

jesuits

in East Asia and Oceania

July 2006



Pilgrim Ignatius

in the Jubilee year

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Cambodia and Burma

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Assistancy snapshots



TRIAL BY FIRE AND EARTHQUAKE

During the recent troubles, Jesuits of East Timor offered refuge in their communities to hundreds of people fleeing for safety.

In the Yogyakarta area, the earthquake damaged churches, schools and colleges. Among its victims were family members of Indonesian Jesuits.



JUBILEE EVENTS

The most historically evocative recent event was at Melaka, Francis Xavier's stopping place on the way to Japan and China. In June, a statue of Francis and his servant, Anjiro, was blessed. It was a gift of the Catholic community in Kagoshima.



OUR IMAGES OF IGNATIUS

On the cover is the Jubilee image of Ignatius from the Philippines. On the back cover *The Miraculous Mark on the Roche* by Michael Donnelly comes from Xavier College, Melbourne. The pilgrim statue of Ignatius is by Vincent Pipin.



Beth Doherty

OUR HOME IS THE WORLD

The Korean Province now has responsibility for the Jesuit Mission in Cambodia. It was previously the charge of the Jesuit Conference of the Assistancy.

We continue to benefit from the generosity of Jesuits in the South Asian Assistancy. They are providing an assistant for the combined Tertiarity in Kandy, Sri Lanka. Joel Mascarenhas, from the Bombay Province, has taken responsibility for administration in the East Asian Pastoral Institute.



WORLD YOUTH DAY 2008

We are now preparing for World Youth Day in 2008. The Australian Jesuits are planning an Ignatian programme for young people from the Assistancy and beyond. Time to make preparations.



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Ignatius and the *pilgrim* way

He bought a pilgrim's staff and a small gourd, and put everything up front on the mule's saddle



After the early companions formed the Society of Jesus, Ignatius rarely left Rome. But like Francis Xavier, he has left his mark on our Assintancy. Many houses and communities are named after him or places associated with him. They include schools, retreat centres, parishes, and even Provincial Offices.

Ignatius described himself as the Pilgrim. The title suggests a deeper connection with our region. It links the travel that brought Jesuits to Asia with their inner voyage. Ignatius' pilgrimage brought together the movements of the heart, his following of Jesus, his own travel, the power that the image of Jerusalem had for him and his companions, and his shaping of the Jesuit way of proceeding. We bring together some of these aspects of Ignatius' pilgrimage in the centre pages.

From the time he lay in bed wounded, Ignatius was drawn to Jerusalem. This was the greatest of the places to which devout Christians, repentant Christians, went as pilgrims. This pilgrimage allowed the pilgrim to follow Jesus where he had walked. No wonder that Ignatius wanted to go there.

When Ignatius went to the Holy Land, he wanted to see exactly where Jesus had been. He even rashly returned to Mount Olivet to see which way Jesus' feet were pointing when he ascended to heaven. It encouraged him to pray imaginatively on the events

of Jesus' life, culminating in his death and resurrection. So his pilgrimage fed the *Spiritual Exercises* that he was developing.

It was only natural that Ignatius' young companions in Paris, whom he had introduced to the *Exercises*, also wanted to go to Jerusalem. If the ships had sailed that year, we may have known them only as pilgrims who spent their lives, perhaps their short lives, in Jerusalem. But they could not go to Jerusalem. So they offered themselves to the Pope for mission. The Society of Jesus was born. But it remained a group of pilgrims whose style was to travel without baggage. As Jerome Nadal said, the Jesuits' home was the journey.

We see this in the long and short journeys of Jesuits like Francis Xavier, Edmund Campion and Benito de Goes. But Ignatius applied it to all Jesuits when he described *our way of proceeding*. It is to be companions of Jesus on his path: to travel lightly, discern the way, to be flexible, and to stop where fruit is to be picked.

