

# JESUITS

Central and Southern

Summer 2020



## *Cura Personalis:* Our Response to the Pandemic



Dear friends in the Lord,

On May 20, a beloved former Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, entered eternal life after a long battle with a debilitating disease. No one could have met him and not be moved by his presence and especially his personal warmth.

The UCS Province received him twice.

Personally, I remember best his last visit. He had come to El Salvador in May 2016 to meet with the Jesuit Provincials of the Americas. He had already announced his desire to resign but wanted to be with us and encourage collaboration throughout the hemisphere. Clearly, he was ailing, and he fell, hurting himself. Yet, even in some pain, he desired to complete his trip and meet Jesuits and collaborators in New Orleans. The radiance of his smile, the simplicity and yet power of his words, his humor and depth shaped a remarkable day. No one would have guessed that he was in pain, not even the novices, with whom he spent significant time.

Shortly after his death, we received some notes he had taken for a letter that he never wrote. They touched me deeply and spoke of a man who could be joyful even in pain. Speaking of Jesuit history, he wrote:

*We are all very proud, and rightly so, of our history and of the great men that fill it. ... [W]hat strikes me in all of them is their total dedication to their vocation and mission. They are people who have given everything and remain focused on the ultimate goal of their self-gift: God and the service of his Kingdom.*

Father Nicolás lived that so well; we saw that focus, that lack of distraction, in his presence to everyone during that visit to New Orleans, and especially in his presence to God during the Eucharist.

In this magazine, you will read stories of Jesuits who have heard the call and who respond, even in challenging times. Matthew Stewart and David Lugo have had to delay their ordination. Ángel Flores experienced a deepening of his own call as his pilgrimage invited him to focus on the enduring painful effect of slavery. Alice Edler's piece on men remembering their ordinations points out how the devotion of the first companions continues to live in their descendants.

You are in my prayers. Your help makes it possible to continue our mission and ministry in the footsteps of men like Fr. Nicolás. May the Lord greatly bless you and keep you and your loved ones safe in this time of pandemic.

Gratefully in the Lord,

Ronald A. Mercier, SJ  
Provincial

Queridos hermanos en el Señor,

El 20 de mayo, un querido ex Superior General de la Compañía de Jesús, el P. Adolfo Nicolás, entró a la vida eterna después de una larga batalla contra una enfermedad debilitante. Nadie podría haberlo conocido y no haberse conmovido con su presencia y, especialmente, con su calidez personal.

La Provincia USA Central y Meridional lo recibió dos veces. Personalmente, recuerdo mejor su última visita. Había llegado a El Salvador en mayo de 2016 para reunirse con los Provinciales Jesuitas de las Américas. Ya había anunciado su deseo de dimitir, pero quería estar con nosotros y alentar la colaboración en todo el hemisferio. Claramente estaba enfermo, y tuvo una caída, lastimándose. Sin embargo, incluso con algo de dolor, deseaba completar su viaje y conocer a los jesuitas y colaboradores de Nueva Orleans. El resplandor de su sonrisa, la simplicidad y el poder de sus palabras, su humor y profundidad hicieron que fuera un día notable. Nadie hubiera adivinado que estaba sufriendo, ni siquiera los novicios, con quienes pasó mucho tiempo.

Poco después de su muerte, recibimos algunos apuntes que había tomado para una posible carta que nunca escribió. Al leerlos me conmovieron profundamente. Hablaban de un hombre que podía estar alegre incluso en el dolor. Acerca de la historia de los jesuitas, escribió:

*Todos estamos muy orgullosos, y con razón, de nuestra historia y de los grandes hombres que la llenan... [Lo] que me sorprende de todos ellos es su total dedicación a su vocación y su misión. Son personas que han dado todo y permanecen bien orientados hacia el objetivo final de su auto-donación: Dios y el servicio de su Reino.*

Y el P. Nicolás lo vivió muy bien; vimos ese enfoque, esa falta de distracción, en su presencia entre nosotros durante aquella visita a Nueva Orleans y, especialmente, en su presencia ante Dios durante la Eucaristía.

En esta revista encontrarán historias de jesuitas que han escuchado el llamado y están respondiendo, incluso en tiempos desafiantes. Matthew Stewart y David Lugo han tenido que retrasar su ordenación. Ángel Flores experimentó una profundización de su propio llamado cuando en su peregrinación sintió la invitación a enfocarse en el efecto doloroso y duradero de la esclavitud. El artículo de Alice Edler sobre hombres que recuerdan sus ordenaciones muestra cómo la devoción de los primeros compañeros sigue viva en sus descendientes.

Están presentes en mis oraciones. Su ayuda hace posible continuar con nuestra misión y ministerio siguiendo las huellas de hombres como el padre Nicolás. Que el Señor los bendiga grandemente y que junto a sus seres queridos los mantenga seguros durante este tiempo de pandemia.

Con gratitud en el Señor,  
Ronald A. Mercier, SJ  
Provincial





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**Jesuits Central and Southern  
Volume VII • Number 2  
Summer 2020**

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Jesuits is published and distributed by the Jesuits of the Central and Southern Province of the Society of Jesus.  
4511 West Pine Boulevard  
St. Louis, Missouri 63108-2191  
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jesuitscentralsouthern.org

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Cover: Father Kevin Dyer, SJ, left the classroom behind during the coronavirus pandemic to serve as a chaplain in a busy New Orleans hospital.



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## Provincial Sends Pastoral Letter on Racism

The Most Rev. Ronald A. Mercier, SJ, on June 1 sent a pastoral letter to members and colleagues of the Jesuits USA Central and Southern Province urging prayer and action to address systemic racism in the United States.

Father Mercier urged Jesuits and colleagues to ponder the images and experiences of the protests that followed the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. He acknowledged this province's history of slaveholding and the lasting mark that institution left on the United States. And he called for a response.

"It would be tragic were we to forget what has occurred over the last three months and especially the last week. ... Rather, how will we remember those deeper desires and create something new with God? How are we being asked at this time and in this situation to be agents of the mission of racial reconciliation and justice?"

The full text of Fr. Mercier's letter is available on the province website: [www.JesuitsCentralSouthern.org](http://www.JesuitsCentralSouthern.org).



Following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Jesuit scholastics organized nightly prayer vigils for racial justice at St. Francis Xavier College Church in St. Louis. They were joined by other Jesuits, parishioners, Saint Louis University students and others who prayed for the victims of racial violence and for an end to racism.



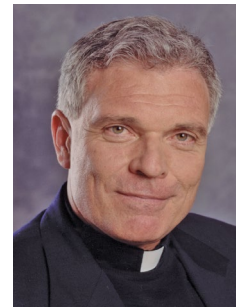
## De Smet Jesuit Names Kevin Ruder Interim President

The board of trustees at De Smet Jesuit High School in St. Louis has named Kevin Ruder interim president, effective immediately. In light of the coronavirus pandemic, the board has decided to put the search for a permanent president on hold for now.

A 1993 De Smet alumnus, Ruder will lead De Smet for the 2020-2021 academic year. He has served on the school's board of trustees since 2014.

"As an alumnus and an advocate for Jesuit education, I am both humbled and excited to lead this apostolate," Ruder said.

## Fr. Michael Garanzini, SJ, Named President of AJCU



Father Michael Garanzini, SJ, has been named the next president of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU). His

term began on July 1, 2020. He succeeds Fr. Michael Sheeran, SJ, who has served as president of the AJCU for the past seven years.

The AJCU is a national organization that represents the 28 Jesuit institutions of higher education in the United States, including the six in the Jesuits USA Central and Southern Province.

Father Garanzini brings significant leadership experience to the role. He currently serves in two important positions: as chair of the board of directors for the International Association of Jesuit Universities (IAJU) and as secretary for higher education of the Society of Jesus. He previously served 14 years as president of Loyola University Chicago.

"This is a challenging time for all of us, and so the need to work together has never been more important," Fr. Garanzini said. "I know that I can count on our presidents to work closely and support each other, to ensure that Jesuit education continues to thrive for years to come."

Father Sheeran will move to Saint Louis University this summer, where he will serve in a pastoral capacity for students, faculty and alumni.



## Pope Francis Recognizes Martyrdom of Rutilio Grande, Clearing Way for Possible Beatification



The Vatican announced on Feb. 22 that Pope Francis has recognized the martyrdom of Fr. Rutilio Grande, SJ. This important

step clears the way for beatification, which is the final step before canonization. In order to be canonized, a miracle must be attributed to his intercession.

A Salvadoran and close friend of St. Oscar Romero, Fr. Grande made it his life's work to educate and spiritually nourish the poor, rural people of his native country. He is remembered for inspiring peasants to make their voices heard against the ruling class of the nation and practice their faith, no matter what the cost.

He was assassinated on March 12, 1977. An elderly parishioner and teenager accompanying him were also killed.

It is said that Fr. Grande's murder moved the then-conservative Archbishop Romero to step up his defense of the poor.

"The beatification is a great joy for everyone: for peasants, for the oppressed, for those who experienced violence," said current Salvadoran Bishop Oswaldo Escobar Aguilar. "For me, the beatification of Rutilio means that the persecuted Latin American and Salvadoran church is being recognized."

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**Christopher J. Kellerman** was ordained a deacon on Saturday, May 23, at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Toronto, Ontario. Most Reverend Terrence Prendergast, SJ, Archbishop of Ottawa, presided.



**Father Joseph Laramie, SJ**, has been named the United States director of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network. He served most recently as a campus minister at Saint Louis University and has been a spiritual director at White House Retreat, as well as a teacher and director of pastoral ministry at Rockhurst High School in Kansas City, Mo. He is the author of *Abide in the Heart of Christ: a 10-Day Personal Retreat with St Ignatius Loyola*.

The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network in North America (formerly Apostleship of Prayer) provides all English-language content for the Holy Father's Click to Pray app. Through the app, the PWPN reaches hundreds of thousands of English speakers monthly.



## Province Releases Apostolic Plan

In early March, not long before the coronavirus pandemic forced the closure of the province offices, Fr. Provincial Ronald A. Mercier, SJ, completed an apostolic plan for the Jesuits USA Central and Southern Province. Grounded in the Universal Apostolic Preferences and the product of several years of discernment and conversations with Jesuits and collaborators, the plan will direct apostolic decision-making in the province for the next ten years.

Father Mercier wrote, “Living out our response to the Universal Apostolic Preferences will require major shifts in the way that together, as collaborators with the Lord, we engage in ministry. This will ask of us a holy boldness, trusting in the goodness of the Lord.”

