

flame

JESUITS AND FRIENDS IN ASIA PACIFIC TODAY July 2011



Seeking wisdom



many sparks one fire
many stories one history
many dreams one vision



After the tsunami

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God's business
together



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Snapshots



Fr Zuloaga honoured in Philippines

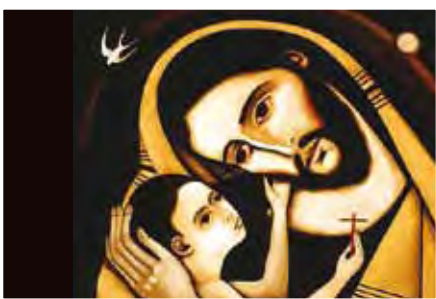
Fr Ismael Zuloaga was recently honoured by Xavier School in San Juan City. From 1965 to 1985 he was the

director of the school. Subsequently he was named Father General's delegate to China and, in 1992 he was appointed to the Jesuit Conference for East Asia and Oceania (now the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific). He served as President for twelve years until 2004. He then returned to Xavier School as Chair of the Board.



Death of an Asia Pacific priest

Fr Frank Doyle, who died recently, spent much of his life in the region. Born in Ireland, he was ordained in Hong Kong and worked in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore, particularly in publications. After returning to Ireland, where he contributed to the popular Sacred Space website, he returned to Arrupe International Residence as spiritual director.



Dili Diocese resumes Colégio de São José

The Diocese of Dili will resume direct responsibility for Colégio de São José in Dili at the end of 2011. The Society of Jesus has administered the school at the request of the Bishop of Dili since 1993. The Jesuit region hopes to continue its educational ministry, and has purchased land to the west of Dili.



New Rector for Arrupe International Residence

Following the illness of Fr Koichi Matsumoto, the Rector of Arrupe International Residence, Fr Rene Repole has been

appointed Rector. He was previously the Rector of St John Vianney Seminary in Cagayan de Oro City. Fr Matsumoto is recovering from his illness.



Two on-line retreats

To celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the founding of the Jesuit Refugee Service, a 30 day retreat has been offered on-line to members and friends of JRS. It focuses on the experiences of refugees. www.jrsusa.org/retreat

In Korea, Fr In-young Cho offers street retreats. Each day he sends out through Twitter scriptural passages and instructions. They help people reflect in the midst of their busy daily lives. Participants are encouraged to share photos and comments on a dedicated website in order to deepen the experience. www.jceao.net/content/street-retreat-twitter



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Earth, fire, air, water

In recent months our region has been horrified by images of destruction and heart-rending suffering caused by floods, earthquakes and tsunamis.

HUMAN and environmental devastation caused by floods in Australia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, and by earthquakes and their aftershocks in New Zealand, Japan and Myanmar is massive. Although Japan has the experience and technology to cope with earthquakes, this latest tsunami defied preparation. The consequent nuclear crisis brought the worst of nightmares into reality.

We know there will be more natural disasters in Asia Pacific. Indonesia, for example, is said to be the most disaster prone country in the world. Like Japan and Papua New Guinea, it is located within the Pacific 'Ring of Fire' where tectonic plates meet, causing frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. In 2009, Indonesia suffered 469 earthquakes with

a magnitude of five or higher. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami killed about 170,000 people in Aceh Province alone. Each year in Indonesia and the Philippines, hundreds of disasters such as mudslides are rarely reported because they may affect only a few families. But the cumulative impact is great, and the human pain and loss always immeasurable.

'All creation groans as in the pains of childbirth', says St Paul writing to the Romans. Paul urges us not just to be spectators of these dramatic events, but to engage as a part of creation. Media headlines draw attention to the impact of these disasters on people, and mobilise the responses on which the survival of whole communities depends. Stories of pain, loss and heroism inspire us. But headlines are short lived and

stories can only move for a time. The communities themselves must struggle for years. So we are invited to stay in continuing solidarity with those who struggle.