For Ignatius, the Jesuit Constitutions were a road map. When he advises Jesuits how they are to choose ministries, he describes a pilgrimage. We should choose paths that promise the most lasting good, that make us walk with people who are most in need, paths that others

will not take. We are to be flexible and constantly to discern our path.

Pilgrims come to see freshly the faces of their fellow travellers. They are constantly invited to be compassionate. On his journey, Ignatius founded houses for prostitutes and worked in hospitals.

In this edition of *Jesuits in East Asia and Oceania*, we focus on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Jesuit Refugee Service in Asia. Accompanying refugees made Jesuits think of their journey as a pilgrimage. The birth of the Cambodian mission, for which the Korean province has now accepted responsibility, was testimony to the flexibility of JRS.

The Indochinese crisis that gave birth to JRS also brought many young Vietnamese on a pilgrimage that led them to become Jesuits in foreign lands. Pham Van Ai, who joined the Jesuits in Australia, recently returned to Vietnam. He describes the young Jesuits whom he met.

A refugee Jesuit *returns home* to Vietnam



'My age is as old as your time of living in Australia.' This remark of Hoang An, the youngest scholastic at Saint Joseph's Jesuit House of Studies reminds me of my journey from Vietnam to Australia and now again back to my native country.

I was among 38 boat people who left Vietnam in February 1982. A German humanitarian ship, named Cap Anamur, rescued us from the sea and then sent us to Palawan Refugee Camp in the Philippines. After one year, I was accepted and arrived in Australia. Most of my boat friends resettled in Germany. Early in 1984, I joined the Australian Jesuits and was ordained priest at the end of 1993. In 2004, during my first trip back to Vietnam I visited Saint Joseph and planned with the rector, Fr Nguyen Cao Sieu SJ for more visits.

In mid-January 2006, I returned to Saint Joseph just in time to join the Vietnamese Jesuits at their annual gathering. The house of studies is located in the district of Thu Duc, about fifteen km north of Saigon. It shares the property with the Regional Superior's Office, facilities for retired Jesuits, and the parish church of Hien-Linh (Epiphany).

For three days, the Jesuits shared their vision and enjoyed one another's company. They saw the great value of giving the *Spiritual Exercises* to various groups of people. This is the main work of the Region. They also spoke of the formation of young Jesuits, of intellectual ministry, and even of responding to the Society's mission outside Vietnam.

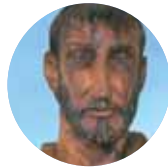
I found it very encouraging to know that the Region can openly form 27 novices, and that it has the luxury of 'screening' 160 prospective candidates. The gathering ended with a celebration of the Final Vows of four Jesuits and of New Year of the Dog.

I stayed on at Saint Joseph with 28 scholastics and brothers who are completing their first three years of Jesuit studies. Most have completed a university degree. Here they study philosophy, scriptures, fundamental theology, and Ignatian spirituality.

The faculty includes Jesuits and professors from other institutes in Vietnam. Because they can come for only short periods of

time, most courses are done intensively. The daily deadlines do not lessen the students' eagerness to study. Some argue that their schedule is much better than that of Jesuits who studied a few years earlier. Then all religious activities were strictly 'supervised.'

The students also give much time to learning new languages. Each weekend they study French. They reserve one month of each summer for learning English. Wednesday is also an English-speaking day. They need to concentrate hard during communal prayers, liturgies, and meal conversations! As a result, many can follow lectures, read set material, and write assignments in English.



We too can reckon ourselves to be in our Indies, which are to be found in all places.

The study of English also prepares them for later studies in places like Manila, Boston and other places where they can get scholarships and visas.

After 1975, the Vietnamese Jesuits' library was destroyed. Since then they have gradually collected relevant material from anywhere they can find, and have rebuilt the house library. But it is still basic, with few new items. Since most of the young Jesuits of the Vietnam Region read English well and use the internet freely, they would benefit from access to our Jesuit e-libraries. That would enable them to read periodicals and printed material through the internet.