Jesuit Superior General Arturo Sosa announced new Universal Apostolic Preferences in February 2019, calling on Jesuits and collaborators to view them as a way to respond to God’s desires for our world. The preferences are:

- ▶ *To show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment;*
- ▶ *To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice;*
- ▶ *To accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future;*
- ▶ *To collaborate in the care of our Common Home.*

In conjunction with collaborators who share the mission of the Society of Jesus, the province will explore how to respond more fully and creatively to the evolving needs within the province, with these preferences as a lens.

The Apostolic Plan addresses all the critical components of the province: spirituality, community life and apostolic ministries. It will be implemented gradually and strategically over the next decade, with an initial emphasis on restructuring relationships with current apostolates to respond to the changing needs and resources of the province.

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“If we are to prepare ourselves to respond to the needs of our day, we need to reshape our current ministries,” Fr. Mercier wrote. “This will require changes in the relationships with these works and the communities they serve. No doubt this will require some painful decisions, but freedom in apostolic discernment calls for boldness in the undertaking.”

A key component is a willingness to network with other Jesuit institutions in the area. This reflects an effort to improve cooperation, called for by the documents of General Congregation 36. The province envisions apostolic communities in which Jesuits may serve in more than one apostolate.

The plan also outlined the criteria for new works, including that the ministry must flow from the Universal Apostolic Preferences.

Finally, because vocation promotion is crucial for the future of the Society, the ministry of vocation promotion remains an apostolic priority which must be embraced by all engaged in work of the province. Effective vocation promotion requires collaboration of Jesuits, colleagues and our sponsored apostolates.

The plan includes basic commitments that will shape future decisions. The province will:

- continue to promote, within the communities and ministries of the Society, a consistent culture of protection and safety for minors.
- develop the financial resources of the province itself for formation, healthcare, and apostolic initiatives.
- assess the implementation of this plan in three and five years.



## REMEMBERING

# Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, SJ

Jesuits worldwide mourn the loss of former Superior General Adolfo Nicolás, who died May 20 in Tokyo, in the adopted province he loved. Born in Spain, he entered the Society of Jesus in 1953 at the age of 17. He was sent as a missionary to Japan, where he would become provincial of the Japan Province and later, president of the Asian Conference. He spoke five languages in addition to his native Spanish. In 2008, he was elected the 30th Jesuit Superior General and served in that role until his resignation due to health issues in 2016.

Those who knew Fr. Nicolás well say that his most remarkable attributes were not his intellect, leadership or authority — though he certainly possessed all those traits — but rather his vision for the Society, his authenticity and his humility.

Father Douglas Marcouiller, SJ, the final provincial of the former Missouri Province, worked with Fr. Nicolás in Rome. He shared the story of another provincial who wrote to Fr. Nicolás regarding a proposal to build an

impressive apostolic center in a poor neighborhood. Father Nicolás, ever humble, said of the proposal: “I think not. We do not want to show our power but rather the power of the Gospel.”

Father Luis Orlando Torres, SJ, a member of the Jesuits USA Central and Southern Province who also worked with Fr. Nicolás in Rome, recounts that Fr. Nicolás had identified seven

criteria for the life and mission of the Society. These areas — universal availability and planning, spiritual depth, formation, leadership, creativity, the intellectual apostolate and community life — became the main themes he developed during his eight years as Superior General through letters, visits to provinces and personal encounters with Jesuits and partners in mission.

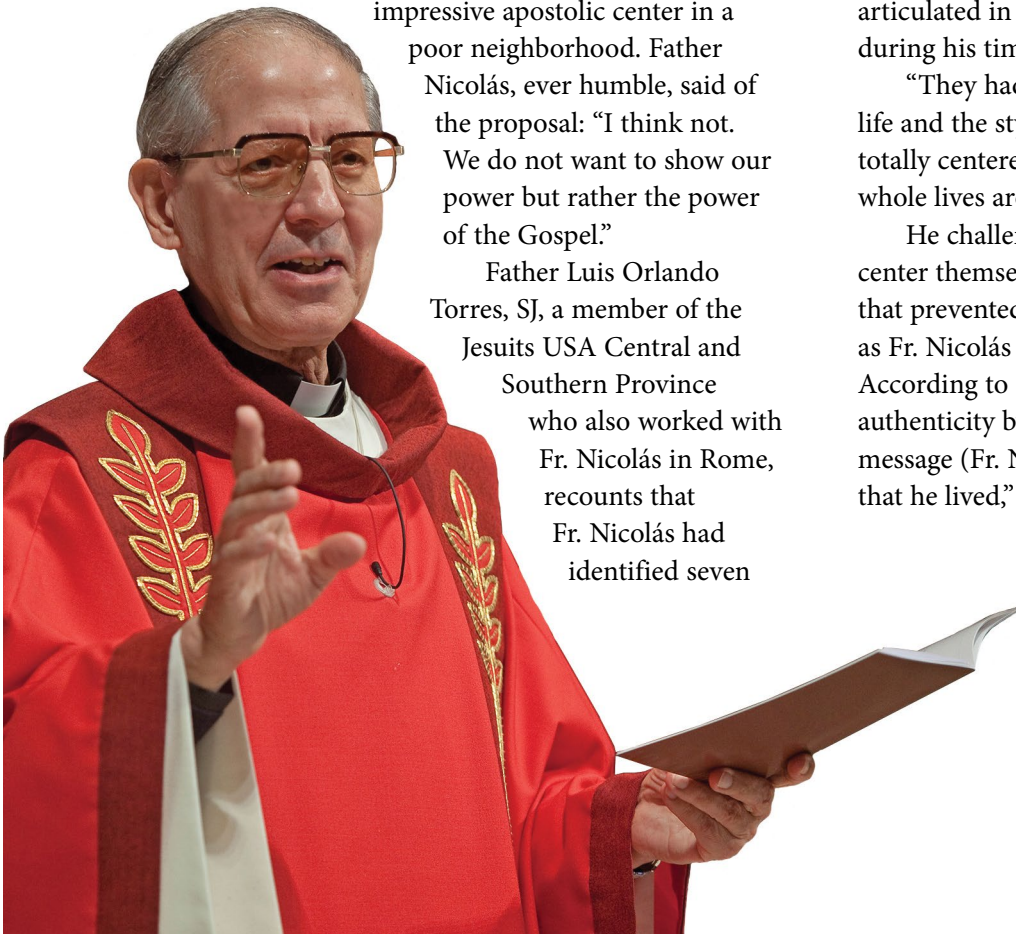
As Fr. Nicolás’ assistant for formation, Fr. Torres emphasized these same criteria in Jesuit formation. The goal of formation for Fr. Nicolás was to form Jesuits to whom the mission and well-being of the Society could be entrusted. And the goal of mission is to accompany people on a journey that will build a society where all human beings can live in solidarity and peace.

Soon after his appointment as superior general, Fr. Nicolás re-read some of the classics, works by Saints Ignatius Loyola, Francis Xavier and John of the Cross, among others. He was struck by what he calls their “total centering,” an idea that Fr. Nicolás himself articulated in a text he shared with close friends during his time as Superior General.

“They had been caught by the spirit, the fire, the life and the style of Christ, and they had stayed there, totally centered, probing its depths, rebuilding their whole lives around this new center,” Fr. Nicolás wrote.

He challenged members of the Society to likewise center themselves on Christ and block out “distractions” that prevented them from being “authentically Jesuit,” as Fr. Nicolás is described by Fr. Kevin Cullen, SJ. According to Fr. Cullen, Fr. Nicolás showed this authenticity by practicing what he preached. “The message (Fr. Nicolás) offered was known in the way that he lived,” Fr. Cullen said.

*This was Fr. Nicolás: a man of great intellect and vision but of even greater humility, a man who found joy by centering his life in Christ.*



# Cura Personalis during a Pandemic:

How Jesuit Works Continue to Care for their Communities

By Jerry Duggan

COVID-19 has changed life as we know it. With more than 8.4 million cases and more than 450,000 deaths globally, the virus has devastated and disrupted lives. This includes operations within the Jesuits USA Central and Southern Province.

Still, even in times of unprecedented loss and hardship, the apostolates of the UCS Province – schools, churches, retreat and spirituality centers – continue to be of service, providing the spiritual nourishment people thirst for, even if done virtually.

Indeed, Jesuit apostolates have gone beyond providing spiritual support. They have been meeting academic, economic and physical needs throughout the coronavirus pandemic. They have put into practice the Jesuit ideal of *cura personalis* – care for the whole person. This has been manifested throughout the province, as each apostolate has continued to be of service in a distinct and inventive way.

## Jesuit Schools Model Service

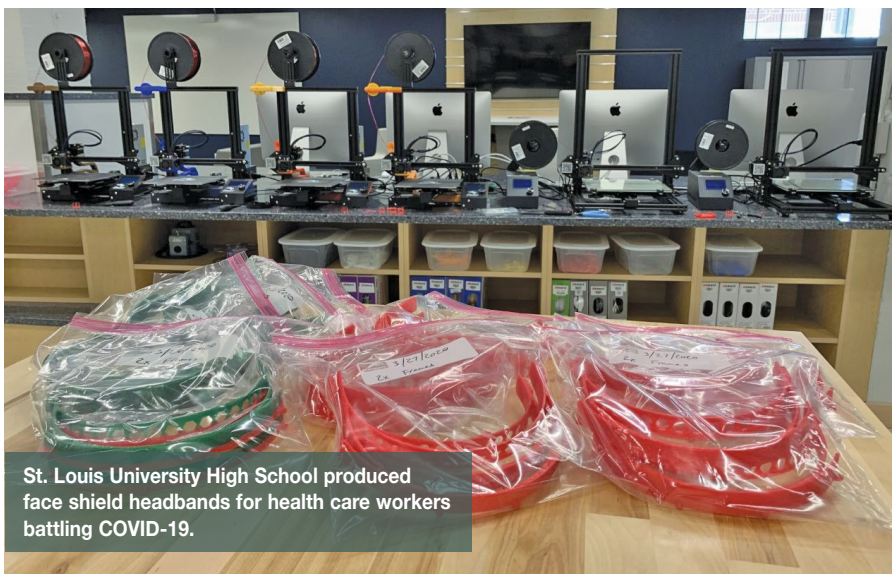
St. Louis University High School in St. Louis, like all educational institutions in the province, was faced with the prospect of a graduating class unable to experience many of the “lasts” that the school’s seniors typically do – chief among them a graduation ceremony. Still, SLUH tried to compensate for lost experiences, lighting up athletic fields at 8:20 p.m. every Friday to honor their

seniors and having a “drive thru” ceremony in which seniors placed the name of the college they will attend in their car’s back window. The school also provided students with “SLUH 2020” yard signs and flags for their porches.

