



The Jesuits

IN ASIA PACIFIC **2022**

A faith that does justice



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A SYNODAL MOMENT FOR THE JESUIT CONFERENCE OF ASIA PACIFIC

The year 2021 was a season of blessings with a lot of pressing challenges. The Ignatian Year, commemorating the 500th anniversary of Ignatius' conversion, commenced on 20 May. Fr General invited all of us, Jesuits and companions in mission, to take stock of our life-mission so we may "see all things new in Christ" – the motto of the Ignatian Year. We were also invited to follow the poor and humble Christ as we reflected and prayed over our vow of poverty. In the last quarter of the year, these initiatives to conversion were contextualized when the Synod on Synodality was convened. The Synod called for greater listening, discernment, communion, conversion, participation, and renewed mission in the Church. We are immensely grateful for all the blessings received: the governance restructuring that made Myanmar a dependent Region of the Philippine Province, the launching of the JCAP Plan (2021 – 2025), our hosting of the second Jesuit Education Global Colloquium, and of the 109 Brothers' gathering, the approval of the China mission proposals, the successful rollout of the two consultors' workshops, the revision and approval of the JCAP statutes, the Local Superiors' workshop, the inaugural lecture series of the theologates in South Asia and Asia Pacific on Asian theologies and cultures, the assembly of novices and those in formation, all these and many more were done virtually and creatively. We are immensely grateful to the Lord for all these blessings.

On the other side of the story, we witness the pain and suffering that people endured during the second year of the pandemic. Although everyone is affected, it is the poor and the vulnerable, who have less access to health care and livelihood, that suffer the most. There is also a lingering fatigue and mental stress that people go through amid the uncertainties. The persistent misery of people due to flooding, forest fires, drought, and other natural calamities brought about by global warming and environmental destruction continues at an unprecedented intensity. The breakdown of democratic institutions in Myanmar and the escalating conflict that ensued have caused untold pain and anguish. The protest movements in Thailand, Hong Kong, and the Philippines are signs of growing unrest and political instability. These are a few of the many pressing challenges that we face.

Still, we soldier on with faith, hope, and courage. We press on without quick and clear solutions. We move on as a synodal body eager to listen and learn from each other, willing to encounter surprises in our life-mission, desirous to find the will of God, and committed to allowing the Spirit to accompany us in our journey toward fullness of life and freedom.

Tony Moreno SJ
President
Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific

* *Painting of The Conversion of Iñigo de Loyola by Fr Mateusz Orłowski SJ*

2021 AT A GLANCE



6 The Jesuit Mission in Micronesia celebrates 100 years since the arrival of the first Jesuit missionaries on the island in 1921.

MARCH



19 The Myanmar Jesuit Mission becomes a Dependent Region of the Philippine Province. (See related story on pg 10)

JANUARY 25-29

JCAP Major Superiors hold their 2nd virtual assembly in an atmosphere of synodality in a digital world. New major superiors are welcomed: Fr Quyen Vu SJ of the Australian Province, Fr Edward Quinnan SJ of the Micronesia and Fiji Community, and Fr Miguel Garaizábal SJ of the Thailand Region.

MAY



3 Fr General Arturo Sosa SJ launches his new book, *Walking with Ignatius*, presenting the first copy to Pope Francis.

APRIL



4 The Philippine Church begins the yearlong commemoration of 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines.



13 JCAP launches its Apostolic Plan 2021-2025. (See related story on pg 6)

16 Jesuit Refugee Service Asia Pacific launches the 40-4-40 project in collaboration with JCAP ministries. (See related story on pg 12)



24 Jesuits in Jakarta join an interfaith prayer and bike rally on the eve of the ASEAN Summit to show support for the people of Myanmar and pray for an end to the political and civil crisis.



20 The global Society of Jesus begins the celebration of the Ignatian Year, commemorating St Ignatius' conversion 500 years ago in the Battle of Pamplona.



21 The Philippine Province announces a renewed Province Plan 2021-2024.

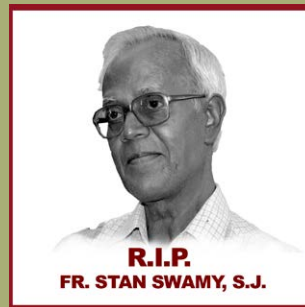
JUNE

2 The Jesuit conferences of Asia Pacific and South Asia through Jesuit Mission Australia with religious and lay leaders from around the world unite in prayer for Myanmar and India.

JUNE 28 - JULY 2



JCAP Education hosts the second Jesuit Education (JESEDU) Global Colloquium as a fully online event.



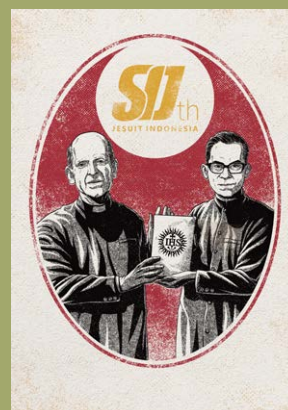
JULY 5

Indian tribal rights defender Fr Stan Swamy SJ dies in Mumbai after nine months in prison.

