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JustSouth Monthly

JSRI Perspectives on FAITH DOING JUSTICE

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Welcome, Defend, Promote, Integrate

Understanding the Message of Pope Francis for Our Border Challenges

by Fred Kammer, S.J.

JSRI Future Activities

August 1

Fr. Fred Kammer will participate in the Chicago orientation of the new domestic and international Jesuit Volunteers for 2018-19.

August 10

Last day for summer intern Melinda Davis, who is returning to her senior year at the University of Norte Dame.

JSRI Recent Activities

June 13

Dr. Sue Weishar participated in a planning meeting of the Gillespie-Senter Memorial Community Breakfast Steering Committee at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of New Orleans.

June 19

Dr. Weishar and JSRI Summer Intern Melinda Davis participated in a Day of Compassion at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola.

June 25

I was in Rome in March for the conference of the International Catholic Migration Commission held every four years. These were church leaders committed to the mission of responding to what Pope Francis called “the inhumane living conditions experienced by millions of our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters in various parts of the world.”[1] The Pope reminded us of the four verbs that should characterize the Church’s pastoral response in the face of contemporary migration: *welcome, defend, promote, and integrate*. [2]



Fr. Kammer meets Pope Francis at immigration conference in Rome.

Fr. Kammer participated in the local board meeting of the Capital Post-Conviction Project of Louisiana.

June 28

Dr. Weishar discussed current U.S. immigration policies and their legal ramifications with immigration attorney Kathleen Gasparian on a conference call for JSRI Action Alert subscribers.

June 30

JSRI associate Mary Baudouin and Dr. Weishar participated in the New Orleans area's Families Belong Together Protest at Congo Square.

July 6

Dr. Weishar participated in a meeting of the Gulf Coast Immigrant Advocacy Network at the Louisiana Bar Foundation in New Orleans.

July 10

Fr. Kammer participated in the New York City meeting of the presidential search committee of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps.

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One can parse out these four words and their specific requirements in the teaching of our Church at great length and with great profit. However, to take them to heart in our national political context, we should reflect on two things Pope Francis said to our gathering about God's reaction in the book of *Exodus* to Israel's enslavement in Egypt. Francis said, first: "The Lord hears their cry and sees their suffering" [Ex. 3:7]. We owe a debt of gratitude to those in ministry to immigrants and refugees and to our news media for bringing us the often painful pictures and stories of families torn apart on our borders and elsewhere by brutal political policies. These families put flesh and sinew on what can seem to be abstract historical and economic bones about "push factors" that drive parents with children and even children alone to flee war, gang brutality, and grinding poverty in their home countries.

These families invite us, as did *Exodus*, to hear their cries and see their suffering instead of succumbing to the worst forms of immigrant bashing, racism, and frankly blatant lies about people seeking biblical hospitality and home in a nation once distinguished worldwide as welcoming "your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free..."

What are we to do, we ask? Pope Francis takes us back to the man chosen to lead his people from poverty and slavery to freedom—Moses. In doing this, Francis gives us our second set of directions in these words: "The Lord sent Moses into the midst of his oppressed people, to dry their tears and restore their hope" [Ex. 3:16-17]. Drying tears is the first step in our response. This means tending to the wounds of those brutalized by our draconian family-separation policies and denied the basics of longstanding international law: the right to apply for asylum and be heard.

Exodus and Pope Francis also call us to be messengers of hope. This is a call to solidarity. Solidarity, as Saint Pope John Paul II explained, is "not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far." Rather, John Paul wrote, it is "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good..."[3] That common good calls us to put our time, treasures, and talents on the line for those who cannot defend or represent themselves adequately in detention centers or jails, before immigration tribunals, around the family table, or in the forum of public opinion.

[1] Pope Francis. (March 8, 2018). Address to the Members of the Plenary Council of the International Catholic Migration Commission.

[2] Pope Francis. (August 15, 2017). Message for the 2018 World Day of Migrants and Refugees.

[3] Saint Pope John Paul II. (1989). *The Social Concerns of the Church*. 38.

Monthly articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Loyola University New Orleans. Please send feedback to jsri@loyno.edu

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