The school’s leadership remains determined to try to hold graduation weekend, complete with a Baccalaureate Mass and dinner, graduation ceremony and lock-in. Celebrations have been rescheduled for a weekend in July.

SLU High also contributed to the battle against COVID-19. When shortages of supplies for health care workers became a problem in St. Louis, SLUH responded. Jeff Schaefer, director of SLUH’s Innovation Lab, used the 3-D printers in the lab to make headbands for face shields for health care workers. He produced more than 50 headbands, which were donated to hospitals and senior care centers.

He also used the school’s laser cutter to cut and engrave templates



St. Louis University High School produced face shield headbands for health care workers battling COVID-19.





The Class of 2020 at Strake Jesuit College Preparatory School (Houston) graduates May 29 wearing masks and following social-distancing policies.

for a group that is making fabric face masks. “This was a great way for us to lead by example and show our students and the St. Louis community the embodiment of ‘Men for Others,’” Schaefer said. “It’s also just a great example of how you can serve within your own community.”

SLUH wasn’t the only province high school joining the manufacturing efforts. Jesuit High School in Tampa contributed reusable masks to a local hospital using the school’s 3-D printers. Engineering teacher Eric Price led the effort and worked on an aggressive timeline to prepare the masks. Price’s efforts were all about setting an example for his students. “I always teach students about being ‘Men for Others,’ but this was a chance for me to put that into practice myself,” he said. “This is about being a role model and a leader more than just being a teacher.”

Tampa Jesuit’s new Native American Club found a unique need to fill. The club collected essential supplies like protective masks, hand

sanitizer, toilet paper, sanitary wipes and paper towels and sent them to Caddo Nation elders in Oklahoma.

The province’s colleges and universities also faced challenges as the pandemic spread, chief among them how to get their students safely off campus. Saint Louis University accomplished this by instituting social-distancing practices in the move-out process. This included having sign-up slots for moving out, with ample time allowed.

Province schools had another situation to address: some students

cannot go home or have no safe place to call home other than their school. According to Dr. Debra Lohe, interim vice president for student development, the guiding principle of SLU’s approach to those students was compassion.

“We didn’t want students to feel interrogated or like they had to justify their need to stay on campus,” Lohe said. “Our goal was to keep campus open for whoever felt they had a real need to stay, whatever the reason for that was.”

In addition to providing those students with housing that allowed for social distancing, SLU gave additional assistance. Students received 24/7 access to the campus food pantry and computers and printers to complete courses online.

**THIS WAS A GREAT WAY FOR US TO LEAD BY EXAMPLE AND SHOW OUR STUDENTS AND THE ST. LOUIS COMMUNITY THE EMBODIMENT OF ‘MEN FOR OTHERS.’** *–Jeff Schaefer*

Province universities also cared for the students who returned home. Rockhurst University in Kansas City, Mo., emphasized maintaining the sense of community that makes its campus special. With fewer than 3,000 undergraduates, a rich part of





Eric Price of Jesuit High School in Tampa works to create reusable masks for health care workers.

the Rockhurst experience entails students connecting emotionally and spiritually with fellow students and faculty. School officials didn't want that community aspect to diminish after students had returned home.

RU began its effort by sending a survey to students to inquire about their needs. With community and mental health support emerging as the top two self-identified needs for students at home, Rockhurst worked to respond – a great example of *cura personalis*. To accomplish this, Rockhurst transitioned to telecounseling to provide students with mental health care from a distance. The school's campus ministry department instituted "*cura communities*" – as in *cura personalis*. These small

groups of about six students met weekly for 30 – 60 minutes to pray and feel the sense of togetherness that Rockhurst students are used to experiencing on campus.

According to Cindy Schmersal, vice president for mission and ministry, these efforts were worth it, even though they took effort to institute. "We wanted to make sure to continue our commitment to connecting with each other during this time – even if it was done virtually, because those personal connections are such a big part of the Rockhurst experience," she said.

Province universities also served their larger communities during this time. Loyola University New Orleans rose to the occasion to help its hard-

hit community. In addition to providing housing for students who could not return home, Loyola prepared three residence halls for health care workers should the need arise.

Loyola senior Baasel Syed used the school's 3-D printers to make face shields for health care workers. Syed simply wanted to help those in need. "The message of being a Man for Others has really stuck with me," Syed said. "I try to do things for the greater glory of God and always keep people at the center of what I'm doing. This was one way for me to do that and help my community at the same time."

### Parishes Respond to the Crisis

Jesuit parishes have responded creatively to the pandemic. Nearly all began to make Mass available online. St. Francis Xavier College Church in St. Louis determined that wasn't enough. In an effort to replicate the richness of in-person liturgies, the parish added interactive portions to livestreamed Masses. This proved especially beneficial for the Triduum services. On Holy Thursday, parishioners were encouraged to wash their family members' feet. On Good Friday, parishioners gave reflections



The Jesuits at Immaculate Conception Parish in Albuquerque bottle holy water for parishioners' use at home.



on Jesus' final words. On Holy Saturday, parishioners were encouraged to celebrate the Mass in darkness with candles lit, as one would experience at an in-person Easter Vigil.

Other parishes found inventive ways to continue to offer the sacraments. Immaculate Conception Parish in Albuquerque, N.M., heard confessions in the parish parking lot following social distancing guidelines. What's more, parish priests blessed holy water from the Easter Vigil, bottled it and made it available for parishioner pickup, so that they could have a piece of their parish with them at home this Easter season.

Other parishes focused on reinventing their community outreach efforts during the pandemic. St. Ignatius Loyola Parish in Denver partners with a local senior center to prepare a quarterly sit-down meal for 70-80 low-income or homeless seniors. Since that was out of the question for now, they instead assembled and distributed a sack lunch to their clientele. Parishioners also donated to two local organizations as part of a food drive, in addition to donating toiletries and other essentials to a 24-hour shelter for women experiencing homelessness during the pandemic.

While this pandemic has made food distribution efforts more difficult for many community outreach efforts, Sacred Heart Parish in El Paso, Texas, has bolstered its operations. The parish received \$8,500 in grants from several organizations, and now is able to include an additional prepared meal as part of its weekly food distribution efforts to its predominantly low-income community.



Father John Brown, SJ, awaits the next penitent when hearing drive-thru confessions at Jesuit High School in New Orleans. (Photo courtesy of the New Orleans Advocate, used with permission.)

The social ministry office of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Kansas City, Mo., lined up volunteers and professionals to meet the physical, mental and spiritual needs of the parish community. Services range from telephone counseling to food distribution. Their food boxes even contain fresh vegetables grown in the parish's on-site garden, cultivated by parish volunteers.

Sacred Heart Retreat House in Sedalia, Colo., remained open throughout the period of stay-at-home orders, not simply because they could, but because of their responsibility to keep safe retreatants who were already there at the time of the order. While the retreat house was forced to cancel larger group retreats, it continued to accept participants for its individually directed and private retreats.

### **Jesuits Serve in New Ways**

Several members of the UCS Province found new ways to be of service during the pandemic. Father Kevin Dyer, a theology teacher at

Jesuit High School in New Orleans, became a hospital chaplain during this time. He visits the hospital six or seven days a week and prays with both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients. He has been touched by the experience. "I prayed to God to open doors for me to serve, and I am so glad those doors opened," he said. "This has been a most profound time in my life as a Jesuit and a priest."

Father Tom Cwik, SJ, led a virtual memorial service for a woman he knew from his time as pastor of St. Ignatius Loyola Parish in Denver. The service included participants from across the United States and even from other countries. The deceased had always wanted Fr. Cwik to preside at her funeral, but she probably couldn't have imagined it happening in this format.

Jesuit novices have had to shift course along with the rest of the world. Recalled from their apostolic assignments, the novices received medical training and were sent to assist at the province's two health care facilities. In the event a crisis arose, the novices would be ready to help care for retired Jesuits in residence. Thankfully, that situation did not become a reality. However, they did help out at the pavilions, and their presence provided some distraction and mitigated some of the isolation associated with the lockdown of the pavilions.

The province's apostolates have stood ready to help with this pandemic in whatever way they can: to educate, to manufacture medical supplies, to serve the local community and each other. No matter how long the pandemic goes on, Jesuits and collaborators will continue to care for the whole person.



# MEMORIES

## *of Ordination*

By Alice Edler

*Most years, the summer issue of Jesuits magazine features an article on the annual celebration of ordinations to the priesthood, but the coronavirus pandemic has forced the province to postpone this special occasion until August 15. Instead, Alice Edler interviewed Jesuit priests and invited them to recall this singular time in their lives. The result captures a bit of the joy and mystery of the priesthood.*

Having attended several ordination liturgies, I was interested in what ordained Jesuits remembered about the days surrounding their own ordinations. I interviewed ten Jesuit priests who were ordained between 1 and 57 years ago. I asked the simple question, “What do you remember about the days surrounding your ordination?” I hope the following will encourage you to pray for the Jesuits who minister to us and reflect upon the value of our own sacramental lives.

