



Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat of the Society of Jesus

September 2019

...to exchange social justice and ecology news, stimulate contacts, share spirituality and promote networking...

Narrative

Life Changing Ministry

John Baumann SJ (UWE)



My life as a Jesuit followed the usual pattern of most Jesuits in California who entered in the mid-1950s. For the first ten years my formation fostered in me a perspective of "seeing God in all things". It was focused on the immediate, personal interactions within a largely homogeneous Catholic environment - living in Jesuit community, and teaching/coaching in a Jesuit High School.

If life in the Jesuits changed little for me during those ten years, the same was not true for the rest of the world. This was the age of reform and revolution in the country and the Church. The civil rights movement, anti-war protests, and free speech dominated the headlines. Vatican II, which closed in 1965, quickly influenced our understanding of how the Church should interact with contemporary society. The following year the Society of Jesus concluded its 31st General Congregation and promulgated its declarations on social action in collaboration with the laity. This document unleashed the imaginations of many Jesuits, including me.

In 1967 Jesuit Father General Pedro Arrupe wrote a letter entitled, "*Race Relations in the U.S.*" and encouraged Jesuits to respond to the crisis in that area saying "Jesuits cannot, must not stand aloof". Encouraged by the Province's commitment to social ministry and challenged by Vatican II and our General Congregation, I took the opportunity to explore a social ministries apostolate.

Before my second year of Theology studies in the summer of 1967, I headed off to Chicago to attend the Urban Training Center. UTC was created in the 1960s with the mission of training clergy and laity to connect their churches to the critical needs of inner cities. We were introduced to community organizing and received practical, hands-on training through field placement. That summer in Chicago became the life-changing first step toward the adventure that has been the rest of my life.

When I returned to Theology for my 2nd year, my studies came alive. Theology was no longer an abstraction; it became concrete and personal. My faith had been transformed and theology gave me a way to think about my summer experience - about putting gospel values

into action. I deepened my appreciation of the Ignatian principle that God is present in our world and active in our lives. If we truly believe that God is among us, how can we allow divisions based on race, ethnicity or religion to create animosity, injustice, or violence? I began to understand my vocation as a Jesuit to be a life of service to others by working for justice and the common good, a concept that stems from the dignity, unity, and equality of all people.

After ordination in 1969 I returned to Chicago for more training in community organizing. In 1972 I returned to the province, and with the support of the province I co-founded Faith in Action (formerly PICO), a national and international network of faith-based community organizations.

Faith in Action's model is transformative. At its center is a belief in the potential for transformation - of people, institutions, and our larger culture.

FIA's organizing model is faith-based. There are many paths to a more just world and value-based and valued-driven organizing is one of them. Other paths include direct service, in which people respond to the immediate needs of others. Another path is advocacy, where people act and speak on behalf of others who are suffering from great injustices and social ills. FIA's path to building a more just world teaches people of faith how to develop their own power to address the root causes of the problems they face.

FIA presently works in 23 states that include more than 3,000 local, religious congregations representing 34 denominations and traditions. Our organizing agenda in the United States addresses the most critical issues of our time including economic equity, gun violence, health care, immigrant justice, mass incarceration and voting rights. Internationally, FIA-affiliated organizations are in East Africa in Rwanda, in Central America and Haiti. These organizations engage in life and death struggles as they fight to reclaim democracy and provide for basic human needs, including food and water, safety, health care, and employment.

This summer, 2019, Faith in Action and I celebrate FIA's 47th birthday. FIA has trained generations of leaders and organizers to "unlock the power of people" and organize for better communities. In John's Gospel Jesus tells Nicodemus that the Spirit allows us to be born again. Starting FIA was also a kind of birthday or "born again" experience for me. FIA has opened my eyes to a faith that recognizes how the Spirit is at work when people organize to address the hardest challenges that society faces.

Flashnews

SJES - Fifty years of Justice and Reconciliation: Testimony of Fernando Franco

As part of our ongoing celebration of the half-century anniversary of the Secretariat for Social Justice and Ecology at the Curia of the Society of Jesus in Rome, we have invited the former secretaries to record their thoughts on being part of 50 years of services by SJES. Each secretary shares the unique challenges that SJES faced under his leadership, and his thoughts on the apostolic needs for the social and ecological apostolate today. Watch the testimony of Fr. Fernando Franco. From Gujarat Province in India, Fr. Franco is currently a Research Coordinator at St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad, and Coordinator of his Province's Development Office. [Read more...](#)

SJES - *Promotio Iustitiae* on Indigenous Rights and Integral Ecology

In the present issue of *Promotio Iustitiae* on **Indigenous Rights and Integral Ecology**, keeping the Synod on Amazon at the background, Jesuits from 5 Conferences, accompanying the indigenous people over many years have reflected on the Indigenous Rights and Integral Ecology from the perspectives of justice and reconciliation. The Synod is a wonderful

opportunity for the Church to collectively discern, plan and find new paths towards an integral ecology from the standpoint of the symbiotic relationship that exists between the indigenous people and ecology and the growing moral and ecological crisis.

