

*The spirit of our founder impels us to embrace the great causes of God and man, and to go wherever God is threatened in Man and Man is threatened as the image of God* (Rule of Life, #4b)

Assigned to the new community in Goma (Democratic Republic of the Congo/DRC) to be involved in radio communications, I find myself, instead, for the time being, in the sphere of the 'formal' word-of-mouth communication that takes place in refugee camps near Goma-Sake, with those who have had to flee militia violence in the area. It is a preferential option for the poorest levels of society, especially the most vulnerable displaced persons; the elderly, the handicapped, widows and widowers, unaccompanied children, and heads of households also need someone with whom to communicate in order to be healed of the loneliness they are suffering. This is my new way of 'communicating in another way »: confidential conversations in plastic-sheeted huts or simply outside in a field. These huts for the displaced are popularly called « blindés » (« armoured shelters »). The life lived there is not very attractive at all!



Nobody needs to be reminded why these people have fled their homes and abandoned their fields. They are seeking refuge from the human butchery which took hold of the villages where they lived.

Compassion for human beings struggling on the margins of society was the hobby horse of Fr.

Pedro Arrupe, former Superior General of the Society of Jesus. He founded the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) taking as its mission to accompany, serve, and defend the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.



This noble mission rests on a faith in God present in human history even in its most tragic moments.



In a smuch as this organization is Catholic and a ministry of the Society of Jesus, the JRS draws its inspiration from the compassion and love of Jesus for the poor and the excluded. To carry out its mission, the JRS works in close collaboration with the local church and with religious families that share its salvific vision of the displaced person. In Goma, the JRS works with an Assumptionist religious for the extension of the Kingdom of God even within camps for internally displaced persons…







The core strength of this service with the displaced rests on its human values. Compassion: we

are encouraged to relieve suffering and to treat all with the same respect with which we ourselves desire to be treated. Hope: we provide refugees with support that is both spiritual and concrete during this difficult time of displacement. Solidarity: with humility and dignity we are called to serve displaced persons of different cultures, religions, nationalities, and social classes. Hospitality: we are likewise called to accompany and welcome the most vulnerable, giving priority to those great needs which other groups and agencies (humanitarian in nature) do not address. Justice: we try never to forget to work with the refugees to defy those systems which deny human rights.



Many persons of good will collaborate with great discretion in this work. They make financial contributions, according to their means and priorities. May all who are still reluctant to help out do their part, insofar as they can, to come to the aid of their brothers and sisters who are suffering in these refugee camps, exposed to all kinds of adverse weather conditions. It has been said, « Don't expect to be comfortably warm on the cross » !… These persons have come to the point where they repreat one phrase: « I am hungry. For the last three months I have only had water to drink. There is no one to help me… » And then tears begin to well up in their eyes as a sign of their powerlessness!



What do they need? Food, clothing, shelter, a little money to buy salt and oil, soap and water bottles, plastic buckets and blankets.

Be aware that these people of whom I speak are especially displaced persons who live in sites called « temporary » and who bear their burden day and night. They have no one to help them. They know no one and no one knows them…They are basically left to this their sad fate. We are talking about the elderly, the handicapped, orphaned children, and widows who must care for many children.

We organize our little carts to bring them as best we can your contributions, which permit these forgotten ones of the planet to survive from one day to the next.





Let us also increse our pleas to all the warlords that they may put an end to the senseless violence afflicting our land and that a lasting peace may return without delay to a population strangled by ceaseless wars and the devastating consequences that come in their wake.

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