocate for refugees and forcibly displaced individuals worldwide. Central to our mission is the recognition of the essential role of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in addressing the complex challenges faced by displaced populations. By understanding the nuances of MHPSS, upholding ethical principles, and integrating support mechanisms into programming, we can effectively promote well-being and resilience in conflict zones.

Amidst the challenges we encounter in our mission, it is vital to prioritize self-care and support within our teams. Just as we extend care to others, we must also nurture ourselves and each other. By practicing self-care daily and fostering a culture of mutual support, we ensure that we can continue our mission with strength and compassion.

Furthermore, as we navigate these challenges, it is essential to reflect on our purpose. Why do we embark on this journey? Why do we stand in solidarity with forcibly displaced people? Our strength emanates from turning to the crucified and risen Christ, who leads us to the crucified of this world and guides us in this mission of healing, justice, and hope. As Fr. Pedro Arrupe aptly expressed when founding JRS, *“God is calling us through these helpless people. We should consider the chance of being able to assist them a privilege that will, in turn, bring great blessings to ourselves...”*

JRS Spirituality of Nonviolence

Reconciliation in Response to the Global Humanitarian Crisis

1. Introduction

Contemplating the world through God's eyes, we see conflict and violence as major drivers of forced displacement. In most places where JRS operates, this reality is prevalent, marked by ethnic and religious tensions, post-conflict resentment, and outright



conflict. Relationships are torn apart by suspicion, hatred, and violence, posing a constant challenge to eradicate these hostilities.

JRS, as a global apostolate of the Society of Jesus, responds with a spirituality of non-violence grounded in reconciliation. Rooted in Jesus' teachings, Catholic Social Teaching, Ignatian Spirituality, and shared universal values, reconciliation is central to JRS's mission. We strive to rebuild just relationships with God, self, others, and creation, addressing the wounds caused by conflict.

As a backdrop to our spirituality of non-violence, Reconciliation is our path to creating right relationships among refugees, between refugees and host communities, and among our own teams. Through this, we aim to resolve conflicts peacefully and heal from the trauma of violence, fostering a culture of peace and understanding. Our efforts include:

- Accompanying those served towards right relationships with a focus on bridge-building and psychosocial support.
- Empowering individuals and communities to be agents of change through hospitality, education in peace-building, and peaceful coexistence.
- Advocating for restorative justice by identifying the roots of violence and influencing social and political change to prevent structural violence.

In this session, after a broad presentation of the global humanitarian crisis and its underlying causes, we will explore JRS's non-violence spiritual approach centered on reconciliation, and how it promotes peace and builds communities of hope among people served.

2. The global forced displacement crisis

2.1 Who is a refugee?

The 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention relating to the Status of Refugees is the most widely accepted legal instrument for the protection of refugees. Article 1 of the 1951 Convention defines a refugee as a person who *"owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themselves] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of [their] former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."* The international definition of a "refugee" as outlined in the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol is crucial but limited, primarily focusing on individual persecution and excluding broader displacement causes. Notably, the convention does not cover internally displaced persons (IDPs), i.e. civilians who face similar violence as refugees but remain within their own countries. When these countries fail to protect IDPs, the international community must step in. Although international law does not specifically protect IDPs, policies have evolved to address their needs. This exclusion highlights the need for a more inclusive framework.

Even at the time this definition was issued, with its strong focus on an individualized risk of harm, it was not globally received as a satisfactory response to the needs on the ground. While fully recognizing the Geneva

Convention, JRS considers its scope too restrictive as it excludes millions of people forced to flee their homes. JRS supports instead the Catholic Church's 1992 “*de facto refugee*” definition, which encompasses victims of armed conflict, flawed economic policies, natural disasters, and IDPs, emphasizing the dignity of every person.

2.2 A Global Humanitarian Crisis: A World with 110 million Forcibly Displaced People

Today's refugee and migrant movements are complex and disorderly, posing significant challenges. The humanitarian crisis landscape has evolved to become more global. As of mid-2023, UNHCR reported 110 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, including **62.5 million internally displaced**, **36.4 million refugees**, and **6.1 million asylum seekers**. Notably, poorer countries bear the greatest burden, hosting 75% of refugees despite representing a small fraction of the global population and Gross Domestic Product. Countries like Chad, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Uganda host large refugee populations, while low-income countries struggle with inadequate funding and accountability mechanisms.

Legal mechanisms for refugee protection, adequate funding, and accountability are crucial. There is a growing recognition of the importance of involving displaced people in decision-making processes. Consequently, key actors, including UN agencies, donor states, NGOs, and displaced persons, have developed more sustainable responses and improved funding and accountability mechanisms.

2.3 Why a “Refugee Crisis”? The Drivers of Forced Migration

Complex situations force people to flee their homes, including poverty, armed conflicts, climate change, human rights abuses, globalization, and lack of access to natural resources:

- **Poverty**, exacerbated by corruption and lack of infrastructure, is a primary driver of displacement, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Over 86% of the world's refugees come from and are hosted in the poorest countries.
- **Armed conflicts** drive forced displacement in many regions of the world, and the situation is exacerbated by governance failures and regional power struggles. Affected regions are particularly the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Ukraine.
- **Climate change** is increasingly contributing to displacement, with rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and droughts forcing people to relocate. The impacts are particularly severe in vulnerable regions, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and sometimes leading to conflict. The international response, including legal frameworks like the 1951 Refugee Convention and regional agreements, is evolving but needs further development to address the complex challenges posed by climate-induced migration. **Water scarcity**, exacerbated by climate change, is linked to armed conflicts and geopolitical tensions, requiring equitable and sustainable management to prevent conflict.
- **Human rights violations**, especially against asylum seekers, refugees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), are a major cause of forced displacement. In conflict-ridden countries like Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Syria, forced displacement is often used as a deliberate tactic of warfare. Persecution based on religious beliefs exacerbates ethnic and religious cleansing, with minorities facing discrimination and persecution. Intolerant interpretations of religion worsen conflicts. Protecting freedom of religion or belief is essential for advancing human rights.
- **The global arms trade** worsens conflict and insecurity, leading to increased military spending and the development of extreme military technology. Challenges to existing arms control agreements are exacerbated by deteriorating relationships between major powers like Russia and the United States. Rising defense spending, especially in countries with weak governance, poses new risks to global security. Civil society groups advocate for responsible governance and transparency in defense institutions to address these challenges.

- **Globalization** offers tools to fight poverty but disrupts traditional jobs and threatens cultural identities. The refugee crisis underscores the challenges of migration amid shifting global trends. Economic trends like trade liberalization and privatization contribute to rising local tensions and inequality, disproportionately affecting the poorest and most desperate in society.
- **Access to natural resources** drives conflicts, with exploitation by both Western and non-Western companies perpetuating violence and human rights abuses. The involvement of these companies disregards the disastrous consequences, profiting from conflict-linked resources.
- **New forms of violence**, particularly in regions like Central America and Colombia, defy conventional definitions and necessitate a broader understanding of refugees. Organized crime syndicates exploit the lack of state capacity, engaging in activities like drug trafficking and human trafficking, exacerbating violence and displacement.

These causes are interconnected, with poverty, cultural differences, and limited opportunities often leading to armed recruitment and prolonged conflicts. Addressing these issues requires political and economic efforts to eliminate ethnic strife, curtail the arms trade, and promote economic development and social progress. Pope Francis emphasizes the moral duty to safeguard human dignity and create conditions for dignified living. He advocates tackling root causes like sustainable development to make migration a voluntary choice rather than a necessity. In his recent message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis highlighted the significance of individuals being able to “*freely choose whether to migrate or to stay.*”

2.4 Protracted Nature of Conflicts

Protracted refugee situations, “*defined as those where more than 25,000 refugees from the same country of origin have been in exile in a given low- or middle-income host country for at least five consecutive years*” (<https://www.unhcr.org/-/mid-year-trends-report-2023>), are common. 66% of refugees are in such situations, predominantly in Africa, with Afghan refugees

in Pakistan and Iran facing displacement for over 30 years. Challenges include overcrowding, limited resources, and loss of livelihood, trapping refugees in a state of limbo where returning home is unsafe, and they lack permanent residence elsewhere. Protracted crises, like those in Yemen and South Sudan, combined with new displacement crises and low numbers of returnees, exacerbate these situations.

During his visit to a Palestinian refugee camp in March 2000, Pope John Paul II highlighted the degrading conditions refugees endure, the prolonged and barely tolerable situations in camps, and the necessity for displaced persons to remain in these conditions for years. He appealed to all working for justice and peace not to lose heart and urged political leaders to implement existing agreements and strive for peace, emphasizing the inalienable right to justice for all.

3. Refugees’ lives and hardships

Forcibly displaced people often lose everything and lack basic human necessities such as safety, food, water, shelter, and healthcare. When refugees flee their homeland, the horrors they endure on their journey are often worse than what they fled:

- They suffer psychological trauma due to the loss of their normal lives and the irreversible experience of displacement.
- Many have no social networks and no command of the local language, making them vulnerable to exploitation.
- Discrimination and xenophobia, particularly in urban areas, often force them into hiding.
- Although international law grants them the right to work and move freely, many face restrictions on movement and formal employment. Without means of subsistence and access to employment, they become dependent on assistance, leading to dependency and depression.

Thus, they particularly come from and live in environments marked by division and violence. Conflicts erupt between refugees and host communities over scarce resources such as employment, water, or firewood. They encounter obstacles that are not only physical

but also deeply rooted in the hearts of some of their hosts: stereotypes, fears, and hostility that condemn refugees to remain outsiders, unable to realize their potential by integrating and participating in social and economic life.

This complex situation shows that beyond material needs, forcibly displaced people have a fundamental human need for companionship—someone to listen to their stories, help them find personal and communal peace, and attain consolation, hope, and stability in their lives.

4. JRS response: addressing violence through reconciliation

In response to the global crisis of forced displacement, spawned and fueled by various forms of violence (individual, communal, and structural), JRS discerned approach prioritizes reconciliation, rooted in faith and compassion. As such, JRS's ministry with the people they serve seeks to promote nonviolence and peace, emphasizing the importance of reconciliation and justice.

4.1. Faith and Compassion

To better understand JRS preferential option for reconciliation, as a path to bringing peace and healing to the forcibly displaced, violence-scarred and broken, it is important to note that our response to the needs of the forcibly displaced transcends mere humanitarianism. This ministry of consolation and healing is founded on the conviction of God's presence amidst humanity's darkest moment.

Indeed, as a Jesuit faith-based organization, JRS draws inspiration from its religious roots, particularly Catholic Social Teaching, Ignatian spirituality, and shared universal values. The JRS mission is built on our faith in God who is present in human history, even in its most tragic moments. At JRS inception, his founder said that, *“The spiritual as well as material need of nearly 16 million refugees throughout the world today could scarcely be greater. God is calling us through these helpless people. We should consider the chance of being able to assist them a privilege that will, in turn, bring great blessings to ourselves and our Society.”* Until today, the experience of faith in God, present to refugees through the compassionate presence of Jesus and those called to serve, remains central to the personal experiences of many

collaborators. For them, accompanying refugees affirms that God is present in human history, even in its most tragic episodes. The relationships built with refugees signify God's presence in a world increasingly hostile to them, offering a powerful counter-witness to the prevailing culture of rejection and disbelief. Despite all indications to the contrary, God has not abandoned us; rather, He works through us. JRS UK Director Sarah Teather expressed this sentiment, stating, *“I have a real sense that we often meet God in encounters with refugees. When you draw into the shadow, and you draw alongside people, sometimes that's where you see God's protection of others, that's where for us we get to see and meet the Living God working, laboring ahead of us.”*

Furthermore, faith holds significant importance for refugees. It serves as their source of hope in coping with the trauma of war, loss, suffering, and displacement. Similarly, regarding hosting entities, faith communities are well-equipped to receive and integrate refugees.