At St Joseph's, Sundays are pastoral days. The young Jesuits head out on their motorbikes to different places. Some lead choirs, youth groups, and CLC

in parishes. Some accompany university students and immigrant workers. Others care for the needy and for people with HIV/AIDS. Some even take care of the candidates of other religious congregations!

The most popular moment of the daily routine is the time for playing sport. At volleyball, table tennis or badminton, faces are no longer stressed and intent, but enthusiastic. This may be the only formation community today in which all the young Jesuits share the same taste for sport.

I am grateful to the Jesuits in Vietnam, especially the rector, brothers and scholastics at Saint Joseph, for welcoming me. I was privileged to share their experience of the various times of struggle and happiness, tension and zeal, of fear and hope. Most of all I valued Jesuit companionship during my pilgrimage to my own native country.

Pham Van Ai and
Nguyen Cao Sieu sj



Our home is the journey

Pham Van Ai, the writer of this article, is one of many young Vietnamese who left Vietnam by boat as refugees, and entered the Society of Jesus in other lands. Most joined Provinces in the United States, France and Australia.

They have brought new life to the Provinces that they joined, and to the missions of the Society. The challenge that they faced in living as Jesuits outside their homeland was commonplace in Ignatius' day. But it was also great. How great was hinted at in the sermon preached on Pham Van Ai's vow day, 7 March, 1986.

You are called to be a bridge. It is not easy to be a bridge. You have crossed the seas that separate the two cultures which you must span. You know how distant they are from one another. Legs that span such a wide sea must grow tired, and there will be times when you will not feel at home. Bridges, too, are for walking on. You will help people who cross from Vietnam to find the hand of God in their new life in Australia; you will also help those of us who cross from the Australian side to find the gift that God has made in your countrymen and in your culture. There will surely be times when you weary of bearing the burdens put on you. But we may be confident that God, who has blessed us by bringing you safely over such dangerous waters, will give you strength and joy in his service.

How Jesuits *came to be journeymen*

St Ignatius described himself as the Pilgrim. After his conversion, he travelled simply and far. His journeys were of the feet and of the heart. He modelled the spiritual journey and the mission of later Jesuits.



1 **Pamplona:** the compass

Yet there was this difference. When he was thinking about the things of the world, he took much delight in them, but afterwards, when he was tired and put them aside, he found he was dry and discontented.



2 **Manresa:** learning to walk

God treated him at this time just as a schoolmaster treats a child whom he is teaching. Whether this was on account of his coarseness or his dense intelligence or because he had no one to teach him or because of the strong desire God himself had given him to serve him, he clearly believed and has always believed that God treated him in this way.





8 Trent: Christ's way

Visit the hospitals at a convenient hour that will not be injurious to health. Hear the confessions of the poor, and console them, and even bring them some little gift if you can.



7 Rome: the whole world

Owing to the extreme pressure I am under in suddenly having to send some of our men to the Indies, some to Ireland, and others to different parts of Italy, I will not have the time to write at length as I should wish. Master Francis Xavier of Navarre is the bearer of this letter.



6 Rome: true north

One day, while still a few miles from Rome, he was praying in a church and saw so clearly that God the Father had placed him with his Son Christ that his mind could not doubt that God the Father had indeed placed him with his Son.



5 Paris: the heavenly city

At this time the companions had all decided what they had to do, namely, to go to Venice and then to Jerusalem to spend their lives in the service of souls; and if they were not given permission to remain in Jerusalem, they would return to Rome and present themselves to the vicar of Christ.



4 Alcalá: the way of mind

In Alcalá he studied the logic of Soto, the physics of Albert, and the Master of the Sentences. While at Alcalá he was busy giving spiritual exercises and teaching Christian doctrine, and in so doing brought forth fruit for the glory of God.

3 Jerusalem: the earthly city

It was his firm intention to remain in Jerusalem continually visiting the holy places. He also planned to help souls.