Times of dramatic crisis also challenge us Jesuits to stay focused and to plan our actions in the light of our mission. We are to seek justice for all, and to establish right relations with God, with one another, and with creation. We are called to move from watching as spectators, to pray and act in ways that will change our world for the better.

The people most affected by human and environmental upheaval are often at the margins of society. So they are forced to live in the most dangerous places. Many indigenous people, who have previously been pushed

'When we witness these floods, tsunamis, landslides, wild fires and cyclones we breathe an incredulous sigh of relief that we are alive and safe. To be human is to be vulnerable. Our hearts go out to those whose lives have been torn apart by elemental forces.'

to remote places such as forests and mountains, now find their livelihood threatened by a world hungry for resources.

We Jesuits have committed ourselves to live in greater harmony with our environment and to find practical ways to promote reconciliation with creation. For this we need time and experience. Our identity as a global body that is locally grounded gives us encouragement and insight, and leads us to cooperate in practical ways. Wherever we are present we must be more aware and caring of our environment. We must also work cooperatively, and challenge young (and old) to change the destructive ways we have all inherited. Then we will be alert to the effects on communities of dramatic disasters. We shall also attend to the abiding disasters created by our way of life, the pollution of our atmosphere, the consumption of non-renewable resources and the destruction of habitats.

When we witness these floods, tsunamis, landslides, wild fires and cyclones we breathe an incredulous sigh of relief that we are alive and safe. To be human is to be vulnerable. Our hearts go out to those whose lives have been torn apart by elemental forces. May this sensibility lead us to live lives that are reconciled with our world, with other people and with our Creator.

Mark Raper sj

The human face of the tsunami



In March this year, world attention was focused on Japan. The tsunami that took some 20,000 lives in the north-east of Japan and destroyed many towns reminded us how fragile our environment is. Release of radiation from the nuclear reactors at Fukushima emphasised human capacity to destroy the environment.

THE JESUITS IN JAPAN had no houses, no communities in the affected areas. But they helped to channel aid to people made homeless. Some young Jesuits, too, volunteered to help communities devastated by the tsunami. One of them was Fr Non Yamauchi. He says: 'After the earthquake off the coast of Miyagi, Japan, and the huge tsunami that followed, I volunteered to join the relief efforts. I stayed at the Catholic Church in Ishinomaki to respond to the requests from

the town's volunteer centre and those of parishioners. A major task was clearing the mud and mess from houses flooded by the wave.'

He noticed the difference between the effects of this earthquake and the one that devastated Kobe in 1995: 'This time, there was little damage from the shock waves but much from the sea. So much land was flooded, that even after several weeks, there is no prospect yet for reconstruction; a large number of bodies have yet to be recovered. One village I passed had not a single house standing among the sea of rubble – a sad sight, indeed.'

Volunteer response

Edward 'Jody' Magtoto, a Filipino scholastic, volunteered to join the relief effort. He says, 'I found myself among this group of



five men and seven women who responded to the call to help in the Caritas Japan relief efforts. We did not know each other prior to this trip and had met only once for an orientation meeting.

Bony James, an Indian Jesuit scholastic, and I were probably the only Christians in this group.'

The group worked in the northern coast town of

‘Kamaishi is the town where a huge ship rammed into the tsunami wall. The sidewalks were still full of debris—everything from old toys to the remains of a baby shark. The debris was at times several metres deep, and we had to dig through the wreckage with a shovel or our hands in order to move the rubble to a nearby lot.’

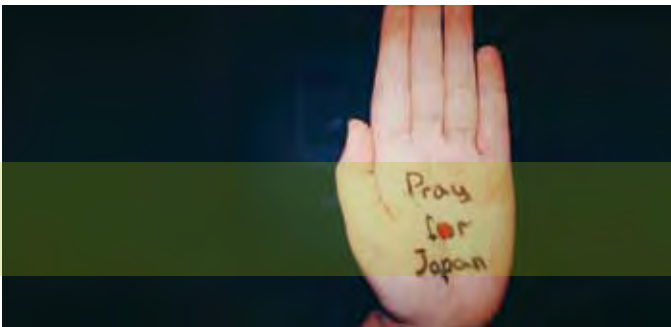


Photo courtesy rori_iori

Kamaishi. Jody describes vividly what awaited them: ‘Kamaishi is the town where a huge ship rammed into the tsunami wall. The sidewalks were still full of debris—everything from old toys to the remains of a baby shark. The debris was at times several metres deep, and we had to dig through the wreckage with a shovel or our hands in order to move the rubble to a nearby lot.’