On this road of faith, JRS is inspired by the compassion and love of Jesus for the poor and excluded, as well as by His vision of the reign of God, where those labelled as last come first. Throughout His ministry, Jesus displays a remarkable ability to notice and to approach those who are ‘invisible’ to others, marginalized because of their debilitating sickness of body or spirit. His parables and pithy teachings are the polestar for our mission today. Everywhere in the world, when JRS staff and volunteers are asked what inspires their commitment to refugees, one of the most universal answers is simply to cite the Golden Rule: *“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.”* (Mt 7:12). Additionally, The Vatican's Pastoral Guidelines for the care of migrants and refugees says: *“The New Testament has left us a marvelous synthesis of Christ's work in which we, too, are called to participate as shown in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.”* This beautiful story (L uke 10, 39-27) not only shows us how to live but presents as a model someone who we might have learned to despise because he comes from a group that we mistrust, stereotype and stigmatize. In biblical times, the Jews labelled Samaritans as heretical and wicked people.

Accordingly, the pillars of JRS ministry are as follows:

- **Compassion and Accompaniment:** With the aim of restoring dignity and empowering individuals to rebuild their lives on just foundations, this involves offering companionship, active listening, and solidarity, grounded in the belief in divine presence on earth and expressed through compassionate action. We prioritize the practice of Ignatian *Cura Personalis*, which involves caring for the whole person and emphasizing respect for the dignity and well-being of each individual. While always ready to assist refugees with their material and spiritual needs and in designing projects for a fuller and more independent life, we prioritize "being with" over "doing for." Our presence among refugees is one of sharing, accompaniment, and walking together along the same path. We aim to empathize with their experiences, share their hopes and aspirations, and see the world through their eyes. Accompaniment serves as the driving force behind all our actions, shaping our identity and reputation, particularly among refugees themselves.
- **Advocacy and Justice:** JRS commitment to evangelical solidarity propels active engagement in addressing the root causes of injustice and suffering, challenging oppressive structures, and advocating for systemic change. This approach reflects JRS faith in action, drawing inspiration from the teachings of Jesus and manifested in works of justice and reconciliation.
- **Spiritual Benefits:** Through their work with the people served, many JRS collaborators experience personal and spiritual growth, recognizing it as a privilege to serve. They feel deeply "accompanied" by those they accompany. They receive profound gifts from refugees, fostering human connection and spiritual enrichment.

These pillars form the foundation of JRS ministry of reconciliation, addressing the reality of violence through activities that promote peace and social cohesion, provide redress for victims, and support systemic change.

4.2. Discerning the signs of times

Reconciliation is not just a goal but an integral expression of the JRS mission. It is the result of a process of discernment by JRS, following Fr. Arrupe's initial recommendation to adopt "communal discernment" as the fundamental basis for any development of the JRS mission: "*We can only start out on this tremendous work step by step, looking ahead and searching out the way. Most probably we shall have to search for it daily... the elasticity of this experimentation and risk-taking should be all in one direction—the direction pointed out by the Holy Spirit*" (Fr. Pedro Arrupe, 6 August 1981; ref. The "Jesuit" In Jesuit Refugee Service, *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuites*, Introduction by Thomas H. Smolich Smolich, iii. Spring 2022)

Hence, discerning the signs of the times in a world marked by profound suffering and division, and willing to find God in all things, JRS adopted reconciliation as the mainstream of its mission to deeply assume its identity as a global ministry of the Society of Jesus and integrate the renewed mission of reconciliation and justice of the Society. This constitutes one of the four Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society, discerned by the entire apostolic body of the Society and promulgated by Fr. Arturo Sosa, the current Superior General: "*To walk with the poor, the outcast of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice*" (*Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, 2019-2029*. Letter to the whole Society of Jesus, 19 February 2019).

This also aligns with the Society's mission received from 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 defense of their rights*" (Fr. Arturo Sosa, Renewed commitment of the Jesuit Refugee Service. Letter to the whole Society of Jesus and Partners in Mission, 24 May 2019).

At JRS, we believe that our presence among refugees can be an "effective sign of God's love and reconciliation" (JRS Charter, 2000). In fact, it would be virtually impossible for JRS to fulfil its mission without working on reconciliation.

Over the years, profound questions have emerged, prompting us to prioritize reconciliation and better articulate JRS's mission as a mission of reconciliation and justice, as all Jesuit apostolates require:

- *How can we accompany refugees without responding to their longing for healing and peace?*
- *How can we be present in conflict and post-conflict zones without supporting communities in their search for reconciliation and the restoration of justice?*
- *How can we serve refugees targeted by intolerance without building bridges with host communities?*

Our ministry of reconciliation is, in fact, our response to promote nonviolence among refugees and address the violence that generates their situation. By actively engaging in reconciliation efforts, we aim to create spaces where conflicts can be resolved peacefully, and where individuals and communities can heal from the trauma of violence. Through this approach, we not only seek to restore broken relationships but also to prevent the recurrence of violence and promote a culture of peace and understanding.

Reconciliation serves as a catalyst for personal and societal transformation, promoting unity, peace, and solidarity. By fostering reconciliation within its own organization and promoting dialogue and understanding among diverse communities, JRS embodies the values of unity, peace, and solidarity.

4.3. Reconciliation ministry and Non-Violence

In our perspective, reconciliation and nonviolence are deeply interconnected principles that often work hand in hand, especially in contexts of conflict or crisis:

- **Resolution of Conflict:** Reconciliation involves the resolution of conflicts and the restoration of relationships. Nonviolence provides a means of achieving this resolution without resorting to physical or psychological harm to others. By embracing nonviolence, parties in conflict can engage in constructive dialogue and seek peaceful

solutions rather than perpetuating cycles of violence.

- **Healing Trauma:** Reconciliation acknowledges the pain and trauma experienced by individuals or communities involved in conflicts. Nonviolence recognizes the importance of addressing this trauma in a compassionate and empathetic manner, rather than perpetuating further harm. By promoting healing and understanding, reconciliation can help break the cycle of violence.
- **Building Trust:** Nonviolence fosters trust and mutual respect among parties involved in conflict. Reconciliation seeks to rebuild trust and create conditions for peaceful coexistence. Through acts of nonviolence, such as dialogue, forgiveness, and empathy, trust can be nurtured, paving the way for reconciliation processes to take place.
- **Promotion of Justice:** Both reconciliation and nonviolence are often grounded in principles of justice and fairness. Nonviolence advocates for the rights and dignity of all individuals, while reconciliation seeks to address grievances and promote accountability for past injustices. By upholding these principles, reconciliation processes can be more effective in addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting lasting peace.

Overall, within JRS's mission, reconciliation and the promotion of nonviolence are interconnected approaches that share the goal of addressing conflicts and promoting peace in a way that respects the humanity and dignity of all involved. Through our ministry of reconciliation, we actively advocate for nonviolent solutions and strive to create environments where individuals and communities can resolve conflicts peacefully, fostering healing and understanding.

4.3.1. Building up peaceful and just relationships

Based on more than 40 years of experience, JRS embodies the spirituality of reconciliation and nonviolence through its threefold mission. JRS reconciles by: a) listening and accompanying, b) serving through education and creative support, and c) advocating for restorative justice and right relationships between all sides in conflict.

If any of these dimensions were removed, the mission to reconcile would lose its specific JRS identity. Together and inseparable, these three dimensions characterize JRS spirituality of nonviolence grounded in reconciliation.

a) Accompanying All Sides in Conflict

The importance of personal encounters with victims as the first step towards reconciliation is highlighted. This involves listening to their stories and accompanying them through their suffering. However, true reconciliation also requires extending this accompaniment to the aggressors, acknowledging their humanity, and seeking mutual understanding. Without encountering and acknowledging "the other," genuine reconciliation is impossible. Welcoming all without discrimination, working for the good of all, and seeking the good in all. As agents of reconciliation, we strive not to take sides. We listen to the suffering of the victims and to the perpetrators. And we try to help people realise that real happiness will only come about when the dignity and rights of each one is respected.

b) Education to peace

Education, particularly for children, is emphasized as a powerful tool for reconciliation. By providing educational opportunities, JRS aims to break the cycle of violence and foster a future generation capable of living together in peace.

In several operational contexts, JRS organizes peace and reconciliation training workshops for its educational staff and community leaders. We also conduct peace-building campaigns that involve community members, host populations, and civil society, aiming to strengthen peaceful cohesion and cohabitation.

To further support reconciliation, we facilitate safe spaces where people from divided groups can come together to get to know and listen to one another. Through this process, individuals become more aware of the sources of division, violence, and despair, and the harm they cause. As trust and relationships gradually develop, understanding and reconciliation are fostered. In these community safe space gatherings, Pope Francis' Call for Peace resonates loudly, moving hearts and provoking tears of regret, conversion, and meaningful dialogue. Indeed,

his profound message emphasizes the consequences of self-centeredness and the importance of caring for one another, urging each of us to reflect on our responsibility towards our brothers and sisters:

"When man thinks only of himself, of his own interests, and places himself at the center, when he permits himself to be captivated by the idols of dominion and power, when he puts himself in God's place, then all relationships are broken and everything is ruined; then the door opens to violence, indifference, and conflict.... It is exactly in this chaos that God asks man's conscience: 'Where is Abel your brother?' And Cain responds: 'I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?'" (Gen 4:9).

We too are asked this question. It would be good for us to ask ourselves as well: Am I really my brother's keeper? Yes, you are your brother's keeper!

To be human means to care for one another! But when harmony is broken, a metamorphosis occurs: the brother who is to be cared for and loved becomes an adversary to fight, to kill. What violence occurs at that moment, how many conflicts, how many wars have marked our history! We need only look at the suffering of so many brothers and sisters." (7 September 2013, St. Peter's Square, Vigil of Prayer for Peace)

Additionally, offering material support and income-generating activities to victims is essential, addressing their immediate needs and empowering them to rebuild their lives.

c) Advocating for truth and justice

JRS advocates for Restorative Justice, emphasizing the right of both victims and aggressors to heal and restore relationships. This includes advocating for truth and justice regarding human rights violations, giving a voice to marginalized perspectives, and defending spaces where silenced stories can be heard.

In this perspective, we believe that genuinely reconciled relationships are marked by justice that restores humanity. Pseudo-reconciliation, which is disconnected from the truth, can be a way of covering impunity. Thus, our reconciliation ministry supports restorative justice, which is an approach to justice that

emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior through inclusive processes that engage all stakeholders. It contrasts with traditional punitive justice systems, which focus primarily on punishing the offender. Key principles include:

- **Repair:** The primary aim is to address and repair the harm done to victims, communities, and even offenders. This can involve restitution, apologies, and other forms of making amends.
- **Inclusion:** Restorative justice seeks to involve all parties affected by the crime or conflict, including victims, offenders, their families, and community members, in the process of finding a resolution.
- **Accountability:** Offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and understand the impact of their behavior on others.
- **Reintegration:** The approach supports the reintegration of offenders into the community, aiming to reduce recidivism by addressing the underlying causes of criminal behavior and promoting personal development.