OCTOBER

6-8 JCAP holds inaugural gathering of novices from Jesuit novitiates in Australia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Timor-Leste, South Korea, Philippines, and Indonesia.

31 Some 109 Jesuit brothers from all over the world meet online for a worldwide Jesuit brothers' gathering hosted by JCAP.



SEPTEMBER 8

The Society of Jesus in Indonesia marks 50 years as an independent province. (See related story on pg 8)

NOVEMBER



1 Fr Stephen Tong SJ becomes the new Provincial of the Chinese Province, succeeding Fr Stephen Chow SJ.



6 The Jesuit parish of St Ignatius and Caritas Singapore inaugurate a Climate Action Conference for Catholic parishes in Singapore.

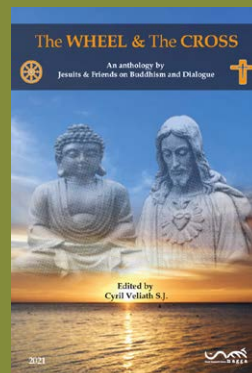
10 The Australian Jesuits join a growing number of Catholic organisations committing to the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development's Laudato si Action Platform.

DECEMBER

1 The theologates of the Jesuit conferences of Asia Pacific and South Asia organise their first "Conversation" to enhance students' theological formation for mission in the Asian context.



4 Fr Stephen Chow SJ is installed as the ninth Bishop of Hong Kong by Cardinal John Tong Hon.



20 The Buddhist Studies and Dialogue Group publishes its second anthology titled, "The Wheel & The Cross", based on the loving friendship that forms the most vital base for interreligious dialogue and collaboration.

OUR PILGRIM JOURNEY AS A JESUIT CONFERENCE

To listen, to learn, to be led, and to love by walking together—these words emerged with increasing resonance as we met over the course of three years in the conference to discern our apostolic plan. They signify for us the paradigm shift that we had undergone, no doubt inspired by the Holy Spirit. And no, you did not read it wrong – three years indeed! What started out as a presumably straight-forward task to renew the previous five-year plan turned out to be a prolonged journey that took us through many twists and turns.

We first began our journey in a very different world, a pre-Covid world. At several meetings (yes, face-to-face!) from mid-2018 to early-2019, the JCAP Major Superiors and Extended Consult (comprising heads of various apostolates, networks, and institutions in the conference) examined our current realities vis-à-vis the previous conference plan. Using the method of Spiritual Conversation, we noted the consolations and desolations, and acknowledged that although we have progressed as a conference, there was much room for improvement in our internal and external collaboration. In particular, not many people had previously paid much attention to the detailed text of the conference plan, and there had not been much ground-up involvement in the planning. Inter-provincial and inter-sectoral dialogue in planning was also limited. In addition, we admitted our dire inadequacy in terms of personnel, resources, time, and talent.

As we endeavoured to address these gaps, little did we know that they would sow the seeds of synodality in a time to come. The launch of the Universal Apostolic Preferences

(UAPs) discernment process was a great grace in our planning. It helped us to see that we were part of a bigger picture, and that we journeyed not alone but with the Universal Society. Unprecedented consultations were carried out at the grassroots level in all provinces, regions, and sectors. Many of these included not only Jesuits but also mission partners. The Spiritual Conversation method was taught and used more widely. This further deepened our experience in communal discernment as desired at General Congregation 36, and some people even felt that this was the first time that they really listened to one another and discerned together. The Major Superiors then met in late 2019 to reflect on our graced history as a conference and to fine-tune the UAP submission.

In the light of the freshly-promulgated UAPs, we experienced a ground-breaking meeting in Hong Kong in mid-2019. We reflected on identity and mission in the Society as well as on the signs of the times. But just when we thought that a list of conference priorities was within reach, the Holy Spirit had other plans! Our prayer, reflection, and conversation turned our attention instead to our own need for conversion, for getting out of the box and our comfort zone, and for taking more time to discern. Most of all, we felt a new desire to listen to others especially the people on the margins and the youth, to learn from them, to be led by them, and to love by walking together. We recognised this as a paradigm shift from doing ministry “to” and “for” them, to doing together “with” them, and more importantly, “being with” them.

God gave us the grace to be flexible, patient, open, and spiritually discerning in the planning process rather than rushing to complete it. In another unprecedented move, an enlarged consult met in Manila in late-2019 involving not only office bearers but also members of sectoral core teams. Moreover, the planning conversations were carried out in inter-sectoral clusters rather than along sectoral lines. As a result, several apostolic and organisational priorities were identified.

The Major Superiors then gathered for a first-ever joint retreat in Baguio, Philippines in early February 2020. The graces of this retreat bore fruit in an earnest and prayerful dialogue towards a draft plan. Amidst many areas of mission that seemed equally urgent and important, they were able to reach consensus on a realistic list of priorities.

