



# Remembering 25 Years

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**Jesuit Refugee Service Asia Pacific 1980-2005**





Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation with a mission to accompany, serve and plead the cause of refugees and forcibly displaced people. Set up by the Society of Jesus in 1980 and now working in over 50 countries, the priority of JRS is to accompany refugees whose needs are more urgent or forgotten.

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# ASIA and the PACIFIC





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# Acknowledgement

Remembering these 25 years is a way of recognizing, through the lives of refugees and displaced peoples, the true humanity of love and justice to which we have been called. It is their lives we seek to commemorate. We owe a deep gratitude to them for bringing us all together and drawing out the best in us.

To all who shared and continue to share this life in JRS and communicate these experiences in myriad number of ways with lucid simplicity, we are grateful for your generous solidarity.

We are particularly grateful to Fr Andre, Khun Emilie, Ms Kep and Ms Took for beginning work on this memoir, for painstakingly contacting past and present JRS personnel and editing their stories, searching, sorting and identifying photos (from the thousands we have had for 25 years!), to Mr Sanjay, Ms Leida and Fr Bernard for their editorial work, to Mr Phanas Phokthavi and Ms Eve for the layout/design of these pages, and to numerous others who in one way or another made this possible.







# Introduction

“Civilization must be judged and prized not by the amount of power it has developed but by how much it has evolved and given expression to, by its laws and institutions, the love of humanity... [F]or that by which alone man is true can be nourished only by love and justice.” (*Rabindranath Tagore*)

In the following pages, one would have a glimpse of the lives of women and men, who have given meaning to the expression “the love of humanity.” They gave, and continue to give, witness to the truthfulness of the human person—nourished and nourishing only by love and justice. These 25 years of accompanying, serving and defending the rights of refugees and displaced people is “a sacred history in the drama of human and divine humanity.” With simplicity of means, quality listening presence and creativity they have responded to the harsh realities faced by refugees and displaced peoples. The intimate presence of JRS personnel enables them to speak with authority and credibility to advocate their cause to government and non-government organizations and other related agencies. They share stories of how in the lives of refugees and displaced people one can glimpse, and sometimes touch, sacredness and at the same time the woundedness of our humanity.

Reminiscing these years, the men and women of JRS recall how they have been challenged to look critically at themselves in the encounter with refugees and displaced peoples. The latter are like a mirror reflecting back to us what is wrong in our humanity—in our political, economic, social, military and educational systems. They unveil the lie of what we refer to as ‘civilization,’ shattering the scaffoldings of our unexamined assumptions that defines us as human persons—possessions, prestige, power—and show us how one can live with dignity intact despite the damning deprivation they experience. Their resilience, courage, creativity and humanity—frequently mentioned by JRS personnel who have accompanied them—speak of them as true “bearers of hope.” Thus, the refugees and displaced peoples are considered “dangerous people” since they call us





into ourselves, first and foremost, towards a critical awareness of the death-dealing forces within and call us out of ourselves towards a compassion that is nourished by love and justice for all men and women.

While in their lives, or if we care to look closely into their eyes, we see the effects of our laws and institutions, and yet it is also in and through their lives we see how much humanity has “evolved and given expression...to the love of humanity,” without choosing whom one should love. They have brought together men and women of diverse backgrounds—race, religion, culture, nationality—to give expression to what is noble in our humanity, i.e. the love that is self-sacrificing. In the brief history of JRS Asia Pacific, one will recognize this special gift, a rich blessing, of men and women—Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Muslims and people of good will—giving expression in their own ways to see every human person as brothers and sisters. A JRS staff remarked, a sentiment shared by many of its personnel, “ironically, in the lives of refugees and displaced peoples one can concretely see the highest value of being human.”

This is a tribute to the men and women who have walked the extra mile, broke bread together and shared the sufferings of refugees and displaced peoples in some manner to give witness to the foundation of humanity’s greatness—love and justice. On the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, JRS has produced 3 other books that uncover for us the lives of refugees and displaced peoples and the JRS personnel who chose to share their lives. These books are: *The Wound of the Border*, *God in Exile* and *Horizons of Learning* (see [www.jrs.net](http://www.jrs.net)). Let their lives speak of this truth!

Bernard Hyacinth Arputhasamy, SJ





# A Brief History of JRS AP

“Remembering must be grasped and embraced” (*God in Exile*, 51). This is what we attempt to do as JRS remembers 25 years of accompanying, serving and advocating the cause of refugees and displaced persons. From its humble beginnings on 14 November 1980 by Fr. Pedro Arrupe, it has grown in many ways to be present in at least 50 countries on all the continents of the world. The present account does not claim to be comprehensive but gives a broad-spectrum or sketch of a vision begun and a mission brought to fruition. But the plight continues...

It was the plight of the Indochinese boat people in 1979 that prompted Fr. Pedro Arrupe together with a small band of Jesuits to respond to the crisis of the time.

Many complex questions needed careful consideration in the foundation of JRS. Thus, in a meeting held in Bangkok on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1981 between Fr. Arrupe and all the Jesuits gathered in Thailand, including the Jesuits of the Region of Thailand, a broad framework for the work with refugees was drawn. Fr. Arrupe commended the work already

undertaken and strongly supported the desire of the participants to continue the work in some form. He reorganised the delicacy of the work in a volatile political climate, and also the demands which the commitment to refugees would make on an already thinly stretched Jesuit community in Thailand. He insisted that Jesuits working with refugees should cooperate with others and particularly with people of other faiths. He was aware that charges of ideological bias might be made against Jesuits, but accepted the risk as part of the cost of any worthwhile enterprise.

## The Genesis

Within this general encouragement of the work with refugees, Fr. Arrupe made two decisions with far reaching ramifications. In the first place, he accepted the demand of the then Archbishop (and later Cardinal) Michael Michai of Bangkok that Jesuits working with refugees should be placed with COERR so that their work would be incorporated into the Church of Thailand. COERR (Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees)

is the arm of the Church of Thailand responsible for work with refugees, founded in 1979 under the direction of Fr. Bunlert Tharachatr. It enjoyed the confidence both of the church and of the Thai army, which had a large role in developing and administering refugee policy within Thailand. Secondly, Fr. Arrupe asked that a Jesuit of the Thailand region be appointed as the JRS coordinator. The appointment would enable work with refugees to respect the sensitivities both of the Jesuits of the region and of the local church. In response, the Jesuits of Thailand region appointed Fr. Alfonso de Juan as the JRS coordinator.

Subsequently, the Jesuit commitment to refugees in Thailand took shape and began to expand from the Xavier Hall Jesuit community in Bangkok, offering generous hospitality to Jesuits working with refugees in Thailand and other assistance. Fr. Cerutti took untold pains in posting mail and cashing cheques for refugees. In the field, to name a few, Frs. Pierre Ceyrac and John Bingham began to work with





Cambodians in Ampil camp at the Cambodian border supporting educational and social work in the camp. (Fr.) Bon Maat continued to work with ARC at Nong Samet in a programme directed towards patients with tuberculosis while (Fr.) Ed Brady remained at Ban Vinai and later joined by (Fr.) John Blanchard who became involved in a social programme. Many of these responses were expressed in projects such as education, technical training, pastoral work, health, research or advocacy.

### **The Growth**

From an emergency response to crisis, the work of JRS expanded towards a longer term commitment. The worldwide sympathy for refugees, which in 1979 had allowed so many to resettle, had diminished. Refugees were expected to wait in camps much longer, and were more likely to be rejected. They faced a correspondingly more unwelcoming reception in countries of first asylum. In Thailand, the enormous number of people housed at Khao I Dang had diminished, and the border camps already wore a more permanent air, with little promise of political settlement which would allow the refugees to return home. The same situation prevailed in the camps

which held the Hmong and Lao in the North East of Thailand. Thus, the long-term needs of refugees received increasing attention—education, support of culture and the ability to participate in the decisions which shaped their lives besides the needs of food, medicine and shelter. Refugees and their cause had also ceased to command media attention. Thus, events like the visit of Pope John Paul II to the camps in Thailand, in May 1984, gave a glimmer of hope to them. People working in the camps were able to contribute a little to the speeches given by the Holy Father in Thailand.

In the course of work, the circle of JRS team enlarged since the Jesuits developed close friendships and working relationships with other volunteers among whom they lived. Some pastoral and spiritual responsibility to the catholic volunteers grew and deepened in these environments. JRS took an active role in recommending, supporting or sponsoring people to work with refugees in programmes in which Jesuits were involved. The JRS network in the field grew more complex and rich. It aroused the question of identity: who actually belonged to JRS? This gave rise to a tension—the JRS as a

network of Jesuits and as a network of Jesuit relationships began to be explored. Some who contributed to this enlargement and enrichment of JRS are Sr. Pierre Marie Bail, who worked with the lepers in Ban Vinai, and Bernadette Glisse who worked for many years as a teacher of midwives with ARC in Nong Samet and in Cambodia in 1988. Elsie Webber has been untiring over many years in representing the cases of refugees seeking resettlement. Hiroko Horiuchi first came to Thailand through a programme organized for short-term volunteers by Giuseppe Pittau, SJ (later Archbishop) from Sophia University. She later returned for an extended period of service. This was an early example of the international Jesuit network of Jesuits and their publics dreamt by Fr. Arrupe. It was based on friendship, and expressed itself in shared prayer and a common reflection on the Gospel.

The initial period of growth of the Jesuit Refugee Service in the Asia Pacific region could be dated from late 1982. Fr. Mark Raper, SJ was appointed as the regional coordinator. At this time he was the director of the Asian Bureau Australia (ABA), an organisation, begun by and loosely associated with Jesuits





then, focused on Asian issues. His background in Asian political studies and working experience on development issues with church and other groups throughout Asia gave him many contacts in the region (e.g. SELA, ACR, APHD) and familiarity with issues of refugee policy and resettlement. This new appointment gave a new focus both for Mark and the Bureau. The appointment meant that reflection on refugees in Asia could look beyond the immediate demands of the works in which people were engaged in the field. Fr. Mark visited refugees in Sabah, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Hong Kong and Malaysia to negotiate new projects. He was also occupied in arranging funding for projects and in talking with Jesuits and their publics about the needs of refugees and the possibilities of working with them. These visits encouraged and facilitated the commitment of the local churches and aid organisations to the cause of refugees.