Restorative justice practices can include victim-offender mediation, circle processes, and community conferencing. These practices are designed to create a space for dialogue, mutual understanding, and collective agreement on how to move forward in a way that promotes healing and reconciliation for all involved.

in this context, reconciliation is not imposed from outside but emerges through the active participation of all parties involved.

d) Hospitality: Welcoming the stranger

In some contexts, we articulate reconciliation as hospitality, going beyond stereotyping labels to welcome the stranger struggling in a hostile environment characterized by fear of the other, closed minds and borders, exploitation, and scarce support. These factors contribute to reduced hospitality and a negative shift in the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees.

Encouraged by the Vatican's Pastoral Guidelines for working with refugees and migrants, this ministry aims to be a 'sign of contradiction,' "a

counterculture to this hostility," so that, as JRS UK Director Sarah Teather explains, "those who experience hostility might at least have some experience of hospitality. Those who experience isolation might find some place of community. People who are demonised might find some space of friendship." A place of hospitality becomes a place where joy and pain, tears and peace are closely interwoven. The essence of such a community is encounter, prompted by a culture of welcome, openness, and hospitality. One example is the daily shared lunches at the JRS UK office, open to staff, volunteers, and refugees visiting for appointments or activities. A refugee shared his experience of this community of hospitality: "*The way you are treated here is like the opposite of how you are treated everywhere else in the system. It's basic things that make the difference: a warm welcome, they use your name, shake your hand, eat food with you, view you as human. This kind of interaction is what provides emotional support for me.*"

e) God's Grace

Reconciliation is God's work, embodied in the principle: "Act as if everything depends on you, and pray as if everything depends on God." We recognize the challenge of loving one's enemies and emphasize forgiveness as a pathway to reconciliation: forgiveness and reconciliation transcend human capacity and are rooted in divine grace. This perspective aligns with Fr. Arrupe's poignant advice to the pioneering JRS workers on August 6, 1981, during a meeting in Thailand, less than one year after founding JRS: "*I will say one more thing, and please don't forget it. Pray. Pray much. Problems such as these are not solved by human efforts. I am telling you things that I want to emphasize, a message – perhaps my 'swan song' for the Society.*"

f) Organization behavior and mission component

Another crucial aspect of reconciliation within JRS is the cultivation of just relationships among us, viewing reconciliation as a journey that begins with oneself and extends to others within our organizational behavior and mission components. This involves the practice of "building just relationships", permeating our

internal interactions in a beneficial manner for the people we serve. In this perspective, we build the capacity of JRS teams and community partners to foster reconciliation, including teachers and students, community and religious leaders, women and youth associations.

This approach fosters reconciliation, allowing the reality of our shared humanity to be lived and taught convincingly. It fosters effective collaboration among individuals from diverse cultures, religious, and secular backgrounds, creating an inclusive environment where all are welcomed and valued.

Through our shared mission of reconciliation and justice, JRS strives to break down barriers and foster solidarity among humanity. We prioritize respecting the deepest religious convictions of both those we serve and those we collaborate with. Our tolerance is not superficial but informed and discerning, grounded in a genuine understanding of each other's stories. To authentically convey our story of accompaniment, service, and advocacy, we must first comprehend and honor the unique stories of each individual, whether refugee or collaborator. And for each of us, finally, the story is unique: each of us is called by name to accompany, serve, and advocate on behalf of our sisters and brothers. Consequently, we honor each person—refugee and colleague—by fully respecting their story, which sustains hope in difficult and tragic situations. In the words of Fr. Arrupe at JRS's founding, *"God is calling us through the refugees—each of us uniquely but all of us in solidarity as JRS."*

5. Conclusion

Reconciliation, rooted in justice and sought through dialogue, is a theme of JRS ministry around the world. It remains at the heart of JRS's spirituality of nonviolence, shaping its actions and relationships at every level. JRS seeks to build bridges of understanding and compassion across divides of culture, religion, and nationality. Embracing Pope Francis' call for unity and reconciliation, JRS acknowledges its role as a catalyst for positive change, promoting dialogue and understanding across diverse communities and working towards a more just and compassionate society for all.

This ministry is carried out in a spirit of compassion and solidarity, encouraging

participative discernment and reflective practice as integral components of its guiding principles or values. It aims to kindle hope, secure justice, and affirm the dignity of refugees and forced migrants. Working for reconciliation is often thankless and tiring, and it can also be dangerous. However, in this journey, we are motivated by the resilience and openness of refugees and others who have been deeply affected by violence, intolerance, and persecution. Our task is to take small steps as we journey together with them towards reconciliation with God, self, others, and creation, discerning daily how to better respond to God's call to give *"an audacious response to the unexpected crises of the present moment without diminishing our engagement with human tragedies that go beyond the present moment, tragedies like the migration of persons forced to leave their homelands because of poverty, violence, or lack of a future for their families"* (Fr. General Arturo Sosa, SJ, *The audacity of the impossible*". JRS 40th Anniversary Mass, 14 November 2020).

In conclusion, our reflection highlights the spiritual approach of JRS as a potential guide for diverse nonviolent strategies in conflict zones worldwide. The pivotal lesson lies in the discernment process that led to the selection of Reconciliation as JRS's specific response to the violence of forced displacement. Fr. Arrupe's methodology involved seeking God in the 'signs of the times,' or the prevailing realities of the era. Similarly, we must discern the signs of our times to effectively respond to our diverse missions in conflict zones globally.

What are the 'signs of the times' that we are called to respond to now in our missions? Today, these signs include the urgency to address heightened conflicts and humanitarian crises, escalating forced displacement, pervasive violence and injustice, environmental degradation exacerbated by conflict, increasing religious and ethnic tensions, and the imperative for trauma-informed healing initiatives. By discerning and responding to these 'signs of the times' with faith, empathy, wisdom, and courage, we can contribute to the pursuit of peace, justice, and healing in conflict-affected regions worldwide.

Sheila Kinsey, FCJM

The Spirituality of Nonviolence as Prophetic Witness for Universal Communion

Mission in Conflict Zones and Healing

Introduction

The time is now for cultivating a vibrant spiritual path of nonviolence for the sake of the world. Jesus accompanies us on the way to discovering and deepening our understanding of who we are. On this journey we are guided by a compass that helps us recognize and experience where God's grace and mercy is with us. We acknowledge the importance of being persons of integrity, as we become aware of the practice of nonviolence. Such a connection to our interior is evident in our conscious prayer, contemplative spirit, and sacred actions. Each of us has a unique purpose for being here and who we are is formed in our relationship to God, ourselves, in solidarity with our brothers and sisters and all of creation.

A compass is a vital image that helps us navigate the path for searching this way. For more than twenty-five years, the compass has been a symbol for a process which I have developed called Integrity for Nonviolence® (IFN). I began to develop this initiative when I was a counselor for victims/survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse. It was important to support and sustain their confidence that nonviolence can counter the violence in their lives. A compass provides a viable guide for the right direction when it is firmly oriented to a true North of ethical sensibility. The process of IFN contains four values like the directional points of a compass: creating respect, practicing honesty, promoting justice, and nurturing wholesome relationships.

In Pope Francis's *Catechesis on Discernment: October 12, 2022*, he wrote of desire as a longing within our hearts to follow the path of Jesus and to bring grace and healing into our own lives and the lives of others. He chose the compass as a metaphor for this deep spiritual longing present within all of us as we seek God's grace. The compass guides us, shows us

where we are, where we have been, and where we are going. It keeps us true to the righteous path to mercy and fulfillment. Our desire to understand is based on our longing for that spiritual light that shines deeply into the core of our being. It cannot be extinguished in the face of difficulties or setbacks, but continues to shine within us, leading us on our path to God.

The conscious practice of nonviolence through integrity prepares us to be open to the movement of the Spirit wherever we have the opportunity to confront the devastating effects of violence in the woundedness found in creation. It offers an alternative spiritual path instead of the existing unhealthy patterns that have led to violence. This direction provides balance, centering us in prayer and discernment while also moving us to engage others. In the long-term, work on issues related to violence, we attend to healing and a better way forward. We come to our social justice and peace actions with a receptive and prayerful spirit for a dialogue that nourishes the choice of social justice actions based on nonviolence, mercy, and cooperation. By turning away from conflict and greed and attending to compassionate responses, we develop a discerning heart of what is ours to do.

We are exploring the Spirituality of Nonviolence within the context of being a Prophetic witness for universal communion, as a Mission in conflict zones and healing. On this path we have signposts for reflective pauses to consider the challenges of prophetic witness, the importance of our personal background, significance of our religious communities and services, and our outreach work in the world, and finally a time to engage in the personal stories of the experience of God. With Jesus, the process of IFN will be a guiding compass in our work.

Challenges of Prophetic Witness

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reminds us of the importance to have a world view in which “...creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into a universal communion.” (LS 76). We are responsible to take these words into our heart and determine how to live by them. Pope Francis describes the prophets as being attuned to the needs of the times and calls us to recognize when political agendas and

international life.” ([Fiftieth World Day of Peace, January 2017](#)) In his message, Pope Francis calls us to follow our path in *Laudato Si'*: “By developing our individual, God-given capacities an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm in resolving the world’s problems and in offering ourselves to God” (LS 220).

We are called to protect God’s handiwork and to accept the serious, but loving, responsibility for the care of all of creation. We are to be prophets



passage of policies need “*suitable mechanisms for oversight, periodic review and penalties in cases of non-compliance*”. (LS 167)

In his deeply moving peace message entitled “Nonviolence – A Style of Politics for Peace”, Pope Francis made an important statement on nonviolence. “*I would like to reflect on nonviolence as a style of politics for peace. I ask God to help all of us to cultivate nonviolence in our most personal thoughts and values. May charity and nonviolence govern how we treat each other as individuals, within society and in*

who realize that “*Christ’s message must truly penetrate and possess the preacher, not just intellectually but in his entire being.*” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 151). To be authentic we need to be persons of prayer to reflect and to be enriched by the biblical spiritual tradition. We can find guidance in the “Little Way” of St. Therese who shows us how to do ordinary things with extraordinary love.

St. Thérèse embraced her limitations: “*I must bear with myself such as I am with all my*

imperfections.” (Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, C IX). She knew that God did not want grand gestures and so committed herself with confidence and the full service of her heart because: “*God requires you only to demonstrate your good will*” (St. Thérèse of Lisieux, The Little Way). We can follow her example of humility and devotion by setting aside unrealistic notions. Pope Francis repeats her request of us: “*...to practice the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation, and selfishness.*” (LS 230)

Nonviolence is a spirituality, a way of life, that calls for the conversion at the core of the Gospel and thus at the heart of the life and mission of the Church. Grounded in this foundation of Christian faith and in light of the global crisis of violence confronting our planet, through integrating all of these aspects, our integrity becomes a compelling witness to the authenticity of our message to build peace.

