

JustSouth Monthly

JSRI Perspectives on FAITH DOING JUSTICE

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Wayfaring Spirit

Welcoming the Stranger in Xenophobic Times

by Edward B. "Ted" Arroyo, S.J., Ph.D.

JSRI Future Activities

March 31-April 1

JSRI Advisory Board will meet on Loyola's Campus.

April 3

JSRI will co-sponsor *Angola and the Re-Entry Court: A Solution to Mass Incarceration* at 7:00 in Nunemaker Auditorium, Monroe Hall.

April 4-5

Fr. Kammer will chair the board meeting for the Ignatian Solidarity Network at Montserrat Retreat House in Lake Dallas, TX.

JSRI Recent Activities

March 16

Dr. Weishar participated in a planning meeting of the Welcoming America immigrant and refugee collaborative.

March 15

Fr. Kammer delivered an address on gratitude for the Loyola Lenten lecture series.

March 15

Dr. Weishar participated in a meeting of the board of directors of Seashore Mission in Biloxi.

March 14

Dr. Weishar, Fr. Kammer, and Ms. O'Dowd completed the final report on [Recovering the Human Face of Immigration](#) and released it in collaboration with the University of Florida.

March 10

Dr. Weishar and Dr. Mitchell along with Mr. Ronnie Moore of Cornerstone Builders, led an *Ignatian Teach-In on Mass Incarceration* at the ACJU Honors Consortium Meeting.

March 3

Dr. Weishar and Ms. Baudouin led a *Methodist Teach-In on Migration* at First Grace United Methodist Church in New Orleans.

February 21

Fr. Kammer presented on the work of JSRI to the board of the Loyola Alumni Association.

"Immigration policy should be generous; it should be fair; it should be flexible. With such a policy we can turn to the world, and to our own past, with clean hands and a clear conscience."
— John F. Kennedy, [A Nation of Immigrants](#)

The Christian season of Lent began on Ash Wednesday, this year at the start of March. It commemorates God's people's 40 years of wandering in the desert and Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness. In this same season we are witnessing an explosion of Xenophobia in our country. Although, as President Kennedy wrote, the United States is a "nation of immigrants," memories tend to become short when, generations after arrival on these shores, we may be tempted to distance ourselves from our wandering, wayfaring roots as people on the move.

For Christians, Lent is a time of movement into the desert for quiet listening, reflection and encounter, and a time to examine our demons and confront them for growth in the good spirit. In our Jesuit tradition, "examen" means taking some "desert time" for discernment about our own battles with evil, a time to contemplate our own thoughts, desires, and deeds, a time to pray and learn in the desert and look forward to a greater future: ad majorem dei gloriam (AMDG) (For the Greater Glory of God).

As our March reflection, JSRI offers this Xenophobia Examen as a faith resource for discovering and countering such anti-immigrant temptations on our own journeys through the desert this Lenten season so as to move along "with clean hands and a clear conscience." Such examens could be done personally in private and also in a group context. Some Bible passages might be helpful resources, such as Exodus 16, Psalm 51, and Mark 1:1-13.

Here we propose in outline form a process of examen.

Presence

- Come to a place/time of quiet
- Take a relaxing posture
- In the silence, ruminate on a word or phrase, maybe from a bible passage, such as the ones above, or "my father was a wandering Aramean."
- Express your personal prayer for wisdom in your own desert journey.

Exploration

- Where and when have I encountered the stranger, or migrants in my own life?
- What differences did I notice: cultural differences? skin color? other bodily features? dress? language?
- How did I deal with this encounter? What feelings surfaced? What assumptions might lie underneath? What did I think? How did I judge?
- How did I act or not act in response to this encounter? Attitude, body movement/language, engagement, or avoidance? Listening or shutting them off? Welcoming or distancing? Were there any mutual "gifts" shared and received?

Celebration

- How might God have been present in this encounter?
- How might we celebrate an exchange of diverse gifts in such encounters?

Looking Ahead

- How might I welcome others in the future?
- How can I foster a culture of welcoming in my local situation?
- How can we acknowledge and celebrate the gifts shared by people on the move?
- What public advocacy might help?

In addition to insights you might gather from this examen, a wealth of resources for healing Xenophobia can be found on the Internet, for example:

- Cardinal Cupich's [recent letter](#) on this topic
- Caritas New Zealand's many [educational resources](#)
- And, of course, JSRI's website [resources on migration](#)

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NETWORK

Fr. Arroyo was the founding director of JSRI and is now a JSRI Associate. He is currently a retreat director at the White House Jesuit Retreat Center outside St. Louis. Cf. <http://www.whretreat.org/>

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