However, history then disarmed us with a huge canon ball. The Covid-19 pandemic drastically changed the context of mission and we thought that we had to discern all over again. We held an online conference (another first!) to discern about the pandemic and listen to the voices of the youth and to the situation of the poor. The theme of vulnerability as a grace emerged strongly. We realised that instead of rendering our tentative conference priorities redundant, the pandemic actually reaffirmed them. Eventually we were able to finalise the JCAP five-year priorities with some specific goals by early 2021 with Father General's approval.

These priorities comprise *cura apostolica* (care of the apostolic works), and *cura personalis* and governance (care of the personnel and governance), both of which are equally important. The first focuses on poverty, ecology, spirituality, the youth, the Church, and mainland China.

The second focuses on strengthening governance in developing regions such as Myanmar, Laos, Timor-Leste, and Cambodia, restructuring some units for more effective mission, improving leadership and synodality throughout the conference, strengthening formation of Jesuits and mission partners, and developing the theological educational apostolate.

The statement of desire with which the planning document begins best conveys our overarching view of these priorities: "Seeing all things new in Christ, we want to walk in a journey of conversion and synodality as we commit ourselves to the urgent call of poverty and reconciliation with creation in Asia Pacific. We seek to collaborate especially with the youth, with the Church, with other faiths, and with those in civil society engaged in similar concerns. Ignatian Spirituality is the gift we share and the charism in which we desire to grow."

The ensuing months saw several inter-sectoral online meetings to flesh out concrete action plans, and we even held our first examen of the fruits of implementation in late 2021. Admittedly, without being forced by the pandemic to become more familiar with online meetings, we might have been slower to move towards such an inter-sectoral way of collaborating!

Looking back, it could be said that identity, life, and mission are not just destinations but things that happen along the way. Indeed, whatever the twists and turns, it is *how* we travel the road that makes the difference. By God's grace, the process of planning was itself the very moment when we began to fulfil our desire to listen, to learn, to be led, and to love by walking together. May Ignatius lead us forward in our pilgrim journey!

Christina Kheng
JCAP Planning Consultant



MILESTONE

THE JESUITS IN INDONESIA: HONOURING THE PAST, EMBRACING THE FUTURE



ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2021, THE JESUITS IN INDONESIA CELEBRATED THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDONESIA AS AN INDEPENDENT PROVINCE OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

A thanksgiving Mass was held on 11 September celebrated by Indonesian Provincial, Fr Benedictus Hari Juliawan SJ, with the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Semarang, Fr YR Edi Purwanto, and the parish priest of St Joseph, Gedangan, Semarang, Fr Benedictus Cahyo Christanto SJ. Former provincials, including His Eminence Julius Cardinal Darmaatmadja SJ, joined as concelebrant in the church, while Fr Riyo Mursanto SJ joined the celebration online

from Manila. Remarkably, the Covid-19 pandemic gave the Jesuits an opportunity to make the thanksgiving Mass more inclusive. Parishioners from Jesuit parishes and collaborators in the various social and education apostolates contributed to the liturgy through video. The Church of St Joseph in Gedangan, where the Mass was held, is a historic place for the Indonesian Province. It is one of the oldest churches in Central Java and was the residence of Archbishop Albertus Soegijapranata SJ, the first local bishop regarded as one of Indonesia's national heroes and especially remembered by Javanese Catholics for his contribution during the struggle for Indonesian independence.

THE EARLY JAVA MISSION

The presence of the Jesuits in Indonesia can be traced to two key moments in history. The first Jesuit to arrive in Indonesia would become one of the greatest Catholic missionaries since St Paul, the Apostle. St Francis Xavier arrived in Moluccas in 1546 followed by the Spanish and Portuguese Jesuits. (Incidentally, 2022 marks the 400th year since the canonisation of St Francis Xavier.) Thus began the Jesuit mission in eastern Indonesia. For 130 years, the record shows 81 Jesuits working in Moluccas.

The second key moment was the arrival of Dutch missionaries in 1859. They included Fr Martinus van den Elzen and Fr Joannes Baptista Palinckx. Indonesia was known as the Dutch East Indies during the colonial era, and the Jesuit mission held the juridical status of Java Mission. Dutch missionary Fr Franciscus Georgius Josephus van Lith SJ would later be recognised by the Indonesian Ministry of Education for his missionary and educational work in Central Java. The Jesuits had set up the first Catholic school in Muntilan, where students regardless of their religious, cultural, or ethnic background could receive an education. Archbishop Soegijapranata was one of the many prominent Indonesians in the 20th century who trained at the school.

THE BIRTH OF THE INDONESIAN PROVINCE

It was the Dutch missionaries who paved the way for local Indonesian Jesuits, and ultimately, the Indonesian Province. Fr General Jean-Baptiste Janssens in 1956 established Indonesia as an independent vice province of the Netherlands. His successor, Fr General Pedro Arrupe, subsequently established the Indonesian Province on 8 September 1971. Fr Antonius Soenarja SJ who had been in the leadership of the Indonesian Jesuits since 1967 was appointed as the first provincial. The newly established province had 333 Jesuits with 176 local Indonesian Jesuits and 157 missionaries of different nationalities. In his decree establishing the Indonesian Province, Fr Arrupe noted: "Not as in many other places where the number of the members decrease, in Indonesia the members increase of which the majority was born in Indonesia."



