UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA COMILLAS
FACULTAD DE TEOLOGÍA
INSTITUTO UNIVERSITARIO DE ESPIRITUALIDAD

Hope
in forcibly displaced peoples

The gift of a stranger

Sacha A. Bermudez-Goldman, S. J.

Director
Prof. Daniel Izuzquiza Regalado, S. J.

Madrid - December 2013

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To Antoinette

Ex-refugee, sister, friend
graced presence, living hope.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BAC	Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos (Library of Christian Authors)
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
GC	General Congregation of the Society of Jesus
GS	*Pastoral Constitution* Gaudium et spes, II Vatican Council
IDP	Internally displaced person
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service
LG	*Dogmatic Constitution* Lumen gentium, II Vatican Council
NGO	Non-government organisation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America
PC	*Decree* Perfectae caritatis, II Vatican Council
SpEx	Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola
SS	Spe Salvi, *Encyclical Letter of Pope Benedict XVI*
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
VC	Vita Consecrata, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II*

Introduction

1. Context: personal, social and ecclesial

The present work brings together two areas that have been of personal interest for a good number of years, namely, the theme of hope and the plight of refugees and forcibly displaced people. The scriptural verse on my ordination card came from the First Letter of Peter: *always be ready to give an account of the hope that is in you* (1 Peter 3:15). Although never a refugee, I have experienced situations of 'forced displacement' in my life, having had to leave family, traditions, culture, language and possessions behind. As director of Jesuit Refugee Service Australia (2008 – 2011), I also have had the privilege of being invited to share in the lives of many people who had been forcibly displaced from their home countries.

The social context from which I approach this writing is primarily that of my own country, a developed nation, geographically a member of the southern and far-eastern nations, but in culture and social background very much a Western country, with a very high standard of living and quality of life. Australia has avoided the worst of the financial and economic crisis that has plagued many European and North American nations in the last few years. We still consider ourselves 'the lucky country'[1] and would like to keep it that way. This might require keeping others out who want to come and enjoy our benefits and good fortune. Australia has one of the most rigorous immigration policies in the world and, of relevance for the purposes of this paper, one of the most callous system of asylum policies as well (see next section). Paradoxically, though we consider ourselves 'the lucky country', as a nation we have significantly high rates of depression and anxiety.[2] Individualism and materialism are widespread and rather than ameliorating these conditions of depression and anxiety, they seem to lead further to a sense of hopelessness and despair. The implicit question behind this seems to be: "If we already have 'all' that can be had, what is left to life then?"

In its ecclesial context, Australia is considered a highly secular nation.[3] In the last national census (2011), about 25% of Australia's population declared itself Catholic.[4] However, only

[1] 'The Lucky Country' is a term that appeared as title of a book by social critic Donald Horne in 1964. Although the origin of the phrase was negative., it is now used in a favourably way to refer, among other things, to Australia's prosperity, its distance from problems elsewhere in the world, its natural resources, history, multicultural dimension, etc.

[2] According to the *Australian Psychological Society*, significant levels of depression affect approximately 20 per cent of Australia's adults either directly or indirectly during their lifetime, cf. http://www.psychology.org.au /publications/inpsych/2012/february/manicavasagar/. The social and economic costs of depression in Australia are staggering. Depression costs the Australian economy approximately $12.6 billion per year and accounts for up to six million working days of lost productivity, cf. www.beyondblue.org.au. Both websites accessed 10 October 2013.

[3] In the Australian 2011 Census of Population and Housing, for the question which asked "What is the person's religion?" 22.3% reported "no religion", which is a growth of 7% since the 2001 Census. This question was

a small percentage of these would consider themselves practicing Catholics, and most of those who attend religious services are elderly people. As it is currently happening in many places around the world, the Church in Australia has been discredited by the many cases of sexual abuse that have come to light in the last few years. Because of both, the high degree of secularism in Australia and the negative portrayal of the church, the church as an institution is not usually a place where people go to seek comfort or direction in terms of either spiritual needs or moral decisions. Positively, the Catholic Church, together with representatives of other Christian and non-Christian faith traditions, has been one of the most openly outspoken institutions against the inhumane asylum policies purported by the government. The social work and assistance provided by the Catholic Church is also widely recognised by those involved in this area, although perhaps not as widely known by the general population.