The *spirit* of the Jesuit Refugee Service



25 of service
YEARS

The JRS mission is to Accompany, Serve, and Plead the Cause of refugees.

The order of the words is important. It all begins with accompanying, with a relationship.

Fr Pierre Ceyrac, who worked for many years in the camps in Thailand says, 'I recall a Cambodian girl saying to me, "Father, you are my father, my mother, my brothers and sisters, because I lost my father, my mother, my brothers and sisters."' '

To accompany refugees is a privilege. But it also means sharing pain, because JRS tries to accompany the poorest and most neglected people. Fr Pierre goes on to speak of those who worked at the Cambodian Border. He says, "They all keep this "wound of the border", which is very deep expression we use among ourselves.'

When we spend time with refugees and come to know them, we want to help them find a better life. We want to serve them. Sr Virginia Hasson, an educational expert who worked with JRS in Site 2, remarks that we must first 'listen to the refugees themselves to learn what they want and need'. In Asia,

refugees' need for shelter, food and medicine were met by larger organisations. JRS addressed their deeper desire education, for pastoral care, and to use their gifts for the community. Sr Virginia describes a Saturday evening scene on Pulau Bidong, in Malaysia. 'At the conclusion of the Liturgy,





Friendship with the poor makes us friends of the eternal king.



Above Bernard Arputhasamy during his visit to Koto Indarung, South Aceh

the congregation en masse moved outdoors to a shrine built from bits of the many ships scuttled by the guards as the refugees reached the island. With great emotion, the Vietnamese leaders led the people in prayers



of thanks giving for their own deliverance. Giving the refugees the lead often brings us all to the heart of the matter’.

Refugees are powerless. Other people decide their fate. JRS tries to let their voice be heard. To do this is often unpopular. JRS



workers try not to shout, but to listen to the voices of refugees they accompany, to share their stories, and to allow their voices to be heard. To do this leads us back to St Ignatius and to his emphasis on reflection and on conversation with others. Bernard Arputhasamy, the Regional Director of Jesuit Refugee Service Asia Pacific, says, ‘The situation of refugees and displaced persons in our region is complex, and differs from country to country. But it challenges us to ask why people are displaced, and how we could cooperate with other people to help them find lasting security’.

Accompanying refugees

The history of the Jesuit Refugee Service in Asia is the history of refugees. By 1980 Vietnamese had come, mainly by boat, to Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. After the Vietnamese refugees fled to the Thai border. Laotians also sought asylum in North East Thailand. All were soon placed in closed camps. JRS placed workers there.

At first they attracted sympathy. Many found resettlement in the West. But the Comprehensive Plan of Action (1989) discouraged sea travel, named cut-off dates, and returned failed applicants to Vietnam. In 1992, the Cambodian government agreed to accept the Cambodian refugees from the Border Camps.

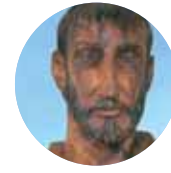
After the crushing of democracy demonstrations in 1988, many Burmese students and members of ethnic minorities fled to the Thai Border. Some also came to Bangkok. Thailand attracts many asylum seekers because it routinely offers short term tourist visas.

But over-stayers are jailed until they find the resources to continue or retrace their journey. The JRS Asia/Pacific Office has assisted these groups.

In the violence that then followed the 1999 referendum on Independence, many East Timorese fled to the hills, and others into West Timor. JRS East Timor helped meet their immediate needs.

When the tsunami struck many Asian communities, particularly in Aceh late in 2004, JRS Indonesia was involved in the relief effort. It continues to meet that challenge.

Jesuit Cambodia from *birth to betrothal*



Look at the people around you and realise that they are images of the Holy Trinity.

Beth Doherty



Beth Doherty



Like Adam from Eve, so the Cambodian Jesuit Mission was born out of the side of Jesuit Refugee Service. Now it has been entrusted to the Korean Province. It brings a rich dowry.