The memories of seminal events in life such as weddings, graduations or childbirth, are often recalled as a collage of images and emotions. Likewise, most of the priests I interviewed remembered only snippets of the day:

“It was a very hot day, and I remember how cool the marble floor felt as I lay prostrate.” (Jesuit ordained 1980s)

“On ordination day, as the men to be ordained were coming down the aisle at the St. Louis Cathedral, when I passed my Dad, he stepped out of his pew and into the aisle to pat me on the back. It meant the world to me!” (Ordained 1970s)

“What I remember most is how many kids were there!” (Ordained 1960s)

Nearly all the men particularly recalled the laying on of hands by the presiding bishop and their brother Jesuits. During the rite, the bishop first

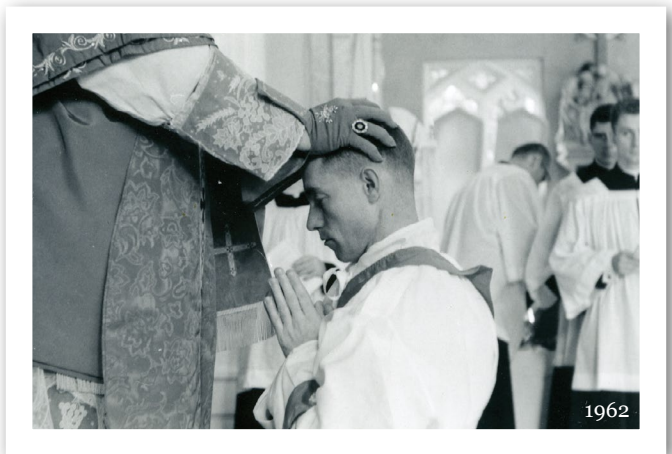
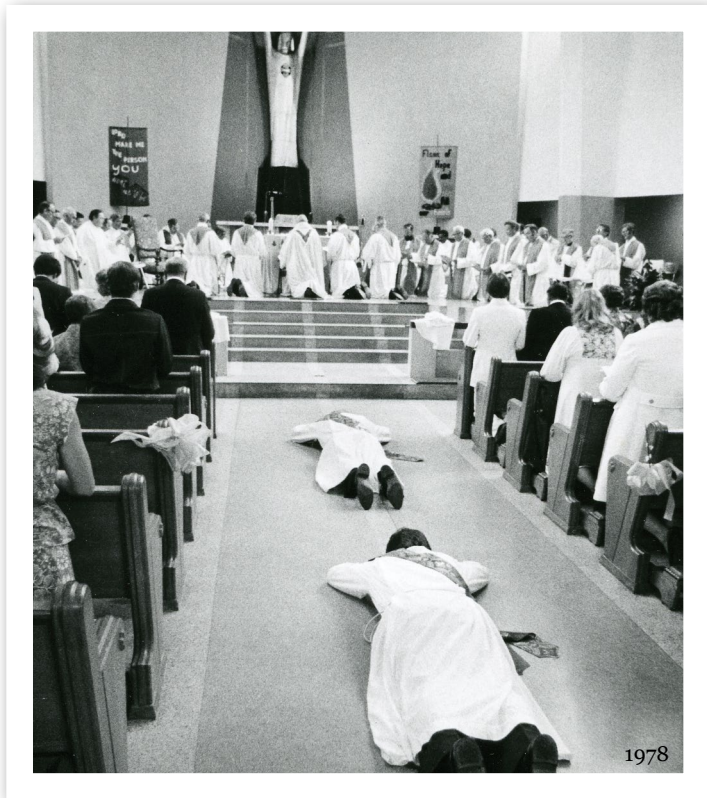


lays his hands upon the heads of each ordinand, conferring the authority of the priesthood. Following this, all other priests in attendance individually lay their hands on the ordinands, offering a silent prayer. This is a vivid memory for most. It symbolizes the universal brotherhood, shared joy and weight of the priesthood in the Jesuit community.

Ordination day came for these men only after reflecting – sometimes agonizing – over the decision to continue their road to priestly ordination. “How did I get here?” “Trust God, this will work.” “What am I getting into?” By the day of ordination, all found confidence, comfort and trust in the “God of surprises,” encouraging them to continue. They all stayed.

St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, wrote very little about the rite of ordination in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. Indeed, he had little to say about his own ordination in his autobiography. However, he wrote with great specificity about Jesuit formation and what life in the priesthood should look like for Jesuits. The Jesuits I interviewed spent much of our time together speaking of how they live their vocations as priests, rather than the day of ordination.

- **“Formation taught me how to live as a Jesuit, how to help others find God, how to pray, and how to discern things big and small.”** (Ordained 1970s)
- **“Our long formation gives us practice being a priest, to understand what people need. I always remember the words of (the late Jesuit Fr.) Dave Fleming: ‘This is a ministry of service.’”** (Ordained 2000s)
- **“What does a priest do? Whatever the people need. It is not what the priest gives, but what the people ask for. The people will teach you how to be a priest if you listen.”** (Ordained 1970s)
- **“The mystery of service is still beyond my understanding. I see how God deals with people, how the humble are seen by God. You don’t do it on your own.”** (Ordained 2010s)







2001



2016



Saint Ignatius and his Companions were establishing the Society of Jesus at a time in history when vowed religious were leaving the gates of monasteries and serving the people directly. He was clear that members of the Society were to be present to the people: “The

end of the Society is to devote itself to God’s grace not only for the salvation and perfection of the members’ own souls but ... to give aid toward the salvation and perfection of the souls of their neighbors.”

(Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, 1540 CE)

For his Company, St. Ignatius emphasized availability for ministry

wherever needed and promoted education for his men. More, he was prepared to use all means to foster the mission of the Church and serve God’s glory, including the establishment of schools just seven years after the approval of the Society.

In his letters, St. Ignatius described the scope of Jesuit education. It is to “exclude no type of learning, not poetry, rhetoric, logic, mathematics, metaphysics ... to build up the neighbor” (1551 CE). In the nearly five centuries since, this commitment has been strengthened and made contemporary through the communal discernment of the Society’s General Congregations. Education remains an integral part of life as a Jesuit.

Many of the men I interviewed found consolation in teaching.

• “Being a Jesuit has changed everything in my life. I am really connected to my students. When I teach in the classroom, I teach truth, beauty, the profound.” (Ordained 2010s)

• “What did I teach? Anything. We did not have many books. I took the kids to parks, those kinds of things, and taught what I could.” (Ordained 1960s, served in missions for more than 40 years)

• “I received great consolation in dealing with the kids and (helping them deal with) their struggles. It was right for me, decision-making based on emotions, values, responsibility and good moral judgment.” (Ordained 1960s)

Of course, the Society of Jesus is about more than teaching. Over the past 50 years, the Society’s General

*“You choose this life to be helpful to others.”*

~ Fr. Giovanni Paolini, Bergamo, Italy, who died April 2020 from COVID-19





Congregations 31 through 36 have promoted faith and justice, particularly to meet contemporary needs. The emphasis is on “not just old apostolates, but those with ‘fresh’ importance, new needs and situations. Today demands the involvement of the laity and the infusion of Ignatian spirit and charism” (GC 34, 1995).

Today, Jesuits can be found far beyond the classroom, the pulpit and the retreat house. But whatever the assignment, it is all part of the Jesuit mission.

One of the men I interviewed worked as a writer for *America Magazine*, the national Jesuit publication. He saw his critiques of theater and movies as an apostolic work. “I wanted to help people with my writing, so they did not waste their money on entertainment that was not good or presented a danger to them.”

Even with a variety of day-to-day activities, all the men came back to one touchstone: their sacramental life and its connection to those they serve. They described a sacramental union with the faithful. It is the external reality of the sacraments that corresponds to the internal grace received.

• “I cherish my time hearing confessions. It is the dynamic of the human and the divine, where people are the most human and they can tap into divine forgiveness.” (Ordnained 2010s)

• “The sacraments? I do them ... but I am only the instrument. Christ is the priest. At the Eucharist, I am praying to the Father, but I am also drawing the congregation into praying to the Father. I need to be fully present for the people. The same with Baptism. I say, ‘I claim you for Christ,’ but then so do the parents and godparents.” (Ordnained 2010s)

• “The funeral liturgies for the Arapaho people taught me the sacredness of life and of death.” (Ordnained 1970s, missioned to a Native American community for two years)

• “It’s not saying Mass; it’s helping people find God.” (Ordnained 1970s)

• “The sacraments draw people into the transcendent.” (Ordnained 2010s)

• “I am a priest to serve the people, to make time to hear confessions, to say Mass, to stop and talk.” (Ordnained 1960s)

Ordination day, like a wedding day, childbirth, even the death of a loved one, is a milestone moment. But the “revelation of God’s love is a slow process.” So, what does a priest do? “Whatever the people need.” (*Jesuit priest, ordained 1970s*)

**MORE ONLINE** Thank you to the Jesuit Archives & Research Center for the photos. You can learn more about their work at [www.JesuitArchives.org](http://www.JesuitArchives.org).





David Lugo, SJ, preaches during the daily Mass at Bellarmine House in St. Louis.

# Ordination Can Wait

*The priestly ordinations of Jesuits David Lugo and Matthew Stewart were postponed from June 13 to August 15. While they wait, they shared a few reflections on the delay and this extraordinary time.*



## Discipleship is the Mission

When I first entered the novitiate, I looked forward to the day of my ordination to the priesthood as a definitive moment when my life of ministry would begin. Once in the novitiate, though, my sense of what a life of ministry could be began to deepen as I learned about life in the Society of Jesus. For those two years, my formation centered on preparation for vowed life, especially through the transformative encounter with Jesus in the *Spiritual Exercises*. That experience helped me recognize a deeper call that I hadn't articulated – that my desire *deep down* was to be a disciple of Jesus, through and through.

What has become clear in the years since I entered the novitiate is

that my life is about following the Lord, in whatever capacity he invites me to and in whatever timeframe he has. A Jesuit's life of ministry begins upon entrance. My life as a Jesuit began on August 15, 2009. Priestly ordination is a deepening that I have looked forward to for many years and that I continue to hope for, even though it is a little further off than originally planned.

I was in Madrid when the first wave of COVID-19 went across Europe. By early March, the virus arrived in Spain and quickly spread through the population. Within a matter of days, we went from business-as-usual to total lockdown.

After 10 days, with the number of cases quickly increasing, the U.S. State Department issued a statement warning American citizens abroad to come home or to stay indefinitely where they were. This didn't faze me until I received a notice from the provincial to return to the U.S. immediately. I was stunned. I felt safe in Spain. I was ready to weather this storm with the members of my community. But the provincial asked me to come home, both for

my own safety and to ensure that I would be stateside for my upcoming ordination.

I was disappointed, but I knew that ordination was not a trivial moment, but a milestone in life as a servant in the vineyard of the Lord. I got on a plane 24 hours after getting the notice and was quarantined in St. Louis for two weeks.

I settled into life at Bellarmine House of Studies. As days turned into months, I began to notice the fruit of living with other scholastics and of being back in the province. I finished my classes online and settled into a routine of preaching and teaching in-house. The chance to minister to my brothers in these and other ways has been a wonderful gift in these last few weeks before priesthood.

I am grateful to God that the changes to my ordination have not caused me much anxiety or concern since there is far too much going on in the world and in our country that is pressing. If waiting can help us focus on the needs and security of the People of God, then it is worth it.





In the end, there are always new milestones along the path of discipleship, but the most important thing has been with me for some time already. I await with joyful hope for my ordination day, but more importantly for the many years of priestly service that await me after that day ... whenever it is.

– David Lugo, SJ



## God's Grace is Enough

It should go without saying that I am thrilled to be ordained a priest. After eleven years of formation, I feel as ready as I'll ever be and am excited as I could be. When the announcement came that ordinations would be postponed, people were understandably concerned. They would ask if I was upset or disappointed. I was moved by how sad they felt for me. But in all honesty, even as I write this article on the day I would have been ordained, I feel consoled and at peace and continue to be excited for when it eventually happens.