In its early years, the province dealt with identity issues. The tension between local Jesuits and the missionaries culminated in the term "Indonesianisation" in the 1960s. Even as the locals served in more roles in the works of the province, the tension did not easily subside. Fr Woerkens, one of the Dutch missionaries, in 1974 wrote in the

Indonesian Jesuits' internal newsletter, *Internos*: "The word Indonesianisation is sometimes understood incorrectly, using words like foreign workers, full time employees, and contracted workers. Such words hurt feelings. The polarisation of local and foreign Jesuits should not happen. It hurts the love among the Jesuits. The Church and the Society of Jesus is not a company consisting of local and foreign manpower."

As the province turned 50, such tension is no longer present. There are not enough foreign missionaries left for it to be an issue. Today only one Dutch and five German missionaries remain. As of 2021, the province has 339 Jesuits, 246 of whom are priests, 74 are scholastics, and 19 are religious brothers. Identity, however, remains a question within the province. Statistically speaking, 90 per cent of the Indonesian Jesuits are Javanese and perhaps close to 95 per cent are Java Island-born. Among the Jesuits in Indonesia and even in the Asia Pacific conference, there is a joke that SJ stands for the Society of Javanese rather than the Society of Jesus!

DEEPENING ITS INDONESIAN IDENTITY IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY

The extent to which the Society of Jesus in Indonesia can become more Indonesian continues to be a challenge. In an attempt to bring a healthy cultural diversity to the province, then Provincial Fr Sunu Hardiyanta SJ in 2019 sent three Jesuits to work in the Diocese of Banjarmasin, Archdiocese of Pontianak, and Diocese of Ketapang in Kalimantan Island.

Fr Juliawan in 2021 sent two more Jesuits including one newly ordained to the Diocese of Ketapang, and another to the Diocese of Banjarmasin. The province plans to involve more Jesuits in the education apostolate in Kalimantan Island in anticipation of the relocation of the Indonesian capital to Kalimantan.

For quite a while, Indonesian Jesuits have been involved in the formation of seminarians from the dioceses of Kalimantan Island, and Malang, including San Giovanni Major Seminary, as spiritual directors. It is likewise in Sumatra Island with the involvement of Jesuits in St Peter Major Seminary in Pematang Siantar. The apostolic work in Papua is concentrated in two parishes and in managing a high school owned by the Diocese of Timika. The hope is that immersion in different Indonesian cultures will bring a wider Indonesian perspective among the local Jesuits.

The Indonesian Province has also sent some of her men to the Jesuit missions in Myanmar, Timor-Leste, Thailand, Japan, and the works of the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific in Manila and the Global Society of Jesus in Rome. This involvement keeps the province in touch with the mission of the universal body of the Society of Jesus.

The golden anniversary of the Indonesian Province is a moment to go deeper into the meaning of harmony in diversity. These days, the province still contends with polarisation, but more in the digital world. Social media platforms are giving rise to all aspects of polarisation. The province sees this as an opportunity. Just as the early Dutch missionaries proclaimed the Gospel to the natives of Java, present day Jesuits in Indonesia want to show the way to God using new technologies, looking back to the past, and moving gently to the future with love, hope, and gratitude.



A NEW STATUS FOR THE GOLDEN LAND



Burma has always been an exotic, isolated country. Over the centuries, the Jesuits have undertaken three distinct missions in Myanmar, as Burma is now known. The most recent mission, which is just over 20 years old, was given a boost when in March 2021 the Jesuit mission in Myanmar was named a dependent region of the Philippine Province. An unpopular coup d'état of February 2021 further isolated Myanmar, and of course its inaccessibility is enhanced by the global Covid pandemic. Yet the new link to the Philippine Province promises new openings for the Jesuit fathers and brothers in Myanmar to seek solidarity with others in Asia.

Although Francis Xavier never visited "The Golden Land", in 1548 he wrote to Ignatius asking that Jesuits be sent to the Kingdom of Pegu, the centre of which was about 40 miles northeast of present-day Yangon. The first Jesuits came to Myanmar from Goa in 1600 as chaplains to Portuguese merchants and Christians from the Malabar Coast and laboured there for 50 years or so. Today, out of a total population of around 56 million, around 740,000 are Catholics. Most are ethnic peoples; descendants of the Portuguese-Burman Christians form a sizeable group among the Catholic population of Myanmar.

A second presence, though short-lived, had a deep impact on Catholic life in Burma. From 1958 until the last of them was expelled in 1966, Jesuits from Maryland Province set up and ran the major seminary in Rangoon, now called Yangon. But a 1962 military-led coup d'état established the "Burmese way of socialism". The political and economic situation deteriorated, leading to significant social upheaval and the expulsion of foreigners.