### **Regional Concerns and Work**

During these years the major focus of work with refugees in Asia continued to be in Thailand. In the Cambodian border camps, Tom Williams helped to establish a technical school for the handicapped

who had lost their limbs to landmines. Jean-Marie Birsens was a medical worker at San Ro camp. At Phanat Nikhom, Neil Callahan, succeeded by Sr. Bernie Evens and Joe Cocucci, took responsibility for the English school administered by COERR. Others who spent some months are Andre Lamothe, with the Vietnamese refugees at Phanat Nikhom, Renato Zecchin and Ian Cribb spent some months for their tertianship on Pulau Bidong, Malaysia, in 1983, working mainly with unaccompanied minors. John Haley, Warren Broussard, and later, Bill Yeomens, John Kringston and Joan Campbell continued this work on the island in the field of education. Early in 1983, Frank Phat, a Vietnamese priest who had been working at Bataan processing centre, in the Philippines, was replaced by Louis Robert, the secretary of SELA, who had already been involved at Bataan and Palawan, in the Philippines, on a part time basis. Paul Shaughnessy worked for a year at Bataan while Mick Smith spent three months on Palawan. At Galang, Indonesia, Gildo Dominici was joined by Francis Wiyono from the Indonesian province, as the Indonesian Jesuits began to take over responsibility for the pastoral care

of refugees in the camp. Louis Robert was sent to camps in Hong Kong as chaplain in the middle of 1984.

This brief list gives some hints of the slow growth in the commitments of Jesuits and friends to refugees in the region. Religious sisters and brothers from other congregations began to be placed in JRS or supported through the Office. Short-term placements, particularly of Jesuits, led to later long-term commitments. Many returned to their own provinces with some experience of refugee life and a commitment to their cause while stimulating the interest of other Jesuits and the local church in refugee life and service. This engendered the enlargement and enrichment of the JRS network.

As JRS continued to grow and grapple with various issues in its service to refugees and displaced people, the Annual Meetings were set in motion. Besides the January 1983 gathering of Jesuits working in Thailand, the JRS workers from the whole region met in October, in Bangkok, for an opportunity to come together and relax together, to reflect on the life of refugees with whom they worked, to examine their experience and to plan together to meet new needs and demands in new situations. The growth and the





extension of JRS could also be plotted through these meetings. From 18 participants in the meeting of 1983 it had grown to 27 in 1984. The breadth of representation demonstrated the importance of the international network established with the local church and voluntary organisations for the welfare of refugees. They were Michael Cardinal Michai, Archbishop of Bangkok, Mgr. Bac and Fr. Venet of the Laotian and Cambodian churches respectively, Bishop Renato Martino, the Apostolic Nuncio in Thailand and an indefatigable friend and representative of the refugees, and Susan Walker, the field director of ARC. The 1984 meeting was similarly graced with visitors—Fr. Dieter Scholz, SJ, the first International Director of JRS after separating from the Social Secretariat, Sr. Patricia Pak Poy, RSM, the Australian Sisters of Mercy who were considering their own commitment to refugees, Keizo Yamada, Fr. Andrew Hamilton, SJ from Australia and Fr. Robert Cutinha, SJ, the Regional Coordinator for JRS India, who was working in India with the recent influx of immigrants and refugees from Sri Lanka.

It is impossible to chronicle the recurring issues and themes discussed during these initial

meetings in a few pages here. Some were far-ranging with concomitant results in new projects or initiatives. These include sharing the experiences of the refugees themselves as they touched it in each camp, the quality of pastoral presence to refugees, the tension between short-term emergency relief and long-term development in our service, the attitude to and relationship with local churches or catholic agencies and those working in those agencies, discernment on the priorities and spirit of the JRS commitments, effective and responsible communication of relevant information to different audiences for productive policy changes, recruitment of competent and committed volunteers—religious and lay—to work with refugees, and the structure of governance of JRS.

In late 1983, Fr. Mark Raper, SJ had taken responsibility for coordinating information about refugees to publish the first issue of *Diakonia*, a small news sheet which described aspects of refugee life, particularly as it was seen by JRS workers, and the movements of JRS workers in the region. It was directed mainly to existing Jesuit publics and to agencies familiar with JRS.

Apart from giving interviews, writing short articles on refugees and had photographs taken to illustrate written material, he also began discussions, in 1984, with Fr. Gerry Martinson, SJ, Director of the Kuangchi Program Service in Taiwan. These discussions resulted in a number of programmes and videotapes which were shown to great effect to audiences in many lands, especially church groups.

The regional office of JRS was moved in 1985 from Melbourne, Australia to Bangkok, Thailand, in Soi Luecha. By this time, it was already impossible to speak of JRS as no more than a Jesuit organisation. It was a period of consolidation of its works and ways of operation. The earliest members of the staff were Porphjan Jutisiriwatana (Tiew) and Ratana Kulsiripatana (Lek). They had a long association with Xavier Hall Jesuit community before joining the JRS office. Others include Dhananuch Prem-On (Kob)—secretary, and Kitikorn Jotisakabratana (Ou)—the office administration team, Therese Caouete—emergency projects and Burma desk, Rossi von der Borch—information officer, Siriphen Limirikul (Ah)—liaison person for projects in Thailand. Vilaiwan Phoktavi (Kep), sister both of Fr. Vichai Phoktavi, SJ (the student chaplain at







Xavier Hall) and of Jub, took responsibility for the management of the office and for financial administration. Finally, many refugees contributed to the service of other refugees by their work with the office—Isabel and Joao from East Timor, Hossein, Seelan, Krishna and Mehdy from Iran, Geetha and Nala from Sri Lanka, and Wa Wa and Moei Moei from Burma.

A significant development in JRS is the establishment of the Mercy Refugee Service (MRS) in 1985. This contributed to the presence and work of many sisters in the field in coordination with JRS. Some of them are Srs. Joan Campbell, Carole McDonald and Maureen Lohrey who were placed with the Malaysian Red Crescent at Pulau Bidong, Malaysia. Sr. Lizzie Finnerty went as midwife to Palawan, the Philippines, in 1986. Sr. Bernie Evens worked both at Phanat Nikhom and the border of Thailand and was later joined by Sr. Julie Rees, while Srs. Faye Kearns, Mary Arnold and Denise Coghlan were also placed at Site 2. Sr. Maryanne Loughry worked for a short time at Bataan and later went with Sr. Marie Geddes to Hong Kong.

Religious men and women of other congregations (some fifteen

congregations) also came to work with refugees and were placed and supported through JRS. These years have also seen the beginning of the recruitment of lay people. By 1989 Christine Stewart, John Walsh and Cecily Reading, Hiroko Horiuchi, Steve Patterson, Charie Abad and Malcolm Ramsay had been recruited for the border. Look Nut, Phonphan Phoktavee (Jub) and Panlop Muankeere (Tan) had also worked there under JRS auspices. Christine Stewart later worked with the COERR team at Sok Sann. Franz Stephen Bauer was preparing to work at Bataan. Dr. Dominica Garcia, who had worked in Cambodia until 1975, and subsequently with Lao, Vietnamese and Khmer refugees, joined a JRS programme at the Suan Phlu transit and detention centre in Bangkok. She was accompanied there by Yolaine Leduc. At the prison they were able to work both with people coming directly from Vietnam and with the undocumented immigrants.

As the work continued, JRS mourned the deaths of several of its workers. In November 1985, Neil Callahan died after a long battle with cancer. At the beginning of 1988, Surimart Chalernsook (Look Nut), who had laboured tirelessly for the

JRS workers in the office and border camps, was killed in a road accident on the Chonburi road. Fr. Bill Yeomens, SJ died after a short illness in 1989 in London. A young scholastic Richie Fernando, SJ, working with Jesuit Service Cambodia, was killed by a hand grenade released by a disturbed student in the school for the handicapped in Banteay Prieb. Following the independence of East Timor from Indonesia in 1999, the birth of this new nation was not without pain caused by the ensuing violence and blood shed. Thousands of East Timorese fled to West Timor and many died in the hands of the militias. Among them were Fr. Dewanto, SJ, a newly ordained priest, who was killed on 6 September in the massacre in Suai where he had been sent to help the parish priest to minister to thousands of people seeking refuge in the church. On 11 September 1999, JRS East Timor Director, Fr. Karl Albrecht, SJ was killed in Dili.

Other developments during this period included the separation of JRS from the Social Secretariat and the creation of the Jesuit Refugee Service as the secretariat of the Jesuit Curia in 1984. Fr. Dieter Scholz, SJ was the first International Director of JRS. Many appointments of national





and regional coordinators of JRS were made during this time. After working in Phanat Nikhom and coordinator for the Philippines, Fr. Tom Steinbugler, SJ was appointed as the second Regional Director of JRS Asia/Pacific in 1990 while Fr. Mark Raper became the second International Director of JRS based in Rome. Fr. Tom oversaw the establishment of a technical school for the handicapped in Phnom Penh after the Khmer cease-fire and eventual return of refugees. Together with Sr. Jeanne Marie Ath, Sr. Denise Coghlan and Br. Noel Oliver, SJ they pioneered several services to refugees here.

### **Gaining Momentum**

As the network of relationships of JRS grew, its programmes expanded in various degrees in the Region—in the camps, in Indonesia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand—according to the changing political circumstances in various countries in these lands.

Included in this expansion is the response to the situation in Burma. Therese Caouete carried through this initiative from its inception, gathering adequate information about the situation in Burma from August 1988. By the end of 1989, the Burma Coordinating Group of

different agencies including JRS worked together to respond to the needs of increasing number of students seeking asylum in Thailand.

Amidst all this expansion of projects, offices, growing complexity of relationships and shared services in JRS, at each step of the way, the identity of JRS has inevitably been subject to question. Vision and mission statements were discussed and clarified in various annual meetings, and initial documents were drawn up to give a comprehensive view of JRS. Early in 1990 Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, wrote a letter to all Provincials renewing the mandate of JRS, and defining its role in the light of the changed circumstances since Fr. Arrupe's letter of establishment.