The Importance of Personal Background

Reflecting on our stories provides insights as to who we are and what we are called to do. It also helps us see the interconnectivity of our actions rather than disconnected things we do. I am sharing my background to hopefully stimulate relevant memories for you as well. It is said that St. Teresa of Ávila wrote her autobiography on her knees because she realized that God was as active in her life as in the lives of the people in the scripture stories. In journaling we have the opportunity of reinterpreting our stories and weaving interconnections.

Where does my story begin? *When I was 4 years old, I was out walking with my Dad when a father of a friend of mine approached us. He was gripping a four-inch razor strap and was looking for his son. I told him that I didn't know where he was. When he left, I told my Dad he was going to beat my friend and asked if he could live with us. That would be impossible, my Dad said, we cannot interfere with families. When I said this was not fair, my dad encouraged me to become educated and do something about this type of problem. I said that I would do so. My friend was beaten, and I only*

saw him just before the family moved. I was deeply saddened by this experience, and I was determined to do something about abuse when I was older.

As a religious I became a teacher in the United States when we were mandated reporters of child abuse. A young victim of incest confided in me about an incident, which I reported. But since there were no safeguards for the child, she did not feel safe enough and declined to pursue the report. I was deeply troubled by this. Later, when I was working as a school principal, I helped the Public Aid Office, which was designated to handle such cases, develop a very simple reporting format for abuse.

I went on to become involved in the areas of domestic violence and sexual assault in both emergency and long-term shelter services. My responsibilities included rescuing victims on street corners, meeting them in hospitals, and counseling, as well as public presentations and developing training programs for police officers, health care personnel, counselors, and our volunteers. I was involved in several collaborative efforts to change civil and criminal laws to better promote the safety and well-being of victims and families.

When I was in a diocesan department of religious education, I was called to two abuse situations regarding a parish school and a high school of a religious congregation. Both persons, in trusted positions, were convicted of their offences. Even though I assisted with communications, had the legal information shared from the States Attorney, and solicited counseling services, I felt a deep lingering pain. I only helped bring a brief resolution to these devastating experiences. The religious community was also questioning themselves as to how this could have happened to people in their care: “*What could we have done to prevent this?*”

It was during this experience that I realized the importance of dealing with the spiritual issues of abuse. I went on to further study and to write my doctoral dissertation *Truth and Compassion: Faith Sharing Groups for Victims of Domestic Violence*. Since this was a ministry program, I also involved the counselors and survivors of the domestic violence program. The agreed

upon topics were explored through a storytelling format. These areas included: Experience of God, Spirituality, Meaning in our Lives, Suffering, Freedom, and Wholeness. The image of wisdom was very prevalent in this work as a strong feminine image for the experience of compassion and development of truth.

Because of my diocesan background and religious studies, I was asked to teach the doctrine section of the lay ministry program. Using the topics mentioned above, this was a way of reflectively integrating their personal experience with the themes of the program. Everyone has had experiences of abuse, either personally or have known of others in their lives.

At the public presentations concerning the recognition and needs of victims of abuse, the participants also asked for guidance themselves because of the violence in our society. This moved me to work on developing applications based upon the experiences of the shelter for the general audiences. IFN was then created to develop the skills to maintain a nonviolent place focused on the four directional values, which would help support a healthy life and provide coping skills for vulnerable people impacted by abuse.

**Nonviolence Applications:
Religious communities and ministries**

In the synodal summary report it was recognized that *“There is a need to develop a more profound understanding of how consecrated life, as well as lay associations, ecclesial movements, and new communities, place their charisms at the service of communion and mission in local churches, augmenting existing paths towards holiness with a presence that is prophetic.”* (S.10 Consecrated Life and Lay Associations and Movements: A Charismatic Sign Matters for Consideration)

Our charisms are reflected in the spirituality of our founders and foundresses. For my order, our foundress developed our way of life following the spirituality of St. Francis. Drawing on the spirit of our charisms and the missions of our organizations we are able to promote important changes. Through the articulation and reflection

on our charism we become centered in the way we act.

These values of nonviolence are transversal for cultivating our spiritual journeys and for our workplaces. Our Sisters and associates committed to the establishment of a Nonviolent Zone. A sign calling for peace to all who entered was placed at the entrance to the campus, blessing all who entered and left the motherhouse property. The values of nonviolence were included in employment expectations for everyone, and behaviors are posted on the website. Our healthcare and affordable housing services won more than 30 awards recognizing their care of creation. Our campus has responded to the call of the Laudato Si’ Action Platform and is alive with beehives, a migratory stop for monarch butterflies, native prairie grasses, a reflective garden, and a peace path.

The practice of nonviolence is a path of spirituality that shows us a way to put God’s love into action. This path allows us to create a way of life guided by sound judgements based on a practice of contemplation. Following this way we inspire by example, showing the way to others. This practice develops through the fruitfulness of contemplative prayer. In Tomas Halik’s book, *Touch the Wounds*, he quotes Hans Urs von Balthasar with this remarkable sentence: *“Whoever does not come to know the face of God in contemplation will not recognize it in action, even when it reveals itself to him in the face of the oppressed and humiliated.”* Halik states: *“There is one fundamental characteristic of actions that grow out of contemplation, and that is **nonviolence**.”*

It is through our efforts in prayer and meditation where we strive to be open to God’s gift of contemplation. Contemplative prayer, according to St. Teresa of Ávila, *“is nothing else then a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us.”* Contemplation is an act of love. It is not a difficult journey, because we desire God and God desires us. To prepare ourselves for this gift from God, we must be open and ready. We must create a place within ourselves so that we may hear and accept the quiet

strength which only comes in the receptive stillness of a state of contemplation.

As a Franciscan, I recognize how St. Francis was exceptionally creative and visionary in his ways of looking at everyday life. Walking in his footsteps, we can approach the great challenges of our age. We bring his creative vision to our reality to Earth, to the chaos around us, to our reverence for life and our struggle for justice and peace.

St. Francis understood the power of words to help create peace. As he later testified, he learned a greeting of this sort by the Lord's revelation: "*May the Lord give you peace!*" In all his preaching he greeted people at the beginning of his sermon with a proclamation of peace. The peace desired for Assisi could be found in the hearts of the citizens. They were asked to receive this peace and have it dwell in their hearts and share it with others.

Integrity for Nonviolence: Applications for our Outreach Mission to The World

IFN can be used with many programs and events for integral development of individual and group capabilities and experiences, resulting in personal and systemic change. This was especially evident in USG-UISG JPIC programs and in [Sowing Hope for the Planet](#) which has promoted the Laudato Si' Action Platform. In this IFN process we become conscious of *what* we say and *how* we live in a way that supports, builds up and challenges each other to be our authentic selves and to work with care and confidence. Our concern extends to all of creation. In our integrity we are in touch with the purpose for which we are here and, in that place, where we are alone with God. The voice of God echoes here calling us to love and to do what is right. ([Gaudium et spes](#) 16)

We can look to the insightful work of [Mary Lippitt, Ph.D.](#), on the aspects of conscious change. For conscious change it is important to substantiate, correlate, and integrate five areas: vision, skills, incentives, resources, and action. All of these areas need to be addressed so we may act from a place of integrity. When one element is missing, the results are imbalanced. Without a clear vision, the result is confusion. Without the necessary skills, we create anxiety. If there is no incentive to change, then the

change will be slow and not necessarily the change wanted. If there are inadequate resources to support change, then we become frustrated. Without a well thought out plan of action, there will be false starts and constructive change will not occur. We need to be who we are in relation to the truth of ourselves.

Halik also wrote that "*The perfection that we are called on to seek in the Old and New Testaments is a matter not of flawlessness but of integrity, wholeness*" and that "*The first thing that God wants of us when he grants us the grace to see our wounds... is to accept them and be capable of saying "yes"*". Pope Francis reiterates this concept in *Laudato Si'* when he reminds us that "*Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it.*" (LS 19) They are calling us to find God's strength within us and to act upon it as we work towards healing ourselves and those we encounter.

Dialogue in the Spirit of Integrity for Nonviolence

IFN has a deep and practical understanding of the strength of dialogue. Integrity means that we build on the dignity of the human person. Nonviolence requires such a reverence that first seeks to do no harm in the dialogue. We seek to build up others in a way that challenges them to be their best self with caring confidence.

In our efforts to accept a role in healing and reconciliation we-remember the wisdom of Pope Francis: "*Reconciliation is a personal act, and no one can impose it upon an entire society, however great the need to foster it.*" ([Fratelli Tutti](#) 246) and that "*Authentic reconciliation does not flee from conflict, but is achieved in conflict, resolving it through dialogue and open, honest, and patient negotiation.*" (FT 244)

The IFN process engages compassionate communication to overcome the barriers to healthy dialogue, sharing of ideas, and collaborating on solutions. As a systemic process it includes four values with inherent actions: Creating respect, practicing honesty, promoting justice, and nurturing wholesome relationships.

Creating respect recognizes the dignity of each of us and sustains a non-threatening place. Honoring the dignity begins by listening to understand where we are in the given situation. Non-threatening indicates establishing a protected place and space where we are enabled to let go of fears that are physical and personal. Such an environment is safe and sustainable.

Practicing honesty entails truthful communication and the freedom to discover our true self. Accurate and meaningful information is available without deceptive consequences. By walking in the truth, we are free to discover our skills, talents, and unique gifts of who we are. We are encouraged to know our reason for being and our purpose in this life.

Promoting justice interconnects accountability and responsibility, negotiation, and fairness. Accountability considers the specific actions for which we have general responsibility. Whereas we can have overall responsibility and management where accountability areas are delegated. Negotiation and fairness engage dialogue with others in the essential areas that need to be accomplished. In so doing the meetings are on a level playing field, there is agreement on the areas to be discussed, actions to be accomplished, effective follow-up and timely evaluations take place.

Nurturing wholesome relationships concerns demonstrating trust and support and having adequate resources. It is important to determine observable ways to build the trust necessary to move forward with the agreement. To carry out the agreement the necessary resources and capabilities need to be in place for the plan to be accomplished.

The practice of nonviolence involves a personal and practical commitment to develop spirituality in everyday life. It is important to take time to process our experiences and to practice our skills of nonviolence and to make correlations to personal and work ways of acting. We become conscious about integrating the values into our words and actions, living in a way that supports and challenges one another to be our most authentic selves with caring confidence.

Some important successful advocacy efforts using this method have included issues related to housing rents, country debt cancellations, and employment rights. We highlight the advocacy for HIV/AIDS in which my community was listed in the congressional record as helping to craft the legislation. The international involvement to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic respectfully included many influential advocates on many levels. Advocates in the US were in a position to promote what became the United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003. This established a comprehensive, integrated strategy to combat the global spread of HIV and AIDS. The advocates involved a wide variety of constituents and worked with both political parties to make this a united effort to pass and fund the legislation.

The Use of Story to understand our experience of God

Another way of working with the power of nonviolence is respectfully reflecting on the stories of our experiences of God. The format for telling the story was developed through my doctoral work. Essential features are shared in such a way that an image captures the significance of the experience. There is a pause in the group setting in which other members share the image they have of the same story which enhances the meaning of experience described. Finally, there is the impact of the experience in which the wisdom received from the story continues to influence the daily life of the storyteller.

Recently, this process was adapted in Uganda and South Sudan with women and men religious who were pastoral workers in areas of conflict. I worked with two professional psychologists to update and adapt the program. The deep sharing included stories of being abducted by rebels, losing members, and never losing hope.