2. Background: closing doors to hope

On Friday 4 October 2013, the Spanish newspaper *El País* reported the tragic death of more than 200 'undocumented' asylum seekers (at the time about 150 others remained missing), mostly from Eritrea and Somalia, who had perished the previous day trying to reach the Italian island of Lampedusa in the Mediterranean sea—both the 'gateway to hope' to life in Europe and the 'symbol of death' for many African and Middle Eastern people escaping hunger, violence and war in their home countries.[5] Less than one mile from the island the small boat, carrying an estimated 500 people (including many children), went up in flames. It had departed like many others from the Libyan port of Misrata heading for Lampedusa (the island itself is located only 205 km from Sicily and 113 km from the African coast). The wreckage itself was not a novelty, but what made it notable was the number of victims. It is known that more than 8000 people have lost their lives since 1990 trying to reach the Sicilian island (other estimates give a figure of over 20,000 counting those who have been lost at sea).[6] "It is shameful" was the spontaneous and heartfelt response made by Pope Francis, while reading a previously prepared speech. "The word that comes to mind is 'shame'." Less than three months earlier, the Pope had visited Lampedusa, on his first official trip outside the Vatican, and had thrown a wreath into the sea in memory of the many people who have drowned trying to reach European soil. During his short visit, the Pope had called for a "reawakening of consciences" needed to counteract the indifference shown to those seeking

optional and 9.4% did not answer the question, cf. *Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011*, http://www.abs.gov.au. Accessed 12 October 2013.

[4] This was about 5.4 million of Australia's total population of 21.5 million at the time; cf. *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/0?opendocument& navpos =220#cultural. Accessed 12 October 2013.

[5] Cf. PLABO ORDAZ , "La crisis de los desplazados sacude a Europa" in *El País*, Friday 4 October 2013, Year XXXVIII, Number 13246, pp. 2-3. At last count, 359 people, including 16 children, had lost their lives.

[6] Cf. JUAN RUBIO, "En Lampedusa, el Papa desafía el 'gatopardismo'" in *Vida Nueva*, no. 2856, 13-19 Julio 2013.

asylum. A plead that echoed repeated calls made by his predecessors in previous years.[7] Deploring a lost sense of "brotherly responsibility", the Pope asserted that we "have forgotten how to cry" for those lost at sea.[8] Perhaps, partly as a response to these words, the Italian government declared a national day of mourning the day after the tragedy. However, this symbolic act will not probably draw 'real' tears from many European citizens, have an impact on their consciousness and contribute to greater openness towards displaced peoples. On the same day, *El País* also presented a report entitled "*Más asustados, menos tolerantes*" (*More frightened, less tolerant*), based on the *Informe de la Juventud 2012* (*Youth Report 2012*), which drew the conclusion that Spanish youth (15-29 years) experienced now a greater sense of rejection towards those "who are different" since the economic crisis began in 2004.[9]

On 7 September 2013 federal elections were held in Australia which gave power to the Liberal Party, a conservative party whose platform was based, among other things, on tough immigration policies. One of the 'hot' issues leading to the election had been immigration in general, and border protection in regards to asylum seekers wanting refuge in Australia in particular. The slogan of the new Prime Minister's party was: "we will turn back the boats", referring to boats carrying asylum seekers who had departed from some of our closest neighbouring countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

The policy behind the slogan basically consisted in not allowing these boats to reach Australian soil and sending them instead to other island nations, close to Australia, where applications for asylum would have to be processed. The purpose was to 'send a clear

[7] The care of forcibly displaced peoples and the need to respond to their plight was a constant theme, for example, for Pope John Paul II. In his *Message for World Migration Day,* 1998 he stated: "The Church looks with deep pastoral concern at the increased flow of migrants and refugees, and questions herself about the causes of this phenomenon and the particular conditions of those who are forced for various reasons to leave their homeland. In fact the situation of the world's migrants and refugees seems ever more precarious. Violence sometimes obliges entire populations to leave their homeland to escape repeated atrocities; more frequently, it is poverty and the lack of prospects for development which spur individuals and families to go into exile, to seek ways to survive in distant lands, where it is not easy to find a suitable welcome", n.1. Cf. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/migration/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_09111997_world-migration-day-1998_en.html. Accessed 22 October 2013.

[8] The following day after the Lampedusa tragedy, on his first visit to Assisi, Pope Francis, visibly moved, pronounced even stronger words: "To this world it doesn't matter that there are children dying of hunger; it doesn't matter if many families have nothing to eat, do not have the dignity of bringing bread home; it doesn't matter that many people are forced to flee slavery, hunger and flee in search of freedom. With how much pain, how often don't we see that they meet death, like yesterday in Lampedusa: today is a day of tears!". Cf. FRANCIS I, *Address during his meeting with the poor assisted by Caritas; Pastoral Visit to Assisi*, 4 October 2013. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/october/documents/papafrancesco_20131004_poveri-assisi_en.html. Accessed 10 October 2013.

