



 The new JRS centre in Parramatta, Arrupe Place, Coolock Cottage, 4 Victoria Road

## Editorial: JRS urges generosity in the face of despair

### We hope that you will support JRS's extended Shelter Project

In my lowest moments, overwhelmed by what St Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, would call “desolation”, Australia’s treatment of asylum seekers who attempt to come here by boat makes me despair of humanity. That awful mantra, “Stop the Boats”, has been justified even by people who claim to be sympathetic toward asylum seekers, on the grounds that this policy saves people from drowning. That argument, however, is only one facet of the truth.

Australia may claim to have stopped the boats, but it has not created for those people seeking to board those boats safer pathways to protection. Contrary to our assurances that refugees who wait patiently in Indonesia rather than get on a boat would eventually be rewarded with resettlement, Australia has now told those same people that they will never be resettled in Australia. We have broken our pledges, and as a result we are condemning people to remain in life-threatening situations, or to undertaking risky journeys elsewhere. At the same time, we have placed those already here in situations of destitution and

uncertainty in the community, or damned them to the hopelessness of detention and offshore centres. Like some demented deity, we claim to give life with one hand, but we take life away with another.

Christmas is a reminder to us of a God who affirms our humanity by becoming human himself, and who embraces all the vulnerability of being human. In birth, in life, in death, Jesus was intimately and irrevocably joined to all in human society, but in particular those who find themselves confined to the margins: the poor, the outcast, and the forgotten.

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer said of the Passion of Jesus that “the figure of the Crucified invalidates all thought which takes success for its standard”. Let us not fool ourselves: each time we boast of having succeeded in stopping asylum seekers arriving here by boat, we stand before the judgment of the crucifixion, and the illusions of a prosperous and self-satisfied Australia are shattered in the face of the One who stands with the poor and the persecuted.

Against the temptation of despair, let us this Christmas affirm our faith in humanity, and by our own attitudes and actions show Australia, and the world, what it is to be in solidarity with others, just as God showed us that first Christmas the Divine solidarity with humanity by becoming human.

The new JRS centre in Parramatta, Arrupe Place, is intended to be a focal point of

service and accompaniment for vulnerable asylum seekers in the community. We hope that you and your friends will support JRS in this extension of our Shelter Project: in our generosity and welcome may the asylum seekers see a better side of humanity, a better side of Australia.

*Fr Aloysius Mowe SJ*

# Join us in making Arrupe Place a reality

**We consistently found that asylum seekers have limited access to basic goods and services**

It is often noted that Parramatta is a melting pot and a node of vibrant growth in Greater Sydney with its blend of cultures, cuisines and languages from around the world. Less often noted is the large contribution which asylum seekers make to this diversity, and the dire need in which many of them live. According to the government, Parramatta hosts the second largest number of asylum seekers arriving by boat living on bridging visas in NSW (1948) and the neighbouring Auburn area (comparatively better served by services aimed at asylum seekers) hosts the largest (2045). This does not include the large number coming by air nor those in community detention.

Asylum seekers - especially those who came by boat - are the quintessential battlers in the Australia of today. Not only do they often have no work or study rights (bridging visas often do not permit either of these) but they are also often isolated and struggling to overcome a legacy of cruelty extending from the flight from their homelands to their arrival in Australia and beyond. In our surveys, we consistently found that not only did asylum seekers in Parramatta have limited access to services which

would help them address these issues (legal aid, English lessons and the like) but that they were also struggling to access basic goods that most take for granted, such as food and furniture.

In order to fill what we see as a huge gap, JRS - with the help and generosity of the Parramatta Sisters of Mercy - will open a drop-in centre in Parramatta to address some of these needs. Called Arrupe Place (after the Jesuit General who founded JRS), it will be based at Coolock Cottage, 4 Victoria Road, Parramatta. This venture will initially provide casework and legal support, financial assistance and home visiting and, in so doing, allow us to serve, accompany and advocate for asylum seekers in Parramatta. We hope that the services at Arrupe Place will eventually broaden to include English classes, employment support (for those entitled to work) and other support services.

Elsewhere in this special Christmas edition of Link, you will find more details about Arrupe Place, our vision for it and the practicalities which lie behind it. As friends of JRS, we invite you to join with us in making this vision a reality.

*Justin Glyn SJ*

## link online

Would you like to receive Link online? Sign up for our electronic newsletter at [www.jrs.org.au](http://www.jrs.org.au) and you'll be helping to conserve both the environment and JRS's precious resources.