These were some of the comments regarding these journeys: *“it was a kind of empowerment to manage difficult situations in life”* and *“everyone has gone through unique experiences which has shown and revealed God’s power and goodness to us”*. They saw themselves doing things differently: *“developing a more compassionate heart and positive attitude towards various complex challenges,”* and

“started to develop a more productive attitude to suffering.” The process of sharing in a safe space helped this insight and healing happen. To keep the spirit of their sharing alive the participants decided upon actions to reflect the experience. They continue to hold themselves accountable for these commitments.

Now is the time for personal stories here. As a way to encourage your storytelling, I share my own experience of God. *I can vividly remember the incident; I was in my room alone, feeling a sense of pain and dismay. I had just received the news that my biopsy showed that I had cancer. Here I was at 43 and what did I have to say about what I had done with my life—had I been too preoccupied with my work, had I neglected others? I was reviewing my life and wondering how much longer I would have to get my life together. Suddenly, I heard from the depths of my being that I was a beloved daughter of God. No, I didn't do everything right, but my heart was in the right place. A sense of peace came over me and stayed with me throughout the surgery, recovery, and therapy. I felt that who I was at the deepest level was loved by God and no one could take that validation away from me. I experienced the loving embrace of God and knew God was with me.*

Reflecting on the experience, I realized that my true self, the deepest part of me abides in God. My deepest desires and God's deepest desires are one. Becoming who I am is nurtured and validated in a loving, compassionate relationship with God. A sense of identity (who I am and what I am about) often comes in the midst of life and death or conflict situations.

As my spiritual life and philosophy has developed, I have learned to nurture ways to be attentive to God's revelations in my experience. I have realized God's value of me as I am uniquely valued for who I am. The inner authority that I attend to is nurtured by a life of prayer, a striving after truth and a life lived in compassionate love. My faith has been an enriching resource for my life. Consciously grounding myself as a beloved daughter is an essential part of knowing myself. Even for Jesus, this was the case. Before he could begin his public ministry, he had to hear the words: *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well*

pleased” (Mt 3:17). For me I realize that it is important to accept people for who they are and where they are in their lives. God is both the spirit of truth and love. It is important for me to accept my role in building a community of compassionate believers whose lives are centered upon the search for truth and wisdom. The ideas and spirit of nonviolence are crucial in creating this community.

This open and honest sharing of insights in a safe nonthreatening space is important. The use of story is vital to the healing process. This happens when we are able to speak the truth about our experience and be heard. Respectful attention begins the healing process. It is also necessary to look at values beyond ourselves, see ourselves in the ordinary, and to look for parables in the stories. Speaking the truth is a way to encounter the revelation of God within our own stories. I have noted that the discovery of ourselves is also the discovery of God within our lives.

The Journey's Path

We all have peak experiences in which we come to a grounding in ourselves as a unique experience of God. Continuing to reflect on this, we can see how we continue to grow and benefit from such insights. We become more responsive to opportunities to promote healing and reconciliation when we are alive in our ways of receiving and responding to those we meet.

The opportunity for sharing our stories with one another will engage us in a personal process for the integration of conflicts in our lives. This is a journey that we may share, travelling together, trusting each other, and guided by our compass to seek God through the path of nonviolence. We are encouraged to continue our paths of nonviolence to make this world a better place. For we know that in Christ *“we live and move and have our being.”* (Acts 17: 28). In this shared journey, we will find the contemplative stillness within ourselves that leads us to God's love.

Mary Barron, OLA

Closing Message



All that remains is for me to say a few words to bring our Seminar to a close. We will formally end with the thanksgiving mass which we

will celebrate together before lunch. First, I wish to share some brief reflections on these days we have spent together as we prepare to move on.

We have had the opportunity to evaluate our experience in groups and to discuss the theme here. We have also listened to the Steering Committee, members of the SEDOS Executive, who evaluated the reflections very well.

So, I shall try to be brief.

The theme of this Residential Seminar was very inspired and we have been richly blessed by the various inputs and sharing we have been privileged to experience.

Doubtless, the key call of our time is for *universal communion* — communion among peoples and communion with all of God's Creation.... There is an awakening consciousness to this call to communion... even though our world seems more fractured than ever... even though the abuse of God's Creation is having detrimental effects on the livelihood of so many people in our world.... Many of our Speakers spoke of this call to communion and interconnectedness... of the choice to be connectors or dividers.... Pier Luigi Maccalli spoke of the difficulties of solitude — and how human connection is so important for life and well-being....

As we journeyed through this Seminar we were invited to reflect on the theme from various aspects: with a particular focus on the dimension of mission in conflict zones and on healing....

I should like to highlight three simple points that I shall take with me: namely, the components of this call to be prophets who can further universal communion:

(i) The relationship with God that underpins all our actions

Relationship with God... the JRS inputs added value to the Christian Message in the search for universal communion, stressing that in our relationship with, and our faith in, God... we hear the call therefore to be open to the grace the Lord will pour upon us....

A key saying of our Founder was, *Know and love God so you can make God known and loved...* a message this week has reinforced for me... besides the non-negotiable dimension of being a prophet, of living as prophetic witnesses. Universal Communion is the personal encounter with God, my personal experience of God, because if I am rooted in a personal experience of God, if Jesus/God made human is my model, then my actions will flow from that relationship as well as the desire to work for universal communion. My way will be nonviolent and will advocate universal communion.

Eric reminded us of the saying: *Act as if everything depends on you and pray as if everything depends on God*; and that the Practice of Reconciliation is a journey that begins with oneself and extends to others....

Guy's 'breaking open' the Word of God showed us that we should be diligent in seeking to understand the Jesus of the Gospel, whom we follow, better; and thus take the nonviolent way but not in a passive or humiliating way — but by non-violent subversive acts that restore dignity to all

We were all deeply touched by the experience Sheila invited us to engage in: sharing our experience and image of God... and from that sharing flowed healing and love....

All our endeavours for Universal Communion flow from our relationship with God:

(ii) **The second dimension** that stays with me is the importance of relating to each person – of taking a person-centred approach to all we do.... Such an approach brings life, respects the dignity of each person... whether it be the dignity of those who are suffering most because of conflict or the dignity of those causing the suffering.... Cardinal Nzapalainga, in his Keynote Address, gave us a powerful example of this call to see and relate to each person.... Luigi, in uniting his prayer with that of Jesus on the Cross, highlighted two words: *Father forgive them*.... The conviction Luigi shared from his experience was that mission can be promoted ‘simply’ by humanizing relationships....

(iii) **The third dimension** that stays with me as I leave is The Importance of Truth. We heard about the work for restorative justice that acknowledges the truth of the situation in the quest for justice. We heard about many situations of exploitation that cause migration and displacement and the call for greater engagement in Advocacy, networking with other groups to reveal and speak the truth to those in power....

All we have shared here resounds with Pope Francis’ words about the immense “need the Church has of men and women who are capable not only of bearing prophetic witness to the truth... but who are also examples”: for us to be prophets in our day.

He says: **The Church needs true prophets** who not only speak the truth fearlessly, but also empathise with the suffering of their people. A prophet must always be a person who is not only “capable of weeping for his people, but also capable of taking risks to speak the truth.” “Truth”, Pope Francis said, is always “uncomfortable” and when a prophet speaks the truth, hearts may either open or “become more like a rock, unleashing anger, persecution.” “This is the test,” the Pope said. “A true prophet is he who is capable of weeping for his people” and speaks out strongly when he must speak (the truth). He is not lukewarm, he is always like that – direct.

As we leave this place, I can confidently say that our hearts are full of gratitude for what we have received and shared here during these very profound days.... On behalf of the SEDOS Executive Committee I should like to take this opportunity to say a word of thanks to all those who have participated in making this a very special Residential Seminar: —

to those who prepared our Morning Prayer texts for the Lectio Divina and Sharing as well as this Morning’s Prayer (André and Anna who are both members of the SEDOS Executive Committee),

to all who prepared the beautiful Eucharistic Liturgy each day: the different language groups and the presiders, homilists,

to all our Speakers – for the care with which they prepared and delivered their talks, inviting us to an ever-deeper level of understanding and engagement as prophets who witness to Universal Communion,

to the Staff of this Centre which hosted us and made us feel very much at home.... I have heard it said that when Pope Francis comes on retreat here he says, *sì mangia bene qui*... I think we can all attest to that – the variety of food was very good and beautifully cooked...

to those without whose expertise we would not have been able to communicate effectively with each other – our three gracious translators.... Thank you not only for the work you have done this week but for your very presence among us, your sharing.

A special word also goes to our technician! To Fr. Roy Thomas, SVD, who stepped in, in the absence of Sr. Christy who usually helps out with the technical side....

We are grateful to our photographer, Bro. Carlos Ferrada, SVD, who very discreetly captured photographic memories of this week

Thanks to our Director of entertainment: Sr. Anna Damas, SSpS, who coordinated all the various get-togethers from the opening introduction to our cultural evening and the film last night.

To all who moderated the different sessions: Sr. Oyidu Okwori, SHCJ, Bro. Rene Stockman, FC, Fr. Marcio Flavio Martins, CICM, and Fr. Alain Mayama, CSSp, all of whom are members of the SEDOS Executive Committee.

Gratitude to each and every one of you, participants. We are a smaller group than usual but perhaps this allowed us to go more deeply into our discussions and sharing. Thank you for coming, your participation has made this quite a special week for everyone.

Finally, a word of thanks goes to the staff who worked behind the scenes to organize and run this Seminar: —

to Sr Celine Kokkat, CJMJ, who always has a very quiet and discreet presence while efficiently organising and planning all the details to ensure we have the necessary materials and communications for each day of the Seminar;

to Fr. John Paul Herman, SVD, the current Executive Director of SEDOS, – thank you for all you have done to make sure this Seminar ran smoothly. It is a great task of organization that demands months of preparation. We are most grateful to you for all your efforts to bring this Seminar to fruition.

And so, as we bring this Seminar to a close, we express our gratitude to our God of Peace, Love and Communion. Let us go to the Chapel to celebrate our final Eucharist together.



André Simonart, M. Afr.

Concluding Remarks

The 2024 SEDOS Residential Seminar proved to be a CALL to prophetic witness and courage, an urgent call, because what is at stake is nothing less than life itself, life on the planet, life of humanity, the life of all of us.

We started our five days together at Ariccia by exploring, reflecting on the Seminar's theme which had the following three elements: **“Prophetic witness for universal communion, Mission in conflict zones and healing”**. With the help of official texts of the Church we were reminded of the mission of the Church which is to further, by God's grace, universal communion with God and universal sisterhood and brotherhood as we all are created in the image of God, all children of God, of the one Father of all (Eph 4). Sharing in this mission of the Church is at the heart of our missionary vocation as consecrated people who walk in Jesus' footsteps as missionary disciples and continue His ministry of compassion, healing and freedom. Each institute does so with creative imagination and in fidelity to its own charism under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Having revisited our “principle and foundation”, we listened to the various Speakers who were quick to challenge us as they shared their own experiences and bore personal witness to their commitment and courage, to their deep human compassion and their practice of dialogue and truth, justice and peace. We understood then that this Seminar was to be a wake-up call. It became a threefold call:

A call to change the paradigm: from a Church to a Kingdom centered mission on to LIFE itself, the one value; to a cosmic, global and universal stand safeguarding and enhancing life, the survival of the planet, our common home, the survival of humanity. Mission is about humanity and humanizing, about our shared humanity, about the “we”, in an approach both personal and inclusive seeking to communicate and to uphold the dignity of every human being while joining up and cooperating with all churches, religions, philosophies of life. One of the Speakers put it this way: *Mission is to be at the service of life; what you humanize, God divinizes*. He insisted on prayer, on being rooted



in the contemplative dimension of life and on reaching out to every person in simplicity and in truth. Further, we were referred to Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* and to Martin Luther King, Jr, who said: *We must learn to live together as brothers or we will all perish together as fools*.