[9] Referring to this increase in intolerance, another report cited in the article alleged that 21.3% of those interviewed (not only youth in this case) believed that all migrants in irregular situation should be expelled, as compared to 8.8% the previous year. Cf. ELISA SILIÓ, "Más asustados, menos tolerantes" in *El País*, Friday 4 October 2013, Year XXXVIII, Number 13246, pp. 36-37.

message to the world' that Australia has tough immigration laws, has a right to decide who can enter its territory and will not allow anyone to abuse that right.[10] The policies are clearly aimed at protecting Australia's borders and protecting Australians from so called 'illegals' who want to take advantage of our resources. There is an implied message that allowing these often-called 'undesirables', 'queue jumpers', and 'law-breakers' into our country will damage our quality of life. There is no mention anywhere in this message of the fact that these policies are in breach of Australia's international legal obligations, that they fail to respect the right of any individual to seek asylum and that they contravene our humanitarian obligations.[11] Little mention is made of the factors that push people to risk their lives to come to Australia, boarding rickety, unsafe and overcrowded boats. Little mention is made of their dignity as individuals, of their needs and *hopes*. And certainly, no mention at all is made of the benefits and gifts that these people can bring to our country.

3. Premise/hypothesis of the work and statement of the issues

Taking into account the given context and background for this paper, the premise of this short thesis is that the best response we can offer to the hope that forcibly displaced people place on us (as developed nations of 'the North' and sought-after places of asylum) is the gift of hospitality and solidarity, and that, through this welcome, forcibly displaced peoples offer us a great gift in return: a discovery and increase of our own hope. This thesis therefore is about hope within the context of the lives of forcibly displaced people—the hope they have, they nurture and they offer. Since the theme of hope can be explored from different angles—philosophical, humanistic, theological, etc.—as explained in section 5 of this *Introduction*, this study looks at hope using 'the lens' of spiritual theology.

This premise in fact contains several other suppositions or hypotheses. First, that forcibly displaced people (or at least a good number of them and in particular those who hold religious beliefs or adhere to particular faith traditions) do have hope. Many of the statistics, reports, stories and images we receive from different media sources would seem to spouse a contrary assumption: their stories of the forcibly displaced are usually of death, of thwarted

[10] It should be noted that Australia is not alone in closing more and more its boarders to asylum seekers and migrants. While the number of forcibly displaced peoples continues to rise around the world—because of wars and armed conflicts, structural and generalised violence, fights over resources, economic instability and climate change—developed nations (and some rapidly developing ones) are accepting fewer and fewer forcibly displaced people inside their borders.

[11] Ironically, one of the highest rated Australian values is the so-call right to a 'fair-go' (Cf. *The Age Newspaper*, 12 November 2006). This call for a fair go, where every person is entitled to an adequate and equal opportunity, has been challenged recently by asylum seeker and refugee advocates in response to coercive and illegal measures imposed against these groups, cf. "A fair go for refugees is a fair go for all Australians", *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 March 2012; and "Australia's fair-go values must extend to refugees", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 October 2012; all articles accessed 25 September 2013 from the newspapers' respective websites.

hopes, of seemingly hopeless existences.[12] Second, that hospitality and solidarity are gifts worth offering, which the developed world possesses, and which it might be willing to share with the less fortunate. (Here, espousing Catholic Social teaching, I would go further to suggest that the sharing of these gifts is not really an option rich nations have, but an obligation). The last part of the premise—that these 'less fortunate' people might have something to offer us in return—might surprise some people, especially those who believe that forcibly displaced peoples come 'to take' and not 'to give'. Further, I would like to argue that this 'something' they offer us—their hope—is not something extra, something superfluous, something we can do without. Rather, it is possible the *one thing* most people in our world need most today, in order to counteract the widespread feeling of hopelessness and despair that seems to have taken over their lives.

4. Motivation and clarification of limits to the study

Hope seems to be everywhere! Or at least talk about hope is everywhere. I have been amazed by the amount of varied literature I have found on the theme of hope in just the last few months, especially in contemporary writings—academic, theological, spiritual, mainstream or cultural. It is obviously a theme of great relevance today, with people from all walks of life and backgrounds having ideas and opinions they want to share about what they think hope is and/or should be. As mentioned above, I believe one of the great spiritual malaises afflicting our world today is in fact a pervading sense of despair. We have all experienced hopelessness at certain moments in our lives, but what I refer to here is an enduring and omnipresent sense of hopelessness, which seems to affect more and more persons every day. We look everywhere for people, things and experiences that might help us remedy this malaise, but to no avail. Part of my motivation in writing about this topic is to suggest that we need to start looking for that 'remedy' in other places perhaps not so obvious to us at first glance. One such particular place is the lives of forcibly displaced peoples. For those of us who have had the privilege to be invited into their lives, as we will see, this *is* in fact an *obvious* place.