In June 1993, a new JRS region was created when JRS South Asia was separated from JRS Asia Pacific. Fr. Vincent Mookken, SJ was appointed as the first Regional Director of JRS South Asia. Fr. Quentin Dignam, SJ was appointed as the third Regional Director of JRS Asia Pacific replacing Fr. Tom Steinbugler, SJ, in 1994. This was the period of screening process (the Comprehensive Plan of Action) for resettlement and repatriation of Vietnamese asylum seekers. Fr.

Quentin presided over the down scaling of JRS programmes with the Indochinese refugees and the withdrawal of JRS workers as many of these camps were being closed. As the JRS work in Cambodia was clearly a work of development rather than a commitment specifically to refugees, responsibility was transferred to the Jesuit Service Cambodia (JSC) and to the Jesuit Provinces of Asia in 1995. Sr. Denise Coghlan became the director of JSC.

Throughout the 1980's and 1990's, refugees from Burma fled the risk of imprisonment, torture and death. In 1988 some 7,000 students had left Burma to seek refuge in Thailand or to set up camps in territories effectively controlled by minority ethnic groups. In the year 2000 there were over 120,000 refugees from Burma living in refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border. There are hundreds of thousands more victims of the Burmese junta displaced inside Burma or living precarious lives as undocumented ('illegal') immigrants workers in neighbouring countries. In this climate Fr. Steve Curtin, SJ succeeded Fr. Quentin as the fourth Regional Director in January 1997.

Fr. Steve continued the work







begun by Fr. Quentin to strengthen JRS programmes with refugees from Burma taking refuge in Thailand. He saw the closure of the last camp for Indochinese refugees in Thailand while continuing the nascent JRS Karenni Education Programme in Mae Hong Song, started in 1996. Other works of JRS included the Suan Phlu Immigration Detention centre where Fr. Oliver Morin, SJ, Dr. Dominica Garcia and other legal officers served detainees and asylum seekers. Towards the end of his term, the post-referendum in 30 August 1999 resulted in militia violence in East Timor causing deaths, destruction and massive forced displacement of people. Major new programmes were started in refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in West and East Timor. Meanwhile, the JRS Indonesia Country Director, Fr. Andre Sugijoprano, SJ started other new programmes for the people displaced by communal violence in the Moluccas and political conflicts in Aceh between the Indonesian military and the Free Aceh Movement.

Fr. Andre went on to become the fifth Regional Director of JRS Asia Pacific in January 2001. He continued the programmes started in East and West Timor until their

closures. By this time, JRS was present in Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia and Australia. He saw the start of JRS in Singapore, which supported the various works in Asia Pacific and established a JRS Thailand country office with its own Country Director, in 2003, to manage its programmes. The tsunami on 26 December 2004 brought about colossal destruction in Aceh, killing about 200,000 people and displacing another 400,000. JRS's presence and work in Aceh increased in personnel and projects for the reconstruction of houses, mosques, schools, hostels and rehabilitation of the people in Aceh. Fr. Andre frequently visited these areas to support and facilitate the work of JRS for the survivors of the natural disaster. He grasped the complexities involved in the situation, gathered good information from the field staff and spent many hours writing proposals for funding these projects for the tsunami survivors. The rehabilitation of Aceh has always taken a participatory approach in all programs in striving to empower the survivors. JRS has been active in Banda Aceh, Lamno, Lamsenia, West Aceh (Meulaboh and Nagan Raya regency), and also in Langsa and South Aceh (Tapaktuan)

in education, empowerment and income-generation, trauma healing, housing, emergency logistics, health care and humanitarian protection. One of the fruits of this venture is the solidarity, amidst challenges, built among local and international volunteers, people of different faiths especially Christians and Muslims in these areas. This interreligious character of JRS has created a space for men and women to serve those in need, regardless of race, ethnic origin or religious beliefs. This was the vision of Fr. Arrupe. Together they give witness to the already engaged work of reconciliation. The peace agreement signed on 15 August 2005 between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement has been very encouraging. Thus, from a gathering of ten Jesuits in Bangkok, Thailand, JRS has multiplied into an organization of more than a thousand lay men and women, from different religious congregations, and people of other faiths, namely Christians, Buddhist, Muslims, and Hindus in the Asia Pacific region.

### **Looking Forward**

So much more remains to be done for refugees and displaced peoples in the region. Into this scene enters Fr. Bernard Arputhasamy, SJ as the





sixth Regional Director in September 2005. It is the year that JRS remembers 25 years of mission in accompanying, serving and advocating the cause of refugees and displaced people. Looking forward, the JRS worldwide has begun the process of “strategic planning” from the country and regional levels in order to adapt to the changing needs and new challenges that lie ahead. “It is this mission that JRS must not lose sight of. . . [remaining] faithful to the original vision of Fr. Arrupe while adapting to new scenarios of forced migration,” urges Fr. General Peter Hans Kolvenbach in his message to mark this occasion. The challenge remains to implement these strategic decisions respecting the peculiar needs of refugees and displaced peoples in each country and region.

“Let us thank the Lord for these 25 years in the ministry of refugee care,” adds Fr. Kolvenbach. “It is also the occasion to thank all who, during these years, have given witness to God’s love for refugees, the poorest of the poor. I would like to mention in particular the directors of JRS, the Jesuits and all their partners in this ministry of compassion: religious priests and lay persons, religious

brothers and sisters. Without their generous commitment, JRS would not have been able to help so many refugees in so many hopeless situations. May the Lord bless them all because they have in effect served Him, as a refugee among all the refugees! . . . Let us pray that the need for a service like JRS will diminish.”





# REGIONAL DIRECTOR





# Fr Mark Raper, SJ

**Birthdate:**

**31 August 1942**

**JRSAP Service:**

**1982 – 1989**

**Regional Director JRS Asia Pacific;**

**1990-2000**

**International Director JRS**

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**Fr Mark helps us appreciate by:**

“Looking back over the 25 years of JRS

“In one of the first camps that I went to, I met a Vietnamese woman who forgave, face to face, and in front of many people, the man responsible for the death at sea of her sister and two of her children. Later she found her husband who had fled by a different route, and they started their lives together again in Sydney. In a Thai camp, I met a woman who looked after her two surviving children plus 20 orphans. Eight other children and her husband had died in Cambodia. She wanted to forgive her husband’s killer and she prayed for the peace of her country. Every day in every camp we heard stories like this. We were there to listen to the people, and by listening, to help them find courage to go on with life.

Until recently, the accompaniment of refugees has been the central preoccupation in my life, and the source of amazing surprises and of recurring and deep joy. Not the least has been the delight brought by many friendships among JRS workers. “A strange and curious body of men”, someone once said of the Jesuits. JRS then, is “a strange and curious body of women and men”. The deep friendships binding many JRS workers occur by an unlikely lottery. If it were not for the refugees, we would

not otherwise have met. Our mission of service gathered us together from all over the globe. Life-long bonds of mutual debt, respect and affection tie us to refugee friends too.

In Asia, JRS found root and grew. The record in the first issue of *Diakonia* of an early meeting of JRS Asia workers, held in 1983 at Xavier Hall, Bangkok, lists insights that remain core principles for JRS today. There we spoke about availability, understanding, helping refugees to reflect on their own situations, fostering self-help and self-determination. The Asia Pacific regional office, supported by Dieter Scholz as International Director, became a paradigm for other regions. Spread across the globe JRS needs to be flexible, with significant authority given to local centres. Dieter modelled how the international centre can help to focus the mission and to support the regions.

In its welcome to refugees, Asia showed us the best and the worst. “Kindness and cruelty grow together”, said Bill Yeomans, “and we who try to serve the refugees must learn to wait in joyful hope for the harvest.” Hospitality, deeply rooted in Thai culture, was injected into the JRS way by our Thai sisters and brothers. But care for refugees is a combined effort of states and civilians. We faced hard reality in dealing with

governments. Until today, Thailand defends its national integrity with disproportionate force when it risks losing control. Today asylum seekers meet such hostility everywhere. Early on, JRS was toughened to these realities. We learned to be wary and wily, and it helped to have international teams. Defence of refugees’ rights assumed an integral place in JRS.

We know that JRS saved lives, gave new opportunities, and supported many people to find safe resting places. During those years we faced repeated crises and rarely had the sense of winning. Somehow, this lack of immediate satisfaction opened us to a deeper mystery. As Bill Yeomans put it, describing his time in Ban Vinai camp in Thailand’s northeast:

“You may think that I have painted a grim picture. I have, because it is grim. But I would not want any other work than what I am doing. There is no superficial job satisfaction or self-fulfilment and so it is capable of engendering a most profound joy.”

Daily I give thanks for the remarkable experience of living in Thailand and of serving the refugees together with so many wonderful JRS Asia Pacific workers.”





# Fr Thomas Steinbugler, SJ



**Birthdate:**  
27 December 1929  
**JRS Service:**  
January 1990 – 1993  
**JRS-AP Regional Director**  
**Bangkok Thailand**  
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Fr. Tom Steinbugler SJ, an American from the Philippines province, served as Regional Director of Asia Pacific from 1990-1993. He continues his affiliation with JRS to this day, as JRS Contact Person in the Philippines. A wonderful mentor Fr. Tom was able to get the most from the staff and volunteers who worked under him during this very traumatic period in the life of the region.

Fr. Tom has written the following

reflections, originally for the JRS International 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary publication but we are pleased that he shares it with us in Asia Pacific.

"JRS - AP 1990 - 1993

My first association with Refugee Work was in 1985, when Mark Raper, then Regional Director, invited me to the new Bangkok offices to help with the financial records. Mark kindly invited me on other occasions, and I used to sit in on his consultations and annual meetings. Also, he asked me to be the Philippine country director, keeping an eye on the Vietnamese arrival camp in Puerto Princesa and the Bataan Processing Zone, the departure area for those going to USA.

Eventually Mark was called to Rome to replace Dieter Scholtz, and since nature abhors a vacuum, I got sucked







into his big pair of shoes in Jan. 1990. The Asian refugee scene was shifting. The civil war in Cambodia wearied everyone, and people longed for an end.

So also, the ever-increasing flow of Vietnamese refugees, arriving by land or boat, had exhausted the patience of the receiving countries. The search to find sponsors for those automatically considered to be refugees shifted to refugee status determination as both the first world countries and the UN tried to plug the pipeline. The processing was slow, the camps were miserable, and word gradually seeped home, "Don't come."