The second call is the call to non-violence, to active non-violence. We were reminded that we

are born into a violent world and that violence is present in all of us. To become non-violent is something we have to learn. We were helped to look at how Jesus practiced active non-violence and explored some of His teaching and parables. We were invited to start “disarming” our talking, our gestures, our looks! Here follow some of the points the Speakers mentioned: change your vocabulary, promote a culture of non-war, of peace; speak out and tell the truth concerning the causes of conflict and strife, the injustices or exploitation taking place; talk about alternatives to violence and encourage alternative narratives; seek contact and dialogue with opposing groups and factions; listen to their grievances, aspirations and needs; be at the service of the truth; rely on personal and community prayer.

The third call is to become familiar with the ways and means used by others such as the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Pax Cristi and others, and to discern on the level of the community, the parish, the congregation/-institute or diocese which launch new projects in fidelity to the institute’s respective charism. Here are three short extracts taken from the papers presented during the Seminar:

Inspired by the compassion and love of Jesus, JRS is dedicated to accompanying, serving, and advocating for refugees and forcibly displaced individuals, empowering them to heal, learn, and determine their own future. Our approach

is holistic, addressing psychosocial well-being, gender responsiveness, safeguarding, community empowerment, and environmental stewardship as key factors for rebuilding lives and preserving dignity.

***Pax Christi** is convinced that in the long run, the only way to make the thought of sustained peace seriously possible, the only way to follow Merton’s plea is by embracing Gospel nonviolence... Nonviolence is not the same as pacifism. It is a spirituality, a way of life, an ethic that is potentially universal, and a proven, often-effective approach to preventing or interrupting violence, to protecting vulnerable people and the planet, to promoting just peace. Non-violence is not passive. It does not retreat from conflict. It actively engages and transforms conflict and is a courageous force for mercy and reconciliation.*

The Integrity for Nonviolence Program promotes four basic values and behavior patterns:

Creating respect: Acceptance of person; being a non-threatening place

Practicing honesty: Open and truthful communication; freedom to discover the true self

Promoting justice: Accountability and responsibility; negotiation and fairness

Nurturing wholesome relationships: Demonstrate trust and support; have adequate resources.



Questions and Answers from the Discussion Groups

English Group

1. Love for Enemies- How do you understand by this text?

- Refusing to engage in a cycle of hostility by avoiding discussing an uncharitable situation with other members of the community.
- How can we resolve internal conflicts in our communities, often caused by the diverse cultures of their members, whether they come from different countries or different parts of the same country? Sometimes it's helpful to have small groups where we can express ourselves freely.
- A localist, tribal mindset, bound to static traditions, makes it difficult to love everyone, especially those who are new members of the community.
- Asking for forgiveness is often seen as a sign of weakness, of not being strong enough to pursue your own.
- Is forgiveness always possible? Sometimes there is no bad intention at all, but others understand that what has been said from a different perspective and feel hurt. I apologize, although I was not wrong, but I have hurt people in their sensitivity.
- To forgive Seven into seven times is important. It might be that I have already forgiven, but then the pain comes again and again, and I have to forgive again and again.
- There are powerful examples of forgiving and reconciliation, e.g. the reconciliation process in South Africa. How can the victims forgive? It comes from something other than that what is in their own heart. God's mercy is greater than ours.

2. Who is my enemy?

- We often react spontaneously: If you do harm to me, I avoid you. Jesus is different, he did not avoid those who did harm to him. He continued to love and to forgive. He chose a nonviolent way.
- To stand with the victims (e.g. Jesus stayed with the woman who was accused of adultery). Our place is besides the victims. Stay with the victims, being present, listening

to their experiences and stories, give an encouraging word, a gesture of appreciation, a word of hope, e.g. mission of being present with the prostitutes on the streets during the night. There is no expected outcome that they would finally leave their prostitution, but the way of being present is consoling and healing for them.

- Standing side by side with the victims does not ask for a lot of doing but of being present, witnessing that they are human beings with an infinite dignity.
- Today: How can we be with people in situations of conflict and war who have lost their loved ones, housing, everything, who are deeply traumatised? It is about being really as human as they are.
- Example: A woman (refugee) was very violent and bitter: when a group dared to listen to her experiences compassionately and documented her story, she herself became lighter and finally became an advocate to save lives of other refugees. It is important to look beyond the tip of the iceberg (here: her bitterness and being violent) and see what will happen then.

3. What is the call beyond restrictions, policies? What is beyond that what is presented?

Allow ourselves to go beyond that what we have heard and to look at things differently.

- To understand God's unconditional love is more difficult than to forgive. The tendency is not judge good or bad. The attitude of Jesus to send rain to everybody is a challenge and makes a difference. We are called to do the same. Being created in God's image, does not allow to judge from what we see, from actions but needs to do a deeper look. We need to look the infinite dignity in each on: we try to walk forward to accompany those who have a low self-esteem. Foundational is that we are saved through God's forgiveness of sins. Our responsibility is to do the same and to acknowledge the infinite dignity of all.

- Non-violent communication is a challenge: it takes a lot of education not to be violent it is not so much a question of intention to be violent, but it is a challenge
 - We need the prophecy of non-violence to relate to the infinite dignity in everything. There is no Plan B to restore nature if we don't take a non-violent stance. In conflicts (regional), if we don't tell the story of change who will tell the story.
 - Power of education to unlearn (child-soldier) and to re-learn what it means to protect life of others and to respond to the infinite dignity. We must learn new ways to prioritize to point out to the infinite dignity in humans and in whole of creation.
 - *Laudato Si'* helps to take a corporate stance to move forward
 - Non-violence leads to social transformation, needs education, and can provoke violence. India: Christian missionaries are accused to do conversion; we can't do what we really want to do. Social change is against the interest of many who have benefitted from good education in schools of missionaries. They don't want people to get up. Therefore, they use violence. That gives no freedom for missionaries, but mission goes on.
 - Praying for peace, for both parties (e.g. for Ukraine and for Russia) is very difficult and can become violent. When we are suffering, we often cannot take a nonviolent stance. When we are involved in a conflict we can hardly stand up and asks for peace, that can bring more conflict. Talking about nonviolent communication is easier than dealing with it. Therefore, it is important to de-learn what we have learned about violence and to re-learn non-violence.
 - Sometimes we forget that good intentions can be violent in a context, e.g. safeguarding is necessary and to learn non-violence.
 - In violent societies there is a need to learn non-violence already in formation. And we must see that in our own communities there is a lot of violence among the members as well as how we deal to follow up our own interests against the interests of others.
 - Dorothy Stangl, model for non-violence in Brazil: doing sustainable farming together: we can learn to bring all stakeholders together for working together in partnership;
- everyone can contribute and learn from one another, therefore initiate a process of sharing (synodality). There are also risks, it might be that younger ones don't want to enter a congregation, because they fear that they might be killed like Dorothy Stangl.
- Example: In a remote area where chiefs were in power, there was a lot of violence. Women were accused to be witches and therefore they were killed. One question helped: What would you do with this woman, if she would be your mother? Infinite dignity requires infinite compassion. Therefore, we really need also be compassionate with ourselves.
 - Non-violence does not guarantee safety. Each person puts us in a place where we understand violence as well as non-violence differently.
 - Collectively we can work for non-violence, it will take time, but it is possible. We know we want peace but how to get there? We need to ask questions to ourselves when talking about non-violence.
 - In realities of traumas, we need to be trauma-sensitive.
 - There is a call to be together and to create a non-violent spirit. What is means must be interpreted in each context. Unity is the strength in being non-violent.
- 4. How and what extent do we practice mutual accompaniment?**
- 5. How effectively does our team/community engage in mutual accompaniment in both internal and interactions and interaction with people served?**
- When Pope Francis asked the religious to open their houses for the refugees, some congregations couldn't accept the refugees in their houses due lack of space. But through CENTRO ASTALI, sisters offered to pay the rent for the house, in which refugees were accommodated. In this case rules and norms of CENTRO ASTALI prevented the sisters from having direct contact with the people they helped, all contacts were through the organization which was responsible.
 - In another congregation sisters had given accommodation to different families and

individuals in their house of the sisters. The community of Sant Egidio identified the individuals and families and sent to sisters. Here sisters had interacted with the people who were accommodated in the house, though one person was appointed by the sisters to be in charge of the people. Interaction with the people who were accommodated was mutually helpful for the sisters as well as the people. Sisters became more aware of the problem the people are facing. The people who were served were able to talk, ventilate their feelings, and find a secure place and could experience care and concern of the sisters. At least for some time they were feeling secure, could learn language and look for possible job opportunities.

Sometimes it also helped sisters to recognize the difficulties in dealing with refugees, who though given everything possible had greater demands. when that was not met they were aggressive, sisters had to learn also how to deal with people who are coming with lot of emotional baggage.

- In one of the male religious community family was given accommodation. Initially it was difficult for the community as the children were running around and it disturbed the normal rhythm of the community. Eventually the members found some way out, found a baby sitter when the mother was out for work and their presence eventually turned out to be blessing. This congregation was giving accommodation for a male person in their community. He used to be part of the community. The duration of their stay was only for one year during which the person had to get his documents cleared and find a job. This helped some people to get settled in life.

6. How does mutual accompaniment affect the implementation of mission?

A sister shared how she was able to help the students through psychological help through her skills, she was listening to their stories. She not only taught them her subject but helped to deal with their emotions. Attending to them brought light to her life.

She also shared while helping a group of mothers getting organised through JRS, she

recognised their potentials and capacities. She didn't tell them what to do but asked them what was their expectation. Their enthusiasm to come together and learn different skills like computer, small courses helped them to build their life. It was mutual help for each other as she was also learning from them.

- Another person shared how accompaniment helped those youngsters who are picking up wastes. Continued accompaniment helped to build trust and with trust they he was able to support them.
- One person shared how the migrants from Mexico crossing the US boarder was helped. Sisters stayed with them to really know their needs and to reach out to them. In the parish level they were given constant accompaniment to give them sense of security, to navigate legal system and to get documents. These migrants had experienced lot of hardships while waiting to cross the border.
- He also shared the experience of accompanying the refuges from Afghanistan after US military pulled out from there. Catholic charity provided support, children were given space to be children, and women were helped to be themselves.
- While accompanying them it is learnt not to ask too many questions and details that make the person uncomfortable.

7. Good practices and challenges

- It is a challenge while helping people not to make the people dependent on those who provide help.
- With some of the refugees whom we are helping, long term planning are not possible.
- A challenge is to provide not one-time action but accompaniment that is a process. Positive hope needs to be given to the people.
- One of the members of the group shared that one of the sisters who was helping the refugees expressed her incapacity to continue to give help because the experience was too stressful for her. She had to decide who will get food and who will not, this meant those didn't get the food remain hungry. The task was psychologically very painful for the sister. When sister expressed her difficulty, the congregation supported her and relieved

her from this mission. She didn't have any mental disorder but stressful. Mutual help helped the sister to gain her mental health.