In terms of the limits to the study, this *tesina* is not intended to be a rigorous systematic study about hope from the different theological, biblical, philosophical or eschatological points of view. These aspects, however, will inform and be in dialogue with the main topic of the thesis, namely, the spirituality of hope in the lives of forcibly displaced people, and in particular of those who spouse the Christian faith tradition. It would be enriching to expand

[12] To be fair, both government and non-government, local and international organisations working with displaced people have tried hard in recent years to portray more positive aspects present in their lives; mainstream media, however, still seems to give priority to stories that emphasise conflict, violence, destitution and death.

the study of this spirituality of hope across several other faith traditions, but such endeavour would go beyond the scope of this paper. This limited scope does not allow us either to address in detail the wide range of issues in the forced displacement field—its politics, economics, ethical, social or legal aspects, though reference will certainly be made to some of these issues in order to provide the necessary context and background to the aspects that will be discussed *(*e.g. hospitality, solidarity, identity, faith, etc.)

5. Definition of theoretical frameworks

Two main areas of study converge in this work to provide the theoretical framework that underpins its premise: spiritual theology and forced migration. As we will see, although the objects of interest of both these fields—the spiritual life and forced movements respectively—have been with us for a long time, both these areas are considered relatively new fields of study.

The action of the Spirit in our lives draws us toward union with God, making us more and more like Christ. This process of development in the Christian life, of growing and maturing in Christ, and of appropriating his mystery in our lives in and through our own spiritual experiences is the object of study of spiritual theology. While these spiritual experiences are personal, they are also rooted in history, taking place within a specific time and space. Our Christian experience cannot be separated from the 'timeline' of God's history of salvation for humanity, nor from the Church, the ecclesial 'space' which provides the context within which the spiritual reading of the events in our lives, as a community of faith, can take place. In other words, it is not possible (or rather, it does not make much sense) to speak of 'my' Christian life. It is 'our' Christian life. As people of faith we can all contribute towards developing a spirituality that helps respond to the present needs of our community, 'building on' our shared experiential spiritual wisdom. This is true for all of us, including forcibly displaced people. And because of their very particular circumstances, they have the capacity to make a great contribution to this 'pool' of spiritual wisdom. As we have already mentioned, one of the great needs of our time is the need to recover our ability to hope. In the process of assimilation of their faith, hope has played a major role in the lives of the forcibly displaced. We turn to spiritual theology to help us uncover the 'hidden treasure' of their spirituality of hope and what it might be able to say to our world without hope today.

The fast growing field of what was formerly known as 'refugee studies' and is now referred to as 'forced displacement studies' to account for the increasingly complex factors it covers, points to the also growing relevance of migration and displacement issues. Forced displacement today, as never before, has become a multifaceted global phenomenon, affecting every continent and region of the world. As we will see, the refugee experience (or

more generally, the experience of forcibly displaced peoples) has specific characteristics or elements that differentiate it from any other. Not all the elements, however, are present in each and every refugee. The cause for displacement, for example, and the physical as well as psychological effects that it can have on any particular person, will vary significantly. The same can be said about the faith experience of refugees in response to the events that have uprooted them and convulsed their lives. Considering the 'hope factor', the spectrum of responses can range from a deep experience of conversion and of putting one's total trust solely on God, to indifference (faith is not a factor at all), to a feeling of abject hopelessness or despair, to anger and a sense of having been betrayed by a God who had given a (tacit) promise of always being there. The nature of that perceived promise will depend of course on the beliefs of a person and whether he/she adheres to a particular faith tradition or not. We could compare for example what we would expect to be the responses from an animist, a devout Jew and a Buddhist, who saw their experience of displacement using the lens of faith. But those responses will also be conditioned by the psychological make-up of the given person, his education and culture, her family's history and dynamics, etc., and we might find that the animist's response might be more 'typically' Christian than we could have imagined!