# JRS calls for volunteers

**'Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'**

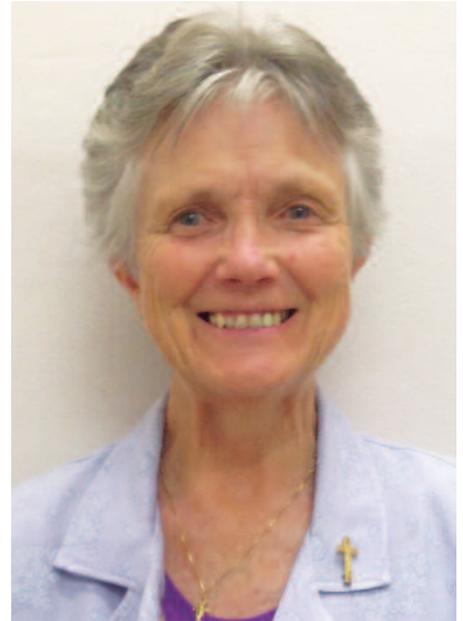
Matthew 25:40

**A**s we look forward to opening Arrupe Place in 2015, we are incredibly fortunate to have connected with passionate, committed, and well qualified people who have all put their hands up to help build a more accessible, supportive and welcoming space for asylum seekers.

We are grateful to the Parramatta Sisters of Mercy who have offered JRS a property to use on their grounds. We are grateful to Our Lady of Mercy College, which is fundraising for Arrupe Place through its Mercy Tree Appeal, and the Sisters of Charity, Holy Spirit Sisters, and the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, who have all offered support and personnel. We are also grateful for the growing list of volunteers who will be attending the first induction training at Arrupe Place in December.

All of this would not be possible without the support of Sr Margaret Guy, the Volunteer Coordinator for Arrupe Place. Sr Margaret has been a Sister of Charity for 50 years and in that time she has been a teacher, provided pastoral care, and spent over 20 years working with the Sisters of Charity Outreach program in South Western Sydney.

It is this work with outreach volunteers that Sr Margaret is most passionate about,



 Sr Margaret Guy

noting that Australia has a wonderful history of volunteering, with 6.4 million volunteers, contributing 713 million work hours and \$14.6 billion in unpaid work.

"I think I would use the terms 'volunteering' and 'service' interchangeably because both mean being there for the other, visiting, driving, shopping, listening, accompanying, teaching—helping in some way to show compassion and make a difference to another's life without expecting payment,"

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## You can help. **Please act now.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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**Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible**

**Please return to: Jesuit Refugee Service  
PO Box 522, Kings Cross NSW 1340**

### **I wish to make a donation as follows:**

\$50  \$75  \$100  \$250  \$500  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Donate online** (single or recurrent donation):

[www.jrs.org.au/donate-now/](http://www.jrs.org.au/donate-now/)

**OR I enclose a cheque/money order** payable to Jesuit Refugee Service for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**OR please debit my credit card** the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Sr Margaret explains.

For Sr Margaret, working directly with people and working directly in service of the poor is also essential, as is the way we work to accompany and support others.

“It’s not what one does for another so much as the way one does it, valuing the dignity of the person, and it can be the smallest thing in giving one’s time to listen to another’s story.”

With the wisdom and guidance of Sr Margaret, we hope that Arrupe Place will become a place where asylum seekers feel valued, listened to and supported.

## JRS on Twitter

You can follow JRS on Twitter at @JRS\_Aus where we will highlight developments around Australian asylum seeker and refugee policy, raise awareness of the plight of refugees seeking asylum in this country, and continue to advocate on behalf of these vulnerable people in the powerful social media sphere. This is your opportunity to follow us, dialogue with us and share the story of JRS and the people it serves among your own social media networks.

Mariam\*, her husband and infant daughter arrived in Australia in 2014 after fleeing the direct and ongoing threat of violence from the Taliban in their home country. “As is the case with many asylum seekers, Mariam and her family are currently living off the charity of others while their protection claim is processed. They worry constantly about being able to pay their rent, buy food, and pay for medications. They are also fearful for the safety of family in their home country and concerned about what sort of life their young daughter will have.”

(\*Personal details have been changed.)

We are still looking for volunteers! If you are interested in volunteering with us at Arrupe Place, Parramatta, please contact Sr Margaret Guy at [arrupevolunteers@jrs.org.au](mailto:arrupevolunteers@jrs.org.au).

*Maeve Brown, Shelter Project Coordinator*

## How your donation will help

Donations to Arrupe Place will directly fund the following:

- Emergency assistance (medication, travel, rent, etc.)
- Food vouchers
- Casework services
- Home visiting services
- Legal advice
- Social support activities



**Jesuit Refugee Service Australia**  
 PO Box 522, Kings Cross  
 NSW 1340  
 Ph: 02 9356 3888  
 Fax: 02 9356 3021  
 Email: [info@jrs.org.au](mailto:info@jrs.org.au)  
 Web: [www.jrs.org.au](http://www.jrs.org.au)

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