In a civil war, both sides suffer. That was true in the fighting that followed the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. But refugee organisations can usually only work with only one side of the conflict. JRS workers who were present in the Cambodian camps by the Thai border always felt uneasy about some aspects of their role there.

They developed many educational programmes in the camps, established a training centre for those injured by land mines, helped refugees build their community resources, and provided pastoral service.

But the camps supported a military insurgency in Cambodia against the

occupying Vietnamese army. In the war, Cambodians on both sides of the Border suffered. Landmine victims were evidence that war destroyed lives indiscriminately.

JRS workers began to dream of a day when they could work for victims of all sides of the conflict. When Cambodia became open to expatriates, they began programmes there that promoted reconciliation. They worked in community education, started a school for the handicapped, contributed to a campaign to ban landmines, and contributed to educational programmes. They helped refugees returning from the Border make a home again in Cambodia.

They also brought the flexible and cooperative ways of working that had served the refugees well at the Border. Jesuits, sisters and lay people worked together, and often shared life in community houses. Sr Denise Coghlan, an Australian Sister of Mercy, led the team that went into Cambodia, and remained responsible for its work.

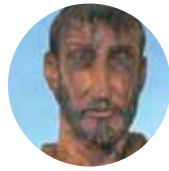
To serve refugees well, JRS has to focus unwaveringly on the needs of refugees. As the Cambodian refugees returned to Cambodia, JRS looked to give responsibility from the programmes in Cambodia to other bodies.

The solution was to create the Cambodian Jesuit Mission. It embraced the

people and the works of JRS, and was the responsibility of the East Asian Assistency.

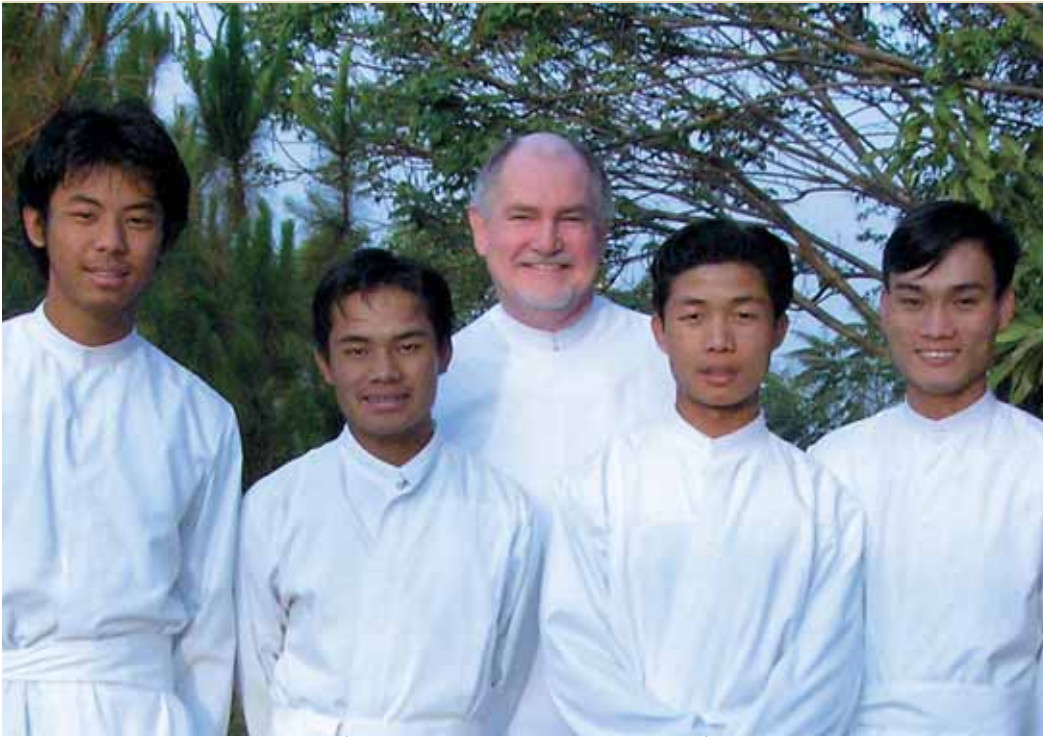
The Cambodian Mission has retained many of the features it inherited from Jesuit Refugee Service. Sr Denise has remained programme director. The Mission has retained its flexible patterns of community living where this best serves the Cambodian people. It also continues to work with handicapped people, encouraging them to develop the confidence and skills that will allow them to take responsibility for their own lives.