The purpose of this reflection is to point out the complexity of trying to arrive at specific conclusions in this study of the spirituality of hope in forcibly displaced peoples. As mentioned before, two areas of study converge here, spiritual theology and forced displacement studies. One advantage is that both areas rely on integral or mixed approaches or methodologies. They look at the experiences of their subjects while attempting a critical reflection on those experiences in order to arrive at specific conclusions that might help illuminate their lives and guide their futures (inductive approach). At the same time, they consider these experiences within the context of specific traditions, rooted in history and past reflection (deductive approach). The phenomenon of forced displacement has been with us since the beginning of humanity (initially it would have been related to seeking safety from adverse and hostile environments, but fairly soon it would have also included personal and communal conflicts), and the process of theologising since the beginning of human reason (or at least the development of an awareness of their being something 'greater' than us). The process of assimilation and appropriation of one's faith, which is the object of study of spiritual theology, while being deeply personal, has also been conditioned by a framework of understanding and reflection of the spiritual experiences of communities of faith throughout time. Within our Christian tradition, these experiences are said to be 'Christian', based on the objectivity of the life and work of Christ.[13] And in our present case, Jesus and his life and his mission (including his mission of hope!) to the excluded and marginalised, provides the

[13] Cf. S. GAMARRA, *Teología Espiritual*, Madrid: BAC [3]2000, p. 15.

model of identification for the life of his followers, both who have been victims of forced displacement, and those who are called to welcome them.

6. Methodology

In this study then, we follow this mixed approach—inductive/descriptive/deductive. The first half of the paper (chapters 1 - 3) intends to garner relevant data of the current state of affairs pertaining to its main two subjects, namely the 'situation' of hope (or lack thereof) and of forcibly displaced peoples in the world today. This is done mainly through bibliographical research of pertinent sources in both fields, but also through engaging in 'conversation' with appropriate interlocutors or discussion 'partners': the Scriptures, theologians, forcibly displaced persons and those working with them (deductive approach).

In the case of victims of forced displacement, the widely acknowledged 'best practice' is to allow them to share their stories (in verse, song or prose) and 'voices' and to listen respectfully to them, and this is what we do here, both throughout the paper and especially in the last chapter (chapter 6), where we 'allow' the forcibly displaced to speak directly to us about their lives of hope (descriptive approach). In doing this we do not intend to be 'a voice for the voiceless', but rather provide a channel where their own voices can be heard. The main aim is to look to the meaning in their stories, which might help us gain a glimpse of their particular way of relating to God, which will hopefully enrich our own ways (inductive approach). In listening to their stories with this particular intention—unveiling their part in our shared history of salvation—we enter into a 'sister' field of spiritual theology, namely, narrative theology. Narrative theology teaches that the Scriptures are seen as the story of the relationship and interaction between God and God's people, and they help us discern how we today can continue being part in this story. Thus if we read the Scriptures as narrative theology, we find that they propose or offer the founding experiences of all Christian life. Tradition and the Scriptures thus provide the basis for the critical interpretation of the spirituality of hope in the spiritual experiences of forcibly displaced peoples. As Charles Bernard suggests:

> The most important element... in the elaboration of a spirituality implies a prior understanding of the phenomenon that is studied: prayer, mystical life... The richness and precision of the spiritual knowledge will depend firstly on the depth of the personal experience, on the broad extent of the information and on the capacity to carry out a critical interpretation of such experience.[14]

In the case of forcibly displaced people, the *broad extent of the information* gathered is assured by engaging also with their closest partners: those who accompany and serve them,

[14] Cf. CH. BERNARD, *Introducción a la Teología Espiritual*, Estella: Editorial Verbo Divino 1997, pp. 62-63, (my translation). Unless otherwise noted, all translations referenced throughout this work are translations from Spanish to English.

and who are committed to defending their rights. Thus, one chapter of the study (chapter 5) is devoted to a particular Catholic organisation which has shown such deep commitment, namely, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). The advantage of recurring to a Christian organisation, and not simply to a humanitarian one, is that this allows us to address our two main themes (hope and forced displacement) and look jointly, aided by those 'in the field', to both the practical/physical situation of the forcibly displaced and their response in faith and hope to their circumstances. Further, those who have been involved in JRS for a number of years have much to offer in the way of theological reflection, both as bringers of hope as well as recipients of this gift. Finally, in order to better understand JRS' approach in particular and the Catholic Church's in general in regards their response to the plight of forcibly displaced people, we look at what Catholic Social teaching and the Church's tradition tell us about this subject (chapter 4). We do this mainly through bibliographical research of pertinent sources, including a range of ecclesial documents (deductive approach).