The blessing of languages

Jody had been initially a little hesitant to volunteer because he did not speak Japanese fluently. But he found on one occasion that his nationality was a gift. It helped him to appreciate the human face of the tsunami. He explains, ‘One day, we worked on the house of an eighty-year old woman. Hanging on to the ledge of the house, we tried to

empty the house of debris through a window so that we could gain access to the door and be able to open it from the inside. After a few hours, we took a break and I was able to have a chat with the woman. When she found out I was Filipino, her facial expression changed. I could not completely understand what she was saying, but I felt her gratitude. She even gave us Philippine Cavendish bananas for a snack!’

As time went on, Jodi found creative ways of relating to the people whom he served. He says, ‘I arranged the food donations on display shelves as one would do in a supermarket, earning me the nickname “Mitsukoshi”, a popular department store chain in Japan. It was such a joy when I saw a young girl of around five years of age

pointing to a candy display I had strategically placed on a low shelf. She asked her mother for permission to take some sweets and placed them in their bag.’

Rebuilding the future

Non recognised that the scale of the disaster was so great that the people will need support for a long time. He explains, ‘As the destruction is stretched out over a strip of land about 500 km (300 miles) long, it will take years to recover. The problems at the nuclear power plant add to the plight of many. The poor people in this area will need our help for a long while to get back on their feet.’

Jodi was pleased to have seen the first steps toward recovery. He recalled a story his father told about his grandfather: ‘My father

had once told me that after a typhoon he, as a child, would anticipate hearing the sound of a broom’s bristles brushing against the wet pavement. He said that he always associates the sound with hope. It is a sound that tells him that people have begun to pick up the pieces after devastation. It tells him that people have decided to hope again and move on.’

The tsunami that struck Japan had a national and international face. It affected the economy of the nation and reminded the world of the dangers of nuclear power. These are issues that Jesuits will reflect on because they affect people’s lives. But the tsunami also had a human face that called out for compassionate action. Volunteers like Jody and Non reveal that human face.

Learning God's business together



A Muslim boy asked his mother: 'Is it true only Muslims get to paradise?' Mother replied: 'Who said that?' 'My teacher', answered the boy. Mother smiled and said: 'Who gets to heaven or hell is not your business; neither is it your teacher's.'

THIS STORY WAS SHARED by Shafa Elmirzana, a Muslim academic, at the 12th gathering of the Scholastics and Brothers Circle in Klaten, Indonesia. The meeting was aimed at fostering friendship and forging collaboration for mission among young Jesuits.

The meeting took as its theme the call of GC 34 for interreligious dialogue. It aimed at building inter-faith relations with a particular focus on Islam. The program was facilitated by Fr Heru Prakosa, sj of the Indonesian

province who studied Islam for over twelve years before beginning work in the area of Inter-faith relations.

Part of the program divided the participants in groups of ten to live in a *Pesantren* – an Islamic boarding school. There, the young Jesuits immersed themselves in the lives of the Muslim students, taking part in their daily activities and talking with them about Islam and Christianity.

Making friends

Reflecting on the experience, Mark Lopez who is finishing regency in Cambodia, said 'A highlight for me was making friends among Muslim youth and getting to know their dreams and aspirations; how they lived and studied. I felt so very warmly welcomed and I experienced remarkable hospitality.'

Mark was impressed by the largeness of heart shown by the Muslims he met. 'Muslims who engage us in dialogue put so much on the line, given the social rejection and sometimes life-threatening situations they risk,' he said. 'And that they continue to do so is testament to their openness and magnanimity.'