I have been puzzling about this response to the ordination delay. I'm usually the first one to have something like this bother him. I've told people that if I thought getting upset or angry would change anything, I would be the first to throw a tantrum!

Part of my response comes from being able to accompany people this semester who had

big life events postponed because of the pandemic – weddings, baptisms, commencements, proms. People have lost loved ones and have had to mourn them apart from the rest of the family. Some people have postponed vacations or trips, while others must wait even to find work.

In the midst of the current Black Lives Matter movement, I am also deeply aware that people of color have been waiting for meaningful justice for much longer than I have been alive, to say nothing of a two-month delay. I think the consolation I feel is genuine solidarity and connection with everyone else who is waiting – most of them far longer and in far more difficult situations than I.

I have come to the conclusion that my response to the delay is really just another way of God generously showering me with grace. I didn't do any work to achieve it, and I certainly didn't earn it. It is just the same reassuring grace that God has given me that reminds me that

I am His beloved son, that he has loved me into being and has called me since before anyone on earth knew of my existence. He has called me to labor at Jesus' side in His vineyard.

Any disappointment I feel is really tied to the reality that people have a deep longing for the sacraments and for pastoral care in the midst of this pandemic and beyond. Seeing people suffering alone breaks my heart, and that heartbreak keeps me close to Jesus' side.

I want to be a priest more than I've wanted anything else in a very long time, maybe ever, and ordination day will be the culmination of a very long period of preparation. But that can wait. The end of St. Ignatius's *Suscipe* prayer does not end with a petition for priesthood. Instead, it ends with a petition that God's love and grace might be enough for me. For whatever reason, that is how I feel right now.

– Matthew Stewart, SJ



Matthew Stewart, SJ, sings the Exsultet on the Easter Vigil for the Faber Jesuit Community in Boston. The community celebrated outside because of social distancing requirements.

# A Pilgrimage Through the South: What the Martyrs Taught Me

By Ángel Flores-Fontánez

PHOTO CREDIT: Brent Moore on Flickr



A mural in honor of martyrs of the Civil Rights Movement. From left to right: Jonathan Daniels, Viola Liuzzo, Martin Luther King Jr., James Reeb, and Jimmy Lee Jackson. National Voting Rights Museum, Selma, Ala.

I still remember the day I got my first Bible.

One night, my mother, a Black Puerto Rican woman, gathered me and my older brother in one of the bedrooms of our home in Cañaboncito. “I have something to show you,” she said, with a serious and gentle tone in her voice. Having our attention, she continued, “This is the most important book in life,” and she handed to each one of us a volume of the “*Latinoamericana*” Bible. As she flipped through the pages with us, she paused briefly in order to explain one of the photos that this Catholic Bible had. The picture illustrated a Black man in a suit that had a hopeful and deep gaze. “That’s Martin Luther King,” she said. “Although he was a Baptist, what he did was so important that his photo is in a Catholic Bible, as an example of what we Christians must do.” She explained to us what he achieved in the Montgomery bus boycott alongside his community and exhorted my brother and me to always respect the Word of God. I think I was seven years old.

Sometime later, I watched a documentary with my fair-skinned father about the struggles and achievements of the African American civil rights movement. All this made an impression on me. A decade later, as I was discerning my vocation while studying at the University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras in 2008, it was King’s words in his last speech the night before he was killed, that gave me peace when I believed God was calling me to be a priest:

“We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn’t matter with me now... Like anybody I would like to live a long life... But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And he has allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I have looked over. And I’ve seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And I’m happy tonight. I am not worried about anything. I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>



I would have never thought 12 years ago, as I took those first steps of my vocational discernment, that I would ever have the opportunity to participate in a “Civil Rights Pilgrimage.” But from January first to the seventh of this year, that’s just what I did. It gave me the chance to follow closely the steps of this man, whose example has been so important to my following of



Jesus. Along with my brothers of the Jesuit Antiracism Sodality (JARS), we prayed our way through important historic sites in New Orleans, Mobile, Selma, Montgomery, Birmingham and Atlanta, where King and many other civil rights martyrs gave their blood for the ongoing cause of racial justice.

Walking the streets of Selma and Montgomery, Alabama, as King and many other martyrs had done, was one of the most mystical experiences I have had. In Selma, I learned three lessons from the witness of the Civil Rights martyrs.

## Lessons from the Martyrs

The first lesson I learned was from Jimmie Lee Jackson, a veteran and a Baptist deacon. He was shot in February 1965 by an Alabama state trooper. His death served as an inspiration for the marches that were held that same year from Selma to Montgomery to ensure

the voting rights of African Americans. From him I learned that no sacrifice for justice goes unrewarded, and that the work to build the Kingdom that God calls us to make on earth can only be made with the collaboration of all Christians. We Catholics hold no monopoly on truth and righteousness. The faithful testimony of so many Evangelical ministers during the civil rights struggle testifies to that.

Viola Liuzzo taught me a second lesson. Viola was a white woman and a mother of five children. She was killed by a member of the Ku Klux Klan for collaborating in the marches’ coordination and for driving protesters back to Selma once the demonstrations were over. She taught me that I do not have to belong to an oppressed group in order to exercise solidarity with them.

Love is measured more in deeds than words. Viola’s witness of love showed me that any claim that the white racists of this era were simply “children of their time” is an excuse to avoid responsibility.

Viola chose not to be complacent with the prejudices and racist practices of her white community. She listened to the dissident voices of her era and did not conform to what political scientist Mary Hawkesworth calls “evidence blindness”: a refusal to inquire and know about what is true but inconvenient, what makes us feel morally inadequate, because it reveals that we might belong to a social group that benefits from the exploitation of another.

PHOTO CREDIT: Joshua Peters, SJ



The pilgrims in front of the Edmund Pettus bridge, famous for the 1965 voting rights marches. From left to right: Jesuits Mike Price, Emanuel Arenas, Joshua Peters, Patrick Hyland, Ángel Flores Fontáñez and Fr. Joseph Brown. Father Brown was guide and mentor during the civil rights pilgrimage. Selma, Ala.

We can do now the same thing Viola did then; we can choose not to live at peace with the privileges that race, gender or sexual orientation give to some of us while oppressing others.

A third lesson came from Jonathan Daniels, an Episcopalian seminarian. He was killed with a shotgun by a special county deputy while shielding Ruby Shields, an African American activist. His example taught me that I can't wait until I become a priest to do what is right. Nothing assures me that I have more than today to imitate Christ. Therefore, I must fight for justice like I have no tomorrow.

After our time in Selma, we moved toward Montgomery, where we visited the National Memorial for Peace and Justice of the Equal Justice Initiative. This somber institution is referred to colloquially as the "Lynching Memorial." The phrase "We remember" is stamped into the walls of this memorial in honor of the Black men and women who were lynched. As a student of history, I heard the voice of God himself calling me to remind the world of the history that today makes us both who we are and how we are.

The victims of the "demon" of lynching taught me that the racial inequalities that divide us today in housing, health care, education and opportunity were not made by God. They are not natural. They are, like any idol, "the work of our hands" (Isaiah 2:8), just like the anti-Black racism that assassinated the lynched. Letting these injustices continue is to commit idolatry, to choose "our way" instead of God's way: "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need." (Acts 2:44-45). The hundreds of coffins in this memorial raise their



The symbolic lynching coffins at The National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

voice to heaven as a cry against the sin of anti-Black racism, in which some of us continue to fall so often by idolizing the status quo.

Our pilgrimage ended in Atlanta, King's hometown. As we toured the house of his infancy, I contemplated how he lived in conditions that were relatively better than the average African American in Atlanta during the 1930s. His house was big, it had high quality furniture, and the neighborhood was a stable one. But he did not settle. Martin and his wife, Coretta Scott King, could have had a more tranquil, middle-class life if they wanted to. But they didn't. They took to heart those words of Frederick Douglass: "If there is no struggle, there is no progress." From them, I learned to be faithful to the Cross and not to choose what is easy, but what is right.

## Racism Persists

We know that racism against Black people is not only still pervasive today but becoming worse. The Jesuit Social Research Institute (JSRI) reports in its *JustSouth Index 2018* that in states like Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, the percentage of Black students attending "intensely segregated schools" (schools in which 90 to 100 percent of the population is non-white) has gone from 32.1% in 1988 to over 40% in 2016. Black men make 22% less in earnings relative to "the average hourly wages of white men with the same education, experience, metro status, and region or residence."

The disparity between white and Black women is even more stark with Black women making 34.2% less than their white peers with comparable backgrounds.



Angel Flores Fontáñez at the tomb of two of his Christian role models: Coretta Scott King and Martin Luther King, Jr. in Atlanta, Ga.

PHOTO CREDIT: Emanuel Arenas, nSU



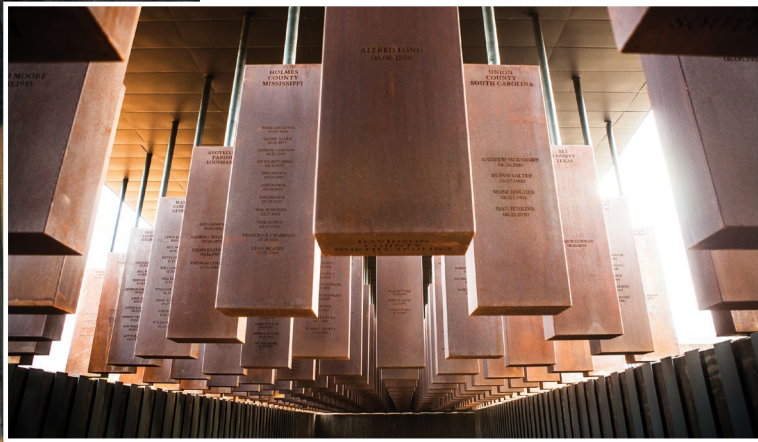


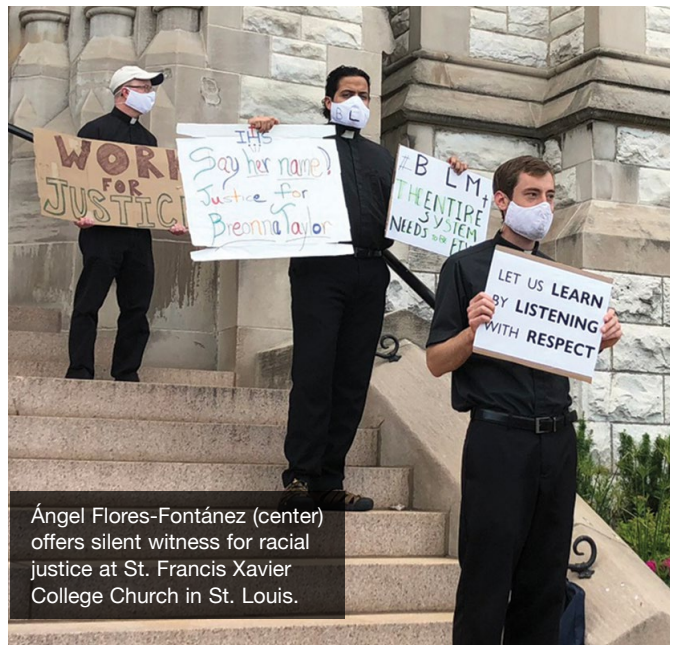
PHOTO CREDIT: Equal Justice Initiative

Astonishingly, JSRI reports that some studies indicate that “a white man with a criminal conviction has greater success finding a job than a Black man with no criminal record, with other important variables like education and experience being equal.” (Find their report at [www.loyno.edu/JSRI](http://www.loyno.edu/JSRI).)