7. Objectives and contents

In broad terms, the main objective of this paper is to explore responses to two interconnected questions: 1) What does a spirituality of hope in the lives of forcibly displaced people looks like, and 2) What can we learn from this spirituality that can help respond to the present needs of a world that seems to be afflicted by a crisis of hope? I say 'explore' rather than 'answer', because I am aware that a study of limited scope such as this can only hope to provide some additional insights regarding these two very complex questions. However, I believe that it is important and necessary for us today to ask them and to contribute and encourage, in any way we can, further conversation on the subject.

To accomplish these objectives, this work is divided in two parts in addition to the conclusions presented at the end. The first part, *Recognising hope and its essential role in the world today*, covers several aspects that fall within the theme of hope (chapters 1-2). The first chapter looks at the present situation of despair and hopelessness that seems to pervade our world, not only in the secular sphere, but also in our institutions of faith, and suggests that one possible guiding light in this dark tunnel of despair might be the capacity of forcibly displaced people to hope against all hope. Chapter 2 establishes a conversation with other fields of theology hoping to come up with some 'reference points' that might help us elucidate how the spiritual experiences of hope in forcibly displaced peoples 'fit' within our current framework of understanding and reflection (as community of faith) of this topic. The second part, *Living hope: a non-negotiable imperative in the lives of forcibly displaced peoples*, (chapters 3-6), introduces the theme of forced displacement. Chapter 3 explores the harsh reality of life of forcibly displaced people, looking for additional 'reference points' that may explain further how their experience of forced displacement might affect their lived out

hope. Chapter 4 suggests ways in which we might be called to respond to this reality, using the Church's tradition and its Catholic Social teaching as guiding principles in this response. As mentioned before, Chapter 5 looks at how this theoretical framework of response to forced displacement has been put into practice by a particular Catholic organisation, namely, the Jesuit Refugee Service. Its many years of accompaniment, service and advocacy on behalf of the forcibly displaced has been source of valuable insights regarding their lives and spiritual experiences. Chapter 6 attempts to bring together these insights and those gathered throughout the paper and endeavours to give a more definite 'shape' to a spirituality of hope in the forcibly displaced. Each chapter also ends with a 'as a way of synthesis' section which intends to capture some of the main points presented, using the imagery of seeds and seedlings of hope throughout the different stages of their development. We hope this imagery will serve as a connecting thread throughout the chapters and also help us in our task of drawing up conclusions at the end of the paper.

FIRST PART

Recognising hope and its essential role in the world today

‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all.

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chillest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Chapter 1

A world without hope?

Hope: an expectation or anticipation of something desired; a feeling of trust or confidence.[1]

Expectation. Anticipation. Something desired. Trust. Confidence. All these words certainly reflect our common ideas about what hope is and what it should entail. So, when we consider a world without hope, can we say that the world—or the majority of people in it—have lost the capacity to experience these feelings? Of course not. There are plenty of instances of people who do hope and whose lives are marked by hope. At the same time, it is true that many people also experience a great ideal of hopelessness and despair, and for some, these are the forces that control their daily lives. In raising the question of a world without hope, what we want to consider is not so much the subjective type of hope that people speak about when they say "hope is the last thing we'll lose". That personal hope which is surely present and which translates into projects —within families, groups, communities—that look to transform and improve their particular circumstances and the quality of their lives. What we want to consider is the widespread perception of an absence of this possibility for a better future for all peoples. Our Christian consciences as people of faith—and the conscience that both believers and non-believers share about the value and dignity of all human life—calls us to go beyond our own particular hopes or those of our own people. A hope that is not at the reach of everyone is simply not sufficient, precisely because of the dignity we recognise in each human being.[2] To hope is to be human, so a world without hope dehumanises us all. Is it possible to restore this universal hope to our world? We must strive to do so.

We begin this chapter by trying to understand the nature of the despair and hopelessness that permeates the lives of so many of us, so we can then tackle the problem. In the recovery of this our hope we might expect our religious beliefs and faith traditions to play an important role. We look then at the position of the Church as it faces this crisis of despair, and to a particular group within the Church, namely women and men religious, 'perennial witnesses of hope'. They, together with forcibly displaced peoples, might possess the key to the vault that holds the treasure of hope we are looking for. Together, they might also help us understand that the only cure to this universal spiritual malaise of despair is Jesus, our hope. As a gift of God, as grace, hope is an integral part of our lived spiritual experience, as we assimilate the mystery of Christ in our lives. This process of assimilation is the object of study of spiritual theology. In the last two sections of this chapter we look at some of the

[1] Cf. L. BROWN (ED.), *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. 1,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
[2] Cf. J. VIDAL TALÉNS, "Creer en tiempos de desesperanza. '*In spe, fortitudo vestra'* (Is 30,15)" in *Scripta Theologica* 33 (2001), p. 844.

constitutive elements of this field of theology and begin to explore ways in which it might help us to elucidate what a spirituality of hope in the forcibly displaced might look like. As a way of synthesis, the chapter ends contemplating an imagery: seeds of hope that need planting.

