

JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE/USA'S GUIDE TO JRS DAY

PRAYING WITH THE MISSION OF JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE





INTRODUCTION

On **November 14, 1980**, Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ founded Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) to “render a service that is human, pedagogical, and spiritual”¹ for refugees. Devastated by images of Vietnamese refugees fleeing their homeland, Fr. Arrupe stated that the situation of refugees in Southeast Asia presented “a challenge to the Society [of Jesus] we cannot ignore if we are to remain faithful to St. Ignatius’ criteria for apostolic work.”² Similar challenges continue to exist today as forced displacement affects over 100 million people worldwide.

At JRS/USA, we depend on the support of Jesuit institutions and the greater Ignatian-inspired family as we continue the legacy of Fr. Arrupe by accompanying, serving, and advocating for and with refugees. We invite you to reflect on the life of Fr. Pedro Arrupe and be inspired by his witness as you renew your commitment to forcibly displaced persons. No matter your role in your community, whether it be administrative, educational, social, or pastoral, you can contribute to the JRS mission of accompaniment, service, and advocacy.

Superior General Fr. Arturo Sosa, SJ has invited the global Ignatian family to recognize **November 14** as JRS Day, the anniversary of the founding of JRS. Together, we hope to celebrate and honor “the women and men whose lives have been changed through JRS, and the generous service of so many lay colleagues, religious, and Jesuits.”

Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ founded JRS in 1980

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

We encourage your community to honor the life and legacy of Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ and the mission of JRS on November 14.



This resource can be used in the following ways:

- 1 Guide for both personal and communal prayer/reflection
- 2 Content for the classroom when teaching about refugees, forced displacement, and humanitarian responses
- 3 Toolkit for planning an event to honor the legacy of Fr. Pedro Arrupe and Jesuit Refugee Service on **November 14**

Photo: A JRS volunteer with refugees at the border between Ukraine and Romania. (Marco Giarracca/Jesuit Refugee Service)

LIFE OF FR. PEDRO ARRUPE, SJ

Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ, was born on November 14, 1907, in the Basque region of Spain. He pursued a medical career until he decided to leave that behind and join the Jesuits in 1927. His care for others that motivated his medical studies only grew during his time as a Jesuit. While living in the outskirts of Hiroshima during World War II, Fr. Arrupe witnessed the destruction of the atomic bomb dropped by the United States. In response to the injured and dying, Fr. Arrupe used his former medical training to turn the Jesuit residence into a makeshift hospital. They cared for over 100 people.



Pedro Arrupe, SJ in Medellín, Colombia in 1968 (Jesuits Global)

Fr. Arrupe's leadership abilities were affirmed when he was appointed superior general of the Jesuits in 1965. It was during this time as leader of the Jesuits that Fr. Arrupe founded Jesuit Refugee Service, but he also guided the Jesuits through the reform of Vatican II and made a commitment on behalf of the Jesuits to address the needs of the poor. When speaking about the goals of Jesuit education, Fr. Arrupe famously said: "Today our prime educational objective must be to form men-and-women-for-others;" an objective that Jesuit schools continue to work towards today.

Fr. Arrupe suffered a stroke in 1981 and had to resign from his post as superior general in 1983. He passed away on February 5, 1991, leaving behind a legacy that continues to guide the work of the Jesuits.



Learn more about the founding of JRS by Fr. Arrupe by watching this video here: [**JRS Arrupe Video**](#)

CONTEXT OF DISPLACEMENT IN 1980 VERSUS TODAY

By the time of the founding of Jesuit Refugee Service in 1980, global forced displacement was not a new phenomenon. The United Nations (UN) organized the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, with a particular focus on providing protection to European refugees displaced by World War II. The 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees expanded the geographic scope of the 1951 convention, ensuring that refugees across the globe received international protection. Yet, despite the intentions of these mid-century treaties, many refugees around the globe still found themselves in difficult situations as they sought protection.

1980 was a year that shifted the world's attention back to the plight of refugees. Images of Vietnamese refugees packed on overcrowded boats stunned the world. These images highlighted the desperate situation of individuals and families who longed for a place where they could feel safe and free from persecution. In the United States, Congress passed the Refugee Act, amending early immigration acts by raising the annual ceiling for refugees, establishing the current refugee resettlement program, and reworking the country's asylum review process. For Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ, the desperation of Vietnamese refugees deeply unsettled him and prompted action: he called for the founding of Jesuit Refugee Service to serve as a humanitarian response to refugees fleeing southeast Asia. The response of Jesuit Refugee Service would soon expand beyond Southeast Asia to address humanitarian crises in different regions, including Southern India, North Africa, the Middle East, and Central America.

Today, over 100 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide.³ This number includes people who have crossed national borders and received protection, are displaced within their country of origin, or are seeking asylum at the port-of-entry of another country. In response to this growing global political crisis of forced displacement, JRS is now present in over 50 countries in different regions including North America, Latin America & the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, West Africa, Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, South Asia, and Asia Pacific.

THE MISSION OF JRS TODAY

The mission of Jesuit Refugee Service is to accompany, serve, and advocate on behalf of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, that they may heal, learn, and determine their own future.



Today, JRS programs are found in over 50 countries, serving refugees and other forcibly displaced persons in conflict zones, remote borders, and busy cities. JRS runs pastoral care and psychosocial support programs in detention centers and refugee camps and provides humanitarian relief in emergency displacement situations. Education and livelihoods programs provide skill development and opportunities for integration into host communities. JRS also advocates for the rights of refugees and articulates the obligation to protect the most vulnerable among us.