In the late 1990s, the Burmese bishops went to Rome. Some, who had been seminarians under the Maryland Jesuits, visited Fr General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach and asked the Jesuits to return. This led to the third mission of Jesuits to Burma. Fr Kolvenbach established a mission under his authority, delegating oversight to the Superior of the Thai Region. A dedicated core team, helped over the years by volunteers, mostly from around Asia, helped to recruit and form those who applied to the novitiate. The foreign Jesuits from Korea, Thailand, Malaysia-Singapore, from several provinces in India, from Vietnam, Australia and Indonesia, among others, came to help. Now, 36 members of the newly established Myanmar Dependent Region are native to Myanmar and 12 are from other countries. About 20 are currently studying abroad, either in Indonesia for Philosophy, and for Theology in Manila, with several also in Rome.

Since the very beginning, apart from recruitment and formation of Myanmar Jesuits, priority was given to education. St Aloysius Gonzaga Institute of Higher Education in Taunggyi was opened even before the novitiate, and continues today with support from Ateneo de Davao University. Another school for teaching English, Campion Institute, was set up in 2003 in Yangon. The Myanmar

Leadership Institute was started in 2019 with assistance from Ateneo de Manila University. When Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar in 2008, leaving thousands dead and crops and houses destroyed, Jesuits engaged in a major response, opening the way for initiatives in the social field and nationwide with the Myanmar Church. In recent years the Mission undertook social and pastoral services in two dioceses in Kachin state.

The Jesuits of Myanmar look eagerly to firming up this new relationship with the Philippine Province, while at the same time expectations are modest. First of all, the relationship gives the Myanmar mission a juridical status in the Society, but it also represents a new maturity for the region and greater possibility to contribute to the Society's universal mission. Fr Joseph Aik Maung, one of the first Myanmar Jesuits to be ordained, comments on this. Joseph served for six years in parish life before Tertianship in Australia and is now studying for a Master's degree in Community Development at Ateneo de Davao.



"Coming to this point of legal identity in the Society of Jesus as a Dependent Region of the Philippine Province is indeed historic. It is more than receiving a legal identity; it is a growth to be thankful for and an opportunity to move forward in depth. Although the status change happened around the time of the Covid-19 pandemic without much physical changes happening, the identity as dependent region opens more opportunities as well as responsibilities in the little tormented part of the mission field of the Lord with Ignatian heritage."

Philippine Provincial, Fr Primitivo E Viray Jr reflects on the move as follows:

The opportunity for the Philippine Province to assist the Myanmar mission came about through the efforts of Fr Antonio Moreno, JCAP President. He invited the leadership of the Myanmar mission and the Philippine province to consider entering into this arrangement of the former becoming a dependent region of the Philippines. Fr Moreno took to heart Fr General's instructions to re-examine our governing structures so that it can respond better to our mission. For us in the Philippine Province we saw this as an opportune moment to pay forward the generosity of the Spanish and American provinces who supported the growth of the Philippine mission until it became a province. Thus, we welcomed this graced moment to assist the Myanmar Region in whatever way we can, recognising our own limitations of personnel and finance. We know in our hearts that in the end our involvement with the Myanmar Region will teach us how to better serve and accomplish our mission as one Society in the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific.

The incoming Myanmar Regional Superior, Fr Girish Santiago, who is originally from the Gujarat Province in India, commented enthusiastically on the arrangement:

From the childhood stage (as a mission) Myanmar has reached the youthful stage (as a dependent region) where the youth needs to be guided, supported, and accompanied. Rightly, we hope, the Philippine Province will do such!

Neither partner will be unaffected by this new structure of relationship. Already partnerships with Philippine Jesuit institutions are helpful for Myanmar. Friendships built while Myanmar Jesuits live at Arrupe International Residence and study at Loyola School of Theology help to consolidate partnerships. Little by little as the Myanmar Region and the Philippine Province accompany one another, graces, alliances, and apostolic possibilities will surely follow.

Mark Raper SJ
Outgoing Superior of the Jesuits in Myanmar



RECONCILIATION WITH CREATION

PROJECT 40-4-40: GROWING CANOPIES



POVERTY AND RECONCILIATION WITH CREATION

Many intensive forms of environmental exploitation and degradation not only exhaust resources...but also undo the social structures...shaped cultural identity and their sense of meaning of life and community. (Pope Francis, Laudato Si, 145)

To commit ourselves in concrete ways to the call of poverty and reconciliation with creation (JCAP Apostolic Plan 2021-2025: Cura Apostolica #1)

Poverty and ecology: these were the strongest apostolic priorities discerned during the JCAP Enlarged Consult meeting in October 2019 just before the Covid-19 pandemic. Fr Tony Moreno SJ, JCAP President, asked that teams start to discern collective action and nudged Fr Adri Suyadi SJ, the conference Secretary for Social Ministries, to initiate discussions. It was during one of these discussions that Project 40-4-40 took root with coordinators from indigenous ministry, reconciliation with creation, youth, and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) composing the task force. Fortuitously, 2020 was JRS' 40th anniversary and we saw the event as an opportunity to strengthen our shared mission with JCAP. The goal was for JRS and JCAP to engage marginal forest communities in growing 40,000 trees to generate canopies.