For the other two main refugee groups, the Hmong from Laos continued to enjoy automatic acceptance by the US, while the Burmese minorities were not going anywhere: unwanted at home, unrecognized in Thailand, they languished in jungle camps where they can still be found.

The Khmer Refugees were mainly in camps just inside Thailand. FUNCIPPEC followers were in the enormous Site II Camp, and others. Pol Pot's people were in more secluded camps closed to the NGOs. (To write that sentence is to recall the hotly-debated question, were these refugee camps, or base camps for the war effort.)

Vietnamese land people were in Thailand. Boat people could be found

in the Philipplines, Hongkong, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Hmong and Burmese were in Thailand. JRS-AP was everywhere, 50+. The Bangkok Office grew from one house to two to three, holding offices, a guest house, Chapel and an inexhaustible kitchen run by the famous Pi Chan. Burmese refugees found a home here, as did Alan and Denise Nichols, for two years.

Two major developments began in the first half of 1990. In anticipation of the Khmer cease-fire and eventual refugee return, Mark had prepared the ground for a JRS footing inside Cambodia. "We want to be there to welcome the refugees home." Our calling card was to be a technical school for the handicapped, similar to the one in Site II. In February, Sr. Jeanne Marie Ath, Sr. Denise Coghlan and Bro. Noel Oliver, SJ flew for the first time from Bangkok to Ho Chi Minh and then back to Phnom Penh, at the invitation of the Quaker Society. Eventually the school was established with Bro. Noel as its first Director, and Sr. Denise became the Team Leader for Cambodia, as she is today. She Ath pioneered rural cooperation in hundreds of villages in Kandal Province.

The work so well begun by these pioneers has continued, expanded and now constitutes the backbone of the Jesuit Service Cambodia. Sr. Denise and Sr. Aht remain, along with a

number of others from JRS days. Meanwhile, to assist the Vietnamese in the determination of their refugee status, the UNHCR called for proper legal assistance to be supplied by the NGO Group. Fr. Louis Robert, SJ, working in HK, attended the initial meeting in Geneva. A group of Australian Lawyers were interested. Peter Hosking, S.J. hosted a 6 hour meeting with a 29 item Agenda, and the Hong Kong Lawyers Project was born, under the leadership of Paul White. For three years this project fielded an uninterrupted flow of lawyers assisting refugees to understand the law, enabling them to present their situations in the fairest manner. The project ended when the camps began to close.

A third, less public service commenced just when Mark was leaving Bangkok. He was caring for a Burmese lass who slowly died, almost literally in his arms. A group formed to help her, a group which remained together after both YeYe and Mark were gone. They were young students, driven from Burma, who passed their time in the forests and then came to Bangkok to continue their struggle for independence. Being illegal, they lacked security, jobs, income, proper housing. JRS helped the Bangkok-based as much as possible. Meanwhile, the Burma Border Consortium, of which





JRS was a member, offered modest assistance to the camps along the Border, with the tacit tolerance of the Royal Thai Government.

Another unusual program served the Immigration Detention Center in downtown Bangkok, where many refugees and others were crowded together in terrible conditions. JRS sought the release of these men and women, and their return home.

The danger, in mentioning these highlights, is that the bread and butter JRS work might get overlooked. In so many camps schools were organized and administered, the sick cared for and counseled, the elderly nourished and supported, babies delivered, mothers cared for, leaders trained, etc. Many volunteers came from Australia, US, Europe, India. Mercy Sisters and other religious women, Jesuit scholastics, brothers and priests, lay volunteers, married and unmarried, young and old.

One has to mention Pierre Ceyrac, Vincent Dierckx and John Bingham from India, who came first and left last. Alphonso de Juan led the very large COERR Team at Site II, Paul White and Tong Lay Lee from the HK Lawyers Project, Anne McDonald, Lizzie Finnerty and Meg Hicks, midwives at Palawan, Louis Robert and Carole McDonald, who served in several

countries, Joan Campbell, who stayed on and on and on, with the Vietnamese in Malaysia. Alan and Denise Nichols, a Protestant Minister and his wife, who left Australia to brave the Catholic world.

Just before leaving, in 1993, I could support Mark in his effort to revive JRS - India, to serve the Bhutanese refugees camped in the mud of Nepal. By this time, the Vietnamese pipeline was clogged, and their camps were closing around the region. The Khmer war was over and the refugees were returning, their problems not yet over. The Hmong flow gradually dried up, and the Burmese? Well, we call them Myanmar now, but they are still there."







# Mr Quentin Dignam



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**20 December 1951**  
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**JRS Service:**  
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## A SPECIAL TIME, A TIMELY AND LASTING GRACE

There are many well-traveled veterans in JRS A/P, but few as sorely tested as the old Honda motorcycle that goes with the job of Regional Director. I don't know if Tom ever rode it (perhaps as pillion?), or Andre or Bernard; but it carried Mark before me and Steve after me. So perhaps it could tell some true stories about JRS on this anniversary? It may be one of our less likely symbols. Two images, particularly, come to mind. The first is of leaping from the lights in the

Bangkok traffic, its burst of acceleration leaving the other revving bikes behind, only to be passed a few seconds later by a swarm of snarling two-strokes as they got their torque up. The second is of Steve Curtin and I heading off for the office one morning: me the lean and lanky sitting up front, Steve the solid ex-rower on pillion, the bike springs compressed to their base, the guard at Xavier Hall swinging open the gate and looking at us looking warily at the steep curving 'hump' out of the compound, the howling of the little engine as we shuddered down the flight deck, us wondering if we'd end up on our backs or in the *khlong*. We made it. And the bike's still there too, I hear. If the first image is about excitement and challenge and racing into it, the second may be about trying the impossible, and getting by with what you've got. I think JRS has done both, and much more besides.

For me, however, the JRS story is about people. People we have touched and who have touched us; people too many to name, too special





to ever forget. And stories, always stories. Stories told reflectively in homilies, narratives painfully and generously recounted across the barriers of language, tales uttered haltingly and urgently despite gaps in power and freedom between speaker and listener, stories given to hearten us and anger us, anecdotes dissolving all our pretensions into uproarious laughter, snatches of news driving us silent and uncertain to the eucharist and the timeless story from which we all draw strength. Who among us has not hundreds of these stories? And has not so much of JRS' mission been to give these stories a hearing, to give these people – often homeless and anonymous – a place and a name?

Those people include the people of JRS itself: the ancients and the new comers, the poets and the planners, the mystics and the rascals, the faithful plodders and the anguished visionaries, the teachers and drivers, the healers of hearts and the fixers of pumps, those who came briefly and those who have stayed for years. Whoever we are, we have come to realise that in JRS we are given something precious to draw from. We can name some of the sources of that spirit – the experience of the poor and displaced, the gospel

story, the insights and animus of Ignatius and Arrupe, the traditions of the Society of Jesus and of the myriad other societies and cultures in which JRS has found itself, the gifts and 'myths' that are associated with each of those JRS faces in photo albums and picture files around the world. We're all in there, in someone's memories. And that's as much a part of the celebration now: what JRS has drawn from us or enabled us to give. We would hope that, for any of the refugees we have served, being a refugee is only a period of their life's experience, and that JRS is – if anything at all to them – just a part of that. But we were a part of their lives, and they of ours. That we can and must treasure and celebrate.

Any story of people is a story of challenge and change, of grounding and growing up. In this I think especially of how JRS has struggled to balance structure and flexibility: to secure funding and develop policies and recruit personnel, but also to be fuel for the Spirit's fire. For it seems to me that naive and intemperate generousities have rightly inspired us and enticed us, even as considered strategies have sustained and protected the JRS and its people and those they served. One thinks here especially of the creative

dynamic between people in the 'field' and at the 'base' (whatever exactly those terms can really mean), each a stimulus and corrective and resource for the other. And none imagines that this was learnt without cost: who of us in JRS has not at some time felt intolerably burdened by our mission; who has not known times of comfort and support beyond measure and merit? That's a grace to give thanks for.

More than that, the JRS story is a story of celebration. The christian story itself seems to have emerged in a mood of hope surprisingly rediscovered, and in the setting of friends gathered. They are locked in fear, or bewildered on a journey without purpose. They end up celebrating and emboldened. Often a meal is involved. One cannot tell a JRS story without touching on meals and eucharists and parties: clumsy and spirited dancing, prayers forced out in the face of seeming chaos and hopelessness, people welcomed and fed from an abundance of food or almost none.

Thanks for that. Thank God for you and for them."





# Fr Steve Curtin, SJ

*Fr. Steve, an Australian Jesuit, has written the following message for JRS International and has agreed to share it with JRS AP 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrants. Thank you Steve.*

“My first assignment with JRS was in the Philippines in 1991 before I was ordained. Tom Steinbugler was the Regional Director of JRS-AP at that time and I was seconded to a Philippines mental health NGO (Community and Family Services International) in the Philippines First Asylum Camp (PFAC) in Palawan. Most of the asylum seekers in Palawan came from Vietnam. This was the time of the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) when countries of the region sought to ‘stem the tide’ of refugees from Vietnam by “screening” them against the refugee definition in the Convention before offering resettlement only to those “screened in”. It was a most difficult time in the camps since those “screened out” faced forced repatriation to the countries they had fled. After many years of automatic resettlement for refugees from Indochina the CPA and screening was a significant change.

I lived at the Catholic parish inside the camp with the chaplain, Fr. Bob Crawford. He was a Vincentian priest who had been a missionary in Vietnam



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**6 June 1956**  
**JRS AP Service:**  
**1991- 1992**  
**JRS volunteer in the Philippines**  
**1996-1997**  
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**1997-2000**  
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before 1975 and an interesting fellow to live with. Anne McDonnell was the Mercy Refugee Service midwife with IOM in Palawan at that time and she helped to keep me sane. A Vietnamese American Jesuit, Fr. Joseph Tuoc, was also there at that time.