Africa Madagascar - Celebrating the Golden Jubilee of SJES in Johannesburg

The Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM) launched its celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES) during the occasion of the annual meeting of the Jesuit Justice and Ecology Network of Africa (JENA). The JENA Annual Meeting had three segments to it: the JENA Annual Assembly, which focused on the Network annual review and planning; the first annual JENA Conference, which focused on the role of the intellectual apostolate in the implementation of the UAPs; and finally the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the SJES. [Read more...](#)

Asia Pacific - Celebrating 50 years of SJES in Yogyakarta

"We grieve with the earth and the poor. We feel strongly that change and conversion will not take place without a real encounter with God, which also means encountering the poor", expressed members of the social ministries network of the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP). The group comprising 24 participants from the Jesuit provinces and regions, JCAP social ministries, and regional and global networks gathered at the Formation House of Syantikara in Yogyakarta, Indonesia from August 19 to 21 for a meeting themed, "Celebrating 50 years' journey of God's faithfulness and discerning roadmaps for the next 10 years". [Read more...](#)

USA -Statement of the Jesuit Provincials for World Day of Migrants and Refugees

Informed by Ignatian Discernment (UAP, #1), the Jesuit Provincials have successfully petitioned for a meeting with Acting Secretary of Homeland Security, Kevin McAleenan, to express our concerns with the current treatment of migrants and asylum seekers (Walking with the Excluded, UAP #2). Among the concerns we will raise will be detention of migrant children (Journeying with Youth, UAP #3). We also realize that among the displacement push factors include not only gang violence but also environmental destruction (Care for our Common Home, UAP #4). [Read more...](#)

Global: UN Assembly and Summits on Global Issues

On September 16, the General Assembly of the UN will meet to discuss issues of global concern. Within the following weeks, several summits like the Climate Action Summit on September 23, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on September 24 and 25, and the High Level dialogue on Financing for development, among others, will take place. There are several calls for mobilization by civil society organizations and platforms from Sept. 20 to 27, particularly the Global Action Climate strike. Jesuit organizations will follow these Summits, since Jesuit/Ignatian delegation was already present in the High Level Political Forum on SDGs (read "[Final external report](#)"), coordinated by SJES. "More ambitious and urgent action is needed and should be supported by concerted action and commitment that is aligned by the motto "leaving no one behind".

Global - Join the Climate Strike on Friday, September 27

Over the past year, Fridays for Future, a global student movement started by Swedish student Greta Thunberg, has grown to include hundreds of thousands of students around the globe. Now, the movement is inviting others to join with them in a series of actions during the week of September 20-27, 2019, culminating in an Earth Strike on Friday, September 27.

Many Jesuit organizations all over the world are joining in these efforts. [Ecojesuit](#) and partners strongly support the [Global Climate Strike](#) activities, 20-27 September 2019, and encourage all to take urgent and sustained climate action. This week-long period is a strategic and opportune time to encourage local and global leaders to address the climate emergency, as it is happening in parallel with the [UN General Assembly](#) from 17 to 30

September. Those interested may support the joint [statement of Ecojesuit and partners for urgent climate action](#). Read the [Statement of JSS Australia](#), [Read more...](#)

Philippines - Jesuit volunteer teacher killed in the Philippines

A young Jesuit volunteer was killed while serving as a teacher in a community high school in Pangantucan, Bukidnon in the Philippines. On August 23, Genefir Buckley and fellow Jesuit volunteer Ann Kathleen Gatdula were attacked and stabbed by a man they caught stealing in their quarters. Buckley, 24, died of multiple stab wounds while Gatdula, 30, was wounded and is recovering in the hospital. Both women are part of Jesuit Volunteers Philippines (JVP), a programme that recruits, trains and sends volunteers for a year of service to marginalised communities, under-resourced schools, parishes and non-government organisations across the country to serve as teachers, formators, community organisers or enterprise development officers. [Read more...](#)

Pan-Amazonian Region - REPAM's Statement on the present critical situation

Lately, forest fires in the Pan-Amazonian region have reached extremely serious dimensions. The events have elicited reactions from many different countries all over the world, and governments have expressed their concern and demanded the local governments in the region to take action. The Church has also raised its voice for the Amazon through several of its bodies. The Pan-Amazonian Church Network (REPAM in Spanish) is aware that "climatic change and the increase in human intervention (deforestation, fires and changes in the use of land) are pushing today the Amazon region to the point of no return". [Read more...](#)