1.1. The present situation

> [The] crisis of the 'content' of hope means that when taking into account the circumstances and known data and asking ourselves what we can hope for, we find it difficult to find a different answer that "more of the same". In other words, it is hard to imagine profound transformations in the human and social realities. It is not easy to come up with utopian designs to mobilise human action.[3]

For some time now the world has been experiencing a paradigm shift—a radical change in our basic assumptions, thought-patterns and beliefs. Or at least we have experienced the first part of that shift. For such a change in paradigm requires both a 'before' and an 'after' stages. The best way to characterise this 'before' stage in our present time is to refer to it as the *post*-period: a period of post-institutionalised religions, post-liberalism, post-any kind of ideologies that have guided humanity for thousands of years—a period of *post*-anything that has long been considered 'foundational as rock' in our lives, but which has now lost its certainty or has become inadequately insufficient. And while we are still in this 'before' stage of our current paradigm shift, we keep looking for that 'something' to replace our former ways of thinking, beliefs and assumptions that will get us to the 'after' stage.[4] While for a few this process of discovery might seem like an exciting prospect or adventure, for most of us the absence of certainties, or at least of some clear perspectives for the future, has led to a crisis of hope.[5]

1.1.1. Doomsday?

The South African Dominican priest, Albert Nolan, asserts that one of the great characteristics of our times, both in his native country and in the world over is despair: "we live in an age of despair", he assures us. While for several centuries we lived in optimism and hope in the most important areas of our lives—political, scientific, economic and religious, all leading to *progress*—now "suddenly almost everyone has been plunged into a state of

[3] Cf. VIDAL, "Creer en tiempos de desesperanza", p. 844, (my translation).
[4] Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, "Jesucristo: esperanza para el mundo. Cómo anunciarlo hoy desde la Vida Religiosa" in *CONFER* 52/Enero-Marzo 2013, nº 197, pp. 43, 48.
[5] Of course, crises of hope throughout history are nothing new. Cf. P. LAÍN ENTRALGO, *La espera y la esperanza. Historia y teoría del esperar humano*, Madrid: Revista de Occidente [3]1962, for a detailed study of the long history of crises and of the recovery and rebirth of hope in diverse circumstances. However, Vidal points out that the fact that the 50's and 60's were typified as 'decades of hope', helps us to put into context the novelty of our most recent 'hopes' past and present. Cf. VIDAL, "Creer en tiempos de desesperanza", p. 848.

despair".[6] The optimism produced by the scientific advances and benefits of the *Age of Reason* (17th century Europe) did not, however, solve all our problems. Bloody revolutions followed, and then world wars ensued which showed us how inhuman and cruel we could be towards our fellow human beings. Hope-filled socialist ideologies of shared resources and equality culminated in totalitarian and tyrannic communist governments, while the economic philosophy of unregulated free-markets and limitless economic growth also went bust. The threat of nuclear annihilation (not yet a thing of the past) is now being overshadowed by the use of biological weapons—we continue to discover more efficient ways of disposing of human lives, while at the same time avoiding damage to valuable and scarce resources, which the victors can then pillage and plunder. And even our planet itself, in response to irresponsible and unabated exploitation, seems to be giving up on us—climate change and global warming are real threats to which we might not have solutions in the long run. And then there is AIDS, the question of how to restrain and stop violence in Africa and in the Middle East, terrorism...[7]

This is the general picture, and it is not good. We have heard all of this before, perhaps too often. So much so that we seem to have become numb to both the negatives aspects of our human history and to the present situation. Partly because the problems are just too big, too overwhelming, too out of our control. If powerful nations cannot fix these problems, what can we, 'little, insignificant' individuals do? The power and control that we thought we could exercise over our lives is now all but gone.

Perhaps, the one way in which we have learned to cope with these insurmountable issues is to immerse ourselves in worlds of fantasy and day-dreaming. Significantly, the most popular video games seem to be those in which we get to kill our enemies, obliterate their cities, and exterminate their worlds. The same is true for the big block-buster films: in them the heroes save planets, cures are found for all the worst illnesses, right defeats wrong, good triumphs

[6] Cf. A. NOLAN, *Hope in the Age of Despair,* Mumbai: St Pauls 2009, p. 3.