My second assignment with JRS was from 1996 to 2000 with JRS-AP in Bangkok. I went to assist Quentin Dignam with Thailand programs and to assist in the Regional Office just as the Comprehensive Plan of Action was coming to an end. Quentin had taken over from Tom Steinbugler as Regional Director. Quentin's time as Regional Director was tough because it was the time when camps all over the region were being closed and "screened out" asylum seekers were being forcibly repatriated. Quentin's last year as Regional Director was especially sad because of the death in Phnom Penh of Richie Fernando. I was making my first visit to Burma in 1996 when I learned from Quentin that Richie had been killed. Then later that year Gil Carrol, one of our young volunteers from the USA had a stroke in Bangkok and had to be medi-vac'd home to face a long rehabilitation.

When Quentin finished in Bangkok at the end of 1996 I became the Regional Director. I represented

JRS in 1997 at the closing of Sie Khieu, the last camp for Indochinese in Thailand. That really was the end of an incredible era.

With the closure of the Indochinese refugee programs around the region, most of my five years in JRS-AP were concentrated in Thailand itself with programs in Bangkok and on the Thai-Burma border. The JRS Karenni Education Programme based in Mae Hong Son was just beginning when I started in 1996. By the time I finished it had grown very considerably.

Prior to the work in Mae Hong Son, a lot of the JRS work with refugees from Burma was focussed on the students who had been involved in anti-government protests in Rangoon and other cities. Some of the students had subsequently fought against the Burmese army in the jungle on the border and had later moved into Thailand to seek refuge and resettlement. The JRS Border Project Officers did an enormous amount over many years to provide assistance to the students, many of whom had been deeply traumatised by their experience. In Bangkok Oliver Morin and Dee Garcia did wonderful work in the immigration detention centre and our legal officers did some very important casework with asylum seekers.

We had some great information officers and editors of *'Diakonia'*, *'Light and Dark'*, and *'News from the Field'*. They helped the refugees to tell their stories and helped JRS workers to reflect on their work.

I have very happy memories of JRS parties and the 'happy hour' gatherings at the office to celebrate birthdays, engagements, welcomes and farewells. Another happy time each year was our annual meeting at Hua Hin.. I especially remember some hilariously funny concerts at the end of these meetings. Another meeting each year that I found especially supportive was the meeting of Regional Directors in Rome. Mark Raper was a great 'boss' and I never ceased to be amazed by his capacity to travel and keep in touch and keep on top of so much information. I also have special memories of times we prayed together at Hua Hin, at the office, in the camps and on the road. I found that the Eucharistic food was the real food for the JRS faith journey.

There were also times when we JRS workers hurt one another just because we are vulnerable and limited human beings and we are working under pressure sometimes without as much training or preparation as we might like to have. The good God who inspires our work





also works in us to heal the wounds that are given and received along the way and God leads us to forgiveness and reconciliation. The times we prayed together were also occasions to pray for one another.

It was during my time as Regional Director that the JRS programs for Bhutanese refugees in Nepal were moved into the care of the newer JRS region of South Asia. I was back in Nepal for a JRS meeting in September 1999 when the post election militia violence in East Timor caused so much death and destruction. I remember rushing back to Bangkok and going on to Jakarta where I was able to maintain some contact with the Jesuits who had remained in Dili sheltering refugees. I was in Jakarta when I learned that the JRS East Timor Director, Fr. Karl Albrecht had been killed on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Fr. Tarcisius Dewanto had been killed in Suai a few days earlier on September 6<sup>th</sup>. My last year as Director was a sad year in many ways especially because of those two deaths. This was also my busiest year with major new programs in East Timor and West Timor. At the same time the JRS Indonesia Director who was to

succeed me as Regional Director, Andre Sugijoprano, was starting new programs in parts of Indonesia where people were being displaced by communal violence.

Before I finished as Regional Director at the end of 2000 I went to Mae Hong Son to celebrate Christmas Mass in one of the camps there. On my way back to Bangkok we detoured to Chiang Dao to visit the home of one of the Regional Office staff. A surprise farewell party had been organised for me. Vilaiwan (Kep) Phokthavi, Tawatchai Hoonghual, Rachanee (Took) Sareechaithaweepong and Emilie Ketudat were the most wonderful people to work with. These long term office staff along with Chan the cook and the various others who came and went were the core of the incredibly loving and loyal community at the heart of JRS-AP. This included quite a few young, committed and incredibly gifted refugee staff. My time with JRS was a special time in my life and I continue to remember in my prayers the work of JRS and I remember with love all those people whose lives touched my life in those years."





# Fr Andre Sugijopranto, SJ



**Birthdate:**  
24 February 1965  
**JRS Service:**  
1995-1998  
**Cambodia;**  
2000 – 2005  
**Regional Director Asia Pacific**  
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“Eight years working with JRS for some people seem very long time. I started working with JRS in Cambodia in 1995 when I was in Siem Reap working with the displaced persons from Battambang province and with the landmines survivors. I had never thought before that I would work with the displaced persons. When I was in philosophy, one young Jesuit came back from the Philippines and told me about JRS for a long time. At that time I had no idea what JRS was. Honestly I was not interested working

with the refugees. My provincial then asked me to go to Cambodia for my regency. The life of the displaced persons in Siem Reap moved me a lot. I had never seen such poverty in my home country. Thanks to God that during my time I could resettle about 150 families into a new village. We worked together with the Cambodian Red Cross which provided land for all the families.

Again God led me to JRS when around 280,000 East Timorese crossed the border of Indonesia after the referendum in September 1999. I was in my third year of my Theology at that time. The provincial suddenly asked me to go to West Timor to help the refugees. I prepared my departure only in one night, then went to Kupang. It was challenging because there was no Jesuit in West

I had never been there before. Together with three Good Shepherd sisters I started the JRS works in West Timor. Some novices and scholastics then were sent by the provincial to help me. There were a lot of things to do. I woke up at 5 a.m. to attend the daily mass in the parish church. The





refugees came to our center around 6 a.m. either to register for repatriation or for going to the airport for repatriation to Dili. JRS worked closely with UNHCR because UNHCR at that time had no local staff that could arrange the repatriation process. We were trusted to save the rebels (Fretilin) because the refugees trust the Church.

Two months after starting JRS in West Timor, the JRS Indonesia country director resigned immediately. I was appointed then as the country director. I did not move the office to Jakarta. I remained in Kupang, while supervising the JRS works in three places in West Timor: Kupang, Atambua, and Betun.

The conflict in Moluccas at the end of 1999 was getting worse. The fighting between the Moslems and Christians caused thousand of displaced persons. Some Jesuits in Indonesia asked me to help them. After consulting with the regional director in Bangkok, I set up JRS office in Ambon, the capital of Moluccas in March 2000. I was always worried for the safety of JRS staff in Ambon because the conflict was so tensed. In June 2000 I asked all of the staff to go out from Ambon because of the escalation of the conflict.

Around February 2000, when my

provincial went to Dili with me, he told me that I was asked to be the new regional director of JRS Asia Pacific. I was ordained in July 2000 and continued working as JRS Indonesia country director. I finished my term as a country director at the end of September 2000, then moved to Bangkok for my new work as the regional director.

Five years as a regional director made me aware of the challenges JRS faces. The number of refugees and displaced persons are always increasing. I enjoyed my time especially when I met the displaced persons. Whenever JRS can help a person, I always feel satisfied. I was lucky because I had very good and dedicated staff around me. Though the works were so many and never ended, I did not feel that I worked alone. In front of my computer I communicated with many JRS staff in the region. Technology helps me to coordinate the works effectively.

I really want to thank all the people who for five years always ready to help JRS. Our partners and donors are always willing to support our projects. My Jesuit brothers all over the world are always ready to support with different things. Especially for all JRS staff in the field who always work so hard to accompany, serve, and

plead the cause of the displaced persons. They have become my inspiration to see the goodness of God in the world.

Though I am not working with JRS anymore, I will keep myself updated with the problems of the displaced persons. The friendship with some refugees and displaced persons makes me aware that there are a lot of people who need JRS 's help."







## Fr Bernard Hyacinth Arputhasamy, SJ

**Birth date:**  
**17 August 1967**  
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**present**  
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“This work will be a school in which we learn many things.” These are the words of Fr. Pedro Arrupe in his *Final Address to Jesuits Working with Refugees in Thailand* in 1981.

I have been reading *Everybody's Challenge* as part of my preparation to work with JRS again, to learn of its humble beginnings, growth, works, way of proceeding, etc. Most of all I want to be familiar with the people—refugees and displaced persons, and the people who accompany, serve and plead their cause. Printed material is but a small beginning. It is certainly not enough. One will learn more through concrete encounter with refugees and displaced persons. They alone know in and through their lives what they are about,







where they have come from and where they want to go. I must be present to them, listen to their words and listen to their silence.

My thoughts go back to my childhood when I used to visit a camp in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia with my family. It was in a church compound. I believe this was the initial period of the 'boat people' arriving in Kuala Lumpur. Later as a young Jesuit scholastic, I encountered a people I have been familiar yet unfamiliar. I spent two years (1997-1999) working with JRS in Malaysia. In a limited way I encountered more refugees, visited people in the Immigration Detention Centres in Kuala Lumpur (and Bangkok), coordinated with the UNHCR for refugee status determination, participated in JRS meetings in Thailand, and met JRS personnel. Then, during my studies in Rome, I volunteered to work with JRS Italy in the men's and women's dormitory. Now, years later, I am returning once again to the fold. It seems strange for me to say 'returning.' It is as if I have been present in small and different ways. Or rather they and their concerns have somehow been present to me in a myriad number of ways (JRS contacts, reading newsletters, emails, etc.).

At the threshold of another new beginning, a new 'returning,' I leave from one school, having completed my studies, to a different school. Where do I begin? How do I begin? There may be expectations—from myself and others. They can be overwhelming and crippling at times. I have decided to gather some materials as I go to this new school. They are four words, like a mantra, for me to take with towards this familiar yet unfamiliar world of refugees, displaced peoples and others who journey with them. I hope to "live" among them, "listen" to them, "learn" from them and "live" all over again among them. Hopefully the latter "live" is touched and transformed by the former "live."

JRS itself has grown 25 years old. Men and women have *lived* among refugees and displaced persons, *listened* to their stories and *learnt* from them. They have been touched and transformed by the lives of refugees and displaced persons in order to *live* anew this journey with them. The weeks since 21 July 2005 as I return and begin again, I spent time visiting our men and women in some of our works in different countries. I am humbled by their compassionate accompaniment, generous service and sensible courage in pleading the cause of refugees and displaced

persons. I am in good company, with the people who began this journey before me and still others who have moved on yet left their mark through the memories of their lives and services.

