

JustSouth Monthly

JSRI Perspectives on FAITH DOING JUSTICE

LOYOLA
UNIVERSITY
NEW ORLEANS



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Rhetoric and Reality

Walls, Bridges, and People on the Move

by Edward "Ted" Arroyo, SJ, Ph.D.

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JSRI is Hiring

JSRI invites applications for the position of [Research Fellow](#).

JSRI Upcoming Events

March 29

Ms. Donovan will present at the 2016 Health Summit: [Creating an Agenda for a Healthy Louisiana](#).

April 4-8

Ms. Baudouin and Fr. Kammer will attend the Jesuit Conference on *Crossing Borders, Finding New Ways* in Santo Domingo.

April 12

Fr. Kammer will present Jesuit Justice to the Ignatian Faculty Fellows on campus.

April 15-16

The JSRI Advisory Board will meet on Loyola's campus.

JSRI Recent Activities

March 17

Ms. Donovan and Fr. Kammer presented the findings of the first [JustSouth Index](#) at a press conference on Loyola's campus.

March 16

Fr. Kammer attended a meeting of the Mission Committee of Christus Health in Dallas.

March 5

Fr. Kammer provided two presentations on Catholic Social Teaching to Dallas deacons.

March 4

Dr. Weishar attended the quarterly meeting of The Micah Project at St. Peter Clavier Parish.

February 29

Fr. Kammer attended the Los Angeles meeting of the board of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps.

February 28- March 1

Ms. Donovan attended the Anti-Hunger Policy Conference hosted by the Food Research and Action Center in Washington D.C.

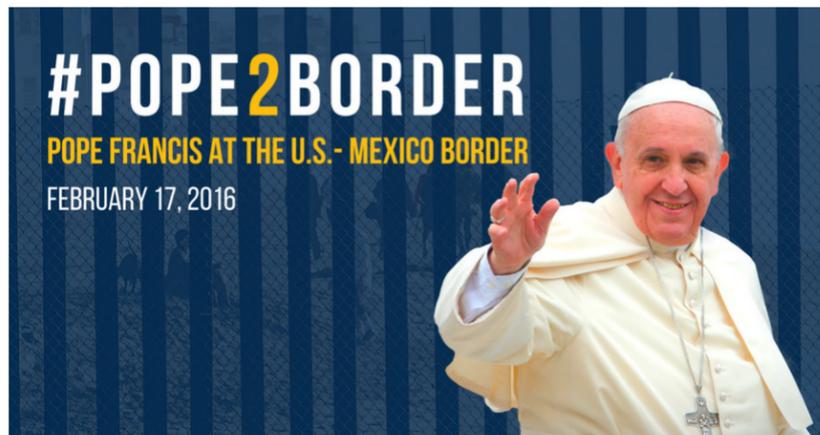
February 24

Dr. Weishar submitted testimony at the New Orleans City Council Hearing meeting on the need to change policies regarding the adjudication of young offenders as adults in Orleans Parish.

Pope Francis' recent prayer at the Juarez/El Paso border led to this airborne response to a journalist's question: "A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian. This is not in the Gospel." These simple words opened up in the blogosphere floodgates of anti-papal as well as anti-immigrant inundations reaching far beyond the Rio Grande's tiny arroyo dividing the U.S. and Mexico.

Many people have legitimate concerns about migration. Maintaining appropriate boundaries, fair and just regulatory measures, respect for the law, the impact of migration on the economy, etc. all call for subtle prudential judgments rather than bombastic generalizations. So often, however, many people of good will seem to forget their own immigrant roots and fail to appreciate the human realities moving 200 million-plus people around today's world.

How might a Christian approach building bridges rather than walls? Global generalizations, and even accurate scientific descriptions of the push and pull factors moving people across political borders don't sufficiently bring home the human realities involved.



Source: [Ignatian Solidarity Network](#)

JSRI addresses this gaping divide between rhetoric and reality by facilitating local dialog between recent immigrants and other concerned people, attempting to build bridges of understanding and mutual respect. We gather together immigrants and others in small groups to hear each others' experiences and concerns, and also to learn what our church teaches about human dignity, ministering to people on the move, appropriate migration policies, etc. In this we follow the time-tested inductive method "see, judge, act" advocated by Pope John XXIII in 1961 [1]. Our experience suggests that as we move above and beyond this local experience of dialog, we start with experiences and practices close to home and then build up to advocating national and global policies. Starting with local dialog can humanize the rhetoric and help us better understand the reality.

For many years I offered a university-level course called "Social Policy and the Christian" using moral theologian Richard McCormick's [2] method of "feeling right, thinking right and acting right" for more adequately dealing with such social policy challenges. In his article "Reading the Signs of the Times" [3] Donal Dorr builds on this approach to develop a fuller theological method to guide informed Christian involvement in advocating public policy about urgent issues. Applying such an inductive methodology theologian David Hollenbach recently offered a concrete example of this process in discussing today's global refugee crisis. [4] And our own JSRI colleague Mary Baudouin offers a helpful reflection on our local implementation of such bridge-building in her article "Welcoming the Stranger." [5]

What are we to do, how are we to act? Flowing from the "Jesuit" in JSRI's mission, we urge an ongoing process of Ignatian discernment beyond the rhetoric, a strategic methodology of careful listening to those concerned, including the excluded, both the victims and those who don't seem to understand, and those who don't agree but are willing to continue the discernment and act to build bridges rather than walls. Welcoming the stranger, a central tenet of the Judeo-Christian tradition, calls us too to feel right, think right and act right.

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