Among the proposed solutions are the implementation of policies that make the intentional integration of schools a priority, enforcement of existing labor discrimination laws, investigations by state and media to denounce wage and hour violations, and creating equal access to quality public education for children of minority groups. But none of these will magically appear. From the martyrs I learned that God has chosen to act through us in this world. Therefore, without our diligent cooperation with God’s grace, society will not improve.

Even as the coronavirus spreads through the U.S., studies are already showing that African Americans are among the worst hit by the disease.<sup>2</sup> This can’t be separated from the centuries-long exclusion from quality health services that African Americans have been subjected to, not just in the South, but all around the country. In Milwaukee, where only 39% of the population is Black but about half of the confirmed cases of COVID-19 were among Blacks as of April 3, officials declared racism a public health issue.

We have to take the lessons from the martyrs seriously. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to grant us the same moral urgency that they received. We especially have to take the words from the Teacher to heart: “I thirst” (John 19:28). Through whom today is he screaming these words to us? Let us not waste this quarantine. Let us love to the end and not be afraid (John 13:1). Let us row deep into prayer, study and action. By the grace of God, like King and the other Martyrs, may we see “the glory of the coming of the Lord” and never turn back.



Ángel Flores-Fontáñez (center) offers silent witness for racial justice at St. Francis Xavier College Church in St. Louis.

**MORE ONLINE** This article first appeared on *The Jesuit Post*, “an online media platform that offers a Jesuit, Catholic perspective on the contemporary world.” For a daily post written by Jesuits in formation, visit [www.theJesuitPost.org](http://www.theJesuitPost.org).

<sup>1</sup> “I See the Promised Land,” *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.* Edited by James M. Washington, (New York: Harper One, 1991), 286.

<sup>2</sup> Akilah Johnson and Talia Buford. “Early Data Shows African Americans Have Contracted and Died of Coronavirus at an Alarming Rate.” <https://www.propublica.org/article/early-data-shows-african-americans-have-contracted-and-died-of-coronavirus-at-an-alarming-rate>. Accessed May 19, 2020.



In Everything,  
Love and Serve:

# Fr. Hung Pham

By Dave Luecking

Upon his appointment in August as Provincial Assistant for Formation, Fr. Hung Pham, SJ, became a frequent traveler, visiting Jesuits in far-flung outposts nationally and internationally. Gone for weeks — sometimes months — at a time, he rarely was in St. Louis to use his office at the Jesuits USA Central and Southern Province headquarters.



Father Hung Pham, SJ, says Mass at a simple altar he's created in his office.



All that changed in mid-March, with shelter-in-place mandates throughout the world because of the global coronavirus pandemic. Just like that, his frequent flights came to an abrupt halt, but not his essential work in Jesuit formation. In fact, other than travel, Fr. Pham's mission has remained the same, just performed differently.

From the office, Fr. Pham has met with young Jesuits via Zoom, a video conferencing platform in which participants hold virtual meetings in real-time. The platform has been a godsend for businesses during the pandemic, and for worship and formation work such as Fr. Pham's.

Father Pham described it as "second best" to in-person meetings.

"We're fortunate to have the technology to do this," he said a few weeks into the lockdown in late March. He described a typical day. "Today, I did Zoom videos for a Vietnamese Mass for a parish in Hawaii. I'm teaching two courses online for the Jesuit scholastics in Vietnam, one in the morning and one late at night. In the daytime, I take care of the guys here (of the UCS Province).

"It keeps me busy. It's the same kind of activity." It just all happens via a computer.

According to Fr. Provincial Ronald A. Mercier, Fr. Pham's activity is an essential aspect of formation for men in the Society of Jesus. Father Pham brings a wide range of practical experience to the role, including the past seven years as assistant professor at the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University in Berkeley, Calif.

"He has long experience working with people in formation, giving his time teaching in Berkeley," Fr. Mercier said. "He's a renowned scholar in Ignatian Spirituality, and the formation of our young men is so important. He brings real skills in that area and helps them to grow in such an important part of our Jesuit charism."

Plus, he has intangible qualities ideal to connect with and accompany men on the journey of formation.

"He has very good interpersonal skills," Fr. Mercier said. "He's very easy to be with, and he's able to challenge when necessary. He also has a warm personality."

PHOTO COURTESY OF SKIP STEWART, REGIS UNIVERSITY



Father Hung Pham, SJ, teaches Ignatian Discernment to a class of first-generation college students at Regis University in March.

Father Pham describes himself as "pretty much an extrovert," though that quality took a while to reemerge after his family immigrated to the United States from Vietnam in 1985. The youngest of seven children, with four sisters and two brothers, Fr. Pham was 16 years old when the family settled in Denver. Although his family is sixth-generation Catholic – "very traditional and devotional," he said – he attended public high school, rather than the Catholic high school in the area.

"My family couldn't afford Catholic school then," said Fr. Pham, who addressed the language barrier with his high school classmates by speaking the common language of math, chemistry and biology. "When Asians first came over to the U.S., there were a lot of challenges in terms of language, so science and mathematics came easier for us. The symbols were something familiar."

Still, the spoken language created a barrier.

"I was like a stranger, not really knowing anybody," he said, adding of his high school years that he was "just trying to survive. I think on top of that, being a teenager and growing up, there are a lot of different layers. Mostly, I stayed home. I didn't do a lot of socializing then."

All that changed after he won a math scholarship at Regis University, the Jesuit college in Denver. Father Pham blossomed socially in the small-school environment of Regis, overcoming the culture shock of his high

school years and developing an understanding of and appreciation for American culture. He continued to excel in math, chemistry and biology, earning a bachelor's degree in 1993. In the spring of the same year, USA Today selected him as one of the 20 best and brightest students in the country, naming him to the All-USA College Academic Team.



Father Hung Pham, SJ, celebrates the Eucharist in the Conversion Room of Saint Ignatius in Loyola, Spain, with Jesuit School of Theology students on their Ignatian pilgrimage.

Most importantly, Fr. Pham encountered the Jesuits at Regis, and the rest, as they say, is history. He entered the Society in August 1993, and now he's in position to help men in formation, just as many others helped him along the way.

"I can accompany them with their own struggles and questions because I've been there," he said. "My own formators were so loving, kind and patient with me. In return, I just want to care for our men because I have been the recipient of that patience, that kindness, that care, that love. That's what I remember, and that's what I want to give."

Father Pham describes his years of formation as "a very adventurous journey, most definitely a non-linear one," with many twists and turns as he grew along the way to become a Jesuit grounded in Ignatian Spirituality.

When he entered the Society, "I didn't know what I was getting into," he joked, adding, "They always say, 'the reason you enter is very different from the

reason you stay,' right? I entered with a lot of ideals and everything I admired (about Jesuits and the Society). I admired the Jesuits at Regis. I enjoyed the service trip to Mexico during spring break. These Jesuits were fun and full of life sharing their passion and ministries in community, so that's what I aspired to follow."

A 30-day silent retreat during the first year of novitiate caught the extrovert by surprise, but he adjusted quickly to the deep inner movements of the spiritual foundation and formation.

"I loved my years in the novitiate; I just fell in love with it," he said. "We were exposed to a lot of different ministries and different experiences. Not only did I learn about the Society of Jesus, but about different places in the U.S."

Father Pham worked locally in Denver, made a pilgrimage to Los Angeles, served in Amarillo, Texas, participated in Habitat for Humanity in St. Louis and volunteered at Catholic Charities in St. Paul, Minn. He also made a trip back to his native Vietnam, with a side trip to work with street children in Manila, the Philippines. Visiting Vietnam for the first time in 10 years created a bit of an identity crisis. He began to question, "Am I American? Or am I Vietnamese?"

During the first trip to Vietnam, local Vietnamese Jesuits called him, "American Boy," and though feasting on Vietnamese food, he found himself missing American food after a while, indicating how American he had become in the past decade. Ultimately, he concluded that his livable identity is that he embraces both the Vietnamese and the American.

"It was a good reality check to see how much I had grown," he said, calling the visit to his homeland "an



Father Hung Pham, SJ, (back row, right) with Jesuit Superior General Arturo Sosa and a group of Jesuit School of Theology students, as part of their Ignaciano Camino experience.



incredible trip,” and calling his novitiate experience among the “best two years of my life.”

After novitiate, Fr. Pham earned his master’s degree in philosophy at Saint Louis University in 1998. He spent two of his regency years as a chemistry and biology teacher at St. Louis University High School. For the third year, he was sent to serve a mission with the Jesuit Refugee Service of Asia Pacific, training math and science teachers in a Burmese refugee camp in the Mae Hong Son province of northern Thailand.

“You’re right in the middle of a jungle, without running water or electricity, yet it’s one of most beautiful places with the most beautiful people on earth,” he said. “The living conditions were challenging, but our [JRS] presence was so very meaningful.

That’s what I love about the Society; that’s what I want to continue pursuing.”