"Forcibly displaced persons need to be listened to." These are the words of Fr. Lluís Magrina, JRS International Director, on JRS World Refugee Day Statement. They echo the words and spirit of Fr. Pedro Arrupe. Let the echo be like a symphony that continually plays in the background as one accompanies, serves and pleads the cause of refugees and displaced peoples in the world.





# STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS





# Fr Chris Boles, SJ



**Birth date:**  
**26 March 1962**  
**in Hawick, Scotland**  
**JRS AP Service:**  
**1992 – 1994:**  
**Regional refugee transit**  
**center Bataan, Philippines**  
**Contact:**  
**Jesuit Community,**  
**28 Lauriston Street,**  
**EDINBURGH EH3 9DJ, UK**  
**Tel: +44 (0)131 477 5795 or**  
**E-mail: [chris.boles@jrs.net](mailto:chris.boles@jrs.net)**

Following Tertiaship in Australia in August 2005, Fr. Chris made his way back to Scotland via Thailand, Japan and other ports. He shared what he had written on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for JRS International with us. Excerpts relating to Asia Pacific (and a little more) are given below. Thanks Chris.

“My work with refugees began in 1987 as a first year Jesuit novice in Birmingham, England. An organisation there provided assistance to Vietnamese and other refugees newly arriving into the city and my work was with the housing department of that organisation, preparing houses and apartments for

new arrivals to the city.

It was an excellent introduction to the world of refugees and got me interested early in my Jesuit life in the work of JRS. In the second year of the Jesuit novitiate novices of the British province do a 3 or 4 month placement and I had hopes of doing that placement with JRS somewhere.

Thus at the end of my first year novitiate I met with Mark Raper, who was then still the director of JRS Asia-Pacific, to ask if I could do my placement in his region. To my great surprise he said no! I hadn't contemplated being told no, so it was a shock! But actually his reasoning made great sense, namely, that a short placement of only a few weeks is of very little help to refugees, who require people committed to long term service and accompaniment.

Mark suggested I prepare myself for a 'regency' with JRS, a period of time where Jesuits in formation take a break from study for two years or so to do pastoral work of some kind. So in order to





prepare myself as best I could for a regency with JRS I began a long and pleasant association with the 'Refugee Studies Programme' (RST) at Oxford University, where I went after novitiate to study philosophy (and play rugby!). That was an excellent preparation and in the course of my time there I was able to represent JRS to RST, which eventually led to the establishment of the 'Pedro Arrupe Tutorship' at the University.

Regency came in 1992 with a placement in the Regional Refugee Transit Centre in Bataan, a camp of first asylum for Vietnamese boat people, where I was responsible for a programme which looked after unaccompanied minors, all those in the camp under 18 who were there alone without any parents or older siblings. The normal way for JRS to work in the Asia-Pacific region at the time was to second JRS staff to work with other agencies in the camps which allowed for a good variety of placements in camps throughout the region. I left the Philippines in 1994 with many of the children still there and it would be three more years before the camp was finally closed and all remaining refugees resettled or returned to Vietnam.

I worked there nearly two years and found it very gratifying though very difficult and very emotionally draining. A refugee camp is no place to go through childhood, but it is remarkable how many of those children are now settled into good living situations in countries throughout the world.

I often described my work in the camp as 'hanging out' with the children because that is essentially what I did. They were in it for the long haul. No country would resettle them until they were 18 years old, even though they were spoken of as 'first among the first' for care and for resettlement. So I did what I could to make their life in camp more bearable and pleasant but in reality I did very little except spend time with them, happy to do so.

I was the only JRS worker in that particular camp and my nearest neighbour was on an island very far away. I depended, then, on the regional office in Bangkok for my support, for news, etc and was able to make visits there about twice each year which was very important.

More studies followed for me and this time they took place in Toronto, Canada, and again I was able to combine study of theology with practical work and I was a permanent

volunteer in the JRS office in Canada, part of the 'Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice' which gave me a good experience of seeing JRS work in the context of a larger social centre.

I was happy to be there because I knew already my next assignment after studies would be to JRS in the UK, working with our growing team in London.

These different experiences of JRS gave me a good overview of at least some of the world of JRS and that was further expanded by annual work in the International Office in Rome, acting as secretary for the meeting of the Regional Directors of JRS each summer. There I was able to see the global scope of JRS which seemed very different from my early days and my time in Bataan. For one thing projects and regions in Africa were being greatly expanded while at the same time projects in Asia-Pacific were trimming down because of the final closing of camps.

I finished working with JRS full time in 2000, when I came to Edinburgh to work in the justice & peace office of the archdiocese, a job I enjoy and which my time with JRS has prepared me for well. I remain a contact person for JRS in Scotland and always look forward to visitors!







# Fr Gildo Dominici, SJ



**Birth date:**  
**5 March 1935**  
**in Assisi, Perugia, Italy**  
**JRS AP Service:**  
**Jan 1979- Sep 1982:**  
**Pastoral program, Pulau Galang Vietnamese refugee camp of first asylum, Indonesia**  
**1984:**  
**Phanat Nikhom, Thailand**  
**April 1985 – 1987:**  
**Leader of Pastoral and Social programs, Bataan refugee camp, Philippines**  
**Sep 1989:**  
**Education and Pastoral care Ta Praya, Thailand**  
**Deceased:**  
**3 March 2003**

Fr. Gildo, an Italian Jesuit helped establish the camp of first asylum for Vietnamese boat people on Pulau Galang, Indonesia. For the first two years (1977-1979) he had served the refugees on a part-time basis. Galang is a tiny island in the Riau Archipelago just a few hours by fast boat from Singapore. Fr. Gildo wrote that when the boat people began arriving in large numbers in 1979 he was asked to leave his teaching in Jakarta to

assist the refugees. He had formerly been a missionary in Vietnam and so spoke Vietnamese. The earliest written contact from Fr. Gildo in JRS records is a letter of invitation dated May 1982 sent from Fr. Gildo to Mark Raper followed by planning for a visit to Galang by the Asian Regional Director to take place in Sep 1982. As early as April 1983 Fr. Gildo wrote that he may have to leave Galang as the Government insisted on the Indonesianization of the pastoral work with refugees, but JRS wanted him to stay on with an Indonesian counterpart. However, he was still there in February awaiting the arrival of an Indonesian priest and still unsure of his own stay. In April 1984 at the time of the first visit of Mark Raper to Galang camp there were over 9,000 refugees there.

After a brief period of pastoral work in Phanat Nikhom in 1984, Gildo went back to his homeland, Assisi, Italy followed by a visit to the USA and then Palawan and Bataan in the Philippines. He was asked to serve JRS in yet a third





country, the Philippines. By May 1985 Gildo had started numerous pastoral programs in Bataan as well as hiring a Vietnamese cook! He built a good team and the pastoral needs of the Vietnamese were met, but a conflict with authorities over their corrupt activities in the camp blew up, and Gildo took time to give retreats and visit Vietnamese youth who had been relocated in the USA.

Back in Bataan in late 1986 Gildo reported that in addition to the Vietnamese there were about 7,000 Laotians and no one who could speak their language. On his return from the USA in September 1986 he was not immediately allowed back in the camp, as there was still a fear for his security. In September 1987 Gildo took a sabbatical semester to study at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkley.

Fr. Felipe Gomez SJ from Vietnam Service ([www.jceao.net/vnservice](http://www.jceao.net/vnservice)) has sent additional material and comments regarding Fr. GildoDominici.

"He was born in a worker family, the eldest son with a younger brother and sister. When he was eight years old, his father died in a work-related accident. His widowed mother struggled to take care of three young children. Life was hard. Poverty was compounded by the effects of World War II. But the whole family was living in faith and hope. Gildo joined the

diocesan seminary and was ordained in 1960. His brother became a carpenter and his sister a seamstress.

After working in the parishes for a few years, he joined the Society of Jesus in 1964, and earned an STD in Canon Law from Gregorian University. He came to Vietnam in 1968 as a Jesuit missionary. After two years of learning Vietnamese, he joined the theology faculty at the Jesuit run Pius X Pontifical Seminary in Dalat. He taught there until expulsion by the new Communist regime. He went to Indonesia afterwards. He quickly learned the Indonesian language and joined the Indonesian province. But his love for the Vietnamese people propelled him to find opportunities to work with the refugees. Around 1978, he started ministering full time for Vietnamese boat people in various camps in Indonesia. At Pulau Galang, he was a tremendous influence in the spiritual, cultural, and social life of the refugees, regardless of religion. He and some of his helpers published the monthly roneo-copied newsletter called "To Do" (Freedom) as a forum for refugees to share their experience and voice their needs. When the United-Nations-sponsored Galang camp was closed in the mid-1980s, Cha Dominici went to Bataan refugee camp in the Philippines and continued to work with the refugees for a few more years.

He also served the Vietnamese in North America spirituality and pastorally. He gave Ignatian retreats and became the Ecclesiastical Liaison and Chaplain for the Vietnamese version of the Christian Life Communities, also known as "Ong Hanh Movement" from 1991 to 1993. He published three books in Vietnamese: "Ra Khai" (Sailing Out), "Vietnam, Que Hong Toi" (Vietnam, my country), and "I Tm Anh Em" (Searching for brothers and sisters). The first two books are his reflections on the experience of the Vietnamese refugees. The third book reflects his works among young adult, especially with his experience of the Focolarini. After a few more years living in North America, he returned to Italy in 1997 to work in the retreat house Galloro at Ariccia.

In 1998, he was diagnosed with cancer. He had several operations and underwent chemotherapy for a year. He seemed to improve for the cancer was in remission for a few years, but it did not go away. Last year, it came back. Though he suffered with the cancer pain and chemotherapy, he remained always cheerful. About a month ago, the cancer was out of control and his liver failed. He died in peace at 12:30 p.m. on March 3, 2003 two days short of his 68<sup>th</sup> birthday.