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND DISPLACEMENT

This project has strengthened our relationship with friends and communities. More importantly, I learned to treat nature with a sense of reverence as it is not only a source of life, but God's creation. (Ornich, Karen youth, Omkoi, northern Thailand)

Our group used the (project) funds for our forest patrol activities and in repairing our community headquarters in Boeung Thom. (Hoeun Sopheap, Prey Lang forest community leader, Kompong Thom, Cambodia)

Our project partners are the indigenous communities who have embraced the idea of strengthening their communities by caring for their environment. Five communities in Prey Lang have planted 4,000 endemic trees with seedlings grown from the nursery of the Jesuit Service Cambodia's Ecology Program. Prey Lang (which means "our forest" in Kuy language) is the largest lowland rainforest in mainland Southeast Asia. It was declared a Wildlife Sanctuary in 2016 by the Cambodian government, but the declaration did little to stop commercial exploitation of the forest and displacement of communities. In the Philippines, communities from five provinces assisted by Jesuit parishes in Bukidnon, university outreach centres in Davao and Zamboanga, and private individuals have pledged 22,000 trees (50 per cent of which have been planted) to grow canopies on their ancestral lands.

Forced displacement in marginalised and indigenous communities in Asia Pacific has led to urgent protection concerns. Community activists in Cambodia, the Philippines, and Thailand have suffered persecution while defending their community's survival and natural environment. The communities are pushed to abandon their homes where they have lived for generations. The cultural and environmental integrity of their communities are threatened and disrespected. Many refugees in the region come from indigenous background. Most of the 93,000 camp refugees in northern Thailand come from the Karen and Karenni ethnic groups exiled from Myanmar due to conflict over land and resources. Their future is at stake.

S AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

YOUTH AND CULTURAL REGENERATION

I feel very happy when we plant trees with our own hands. I feel closer to nature as our elders have told us that if we care for nature, nature will care for us. Tree planting is a kind of reconciliation with the fallen trees we have cut or burnt when we prepared farmland. (Pornchai, Karen youth, Mae Sariang, northern Thailand)

Tree planting is not only a good activity for the environment and climate, but it also enhances community spirit, peace, and reconciliation between the two divided groups in our community. It restores positive relationship among us. (Kayah youth, Demoso, Myanmar)

The involvement of the community youth has energised the collaboration project. In the Diocese of Chiang Mai, northern Thailand, Karen youth from six boarding centres and 15 communities have pledged to grow 7,400 trees. Even in small communities in Myanmar torn by conflict, the process has facilitated some healing from their political division bound by their concern and care for creation.

In launching their project activities, communities performed rituals reflective of their culture's respect for creation and spirit stewards. These cultural rituals bridge knowledge, traditions, and values so embedded in indigenous communities from elders to youth. The youth and elders in Chiang Mai conduct sessions before planting activities to raise community awareness of caring for creation guided by the Pope's encyclical, *Laudato sí*. Their progress monitoring is guided by reflection and commitment to the connectedness of the community and creation. The process of growing trees goes beyond the single act of planting a tree but encompasses the organisation, planning, and involvement of communities. Therefore, growing trees means building communities. And building communities have led to a process of rediscovery and regeneration of culture, spirituality, and way of living.

LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS

Let us not wait until all the trees have disappeared, the forests have gone, and more natural calamities besiege us. We have to act now while there is still time. (Deither Dum-ogan, Umayamnon youth leader, Bukidnon, Philippines)

While we're young, we must unite. We will be the next leaders. And when we become old, we will have a legacy to leave to the next generation. (Marlon E. Apan, Manobo youth leader, North Cotabato, Philippines)

The partnership with indigenous communities has resulted in an engagement of the larger society. The Ateneo de Zamboanga University in southern Philippines supported the *Subanen* community's participation and involved relevant government agencies in sourcing 2,000 seedlings of local hardwood and cacao for livelihood potential. In Cambodia, the *Kbal Khla* community engages the local forestry administration officials in site identification, monitoring, and coordinating patrol missions of the vast wildlife sanctuary.

The various models of collaboration have allowed communities to exercise what arrangements would work best for them while maintaining accountability and trust in their shared goals. One community who holds a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT), a tenurial document under Philippine law, formalised their agreement through a notarised memorandum of understanding with Project 40-4-40. A remote site in Cambodia sends audio and photo reports of their progress using social media as internet capability is limited.

The promotion of cultural integrity and care for creation has raised awareness and inspired others to continue with their community's dream. The *Dumagats* outside metropolitan Manila is not connected with any Jesuit institution. They have had forest regeneration projects that have failed due to lack of support. Project 40-4-40 is an opportunity to not give up on their goal of planting 10,000 trees in a 20-hectare watershed.

COMMUNITY OF WITNESS AND SUPPORT

Project 40-4-40 will pursue its partnerships and implementation especially since we have exceeded our target. We thank all the people and organisations who have helped sustain our collaboration. Our gratitude to the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific and its Social Ministries network, and Jesuit Companions in Indigenous Ministry; the Ecology Program of Jesuit Service Cambodia; the Environmental Science for Social Change of the Philippine Province; and to all our partners in the academe, research centres, parishes, indigenous youth and communities, and individuals who have contributed and believe in the value of this campaign.