For Mark, the encounter with Muslims provided him with an insight that Islamic mysticism is deeply similar to Christian mysticism.

The importance of mysticism also struck Michael Phung Kah Heng of the Malaysia-Singapore Region, who is a philosophy student in Jakarta.

Mysticism and friendship

'I was much encouraged by the exploration of mysticism as a possible means for religions to meet', he said.



He found the close contact with the santris, 18–20 year old students from the *pesantren*, a very touching experience.

The young Jesuits who participated in the meeting did not find the encounter with other faiths and cultures entirely new.

Arun Prakash D'Souza, a scholastic of the Japanese Province describes his Indian background as multi-religious and multicultural. 'I have had opportunities to interact with Hindus, Muslims



and Buddhists during my childhood and schooldays’, says Arun. ‘I grew up with them’, he continued. ‘During my time as a novice, I was often involved in social outreach and immersion programs with people from other faiths’, he added.

Michael Phung Kah Heng of the Region of Malaysia-Singapore lived with his extended family, some of whom were Taoists. ‘You could say that I lived in a house with two faiths’, Michael said.

‘My late grandmother got my brother and me to take part when she performed her prayers and rituals’, he recalled. ‘In many ways, it was a cultural as well as a religious encounter’, he added.

Meeting other Jesuits in the Assistancy

The meeting itself was an intercultural experience for the participants who came from over twelve countries. Michael was only one of many who found the fraternity among the Jesuits the most striking part of the experience.

Mark agreed, saying: ‘Seeing the many talents of the giftedness of the group made me hopeful for the future of the Society in the Assistancy’. Arun commented that the SBC was an opportunity to know and experience the Society and its mission.

Changing attitudes towards Islam

The scholastics brought much back from the meeting to their Jesuit communities. Mark, Arun and Michael found that their encounter with Islam challenged their prejudices that all Muslims were closed to engaging with Christians, and were negatively disposed towards them.

Arun came to see that ‘not all Muslims are terrorists, who promote only bloodshed and violence’. ‘There are so many around us who want to build a peaceful world’, he said.

Arun went on: ‘Dialogue and interaction with Muslims are possible. They are very much needed in our time to appreciate and to acknowledge the goodness in each other.’

Michael returned from the meeting saying it was a profound experience of encountering the very human face of Islam.

All the participants in the meeting were left to ponder the wisdom of Shafa Elmizrana’s story. As the Muslim mother replied to her son, the decision about who gets to heaven or hell is best left to God. Our business is to promote a just and peaceful society. We do that best by fostering and promoting interfaith relations.

Nico Lariosa sj

'Fathers and sons caked in dust and cement show pride in their work as women and girls contribute their part by breaking bricks. Even the children, too young to work, imitate their parents by scaling ladders and observing – just like skilled foremen.'



Building after the flood

Noah's story shows how terrifying floods have been since human history began. They drive people from their homes, destroy their livelihood and isolate them from communities.

IF FLOODS ISOLATE people, the response to them must connect people with resources from many interconnected sources. So the Jesuit response to the massive flooding in the Pakistani Punjab in 2010 was to channel funds from the Asia Pacific region to meet urgent needs, and also to invite people from the region to help heal the damage caused by the floods.

Renato Zecchin, originally from Australia, has worked in Pakistan for many years. He is now superior of the Jesuit mission. After the floods the Jesuits in Pakistan

joined other NGO's in reconstruction work in Kot Aadu. This sugar cane producing area in the southern Punjab is about two hours drive from Multan.

Visitng Pakisan

Over last Christmas, Rob Morris, a Jesuit student of the Australian Province, joined Renato in Kot Aadu. Rob comes from Christchurch in New Zealand. This city, too, was devastated by an earthquake a couple of months after Rob's visit to Pakistan.

Rob describes what he found: 'The approach to

Kot Aadu is along dusty roads flanked by green crops and patches of dry desert scenery. It is hard to believe that large portions of this landscape were under water a few months ago. A short journey from the main road we encounter the first of the flood affected villages. Home to two families, the place buzzes with activity as men set about constructing new homes amid a makeshift encampment of tents. Progress is swift. By the time of my second visit a few weeks later the house is near completion except for finishing touches.'