I hope that this is enough for now

Felipe Gomez SJ  
Vietnam Service





# Mrs Ornchan Pakdeewong

**Birth date:**  
**8 September 1951**  
**in Ubolrachanthai, Thailand**  
**JRS AP Service:**  
**1988-Present**  
**Housekeeper and Cook,**  
**JRSAP, Bangkok, Thailand**  
**Contact:**  
**JRSAP, 43 Soi Rachwithi 12,**  
**Victory Monument, Phayathai,**  
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**+66 2278 4182**  
**Fax: +66 2271 3632**

P'Chan is always very glad to meet many people from many countries and she likes to cook for them all. She feels that everyone in JRS is very kind and has experienced that the JRS workers always take very good care of her, especially commending Khun Emilie, P'Kep and P'Took. She would like to thank all the Jesuit Fathers who gave her this job and those who continued the opportunity for her to work for the JRS family.

When she served JRS at the Soi Luecha house, she met many Burmese. She liked them all and missed them so much when the Burma service was moved to separate housing. She feels very happy when the asylum seekers, refugees and especially the Burmese students come back to visit, send letters and souvenirs for her. It means that they still miss her, P'Chan.

She knows that JRS helps many people and brings smiles to their face. She would like JRS to continue working in this way for others forever.

Mrs. Ornchan, known worldwide as P'Chan, has worked with JRSAP for 17 years. During an interview she provided information on the favorite foods of all the past JRS Asia Pacific Directors:

- |                        |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Fr. Mark Raper         | Pineapple               |
| Fr. Tom Steinbugler    | Pad See<br>lew          |
| Fr. Quentin Dignam     | Kaeng Pha               |
| Fr. Steve Curtin       | Crispy Fried<br>Chicken |
| Fr. Andre Sugijopranto | Pla Duk Foo             |







# Mr Tawatchai Hoonghual



**Birth date:**  
25 December 1962  
Chang Ming, SakonNakhon,  
Thailand  
**JRS AP Service:**  
1 November 1993—present:  
Assistant, Regional Office  
Treasurer and Country  
Treasurer, Thailand  
**Contact:**  
Jesuit Refugee Service Asia  
Pacific, P.O. Box 49, Sanam  
Pao Post Office  
Bangkok 10406 Thailand  
Tel: +66 2 640 9590  
Fax: +66 2 271 3632 or  
E-mail: [tawatchai@jrs.or.th](mailto:tawatchai@jrs.or.th)

Tawatchai, better known as Ung, started work with JRSAP just before the 1993 annual meeting - what a rough beginning. Always kind and patient, he is there for others of the JRS and Xavier Hall family even when over stretched with his assigned work and the tasks that he takes on to help others. Ung is married to Khun Anong, Xavier Hall's major *chef de cuisine*, flower arranger and tailor, and father of two lovable impish boys. Their Bangkok residence is in Xavier Hall.

Ung reflects on his JRS AP experience: "It was just like a dream and the work of God for me to join with JRS. I knew JRS since its beginning when it was established here in Thailand. I knew many people who worked with JRS and many of those passing by Xavier Hall in the early period on their way to the 'refugee and displaced fields.' Now many of those brothers and sisters I met already are with God in heaven.

My work for JRS Asia Pacific is a challenge for me. I have learned a lot and have received many things from JRS and all the people with whom I work love, care, warmth and an atmosphere of being among family and friends. Here in the regional office I have a good chance to meet many JRS people from all over the world.

My heartfelt thanks goes to JRS for giving me the chance to have this good experience. Thanks to all the people for whom I work for giving me a job. Thanks to all my friends and colleagues for teaching me in many ways, by sharing with me in many situations, and by guiding me to the good ways."







# Fr Frank Brennan, SJ



**Birth date:**  
**6 March 1954**  
**JRS AP Service:**  
**Jan-April 1987**  
**Teacher and spiritual director**  
**in Site II and Khao I Dang,**  
**Thailand**  
**Feb-March 1995**  
**JRS Phnom Penh Cambodia,**  
**Uganda;**  
**Sep 2000 - Dec 2001**  
**East Timor**  
**Contact:**  
**Institute of Legal Studies,**  
**Australian Catholic University,**  
**MacKillop Campus, 42**  
**Edward Street, North Sydney**  
**2060, PO Box 968,**  
**North Sydney 2059,**  
**Tel: +612 97392450**  
**Fax: +612 9739 2455 or**  
**E-mail:**  
**frank.brennan@acu.edu.au**

For ten weeks in 1987 at the invitation of the Regional Director, Fr. Frank came to Thailand to live and serve the field workers and refugees in Vietnamese and Khmer camps in Thailand. He provided a great deal of spiritual food and also documented his thoughts as requested by Mark

Raper. In March 1987 writing from Tapraya he commented on the situation in "Khmers: Seeking Shelter and Finding No Protection - An Impression from Site Two". By April Frank wrote an assessment of another refugee site in "A Hong Kong Reflection - Prepared for Jesuit Refugee Service" and another delightful article is dated March 1987 on "Lessons Learnt by a Teacher in a camp for Displaced Persons".

A few years later JRS Cambodia invited Fr. Frank to spend his tertianship elective with them in Cambodia, which he did. A very eventful month, which includes traveling with Fr. Kike to buy a piece of land in Siem Reap and writing a momentous letter to UNHCR on possible Landmines Legislation as well as human rights, feeding into JRS Cambodia's advocacy against the use of landmines. This is one influence which prompted Cambodia to take the lead in what was to become the Nobel Peace prize winning International Campaign to Ban Landmines.





### From Frank we hear:

"I am an Australian. I have been a Jesuit for 30 years and a priest for 20 years. Over the years, I have wandered on the edges of JRS. I worked briefly in camps on the Thai-Cambodian border and in the West Nile region of Uganda. And I was Director of JRS in East Timor for a year or so. Let me share just a few stories about JRS workers.

One day in Site 2 Camp on the Thai-Cambodian border, all foreign workers were evacuated because the shelling had got too close. Fr. Pierre Ceyrac SJ insisted on entering the camp so he could be with the women and children that night. Many NGO personnel were upset with him because they thought he would jeopardise the international relief effort if he were injured or killed. Next day, he asked me rhetorically, "What else could I do? I had to be with the women and children." This one sacramental action of his taught me much about solidarity. Only because he had been there every day for years, it was important and it made sense that he be there that night, no matter what the risks.

Fidelis Magalhaes was a 20 year old man from Maliana on the border of East and West Timor. His father was an independence leader in the area and was killed by police and

militia in September 1999. Fidelis worked with the JRS returnees team assisting refugees when they returned from West Timor. He went to Geneva for the hearing of the UN Human Rights Committee. For him, it was a fantastic experience - and a long way from the border. He had told me that he was in no hurry to go to university because for the moment, the border was his university. On his return from Geneva, we had a two-day meeting of our 30 staff discussing the meaning of reconciliation. He said, "Sometimes I feel like a hypocrite when I help the returnees because my father was killed by the militia. But I am lucky and blessed because I have a mother with a big heart and she is a great inspiration for me." Despite his age, he was more like a teacher than a student at the 'university of the border'.

Isabel Gutteres was a Timorese refugee who came to Australia and trained as a nurse. When the Indonesians left East Timor she joined the JRS team. She was also helping people return across the border. One day we waited seven hours at the border for a very sick woman to be brought across. Senior UN officials and military officers crowded around because this woman was the wife of a key militia leader. Some of her other relatives had been

killed by the militia. While we waited, I was getting very impatient. Isabel observed that the relatives from the warring factions had started to talk to each other. She was overjoyed, proclaiming, "This is reconciliation. This is why we are here." When JRS completed its work, Isabel stayed on as one of the country's reconciliation commissioners.

It has been a joy, a blessing and an inspiration for me as a Jesuit to work with such people.

Let me conclude with one simple story about a refugee whose name I never knew. One day in Site 2, I greeted this man with the observation that it was a beautiful day. He replied simply, "But I am a Khmer." His sad eyes told the whole story. It was all very well for me. I was in the camp by choice. I was there "to do good". He was a Khmer. He had no choice. He was trapped.

Long may JRS workers freely choose to accompany those with no choice but to remain trapped on the borders of life. Happy Birthday JRS. Thanks for all you have done for refugees and Jesuits these last 25 years. Wouldn't it be good if there was no need for a JRS in the next 25 years? May this anniversary give you fresh vision and grace for the task at hand."





# Fr Louis Robert, SJ

**Birth date:**

**28 April 1932**

**JRS AP Service:**

**1983 – Sep 1984**

**Pastoral care and Chaplain**

**Bataan, Philippines**

**1984 - 1993**

**Pastoral care in refugee camps in Hong Kong**

**Contact:**

**7735 Av. D'Outremont**

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**CANADA or**

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Fr. Louis, a Canadian, was born in Mexico, holds a French passport, served the needs of the Vietnamese refugees (JRS workers across Asia Pacific too) in the Philippines and Hong Kong and lives now in Canada. His Report on a "Visit To Refugee Camps" dated October 6, 1981 carries the message he lived as JRS - to provide hope, information and peace.

Fr. Louis served as Executive Secretary for SELA (Socio Economic Life in Asia), beginning in the summer of 1977, and by the mere fact of that work, Fr. Louis says, "I took interest in refugees. At that time JRS did not exist yet. All during my trips, once a year, in all the countries of the Assistency I went to see the camps, sometimes visiting and saying Mass





for longer periods as even a month, for four years in a row in Japan.

I remember once, traveling with Fr. Arrupe alone in his car with him, in Malaysia, but I do not remember where we were going - - during a Major Superiors meeting with him — where he asked me about the possibility of starting JRS. On his coming back to Rome, after a few weeks, he called a greater meeting of jesuits in social work to ask us about the possibility and the opportunity to start the JRS movement. (I remember also having been invited in Japan to give a talk about refugees). A short while after this meeting in Rome with Fr. General Arrupe, if I am right, the JRS was launched and Fr. Mark was appointed.

Up to the end of my term as Executive Secretary for SELA, summer 84, I continued to do the same service for the refugees, visiting regularly nearly all the camps in different countries, where there were already many chaplains, except for Malaysia where I was never allowed to go. At the same time I took the place of a Vietnamese father, whose name I forget now, who was chaplain for the refugees in the Philippines, especially in Bataan. He was moving to Australia, and so regularly for two years I performed that work going to the big Bataan camp every weekend to

celebrate three masses there and then to the Manila camp for another one on Sunday afternoons. I also used to go to the camp in Palawan, once a month, or even for longer periods when necessary, where by this time Fr. Kenneth Jacques was full-time chaplain, having been attracted to that place by Fr. Julian Elizalde who was now working with refugees in the USA.