Louie Bacomo
Director of Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Asia Pacific

HOW DO WE ANSWER THE CALL OF “FRATELLI TUTTI”?



In March 2021, Wishma Sandmali, a Sri Lankan woman, died in the Nagoya Detention Center. She came to Japan with a dream to teach English. While she was learning Japanese, she was physically assaulted by a classmate and was unable to go regularly to school until her visa expired. When she called the police to report the violence, they learned that she no longer had a valid visa so she was sent to a detention centre, where she became seriously ill. Although she asked the officers for decent treatment and hospitalisation, she was ignored. The ministry of immigration attempted to hide the inhumane treatment in the Detention Center. However, the news of her death roused many people to solidarity actions for migrants and refugees. Their collective voice became a powerful force that stopped the government from imposing even stricter immigration laws.

In Japan, more than 10,000 migrants apply for refugee status every year, but the number of those who are recognised is less than 50 people. People in other countries, believing that Japan receives refugees since it signed the treaty, continue to flee to Japan. But lots of them end up being refused and then sent to a detention centre. The policy and stance of the government towards migrants and refugees are seriously problematic.

Although the issue of refugees and migrants has been a great concern of the Shimonoseki Labour Education Center, where I have been working as director, it had not been our central mission, having been eclipsed by the many other issues that our apostolic centre has to deal with. Feeling that I had to do something to change this, last year I started visiting Omura Detention Center in Nagasaki, with two friends who had been regularly going

there. Given the amount of work at the Shimonoseki Labour Education Center, finding time to visit the detention centre has become very special to me.

We meet the detainees one after another, five or six of them throughout the day. They have different reasons for being detained. Every time I listen to them, I feel their pain. There is a young man who was born and raised in Japan whose parents came from Latin America. For some reason, he was sent to jail and after being released was confined in the detention centre because he does not have a Japanese citizenship, even though he had been born and raised in Japan. Under current law, he will not be allowed to work even after he is released. Given the situation, the best option is for him to relocate to the home country of his parents. So I immediately reached out to a Jesuit, in fact my best friend, who lives in that country. He assured me of support for the young man. My visits to Omura have made me realise the necessity of having a global network to support people on the move, and help address the serious problem in the Japanese government's policy on refugees and migrants

In Tokyo, I visited the Arrupe Refugee Center. This visit was very meaningful while I thought about how to solve the problem of Japan's immigration policy and how we could strengthen our network.

What I saw in Kamakura was inspiring and moving. Arrupe Refugee Center was originally a retreat house run by the Jesuits until two years ago when there were no more Jesuits available to serve there. The place was waiting for someone who could use it for God's will. Mr Kenji Arikawa, while working for migrants and refugees in the

Tokyo Diocese, felt the need to have a shelter for refugees. He came to know about the Jesuit retreat house, and began thinking of ways to remake it into a shelter for refugees. With no money and having been refused by civil groups to collaborate on the shelter, he decided to start his own non-profit-organisation with his longtime friend, Hiroshi Urushibara.

The retreat house was transformed into the largest shelter for refugees with 30 rooms and a large open field. Within two years, the Arrupe Refugee Center has welcomed more than 24 applicants for refugee status. By letting people around know about the Arrupe Refugee Center and the dismal situation migrants face in Japan, local citizens gradually



Hiroshi Urushibara (left), Jun Nakai SJ (middle), Kenji Arakawa (right)

started to engage in the activities of the centre. Volunteers and residents at the centre cultivate vegetables together. The refugees are able to regain their sense of dignity by being able to work on the land while socialising with local citizens. I see in this an integration of the essence of *Laudato sí*. The centre offers its residents and local volunteers the space and time to know each other, to work together, and to accompany each other.



Speaking with Arakawa and Urushibara gave me ideas on how to strengthen the JCAP Migration Network to contribute to the Arrupe Refugee Center and the global problem on migrants and refugees. The refugees at the centre will eventually need to leave. The sad reality is that for most of them, it is almost impossible to obtain refugee status under Japan's current immigration systems and laws. The JCAP Migration Network can work towards finding places that will accept refugees, while continuing our efforts in advocating reforms to the current immigration policy not just of Japan but also of other countries.

One suggestion is to have a volunteer/study programme for young people to stay in a Jesuit Refugee Service camp. Living together with refugees and displaced persons will provide them with a life-changing experience. It can help educate and increase the number of people who can raise their voices for the rights of migrants and refugees. We also need to strengthen our domestic network. The Jesuit Social Pastoral Center in Tokyo does consultations with migrants, and connects them with local and church organisations.

Let us walk together on the journey to answer the calling to live together with marginalised people on the move.

Jun Nakai SJ
Coordinator for the JCAP Migration Network



JP
2021

AMID COVID AND COUP: ACCOMPANYING YOUNG PEOPLE IN MYANMAR

When the virus first began to spread throughout the world, in Myanmar “Covid” was an unknown word. Young people of the country strummed their guitar while singing love songs before their lovers’ hostels; they went to college, and played football or *chinlone*. On weekends, some of them would go trekking, fishing, or cycling.