Groupe Français

Jésus modèle de la non-violence

Notre compréhension des textes

Perte de sagesse

Chacun est enfant de Dieu

- L'exigence d'aimer nos ennemis
Jésus qui pardonne qui est miséricordieux
Prise de conscience, une question de justice, de patience, de la miséricorde qui va avec la justice de Dieu. Toujours s'ouvrir à la grâce de Dieu. Il y a toujours la tension entre être juste et être miséricorde. L'expérience de la prière produit le miracle, avec le silence on retrouve la paix à avoir compassion de la personne, apprendre à changer mon regard sur cette personne, reconnaître mon péché me permet de retrouver la force dans la prière la patience, Dieu est patient, la méditation me permet de bien discerner si je prends le temps de la faire, devant certaines situations prendre le temps de méditer me conduira à prendre de bonnes décisions
- Aimer est une décision et non une question de sentiments, grâce à la prière pour moi-même et pour la personne j'ai appris à les aimer. J'ai appris à sortir de moi-même avec l'aide de Dieu, apprendre à connaître l'histoire de chaque personne permet de l'accepter, quelquefois nous voulons changer les autres. La sérénité de de Jésus de s'asseoir devant la force du mal (la mer), la compassion, trouver la grâce de la sérénité dans la prière, la mission ne demande pas de la reproche mais de manifester la bonté de Dieu sans attendre de retour. Jésus restaure les personnes, la patience de Jésus laisse le temps de réfléchir nous devons aussi regarder notre propre vie avant d'agir. L'invitation à être des personnes de confiance, porteuse de Bonne Nouvelle, l'importance d'être vrai avec soi-même apprendre à accepter ses propres incapacités, faire nous-même l'expérience des personnes, faire la différence entre la personne et les actes qu'elle pose, ce chemin demande l'humilité.

Histoire concrètes de notre vie personnelle

Partage sur la jalousie, le pardon, la divulgation des secrets, difficultés avec une communauté religieuse, avec des sœurs en communauté.

Non-violence – (Séance de l'après-midi)

Oui le Congo surtout Congo de l'Est : pas de dialogue, le gouvernement essaie de réunir les trois groupes ethniques, plus le pape parle de la non-violence plus la tension monte, la situation de l'Est du Congo fragilise toute l'Afrique. Si le Congo se stabilisait toute l'Afrique s'émergerait.

Au Cameroun la sœur ont quitté le village laissant le dispensaire.

Au Burkina Faso, la communauté religieuse est fermée, situation d'impuissance d'un mal qui les dépasse, les déplacements sont limités, le traumatisme très fort, on fait face au dilemme, faut-il quitter ou rester la population se sent abandonnée sinon nous quittons. Il y a aussi des violences silencieuses, les gens qui souffrent silencieusement, la situation de Haïti, saccage d'une école avec plus de cent ans d'existence, trouver les moyens de les accompagner dans les traumatismes,

Autre forme de violence en Suisse : violence commise par nos membres.

En Afrique du Sud pas de guerre mais de la violence, la xénophobie beaucoup de préjugés sur ceux qui viennent dans le pays, tout le monde est conscient mais c'est le silence, est-ce la peur ? Ce qui nous affecte, affecte aussi nos relations pour travailler avec les autres, ma façon de regarder mon frère, ma sœur avec les lunettes d'amour.

1. Prophétie de la non-violence, les gestes prophétiques, besoin de prophète comme Gandhi. Exemple le Pape François qui baise pieds des leaders du Soudan. Pas seulement des mots mais aussi les gestes comme prêcher, enseigner rester sur place pendant la période des violences sont des signes de présence prophétique
2. La non-violence n'est pas un appel à la passivité.
3. Appela à revoir notre système éducatif, la corruption qui mine notre société. Nous devons aussi former les consciences, les familles éclatées, continuer l'éducation dans les familles, aller dans les cellules de base, la

communauté chrétienne de base, changement structurel dans l'église, nos communautés. Nos structures sont-elles des structures de non-violence ? Changement culturel, pas de culture de dialogue. On n'est pas habitué à parler. L'interculturalité dans nos communautés, choisir un thème comme la non-violence pour les recollections communautaires, la conversation spirituelle.

Les fruits du séminaire :

La conviction qu'avec la prière nous pouvons résoudre beaucoup de choses; la prière est puissante face aux situations difficiles; ce séminaire était le moment de transformation; nous avons appris la résolution des conflits d'une manière non violente; nous étions enrichis des expériences des autres; c'était le moment de consolider la conviction que tous nous partageons la même humanité et les conflits la détruisent; invitation à vivre plus en fraternité et à continuer à travailler au niveau personnel; apprendre à désarmer la parole; commencer la réconciliation par moi-même; c'était une invitation à connaître la réalité de l'autre, le moment d'apprentissage de ne pas être violent et à avoir le regard positif envers les autres surtout les personnes en besoin; commencer par la gestion des conflits en nous-même; le séminaire était très équilibré: il y avait de la théorie et de la pratique et aussi partage des expériences; l'expérience de chemin personnel de chacun était une invitation à aller toujours plus loin et à découvrir avec le Seigneur ce qu'il veut pour nous; nous avons découvert la non-violence active, l'importance de commencer par nous-mêmes et que tout se passe grâce à la prière; grâce à l'expérience des autres nous avons eu une meilleure compréhension de nos propres difficultés; le séminaire était une invitation à l'attitude de la non-violence dans la vie quotidienne.

Question sur l'organisation du séminaire :

Le cadre était très accueillant ; il y avait une bonne organisation ; nous avons apprécié la prière Lectio Divina ; le thème du séminaire, les intervenants et les présentations bien faites, pratiques et variées.

Nos suggestions :

nous proposons d'avoir plus de temps personnel par exemple dans les soirées et aussi avant le

partage en groupe; on peut varier les formes de prière; nous proposons aussi d'introduire le partage en plénière pour qu'on puisse savoir ce que les autres groupes ont partagé; nous proposons de réfléchir sur le pourquoi de la baisse du nombre de participants (est-ce le coût, le lieu...) il y avait une proposition de faire le séminaire à Rome avec une option de résidents et de ceux qui peuvent venir de la communauté chaque jour.

Gruppo Italiano

1. Il gruppo ha condiviso le parole chiave della presentazione di questa mattina:

- Accompagnare;
- Come fai le cose è più importante di cosa fai;
- Compassione.

2. I membri del gruppo hanno poi condiviso la loro esperienza con i rifugiati, commentando le sfide e le cose apprese:

(1) Accogliere nella comunità due famiglie con bambini dall'Afghanistan che non conoscevano una sola parola di inglese o italiano:

- Ricevere molto aiuto materiale dalla parrocchia;
- La preoccupazione principale della comunità ricevente era ricreare per queste famiglie un'atmosfera in cui si sentissero al sicuro, accolte;
- Imparare: essere prudenti, diplomatici e cordiali in ciò che si dice e nel modo di rivolgersi;

(2) Con l'aiuto di alcuni giornalisti e volontari, nonché fondi da agenzie donatrici, è stata creata una radio chiamata pace in Kinyarwanda (trasmessa ad Addis Abeba e in Gabon mattina e sera con programmi adattati ai rifugiati, comprese le esigenze di parenti e familiari). Questa radio ha funzionato per due anni. Dopo di che un giornalista è andato a lavorare per la BBC e un altro è partito per gli USA.

(3) Ha visitato tutti i campi per rifugiati dal Ruanda in RDC e in Tanzania qualche tempo dopo il genocidio.

(4) Alcuni missionari si prendono cura dei giovani che cercano di raggiungere l'Europa mentre attraversano il Mali, il deserto del Sahel o rimangono bloccati in Algeria o Marocco. Alcuni di loro hanno bisogno di cure mediche, altri di guadagnare un po' di soldi per continuare

il viaggio o per tornare a casa (vedi il film Io Capitano).

(5) Accoglienza dei rifugiati in Brasile provenienti dal Venezuela. Networking e collaborazione con Caritas, Croce Rossa JRS,

3. Altri punti:

- È importante lavorare con gli altri e collaborare, fare networking;
- La causa principale è la mancanza di pace;
- Chiamata a dare più attenzione all'altro;
- La missione è UMANIZZANTE.
- Essere violenti non è umano.

Grupo Español

En grupo con otros de la misma idioma

- Recordando los valores que aprendí en mi familia que es donde aprendí a ser respetuosos a los demás.
- Ser presentes con los/las otros/as que necesitan algo?
- En que le puede ayudar?
No asumir lo que piensan los demás.
- Tratarlos como adultos, respetándonos uno al otro.
- No juzgar por apariencias

Ser abiertos al otro/a la otra

- Honra la dignidad y el valor de cada persona. Todos ganan sabiendo cual es el rol suyo las dinámicas transmiten lo que pensamos de si mismo y lo que pensamos o valoramos de los demás. E vive en unidad, no division.
- Se presentes y atentos a los demás mostrar atención.
- Ser atento, gentil cariñosa, respetuoso.
- Algunas de las razones por las que los refugiados no se integran incluyen nuestro miedo a lo desconocido y al extraño, una actitud de escasez de no tener suficiente para compartir, el profundo temor por nuestra seguridad.
- El proceso de reasentamiento es demasiado largo y complejo, además de injusto. Es necesario un mayor apoyo.
- Experimentamos una falta de reconciliación en nuestras comunidades religiosas, aunque los miembros ofrecen excelentes ministerios. Hay una falta de colaboración entre nosotros y nos identificamos demasiado con los demás.

- Algunas de las razones por las que los refugiados no se integran son el miedo a lo desconocido y al extraño, la actitud de escasez de no tener lo suficiente para compartir y el profundo temor por nuestra seguridad.
- El proceso de reasentamiento es demasiado largo y complejo, además de injusto. Es necesario un mayor apoyo.
- Experimentamos una falta de reconciliación en nuestras comunidades religiosas, aunque los miembros ofrecen excelentes ministerios. Hay una falta de colaboración entre nosotros y nos identificamos demasiado personalmente con nuestros propios ministerios y no los vemos como parte del todo y como algo que nos pertenece a todos.
- Pero los religiosos también pueden ser y son conectores y colaboradores con otros en la defensa y el acompañamiento. El desafío puede ser ir más allá de nuestros límites locales.
- Necesitamos analizar nuestro racismo y prejuicio personal y comunitario, así como los problemas sistémicos, y esto debe reflejarse en nuestro trabajo interno y externo.
- La competencia intercultural debe ser parte de nuestra formación desde el principio.
- Debemos ser conscientes de que el proceso de reconciliación está en curso mientras trabajamos con nuestras propias heridas. Todos necesitamos una transformación y tomar conciencia de nuestras limitaciones.
- Para poder defender y trabajar con refugiados y migrantes, necesitamos estar adecuadamente preparados. Las redes nos ayudarán.
- El trabajo en red y la colaboración como congregaciones es algo permanente. Los conflictos también surgen a este nivel.
- La cuestión de la migración es muy compleja. A veces está orquestada y puede utilizarse para una limpieza ética y religiosa. A veces, quienes migran no quieren regresar a casa. Las ideologías y culturas de las personas los acompañan y afectan los lugares donde se establecen. A veces, estas ideologías son peligrosas y están destinadas a infiltrarse en las sociedades. Debemos ser conscientes.