I was named Executive Secretary of SELA in the summer of 1977 and finished in the summer of 1984. I was going to go full time as chaplain in Bataan, by the fall of 1984 free from the work with SELA. But then Fr. Lamothe came and took my place there, because Fr. Raper wanted me to move to Hong Kong. I arrived there by the fall of 1984 up to the end of 1993 when I left Hong Kong just after the Christmas celebrations were finished."

**Fr. Louis has shared this pot-pourri of souvenirs from the JRS days for the 25<sup>th</sup> JRS Asia Pacific memories:**

**"First the JRS people:**

This is what I valued most. Their dedication, their openness, their friendship... The yearly meetings sharing all the good deeds and the frustrations... The sufferings of the refugees... and most of it, praying together... The Eucharistic celebrations

were deep moments of truth, unity and love.

**Then the refugees:**

Their patience, tenacity, resilience... Hard life...frustrations...anguish...fear... ingenuity... adaptability... and for most of them, in the middle of all of this, laughter, songs, smiles...

LIFE, yes life, bursting everywhere...! Life, like the exploding cork of a cool bottle of champagne... Life, and joy, and hope bursting everywhere!

**And, last, the reality:**

Oppressions, wars, injustices, selfishness, tremendous sufferings... 'Happy are you poor.... Happy are you who are hungry now...Happy are those who are humble... and Happy are those who work for peace...and for justice...and out of love..Yes, yes, happy.. because one day, yes, there will be LOVE !"







# Fr John Kennedy Bingham, SJ



**Birth date:**  
19 May 1928  
in USA; entered the Society  
of Jesus in February 1945

**JRS AP Service:**  
1981 - March 1993  
Assistant Project Director  
Education and Social  
Services Ban Sanghae  
(inside the border of  
Cambodia), Aranyaprathet,  
Khao I Dang, Site II, Ta Praya  
Thailand

**Deceased:**  
14 January 2003  
in Frankfurt, Germany

For six months from September 1980 – March 1981 Fr. John, an American from Jamshedpur province India, together with Fr. Pierre Ceyrac began work with Caritas India, doing whatever could be of help to the people from the Kampuchean People’s National Liberation Front (KPNLF) who had fled to the Thai-Cambodian border and were held in Thailand. Together they started an Adult Education school in English in what was known at

that time as the Chonburi Holding Camp. It later became the Phanat Nikhom camp which persisted for a long duration.

Later he was to be found at almost every camp at the border. By May 1984 when the possibility of closure of Ampil camp was in the air, the JRS Jesuits had decided to rent a house in Kokmakok village and Fr. John successfully found what was needed. With that accomplished his English-Khmer Dictionary came into focus and soon it was selling like hotcakes. Perhaps it was this initiative which led to his opening of a Library-Bookstore many years later in Lhasa. After that it was medical care for children, soccer balls and shoes which were needed for the growing numbers of refugees. By 1987 he had a Vietnamese- English dictionary in his book business.

In 1986 on a visit to India he met his Provincial and perused the future of the SJs with the Khmers and looked to the future of the 150,000 Khmers at Site II. He planned to remain with the Khmers until they





could return home. Later that year back in Ta Praya, JRS bought the blue Toyota station wagon (still parked in front of JRS office but owned by one of the Xavier Hall staff) which served as Fr. John's transport for a decade or more. However, his well-worn green shirt for all occasions is nowhere to be found. In his file for 1987 the first copy of a signed Volunteer Work Agreement with COERR's Education and Social Services program can be found, but he may have made such a commitment years before.

Fr. John Bingham in 1991 was still at Site II, where he had invited two fellow Jesuits to join him in his mission for several months. Later that year he went to Cornell University for Khmer language study during the summer. On his return in September he requested permission from the Jesuit Regional Superior of Thailand to work in Cambodia after the Khmers on the border have returned to their homeland. The Jamshedpur (India) Provincial had received a request from Bishop Ramousse who was in charge of the Church in Cambodia for John's services. However, after over 13 years of John's assistance to the refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand, his wish to provide pastoral assistance in the Khmers' homeland

was not to be. The official decision was given to him in April 1993 and with a saddened heart he prepared to return to India.

John returned to India but not for long, for he went on further north to Nepal where he had the joy of preaching the Gospel to the Nepali people on the border of Sikkim. In his December 1994 Christmas message he wrote: "It is a great job for a Jesuit as I can try in this place to continue the great work of Xavier who came here to the East in 1552." Later Jamshedpur Province, which had loaned him to Darjeeling Province, sent him to Lhasa. Tibet became important to him when he worked in an area where two ancient passes lead into that country and where the Fathers of the 'Socit des Missions étrangères de Paris' (MEP) had erected a cross at the time when they had had to leave it. "Reaching for even mountains to conquer, he and a companion, Fr. Mike Parent, went to China, where they opened both a library and a carpet shop, as part of his pastoral work among the people."

In October 2002 Fr. John was returning to the USA via Frankfurt where he was to meet with donors and friends, but he suffered a stroke and was in a rehabilitation clinic until 17 December. The first thing after

returning to the Jesuit House was to renew his visa for China (it was handed to him on 14 Jan., a few moments before died). A meeting was held on 14 Jan with the people in charge of China operations at the 'Church in Need' agency. He presented himself and his cause in the best possible way. On his return to the house at about 3 p.m. he took a rest—planning to be together later. At 6:15 p.m. he was found dead in his armchair, he had died very peacefully (the doctor did not find any perspiration or similar signs of stress); his heart, instead of just going slow, had stopped going altogether. He had achieved what he had come to do, and we all said: "God has called him, saying *Now take your rest.*"

Two of the nephews, Charles jr. and John (his godson and helper for several years during the JRS time) came to Germany as representatives of the whole family and a wake at the open coffin was held. As he had been claimed for Christ even before he was baptized, we claimed him again for our Lord by signing his forehead with the sign of the cross for the last time on earth.







# Ms Erin Heather Carroll

**Birth date:**  
8 January 1964  
in USA

**JRS AP Service:**  
1995- October 1996  
Urban refugee case manager,  
Bangkok Thailand

**Contact:**  
9846 Bucknell Ct., Littleton,  
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Tel: +1 303-471-5523 or  
E-mail: [gil@longtom.com](mailto:gil@longtom.com)

Erin Carroll was part of a double package that arrived in Bangkok to work with JRS, as she came to Thailand with her husband, Gil Carroll who served as Regional Information officer (they also brought along Emma Kate and Erin soon gave birth to another daughter, Sarah May). Erin had previously worked for COERR as an Occupational Therapy Consultant in Thailand's Ban Napho Refugee camp from June 1992 - April 1993.

Erin developed great compassion in her work with the refugees and displaced people who came to JRS for assistance. She gave from her loving heart and took time to listen to them. Erin appreciates the personal manner in which JRS connects to refugees and is grateful that she had the opportunity to be part of this endeavor.





# Mr Gil Carroll

**Birth date:**  
13 March 1965  
in USA

**JRS AP Service:**  
May 1995- October 1996  
Regional Information Officer,  
Bangkok, Thailand

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Gil Carroll served as Regional Information Officer, enjoying the company of his wife, Erin Heather, and two daughters (above). He also had previously worked with COERR in Thailand's Laotian refugees in Ban Napho Refugee camp from June 1992 - April 1993.

Gil looks back on his experience with JRS as an excellent time of learning about humanity from wise and compassionate colleagues. He sees this experience as fundamental to the way he now views the world.

Following his participation in a Seminar held in Cambodia on the problem of antipersonnel landmines, he was instrumental in forming the Thailand campaign to ban landmines.

Gil suffered a near-fatal stroke on 15 September, 1996, and he and his family were able to learn first-hand of the compassion that JRS extends to those in need. He received superb medical care in Bangkok and then was medically evacuated to Colorado, USA on 12 October 1996. His family returned on the same day and were there to greet him when he reached Denver. Erin writes: "What could have been a disastrous event turned into a lesson about grace and the ability of JRS to encircle people with care. We will be forever grateful."

**The Carrolls wrote:**  
"We both are excited for JRS in their anniversary year and are overjoyed that we have been able to keep in touch with the friends we have at JRS. Our experience working with JRS was certainly a highlight in our lives together."





# Mr Thomas Coughlin

**Birth date:**  
**in New York City, USA**  
**JRS AP Service:**  
**Jan 2005 – Present Thailand**  
**Country Director, Bangkok,**  
**Thailand**  
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and developing friendships here. In addition, some of my closest friends in California were refugees from Vietnam or illegal migrants from Mexico and Central America. I became interested in refugees while working as a casual volunteer in a community center providing basic services to the poor in Silicon Valley, California, most of whom were refugees and migrants. I really enjoyed our clients. They brightened my day.

The present Thailand Country Director, Khun Tom, says that we don't talk about age anymore so his birth date remains a secret, but he relates that he went to Holy Cross College in Massachusetts and to Stanford Business School. Tom speaks of his initial experience with JRS Asia Pacific in his reflection:

I am in awe at some of the work done by JRS staff and volunteers. Although I work in a Bangkok office most of the time, our field staff and volunteers travel on hot, muddy, bumpy and dangerous roads or in tense detention facilities day in and day out so we can meet our mission to serve, accompany and advocate for refugees. We were recently asked on a grant application for our Karenni Education Program to explain how we give value for the money that would be provided. I brushed off my MBA. Well, I wanted to say, who else besides JRS can run a school system with a per child expenditure of far less than 50 Euros! But on thinking about it, although that is an amazing statistic, the real value comes from the love given by our staff to the refugees and the love the refugees return to us in a million ways. This love empowers the refugees to educate their own children with just a little help from us."

"I came to JRS in January, 2005 as Country Director as part of a spiritual journey. I have come some distance; I have a long way to go. I have lived and worked in Asia much of my adult life, including long assignments in Thailand, as part of a business career. I never planned for this to happen; it just did.

So I know about budgets, project schedules and setting goals. However, I learned the most important information about Thailand and its neighbors by visiting small towns, talking with ordinary people