The gift of JRS to the mission in Cambodia has been its focus on the needs of people. That will also be the gift of the Cambodian Mission to the Korean Province into whose care it has now been entrusted.



Consider the address which Christ Our Lord delivers to his servants and friends, as he sends them out on this enterprise.

A small band of brothers



Left-right Augustine, Alexander, Fr Steve Curtin, Michael and Stephen

There has been a small Jesuit presence in Myanmar for some years. Their houses include the novitiate, an English Language Institute and a candidacy programme three residences These have been difficult years for the people of Myanmar.

Many Myanmarers, especially from ethnic communities, have found strength and life in turning to Christ. Some have joined the Jesuits. This year, four novices took their vows as Jesuits after completing their noviceship at Taungyi in the Shan State. With their eleven brother scholastics in Manila, they will be build the developing Jesuit Mission in Myanmar.

Stephen Martay

Stephen was born in Kayah State. He is 26 years old. He sees the poverty of his people and their need for a Church that helps them build a community of love. During the Novitiate, Stephen was sent to experience the hard life of unskilled labourers.

They worked twelve hour shifts six days a week in a plywood factory. Like them, Stephen was paid 75 cents a day. The workers' care for one another struck him most sharply. Stephen writes, 'I was a strange and new person for them, yet they had trust in me. I could feel God's love and generosity through the love and generosity of these poor hard working people.'

Michael Tu Aung

Michael is from Bamew in Kachin State in the north, bordering southern China. He is now 26 years old and has been drawn to a priestly vocation for many years. During the Novitiate, Michael worked for six weeks in a leprosarium in Loilem. The

patients were surprised that, unlike so many people, he was not afraid of them. Michael said, 'I sat, ate and talked with them. I experienced deep joy in my heart to be with them and I found more inner freedom in doing simple things. With happiness, I became more committed and creative in helping the people I believed God was leading me to serve.'

Alexander Pau Sian Zam

Alexander is 22 years old and comes from Kalay in Chin State in the south west of Myanmar. The sight of prisoners in chains has stayed with him since his youth. He has always wanted to make the world a better place. During the Noviceship,

he was sent on a ten day pilgrimage, begging for food and a place to sleep. After the pilgrimage he wrote, 'At times my heart was filled with amazement at the kindness and generosity of people towards us. The way they accepted us, the way they offered food, and talked to us with honesty, mercy and love, reinforced my faith in the basic goodness of people.'

Augustine Pyae Sone

Augustine's family now lives in Loikaw in Kayah State in the north east of Myanmar. For a time Augustine and his family lived in Yangon. Augustine feels grateful for the opportunities he has had in his life. Though he could have studied medicine at Yangon University he wanted more to serve his people as a Priest. He is 19 years old.

Augustine says of his novitiate life, 'As I pray regularly, I find it peaceful and joyful to be in prayer. In prayer during work I gain insight from my experiences. This helps me to integrate my prayer and work, and I become more practical by being contemplative in the work.'

Take Lord, and receive

all my liberty, my memory,

my understanding and my entire will,

all that I have and possess.

You gave it all to me;

to you Lord I give it all back:

all is yours.

Dispose of it entirely according to your will.

Give me the grace to love you,

for that is enough for me.