Evaluation of SEDOS Residential Seminar 2024

ENGLISH

1. Q. *What did you gain from this Seminar?*

A. The call to strengthen one's relation to God, self and others, as the basis of my mission, helps foster Universal Communion.

The topic was very appropriate in the current global situation and of great inspiration for any ministry. A lot of insights on how to be a Prophetic Witness for Universal Communion, but most of all a deep desire to live a life based on the principle of non-violence and to promote it every day. Greater commitment to love, compassion, inclusion, listening, and putting the dignity of each person above all else.

The biblical approach, psychological approach, the spirituality and importance of a non-violent approach in our mission/ministry were an eye-opener. I gained courage. The importance of contacts: the need for net-working across congregations and with other like-minded organizations.

...New knowledge and ideas for a better integration of theory and practice. Better grasp of the importance of, and the need for, prophetic witness for Universal Communion. Accompaniment: is not what you give but how you give it. Understand the complexity of the refugee situation and their needs better, so that as Congregations we can respond and cooperate.... Better and deeper understanding of non-violence and its promotion, which is not passive, not even to avoid conflict.

2. Q. *Was it helpful for your ministry or mission?*

A. Very helpful indeed; also, for intercultural community living. Yes, it brought enlightenment and inspiration. I now have a different approach to this topic. Reflection on the spirituality of non-violence ... inspiration for going beyond mission projects owned by small congregations.

Yes. I gained a lot of new skills, among others skills for story-telling, care of self not only for

others, but for the sake of the mission and the good of the Team. Adopt the holistic approach ... as compassion-mission. Create a support system and a conducive environment.

I learnt various ways to address a non-violent life-style, to practice the spirituality of non-violence and especially how to become more positive. Yes, because it has helped me on my own journey. The content, methods, processes and approaches will be useful in my ministry to teach non-violence and other topics. The insights and what I learned will be shared with my Sisters.

Since our ministries focus on education, non-violence is critical to these ministries. As we increase the interaction of our ministries, this process will help us to plan together.

3. Q. *Do you have any suggestions for improvement?*

A. Next time, ask someone to speak on the political, economic, social aspects and give a cultural analysis of the current global context.

The personal experiences we shared enriched me. The sharing in groups was wonderful. I much appreciated this opportunity to share, reflect and grow together.

Allow more time for personal reflection (10 mins), before sharing in small groups. The resource people mostly substantiated their input with their own experience (impressive accounts), which was very good. More large-group sharing. If possible, have a session like the one with Sr. Sheila earlier in the Seminar. Some were tired and this session involves emotion, which can also be tiring. Being earlier could contribute to our ongoing interaction and sharing during the workshop.

4. Q. *Any Other Suggestion?*

A. The calm, grace-filled presence of the SEDOS Director was very inspiring.

Everything was well organized and implemented. Just be sure the groups are smaller than 8.

More access to drinking water during the day.

Could the Speakers speak more slowly so that the translators can catch up? Speakers from other conflict zones could be included: sharing from war-torn zones could have been more enriching. Perhaps the Presenters could send their reflection/questions ahead of time so we can reflect before sharing. It would make it easier for Sr. Celine to then send them to the groups without having to wait. Project questions/reflections for groups on a slide so that we don't have to use cell-phones or laptops.

Many thanks go to the Committee. God bless



your ministry. Very well done all in all, the Seminar was well-planned, but it mostly focused on JRS; people in Refugee Camps, and post-conflict situations. We could also see the real causes of conflict and how to prevent conflict.

Offer the possibility of on-line participation, as that might bring more participants.

Publish the date and theme as early as possible for planning, as this would give more people the opportunity to experience such a rich encounter. Personal testimonies, like Fr. Pier Luigi Maccalli's, are always appreciated. Thanks for everything including the warning about the weather. Allow more time for interaction with the resource people. The Speakers were excellent.

Identify other gestures of non-violence. Time for preparation of Liturgy to be considered. Reflect on my life and perceive how God is calling me and preparing me for the mission.

FRANÇAIS

Q. *Qu'avez-vous appris de ce séminaire ?*

R. L'importance de la Lectio Divino au début de la journée. Être témoin, être un signe prophétique pour la Communion Universelle, la mission, réconciliation, la paix ; l'harmonie, l'accompagnement des victimes de la violence et de la guerre. L'approche non-violente, prière contemplative, soin et silence. La rencontre de nombreuses personnes de congrégations diverses. Beaucoup de bonnes choses et techniques sur la communication et le comportement non-violent.

Ce séminaire m'a beaucoup enrichi par rapport à l'approche de la non-violence pour la résolution des conflits. Ainsi que la manière d'aider les migrantes en les écoutant, en étant attentive à leurs besoins et difficultés.

Q. *Est-ce que cela a été utile pour votre ministère ou votre mission ?*

R. Oui ! Les expériences d'approches non-violentes, de la compassion, la fécondité de la pratique de la prière ... m'ont été très, très utiles pour ma mission et mon ministère. Cependant je dois être moi-même une personne reconciliée et guérie de mes blessures et surtout une personne de prière, car la prière est ma force.

Non, pas tellement. Je n'y ai pas appris grand-chose. Mais j'y ai rencontré des personnes ressources. Le témoignage de P. Luigi Maccalli, fût à mon avis le moment spirituel de ce séminaire. Je remercie le Père Luigi pour sa réflexion profonde.

Q. *Avez-vous des suggestions d'amélioration?*

R. Prévoir le temps de la mise en commun des expériences partagées dans les petits groupes. Laisser plus de temps pour la réflexion personnelle et les rencontres imprévues/*informel*.

Q. Autres suggestions ?

R. Je suggère de prévoir le temps de la plénière et des questions afin d'apprendre des autres groupes. La sensibilisation des gens pour avoir un grand nombre de participants aux séminaires et autres activités organisés par SEDOS.

Une journée avec JRS aurait suffi. Il aurait fallu un jour pour *advocacy* (ex : AEFJN).

Je suis resté sur ma faim en ce qui concerne la spiritualité de la non-violence. L'essentiel était absent !

Se tenir à l'horaire prévu. Utiliser d'autres méthodes de délais pour les rencontres en groupe. Je remercie toute l'équipe de SEDOS pour avoir organisé ce séminaire si riche et si profond. Merci de m'avoir utilisé.

ESPAÑOL

P. ¿Qué obtuvo/obtener de este seminario? CHECK

R. Obtuve más que conocimiento experiencia de Dios en los ponentes y en los participantes. Verdaderamente me ayudo mucho los testimonios compartidos.

P. ¿Fue útil para su ministerio o mission?

R. Mui útil, especialmente para iniciar un trabajo personal que es por donde hoy que empezos. Amplio mi conocimiento de la realidad de otros lugares.

P. ¿Tiene alguna sugerencia para mejorar?

R. Que los presentaciones sean acompañados por testimonios de vida y se haga relectura **de lo q/dialogo ??** se aprendio y como se transformo. Eso **llega** más al corazón. Continuar con il trabajo grupal y la dinámica Sinodal de escucha.

P. ¿Alguna otra sugerencia?

R. **Hubina** ayudado mucho que la ponente **Amaya hubina** dado su ponencia en español, para **habule** dado lugar y espacio al español y

todos tener la oportunidad de usa la traducción, para sensibilizarnos en esta necesidad.

Muchos gracias por la oportunidad y continua animando a nos Congregaciones para que participen. Fu un buen gruppo.

ITALIANO

D. Cosa hai imparato da questo seminario?

R. Investire sempre più nella *non-violenze* ed essere strumento di comunione nella parola ed azione. Quanto importante sia la nostra missione con i rifugiarti/sfollati: mi ha rinforzato la condizione che siamo tutti fratelli e che mai dobbiamo perdere la speranza che “la non-violenza salverà il mondo”.

Missione in zone di conflitto e guarigione — ci vuole accompagnamento (vicinanza, ascolto *empowerment*) nel cammino di riconciliazione, lavorare in rete, il dialogo. Il cammino di non-violenza è stato molto utile per la mia missione perché questo è vivere il Vangelo — seguire la Persona di Gesù.

D. E stato utile per il mio ministero o missione?

R. Sì, molto. I temi sono stati utile e molto realiste; moderatore e facilitatori sono state molto chiari, e hanno saputo passare il tema. Sì, prima di tutto perché ho scoperto che la riconciliazione incomincia da me.

D. Hai qualche suggerimento per migliore?

R. Approfondire l'importanza di lavorare in rete. Perché per affrontare la situazione in zone di conflitto ci vuole la capacità di lavorare insieme/rete. Preferirei che ci fosse più tempo di riflessione personale e meno lavori di gruppo.

Vedere come organizzare meglio il pomeriggio, perché era un po' difficile di seguire.

D. Qualche altro suggerimento?

R. Più tempo per chi presenta il tema, perché hanno tanta esperienza.

Interview with Peter Baekelmans, CICM 31 May 2024, made by Eughene Hertoghe

Il “dio” del Buddhismo (Urbaniana University Press, Rome, 2023)
(Italian translation of the book *The Hidden “God”, Towards a Christian Theology of Buddhism*, Angelico Press, New York, 2022)

<https://vimeo.com/953254007>

My name is Peter Baekelmans, and the title of my new book is “*Il ‘dio’ del Buddhismo*”. I wanted to offer this book also to Pope Francis. As theologian it is the greatest gift one can imagine. Of course, one does not have much time to talk with the Pope on such occasions, but I saw that the Pope has well listened to the words I spoke, and that he was greatly pleased.

I told the Pope that this book is for “una teologia in uscita”, “an outgoing theology”. The Pope talks a lot about “an outgoing Church”, but also theology should be outgoing, going to the world, also to the theological world of other religions, and this book is about the theological world of the Buddhists. But here is a problem, because the Buddhists do not think that there is a god in Buddhism. Also because they do not have this word “god”. They think directly on a personal god, a creator god, the one and only god, which for us are aspects of the God of Revelation (deus revelatus). However, for the Buddhists, important is the god who is not revealed, the “hidden” god (deus absconditus). That is their teaching, and basically also the same what our theology teaches.



We always talk about the revelation theology, the god who revealed himself in the world, in Jesus, in the Bible, but in the end He always remains also a bit hidden. We have to respect this. Well, the Buddhist are there to tell us: “Respect God! From the moment you talk about God, God is not there

anymore!” One has to remain in the experience, the mystical experience where there are no words, but where one can sense love, wisdom, energy.” All that exists in the “silence” and “emptiness” of which they speak, but in sum it is the word “Dharma” that expresses all this for the Buddhists. “Dharma” is the God of Buddhism, not in the meaning of “teachings (of the Buddha)”, but in the sense of “Truth”, “Order of the World”. This is the true god of Buddhism, and also ours.

SEDOS DIAMOND JUBILEE 2024

1964 - 2024



SEDOS AUTUMN SEMINAR

Thursday, 7 November 2024

Theme: Intergenerational living for Mission

Venue: UISG

SEDOS Annual General Assembly and SEDOS

Christmas Party on 18th December

Venue: UISG

SEDOS Residential Seminar

At Nemi (16-20 June, 2025)