Called to Pakistan

Andreas Poerdianto, an Indonesian scholastic, was also in Pakistan over Christmas. He also visited Jesuit projects in the Punjab. He was struck by the damage done by the flood to the mud houses. 'Everywhere people asked us to visit their houses and to help them rebuild', he said.

Andreas first became interested in Pakistan when he was a novice. Herman Roborgh came to speak to the novices about Jesuit work in Pakistan and about relations with Islam. Andreas said, 'I was already practising inter-religious dialogue at home. My father and many of my extended family were Muslims.'

His interest returned when he was finishing his philosophy studies. Jesuits from Pakistan had addressed the Provincials Conference about their needs. The Indonesian Provincial asked Jesuits interested in the mission to contact him. Andreas did, and was asked to go to Pakistan the following year.

But his determination was tested when he had to wait nine months for a visa. During that time Benazir Bhutto was killed and the Jesuit General Congregation was held. But his desire to work in Pakistan deepened, and he arrived there in 2009.

He spent the first six months studying Urdu in Lahore, and then was made minister of Loyola House, a spirituality centre. He also helped care for the Jesuit candidates. His work brought him into contact with a wide range of people. He made many Muslim friends. He says of them: 'When we got to know one another, they always asked, "Why don't you marry?" I used to say, "Life is not just about marrying and having children. It's about loving. Love is bigger than marriage".'



Rebuilding for the future

The aim of this project is not simply to replace what was lost in the floods, but to build houses that will survive future floods. Rob explains, 'The simple mud brick dwellings that housed families before the flood were literally swept away leaving piles of mud and debris. Fr Renato was keen to ensure this does not happen again. As he moves about the village the key word on his lips is *pukka*, which means strong.'

Stronger communities

The project also created stronger communities. People took pride in their building and grew in confidence. Rob continues, 'Fathers and sons caked in dust and cement show pride in their work. Women and girls contribute by breaking bricks. Even children, too young to work, imitate their parents by

scaling ladders and observing – just like skilled foremen.'

Like all effective relief work, rebuilding houses involves some difficult challenges. The project must contribute to peaceful relations between communities by meeting needs of the whole local area.

'A major problem regarding who to help is the question of land ownership', says Rob. Efforts are made to ensure the people assisted have ownership of their land. Those at landowners' mercy are at risk of future eviction.

Another problem is constant complexity of life in Pakistan. Prejudice towards minorities, especially Christians and ethnic tribal groups exacerbates the suffering of these groups. Rob explains, 'Whereas Muslims are able to access aid more easily from

government sources, minorities are more dependent upon aid from NGOs. One walks a tightrope dispensing aid to different groups.'

The work progresses well, and is very rewarding for those who take part. Rob concludes, 'To date the Jesuits are involved in building eighty homes and providing materials around the wider Kot Aadu area to both Christian and Muslim families. The list of those in need continues to grow. Every village Renato stops at sees more requests for assistance from neighbours. While the work is exhausting and the pace hectic, the spiritual and personal rewards are great. The resilience and energy of the people is contagious and humbling. The simplicity of life here makes one continually question our Western values system.'

'All of my milk cows have been buried by the lava. We've lost our livelihood. In the past we could earn some money from the cow milk ... now all we've got is a memory of the past.'

Fire from the earth

The Jesuit scholastics in Yogyakarta woke one morning last November to find ash covering the ground. Mount Merapi had erupted violently. They asked how they could help those who fled from the area.



BAYU RISANTO RECALLS, 'We decided to cook and send them meals twice a day – for lunch and evening meal. To prepare that amount of rice boxes was made possible only because we were helped by our community cook and more than 40 young people, student colleagues in our apostolate.'

The Jesuit Refugee Service supported people displaced by the eruptions. They soon saw the human dimensions of the volcano. The village of Singlar was typical. Three people were buried by lava, and over 120 families lost everything.