South Asia - St. Britto High School Embraces Solar Power

In a bid to curb pollution and meet the daily energy needs St. Britto High School, Mapusa, Goa has installed one of the biggest and first of its kind grid connected rooftop solar power plant in Bardez Goa. The on-grid rooftop solar power plant on normal sunny days can generate around 100-125 units of green energy per day. The school will use around 60 to 70 units of the power generated from the power plant, while the surplus power will be sold to the Descom. The solar project was inaugurated by the minister and MLA of Calangute - Michael Lobo and blessed by Roland Coelho, SJ - the Provincial of the Goa Jesuit Province. [Read more...](#)

Malawi - Nobody is too poor to give time

"In looking ahead, it's good to look back"! says Kenneth Simalalo SJ, Head Teacher of Loyola Jesuit Secondary School, Malawi, as he reflects on the last ten years which led to the recent graduation of a class of young men and women who will go on to shape the future. We Jesuits of the Zambia-Malawi Province (ZAM) had made the ambitious - almost dangerous - decision to open a new secondary school in one of the poorest countries in the world. Where less than 30% of the youth have a chance to attend secondary school and less than 10% actually complete the required four years. Sadly, the statistics for girls are significantly lower. The decision to go where there was great need was made, before the Universal Apostolic Preferences had directed us "to discern who are the most vulnerable and excluded persons in our midst and to find ways to walk closely beside them. [Read more...](#)

Amazon - The Prophetic Commitment of the Church in the Amazon and Integral Human Development

This readiness for commitment is usefully synthesized in the final chapter of the Instrumentum Laboris (IL) which sums up the challenges and hopes of a prophetic Church in the Amazon basin. The horizon within which it moves, without which there can be no justice and no life, is the fact that "everything is connected" as Pope Francis explained in *Laudato si'* (138). The social and the natural cannot, the environmental and the pastoral must not be separated. Dangerous compartmentalizations - intellectual and spiritual, economic and political - have put human life in jeopardy on Earth, the common home of humanity. The upcoming Synod is committed to helping heal the breaches in a part of the world where the

consequences of contemporary misconceptions and pernicious practices are particularly serious. [Read more...](#)

Asia Pacific - Moments of energy and insight in Bendum

Focused on discernment, depth, action and mission, the third in a series of Laudato si' Spirituality for Action workshops organised by the Jesuit Conference Asia Pacific-Reconciliation with Creation (JCAP-RwC) recognised the need to discern for action on several levels, not only for personal conversion but also for advocacy and global citizenship. The JCAP workshop gathered 27 participants, mostly youth, from different contexts and areas in Asia Pacific. Sylvia Miclat, JCAP-RwC Coordinator, shared that the three-day workshop aimed "to provide participants a time and space to find a deeper personal and communal desire and energy to collaborate in working on the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while recognising the challenges in their institutions". [Read more...](#)

South Asia - A Decade old Institute at the Heart of Jaipur - Enlightening the Marginalised

St. Xavier's Vocational Institute, Jaipur was founded by George Peter, SJ and was started in the year 2006 in the main city of Jaipur to support the marginalised and underprivileged sections of the society. The aim was mainstreaming women and enriching them with the employability skills which either help them to make their space in the organised job market or lead them towards the self-start ups. The institute is supporting one of the major focus areas of Jesuit Conference of India - JesuiTec. Currently, the director of the institute is Jose VK, SJ and the institute supports in total four trainings in the streams of Beauty Culture, Computers, Stitching and Tailoring and Fashion Designing. [Read more...](#)

Africa - "Leaders: take responsibility"

"What have you done? Your neighbour's blood cries out to me from the ground"! (Genesis 4:10) The Jesuit Institute South Africa strongly condemns the deplorable violence, thuggery and looting which has taken place in Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Pretoria. Violence, robbery and lawlessness can never be condoned and are never acceptable ways of acting. The Jesuit Institute urgently appeals to our law enforcement agencies, often working in difficult and dangerous situations, to work tirelessly to maintain law and order. Furthermore, those who are responsible for these criminal acts must be held responsible. Now is the time for action! [Read more...](#)

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Headlines (HL) - Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES)

Borgo S. Spirito 4 - 00193 Rome, Italy

Tel: +39-06-6986-8393, Email: sjes@sjcuria.org

Editor: Xavier Jeyaraj, SJ

<http://www.sjweb.info/sjs>