This freedom would not last long, however. The country would go into lockdown in March of 2020. By May, about half of the world’s population was under some form of lockdown. All outside functions ceased. When humans are caged like animals in a zoo, anxiety, depression, and loneliness set in.

About this time, the Magis youth in Myanmar and India requested me to speak about the traumatic experience of the pandemic to around 50 young people. In turn, several Myanmar Jesuit scholastics in Jakarta, Manila, and Rome were galvanised into organising more online activities. These efforts led to the creation of the Magis Myanmar Online Ministry. Originally, the online talks were focused on faith, hope, and love, with the intention of helping the youth overcome the challenges of living in a cloistered society. These activities reconnected them to old friends and linked them to new ones. The online Magis Circle created an opportunity for them to share, listen, and strengthen one another in their life’s journey.

In February 2021, events in Myanmar took a turn for the worse. Citizens from all walks of life protested peacefully against the coup d’état, only to be answered with bullets. By the end of March 2021, hundreds of people, including children, had been arrested or murdered on the streets or in their homes. Doctors and nurses fled the hospitals leaving behind patients and newborn babies. Thousands of children and young people with their parents and grandparents were forced to take shelter in forests or caves. Like the Holy Family’s flight to Egypt during the massacre of infants in King Herod’s time, they carried neither food nor clothes with them. Locusts and wild honey served as their daily bread. Mosquitoes and serpents visited them. Some became infected with the virus and unknowingly shared it with others. Every day, they would wake up and sleep to the sound of bullets and bombs that would end up killing some of them. The bloody ground emitted a foul smell.



“Where is God in the suffering, confusion, and uncertainty in Myanmar today?” This was the burning question of every theist. Members of Magis Myanmar held an online dialogue on 6 March 2021 with American Jesuit Fr James Martin SJ to provide comfort and spiritual clarity amid the violence in Myanmar. “Often in difficult times, we focus only on the difficulties and not where God might be. We are so caught up in the day-to-day events, and we miss where God is speaking to us,” Fr Martin said. The Consciousness Examen gives one time to “notice where God is active” during the day, “to be able to look back and see where God has been beneficial” to overcome difficulties and challenges, especially now in Myanmar.

Consequently, young people came out of the forests, caves, or their houses with unstable internet connection to participate in the online activities of Magis Myanmar. Magis collaborated with a group of Myanmar diaspora youth called Roman Catholic Youth (RCY) to organise weekly online activities on topics covering theology, psychology, sociology, and health. Most of these topics were requested by the participants. Seeing their faith and zeal reminded us of the martyrdom of the Jewish mother and her seven sons in 2 Maccabees 7:1-42.

“The online activity gives me sacred space where I am listened to and where I can also express my agony with confidence.... I pour out every burden in my heart. I receive inner peace amidst the war,” said one participant.

“Some topics appealed to me with greater fervour than others. Every week I learn something new to strengthen my spiritual, social, intellectual, and mental health,” shared another.

A diaspora youth testified: “Every night and day, I worry about my family. Covid and the coup in Myanmar add to my misery. Every piece of news about the country scares me. For about a month, I could not go to work. One day, I saw a programme of Magis Myanmar on Facebook. I have since been actively participating in the activities and have found friends who share my psychological trauma. The Magis Circles and the talks are spiritual and mental boosters for me.”

As it is, it is difficult to discern the shape of the future of Myanmar. Schools and colleges are locked up, churches and pagodas are closed, shops and squares are empty, playgrounds, parks, and museums are unvisited. Everyone in Myanmar is suffering. In Chin and Kayah states, where majority are Christians, there is massive and obscene destruction of life and homes. People’s heads and hearts have become smaller, and their hands colder.

Still, we have hope in the Lord. Fr Walter Ciszek SJ, who had spent over 23 years in captivity in Siberian labour camps and Soviet prisons, wrote in his book, *He Leadeth Me*: “The Church would survive perhaps not exactly as we had known it at the mission because the faith would survive among the people of God as it had always survived in times of persecution.”

PV Joseph Buan Sing SJ
A Myanmar scholastic studying at the
Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy



Dear friends,

The Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific is the main coordinating body of the apostolic missions of the Jesuits in the Asia Pacific region. The Jesuit conference is home to approximately 1,600 Jesuits or 10 per cent of the total number of Jesuits in the world coming from 16 countries in the Asia Pacific region.

The Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific is engaged in frontier services in the fields of evangelisation, education, the intellectual apostolate, parish and pastoral work, retreat ministry, indigenous peoples, reconciliation with creation, and many other apostolic works.

The field of apostolic service is indeed vast, but our Jesuit labourers are not so many. We thank the Lord that the Society of Jesus has many friends and benefactors, and collaborators who believe in our mission, and who commit their help and support as their participation in the building up of the Church.

I wish to invite you then. Come be part of the Jesuit mission. Be part of the Companions of Jesuits in Asia Pacific and the network of collaborators, friends, and benefactors of the Society to pray with us, to support our mission, and with whom we can share the joy of being at the service of the people of God, especially in the church of Asia.

Thank you very much.

Fr Vidal Gornez Jr SJ
Treasurer and Development Officer
Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific





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