Supryanto, a villager, said, 'If I was asked now, I'd say I'd dare not live here anymore. My house was once there', he added, pointing at the large pile of sand where no signs of buildings are seen. His fellow villager, Paidi, said, 'All of my milk cows have been buried by the lava. We've lost our livelihood. In the past we could earn some money from the cow milk ... now all we've got is a memory of the past.'

The Singlar residents were just some of the 10,000 people displaced by the volcano. Their numbers

were added to by the heavy rain that followed, and the flooding by cold lava. Another 5,000 people were forced to flee their houses, when cold lava that had accumulated on the volcano's slopes struck and buried their villages.

JRS at work

In Kragalan JRS helped the evacuees by distributing foods including rice, milk for the children and elderly, porridge for infants, cooking oil, cooking seasoning and drinking. They also provided plastic mats, mattresses for the elderly and infants, sarongs, hygiene kits, elementary and secondary school uniforms. The village head expressed his gratitude to JRS for the helping hand it gave to the evacuees.

Adrianus Suryadi, director of JRS in Indonesia, visited the

village. He said, 'I came back to my office amazed about those evacuees. They are not the kind of evacuees who would keep pounding with demands and lists of needs. They even seem to feel shy and uneasy to ask for this and that. But what fascinated me most were their smiles, which were filled with gratefulness to anyone who has helped, rescued and attended to them.'

For the Jesuits scholastics, too, it was a learning experience. Bayu commented, 'Thanks to the network we had, we could deliver the goods directly to the people who were in need but who were somehow forgotten by the government due to its unnecessary bureaucratic processes. We learned that when we help people, we are not alone. Others will join us and we work together as a team.'



Listening to the forest

'This forest is my life', said a villager of Bogoran. In that remark he said everything that needed to be said. It confirmed all that the Jesuits studying philosophy in Indonesia had learned from a program concerned with the environment.



TWENTY-ONE SCHOLASTICS from Indonesia, Timor Leste, Myanmar and Thailand had travelled to Bogoran in Central Java. Bogoran is a predominantly Muslim village. In 1997 it won a national award as the best community-based forest. Later tension between people who live around the forest and the government-affiliated department of forestry invited reflection on the major challenges that the vulnerable face today from the lack of good governance and the depletion of forest, water and land. The students also learned from the experiences of the community leaders.

The village head, Mr Sukoco, was once an activist who defended the people's rights over forest resources. He shared with the scholastics

how he tried to reconcile his position as a government officer with his responsibility to safeguard his people's economic interests and to preserve the environment.

At Bogoran the scholastics learned as much from the daily struggles of the ordinary people in the village as they did from formal talks. One of them remarked, 'The hospitality of Bogoran people, their unity with the nature, and their simplicity has moved me to be conscious about my lifestyle as a Jesuit. They made me ask, should we Jesuits be more sensitive about the food we eat, the facilities and transportation we use?'

The program, organised by the Kolese Hermanum in Jakarta, was the result of an initiative taken by Fr Greg

Soetomo and directed by Fr Pedro Walpole. It is part of the Commitment of the Jesuit Conference to the environment.

Before their field experience, the scholastics prepared themselves by reading, group study and writing essays. They were able to draw on their study when they came into the rural community. They came to appreciate and to analyse different perspectives on the environment and on forest management. Their prayer and reflection helped enrich their personal outlook.

Fr Walpole pointed to the breadth of the programme, with its components of social analysis, immersion into the Bogoran community, and spiritual reflection. He remarked,

'Understanding the context of the land and forest processes and how people relate with it is very crucial. But for us Jesuits, we are called upon to know the presence of God in on-going creation.'

Fr Walpole's remarks were echoed by one of the scholastics who participated. He said, 'My encounter with the reality of Bogoran taught me to be sensitive to the environment. It is a home for human beings and all creatures. Furthermore, we learned to balance and manage the mutual dependence between preserving nature and encouraging human development.'

*God is our refuge and strength.
Therefore though the earth should change,
though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam,
we shall not fear.* Psalm 46:3



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many stories one history
many dreams one vision