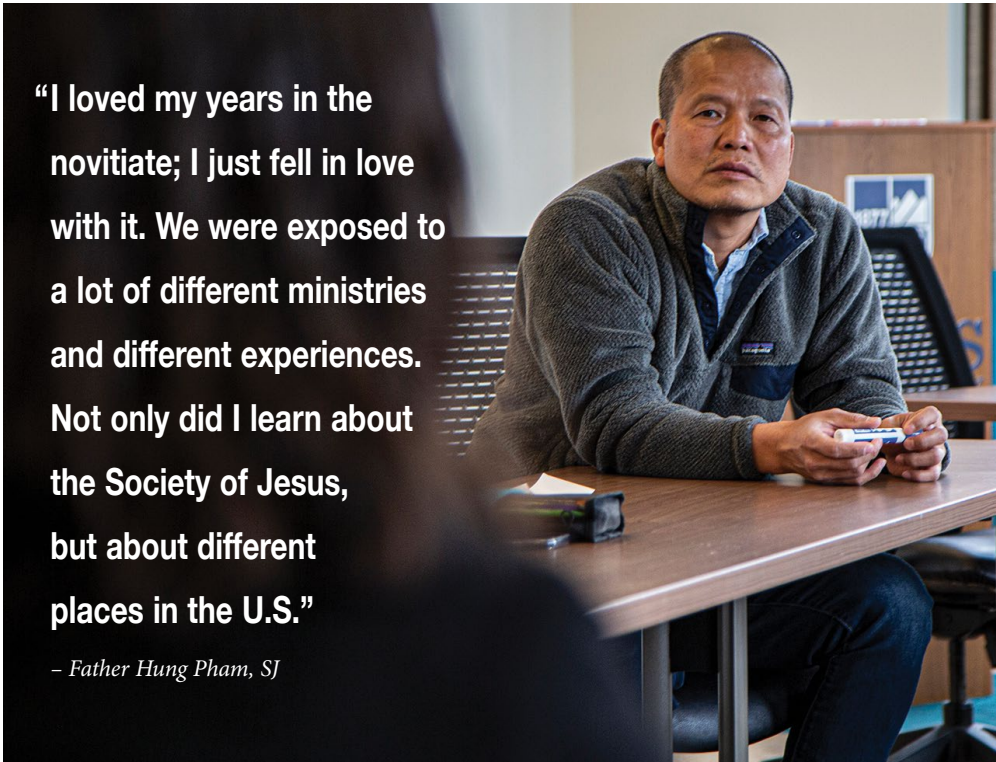
Still, he had doubts after a year of studying theology at Berkeley. Ordination was coming up and Fr. Pham was questioning whether his future was as a priest or as a family man, with a wife and children.

“When I began my theology studies, my doubts really rose to the surface,” he said. “It was in the back of my mind, wrestling with my vocation. Do I really want to be a priest, or do I want a family? It was a time for deeper reflection and discernment.”

He returned to St. Louis and participated in the program at the Consultation Center, where he met with professional counselors and spiritual directors who accompanied him through personal inner work as well as the ongoing process of vocation discernment. He then completed a year in the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program, learning how to listen and minister to the dying at the Research Medical Center in Kansas City, Mo.

This period was hard, Fr. Pham says, but he grew as a result. The two years of discernment led him to continue pursuing his Master of Divinity and Licentiate in Sacred Theology from Weston School of Theology in Boston. He was ordained a priest in June 2006.

After a year and a half teaching Ignatian Spirituality, as well as being part of the campus ministry team at Regis University, he went on to earn a doctorate in



**“I loved my years in the novitiate; I just fell in love with it. We were exposed to a lot of different ministries and different experiences. Not only did I learn about the Society of Jesus, but about different places in the U.S.”**

– Father Hung Pham, SJ

Ignatian Spirituality from *Universidad Pontificia Comillas* in Madrid, Spain, in 2011.

After his time in Madrid, he was missioned to the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, where he taught Ignatian Spirituality for seven years. In April 2015, the Society called him to his final profession. At the Provincial Congregation in 2015, he was elected one of the three delegates of the UCS Province to attend the Thirty-Sixth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus.

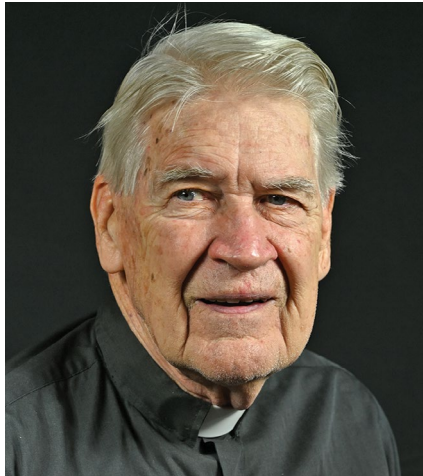
“During the voting at the Provincial Congregation, I was thinking to myself, ‘I would be happy if my name would be called once or twice, then go back to business as usual,’” he recalled. “But then, I heard my name called again and again. I was overwhelmed with joy and love by the trust and confidence the province had placed in me.”

Father Pham considers attending the General Congregation in 2016 a once-in-a-lifetime experience of learning, appreciating and loving the Universal Society.

When Fr. Mercier missioned Fr. Pham to be the Formation Assistant of the UCS Province, he gave him a special mandate: “to help our men to love the Spiritual Exercises.” Such a mission, Fr. Pham said, is “consistent with my love for the Spiritual Exercises and what it means to be a Jesuit – in everything, love and serve [*en todo, amar y servir*].

“My heart is to do the Exercises.”

# Fr. William J. Snyders, SJ: Bringing Souls to God



For more than three decades, Fr. Bill Snyders, SJ, served in a variety of ministries in the Central American country of Belize. Last summer, he moved to the St. Alphonsus Rodriguez Pavilion in Grand Coteau, La., where he ministers to infirm Jesuits. He also works part-time at St. Charles Borromeo, the Jesuit parish. But a piece of his heart remains in Belize.

“I can’t easily extricate from my work and relationships in Belize,” he says. “For instance, I was working with a man in his conversion to Catholicism. I am part of his life; he is part of mine. I am bound by strings, if not ropes. You can’t just pack up and say goodbye forever.”

During his final 12 years in Belize, Fr. Snyders worked in the alcohol and drug rehabilitation center at Belize Central Prison, the sole correctional facility in the country. “I was invited to put a spiritual twist on the 12-step program,” he says. “Belize Central Prison is unique. From the administration to the

guards to the structure, the whole tenor of the place is rehabilitation.”

The prison is operated by the Kolbe Foundation, named for St. Maximilian Kolbe, the Franciscan friar killed in Auschwitz during World War II. The faith-based foundation has transformed the prison into a place that prepares inmates to lead productive lives when they leave. One vital component: establishing the Addiction Rehabilitation Center and inviting Fr. Snyders to develop a program specifically for the prison population.

“Twelve-step programs are already based in spirituality,” Fr. Snyders says. “I added a scriptural foundation and an emphasis on Christ’s role in redemption. The atmosphere of the prison corroborated what I was doing. It was the most joyous environment I’ve ever taught in!”

**“I added a scriptural foundation and an emphasis on Christ’s role in redemption. The atmosphere of the prison corroborated what I was doing. It was the most joyous environment I’ve ever taught in!”**

He estimates he worked with at least 1,200 men in small groups during his years at the prison, a high percentage of the population. “I enjoyed helping them get out of the chaos of their lives,” he says.

In Grand Coteau, Fr. Snyders spends 2-3 hours each day in pastoral ministry to infirm Jesuits. In the parish, he helps with the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) program, typically with young people who do not go to

Catholic schools, but also with families coming into the Church. Many of these families are already Catholic but have not actively practiced their faith. His goal is to help them deepen their understanding, knowing this will enhance their relationship with God.

Father Snyders describes his approach as presenting a catechesis in which the pieces of a puzzle fit together – Church, liturgy and the sacraments. It’s not unlike his focus in the prison.

“I try to give them a much larger perspective of their Christian faith,” Fr. Snyders says. “There’s real substance in our conversations. If people don’t really connect with how the sacraments impact their lives, then it’s just an event. We’re striving for a more adult faith.”

He’d like to return to prison ministry. “That’s where my heart lies,” he says. But prisons in the U.S. do not typically aspire to rehabilitation of prisoners. Masses are rare at the prison in nearby Lafayette, La., so he is investigating other opportunities for service, recognizing he has to be patient.

“Things are starting to come into focus about how I can serve,” he says. “I just have to find the opportunities.”



# Bryan Riquel Torres Santiago, SJ: Grateful for the Invitation

*Deo Gratias.* Thanks be to God.

These words flow easily from Bryan Riquel Torres Santiago, SJ, because they are at the core of his vocation and his life.

Torres, who entered the Society of Jesus in 2017, recently completed his first year of philosophy studies at the *Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Occidente* (ITESO), a Jesuit university in Guadalajara, Mexico. He describes his assignment to Guadalajara for first studies as both a challenge and a grace.

“Even though it is a Jesuit formation house, it did feel new and different in some ways,” he said. “The Society has a universal way of proceeding that unites all of us, regardless of where you are, but it looks different in each province. So, this new ‘Jesuit culture’ was at first difficult to transition to. Now I consider it more of a grace than a challenge, for it has opened my eyes and heart to the universality of the Church expressed in the universal Society of Jesus, and the distinct ways Jesuits experience and follow Christ.”

Born and raised in Ponce, Puerto Rico, Torres first began to discern his vocation to the priesthood at the age of 17 during Eucharistic Adoration. “I’m definitely not a mystic, but I clearly heard a voice inside me,” he says. “I felt this invitation to follow Christ.” This moment reminded him of the scripture passage about St. Matthew’s call: Come, follow me. “Except I didn’t respond right away.”



Jesuit Scholastic Bryan Torres Santiago enjoyed his first experience in a Jesuit high school, at Belen Jesuit in Miami.

Instead, he attended Pennsylvania State University. “As time passed, I kept hearing the invitation,” he says. “It wasn’t an imposition, but an invitation to something I desired deeply.” By his senior year in college, he knew he wanted to become a priest, but he had to decide how and where.

Enter Pope Francis, the first Jesuit pope, doing new things and old things differently. Torres decided to learn more about the Jesuits. So, he went to the source, the *Formula of the Institute*, written by St. Ignatius Loyola in 1540. And he knew this was the group for him.

“The *Formula of the Institute* essentially lays out a program of mercy,” Torres says. “It is a synthesis of the life of Jesus, who carried out both the corporal and the spiritual works of mercy. That’s what the Society of Jesus does, and that’s the life I want.”

As part of his novitiate training, Torres served at the *Fe y Alegria* school in Santa María Chiquimula,

Guatemala. The Jesuit parish there, in addition to its ordinary sacramental ministry and supporting the school, provides adult education, water projects, student housing and more.