Photo: Education programming in Mae Hong Son, Thailand.

AS PARTNERS IN MISSION WITH THE JESUITS, THE UNIVERSAL APOSTOLIC PREFERENCES SERVE AS A POINT OF REFERENCE TO GUIDE OUR WORK.

The four Universal Apostolic Preferences are:

- Showing the way to God
- Walking with the Excluded
- Journeying with Youth
- Caring for our Common Home

STORIES OF HOPE

Malawi: Gahizi, the refugee freelancer inspiring hope

In the part of the Congo where Gahizi comes from, tribal violence has caused suffering to many families. Gahizi was just 13 years old when she ran away with her sister, after soldiers killed their parents and burnt their house. **“I can’t say I had hope, I just moved,”** she remembers.

As a refugee in Malawi, Gahizi did not let the sorrows of her past dictate her hope for the future. She attended JRS’s Digital Inclusion Programme, run in partnership with Conexio, which provides in-demand, digital skills to young refugees to equip them with the technical knowledge needed to get jobs online and earn an income.

The same day Gahizi finished her course, she got a job. **“Life changed completely,”** she says. **“I am able to support my sister and myself, and I really enjoy my work.”**

The opportunity to work and be self-reliant is one of the most effective ways for refugees to rebuild their lives and make a positive contribution to their communities. **“My dream is to be a woman who inspires and encourages others. That’s all.”** Gahizi helps refugees around the camp, whether they lack basic needs or need some company. She encourages everyone to learn and she shares her knowledge with others so they can also become independent.

“Now I feel confident and empowered, and I have the hope for the future,” she says.



Photo: After attending JRS’s Digital Inclusion Programme, Gahizi started earning a stable income and giving back to her community.



Watch Gahizi tell her story by following [this link here](#).

A PRAYER FOR JRS DAY

On JRS Day, please join us in this prayer:



Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J. Prayer Card

“To be just, it is not enough to refrain from injustice. One must go further and refuse to play its game, substituting love for self-interest as the driving force of society.”

FR. PEDRO ARRUPE

God of all,

As we move forward from the familiar comfort of home, whether we are a refugee on the road

Or a companion to our displaced siblings, may we be aware

Of what gives movement to our steps: love.

May we take that love and carry it forth, beyond borders

So we may accompany, serve, and advocate

On behalf of all displaced people

And sustain the mission through the years to come

As long as there are people on this earth seeking refuge and protection.

On this journey, if we ever feel overwhelmed by the injustice of displacement, may we remember

To act as if we only possess your love and your grace, for that is all we need,

As you hold us in your hands.

Amen.



Visit our website to find [**downloadable versions**](#) of this prayer.

INSPIRED BY IGNATIUS: A JRS EXAMEN

Another way you can pray with JRS/USA is by leading your community in the JRS Examen.

Become aware of God's presence

Take a few deep breaths. It's the same air that we all breathe, from the refugee on the road to those of us in the comfort of our home. It's the breath of the Spirit that gives life to each and every one of us. God is present.

For some, God may still feel absent. Continue to explore this feeling of absence. Where is it especially felt? Where's the space that God needs to fill?

Review

Take a moment to gather the information you know about a situation or crisis. Where is it happening? Who is being affected? Where are they going? How are they being welcomed?

Review this information. Acknowledge what may be missing. Allow this to inform your next step.

Pay attention

As you review the information, what strikes you? What do you keep returning to? How does it make you feel? Are you angry? Upset? Saddened?

Sit with that feeling and pay attention. What you're feeling is real.

Choose one feature and pray from it

By this point, you may have identified one thing—a thought, an image, or a feeling—that you can't leave behind. It's something that sticks with you. Pray from it.

How can you approach it? Is there something you can do at home? Or are you being called forward to take action?

Review

Carry that thought, image, or feeling to the next day.

How will it form tomorrow? What will you do differently? Move away from indifference and allow this prayer to become inspired action.

CLOSING PRAYER

God of all people,

We pray that we may accompany those on the road,

Walking in solidarity with those forced from their homes.

May we serve them humbly, recognizing not the cost,

But freely giving from what we have.

Proclaiming the good news and advocating on behalf of all those forcibly displaced.

May we follow your example in being a friend to the excluded and a ready defender in their time of need.

Please keep us united as a family,

brought together by faith, hope, and love.

Amen.



JRS staff accompanying asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border.



There is also a recorded version of the examen [available online](#).



Pierre Ceyrac, S.J. with Cambodian refugees in Site Two camp, Thai Cambodian border, 1986.

Get social!

Please share on social media how your community is honoring the life of Fr. Arrupe on JRS Day, November 14.



Please use [this link here](#) to access graphics created by JRS/USA

Questions?

To share your plans for JRS Day, or if you have any questions, be sure to contact Josh Utter at outreach@jrsusa.org.

If you would like to receive copies of the Fr. Pedro Arrupe Prayer Card, please send the number of copies requested and your mailing address to outreach@jrsusa.org.

REFERENCES

1. "The Society of Jesus and the refugee problem", Letter of Pedro Arrupe SJ to Major Superiors, 14 November 1980.
2. *ibid.*
3. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2021). "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020." <https://www.unhcr.org/62a9d1494/global-trends-report-2021>



Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organization serving refugees and other forcibly displaced people. JRS's mission is to accompany, serve, and advocate on behalf of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, that they may heal, learn, and determine their own future. Founded as a work of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in 1980, JRS today works in more than 50 countries worldwide to meet the educational, health, and social needs of almost one million refugees.