“During my time in Guatemala, I learned about inculturation, how to preach Christ in a way that’s familiar to the hearer,” Torres said. “It helped me to see a new face of Christ, and a new face of the Church.”

His current ministry is teaching “survival English” and organizing faith-sharing activities in a migrant shelter in Guadalajara. “Being in direct contact with migrants is both profound and heartbreaking,” he says. “It can be tough to hear their stories, but mine is a ministry of presence. It’s important for me to just be there and listen.”

Torres is grateful for the opportunity to study and serve in Latin America. He is even more grateful that God has called him to this life.

*Deo Gratias.*



**Blessed are those who have died in the Lord;  
let them rest from their labors,  
for their good deeds go with them.**

### Father Bernard Coughlin, SJ



Father Barney Coughlin entered the former Missouri Province of the Society of Jesus in 1942. After formation and ordination, he served as dean of the School of Social Work at Saint Louis University. Following a dozen years in that role, he was chosen in 1974 to serve as president of Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash., where he had a distinguished career as president and chancellor. Following his retirement from the university in 2017, he moved to the Jesuits West retirement community in Los Gatos, Calif. He died there on Jan. 28, 2020, at the age of 97. He had been a Jesuit for 77 years and a priest for 64 years.

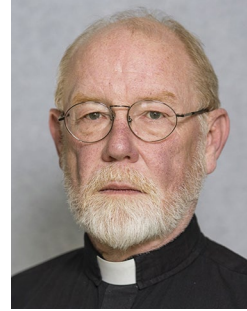
### Father Rodney T. Kissinger, SJ



Father Rodney Kissinger, died March 7, 2020, in Grand Coteau, La. At the time of his death, he was 104 years old, the senior member of this province and the third-oldest member of the Society of Jesus. He was a Jesuit for almost 78 years and a priest for 66 years.

Raised a Lutheran, Fr. Kissinger attended Holy Cross High School in New Orleans, the University of Notre Dame and Loyola University New Orleans. He was baptized Catholic on Christmas Eve of his senior year at Loyola. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1942 at the age of 27 – a “late vocation” for those times. Except for one year as assistant principal at Jesuit College Preparatory School of Dallas, Fr. Kissinger spent his entire priestly career in pastoral ministry at parishes or retreat houses. He was a prolific writer. Following his retirement, he continued offering spiritual direction by phone and posted podcasts, homilies and prayer resources on his blog at [www.frksj.org](http://www.frksj.org).

### Father Francis X. Ryan, SJ



Father Francis Ryan died March 11, 2020, in St. Louis, following a brief illness. He was two days shy of 67 years old, a Jesuit for 46 years and a priest for 35 years.

Father Ryan is remembered by his friends and Jesuit brothers as a caring person who brought others to God by being a jubilant Christian, open to the wonders of God’s Word and gifts. Since 2017, he was assigned to the Jesuit Hall Community, where he helped oversee the care of senior Jesuits. He was well known in St. Louis from his time as staff chaplain at Saint Louis University Hospital and from earlier assignments as a teacher at De Smet Jesuit High School. He was a professor of English for 14 years at John Carroll University in Ohio.

### Father David L. Koesterer, SJ



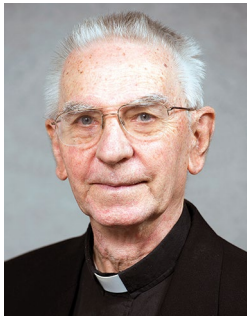
Father Dave Koesterer began his apostolic life in a classroom at St. Louis University High School. He later taught German and French for nine years at De Smet

Jesuit High School in St. Louis. He felt called to shift to pastoral work and between 1980 and 1989, he served in a variety of parishes in Oklahoma, Colorado and Missouri. He was a retreat director and spiritual director at White House Retreat in St. Louis from 1991 to 2006 and served in pastoral ministry in St. Louis from 2006 until early 2019, when his health forced him to retire.

Father Dave Koesterer died March 11, 2020, in St. Louis. He was 90 years old, a Jesuit for 68 years and a priest for 55 years.



## Father Roland J. Lesseps, SJ

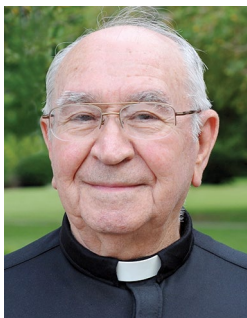


Father Roland Lesseps began apostolic ministry in 1967 as an assistant professor of biology at Loyola University in New Orleans. He continued teaching there, with just two brief interludes, until 1990. He spent one of those years away (1987-88) teaching biology and agriculture at the University of Zambia and Kasisi

Agricultural Training Centre in Lusaka, Zambia. He returned to Lusaka in 1990 to help local farmers develop practices that suited their specific circumstances. He introduced new crops and taught local farmers how to get the most from their land. As early as 1994, he wrote about the importance of the integrity of creation and urged other Jesuits to promote care for creation. He remained in Zambia until 2009, when health problems forced him to retire.

Father Lesseps died March 27, 2020, in Grand Coteau, La. He was 86 years old, a Jesuit for 68 years and a priest for 54 years.

## Father A. Ferdinand Derrera, SJ



Father Ferd Derrera led a life of cheerful service. He was called upon time and again to go where there was a need, and he always responded generously. His early ministry was in secondary education, teaching at Jesuit College Preparatory School of Dallas and the public schools of the Ysleta Independent School District in

El Paso, Texas. He also spent more than a decade training seminarians as teacher, rector and principal of the Minor Seminary of the Corpus Christi Diocese. He later worked in parishes: Our Lady of Guadalupe in San Antonio, Texas; Sacred Heart in El Paso, St. Joseph's Church in Houston, and St. Charles Borromeo in Grand Coteau, La.

Father Derrera died May 15, 2020, in Grand Coteau, La. He was 96 years old, a Jesuit for 68 years and a priest for 58 years.



For complete obituaries, visit the province website: [www.jesuitscentralsouthern.org/in-memoriam](http://www.jesuitscentralsouthern.org/in-memoriam).

# DID YOU KNOW?

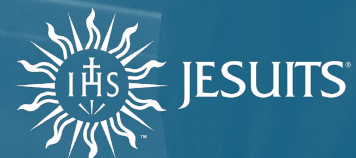
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*As always, we recommend consulting your financial advisor or a tax professional to determine what giving options would be best for your unique situation.*

Inspired by a Refugee's Faith:

# Finding Hope in Dark Days

*“Father, there is no need to be anxious. You fear because of uncertainties. We as refugees, experienced these uncertainties from the very first moment we started running away from our countries. When we took our first step out from our lands, we did not know the future. Those were dark uncertain moments where we lost everything, but God saved us. So, we are still living. We do not know what our future will be, but one thing is certain, that is we know that God will care for us. Even when we die; we die with these thoughts that God loves and cares for us.”*

(Refugee Charite Lobo to  
Fr. Lasantha de Abrew, SJ,  
of Jesuit Refugee Services East Africa)

Father Lasantha de Abrew, SJ, shared the message above with his colleagues at Jesuit Refugee Services during a meeting to discuss how to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. We were so inspired, we wanted to know more about this refugee who exhibits such faith. Here is his story, as told by Fr. Lasantha:

Charite Lobo was born in 1989 in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2009, he was a primary school teacher, and the war between the tribes of Bahema-Nord and Walendu had intensified. Charite had to flee Congo, leaving behind his wife, Esther, and two daughters, Lajoie and Plamdi.

After a difficult journey filled with fear and uncertainty, Charite reached Condo, a town near Lake Albert of Uganda. He spent nearly three years in Uganda in utter loneliness, not knowing the fates of his wife and two daughters.

In 2012, he made his way to Kakuma Camp, the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) settlement in Kenya, near the border with South Sudan. He joined the JRS staff in 2014 as a day care assistant for children with special needs. In recognition of his selfless dedication and skillful listening to children with disabilities, his JRS

superiors promoted him to lead trainer, training teachers.

Charite's wife, Esther, joined him in Kakuma with their second child, Plamdi, after a long and arduous journey. Their older daughter, who had been with a family member, could not be traced, as she and the relative also ran away. “We still don't know what happened

to her,” Charite recalled with tears. “We have lost her, my first born.”

Charite says that his commitment to children with special needs is because of his younger daughter.

“Plamdi is disabled; her vision is impaired,” Charite says, explaining that she lost one eye completely as a baby. “She was a healthy child at birth, but within six months she had meningitis and lost her vision. From the day she arrived in Kakuma, I have been trying my best with doctors to restore the sight of her other eye.”

Plamdi had surgery last year, but the doctors were unable to restore her sight. The resources available to them are too limited. But Charite and Esther have not lost hope.

“They told me that with more medical attention in Nairobi it will be possible, but I am a refugee. When will I have that chance?” Then he became silent.

Regaining his voice, Charite said, “I know the pain of a parent with a child having disabilities. I understand the pain of my daughter, who is unable to see the world. I do my best to help these children have hope for the future.”

Charite enumerates three contributions JRS has made in his life. “First, it has helped me by employing me, lessened my stress and helped me to cope with the utter loneliness of a refugee,” he said. “JRS has provided me the opportunity to care passionately for children and persons with disabilities, and in return I am able to care for my daughter more affectionately. Finally, JRS has empowered me with various training programs. Because of JRS, I have dignity and hope.”



Charite and Esther Lobo are raising Plamdi and three other children in Kakuma Camp in Kenya.



# PRAYER

## *During the Pandemic*

God, our Father, we come before you as your children to thank and praise you for making us your own.

Yes, Lord, we are scared, anxious and worried, but in faith we are experiencing you as the God of the universe.

We bless you for revealing the inner beauty of your powerful message to us through this deadly virus.

Lord, we need you, because we are connected to you as our Father.

Lord, we need each other, to be connected as our brothers and sisters of one family.

Lord, as creatures made by you, we are connected to the whole environment and need to care for it.

Lord, we are connected to the refugees who were chased away from their lands; we feel their pain and anxiety.

Lord, we are connected to all the victims of this deadly virus who close their eyes without their beloved; we share their loneliness.

Be with us, Lord ... walk with us ... help us to be like Jesus, your Son.

Amen.

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*Thank you for your support of our men in formation.*

Join us online!

First Vows Mass will be livestreamed at 11:00 a.m. on Aug. 8 at [bit.ly/UCSVows2020](https://bit.ly/UCSVows2020).

Jesuit Ordinations will be livestreamed at 9:00 a.m. on Aug. 15 at [bit.ly/UCSOrdinations2020](https://bit.ly/UCSOrdinations2020).

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