[7] One of the contemporary authors who has explored some of the issues mentioned here is German sociologist Ulrich Beck. In his widely influential book, *The Risk Society,* the author analyses the present condition of Western societies and explores the way in which globalization has created risks that concern people from all different classes, not just the poor but also the rich and all those in between. Underpinning the analysis is the notion of the `risk society'. The changing nature of our society's relation to production and distribution is related to the environmental impact as a globalizing economy based on scientific and technical knowledge becomes more central to social organization. The author claims that while in industrial society, the driving force was 'I am hungry', in a risk society it is 'I am afraid'. He also points out that risks are 'socially constructive' and that some risks are perceived as more dangerous because they are discussed in mass media more frequently, such as terrorism. This latter assumption has certainly proved true in contemporary Australian society, where the issue of asylum seekers and refugees entering Australia, often portrayed in the media as a ´threat´ to our national sovereignty, is perceived by many as a risk to our values and way of life. Cf. U. BECK, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity,* London: Sage 1992.

over evil. But two hours of fantasy do not solve our problems; they are there when we return home from the movie theatres and the short reprieve we might have experienced in that darkened screen room, is replaced by a darkness that is prevalent and that does not go away. In the more developed world, we might have been able to disregard these 'uncomfortable' issues (wars, violence, degradation, poverty, illness, conflict) while they did not affect us directly, but as many hitherto flourishing Western countries now experiencing economic crises know, not anymore. There might not be armed conflicts in our streets, but there is scarcity, joblessness, and an ever-increasing percentage of depressed and anxious people walking those streets. We know them. In fact, we are some of them.

At the same time, a large percentage of our world is indeed victim to violence, degradation, poverty, armed conflicts, and forced displacement. Yesterday it was Egypt, today it is Syria, and tomorrow it will be yet another African nation. Of course, the world has always had its share of difficulties, violence, destruction, inhumanity. But two factors, among others, seem to intensify the reality of these tragedies. While technological advances have benefited and improved the lives of many, it has also allowed us to inflict damage on one another and our environment in ways unprecedented until now. We can be agents of destruction more effectively and efficiently than ever. At the same time, these advances, especially in the area of communications, allows us to be much more aware of these acts of destruction and violence than we have been ever before—not only do we know that they are happening, but in many cases we can watch them live in our television sets or computer screens. This is our present reality, and as expressed before, it looks quite bleak. So, the question is: where do we go from here? *Is there* a place where we can go now? And can anyone restore to us this gift of universal hope we so badly need? We would like to suggest that the answer to both questions is *yes*. That the church (in all its senses—as community, as people of God, as an institution of faith) offers us a place to go, and that two 'groups' of people, namely religious and forcibly displaced peoples, hold the gift of hope, which they are ready to share with us. Before considering these two hypothesis in more detail, let us first take a look at the way in which this present reality has affected both our psyche and our spirit.

1.1.2. Despair: an universal spiritual malaise

> You shall give birth to a son, and you will give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people... (*Mathew 1.21*)

In our world today, we have become more and more aware that our relationships (with ourselves, with our brothers and sisters, and with God and God's creation) are wounded and suffer from maladies which need to be healed. We have already seen some of the consequences of these wounded relationships: violence, injustice, hatred, death. And surely,

another casualty is hope. Hope is always relational: we put our hope in God and in one another. We hope together for things that will benefit us all. And even when we hope thinking mainly of ourselves, we do it taking into account how the outcome of this hope will affect our relationships with others. Hope is always relational and so, if we want to overcome the 'crisis of hopelessness' that afflicts us today, we need to heal our relationships. And to do so, we need to begin with our own process of healing.[8]

The desert Fathers and Mothers of the Orient conceived a person as made up of three aspects or dimensions: body, psyche/soul and spirit, and insisted on an undeniable relationship between each one of them. This relationship was key in order to distinguish the causes of the diverse illnesses and passions that afflicted a person and to determine the appropriate therapies to heal and purify these *disordered relationships*[9]. When we think and talk about a crisis of despair and lack of hope, we tend to connect it with our psyche, with that part of our humanity that deals with feelings, moods, with our affectivity. Unless we are thinking of the theological virtue of hope, we probably would not connect it with our spirit, that aspect of ourselves that is in direct union with God. However, following the intuition of the desert Fathers and Mothers, I would like to suggest that, because of the intrinsic relationship between our psyche and our spirit, our present crisis of hopelessness is a symptom, a consequence, of what I would like to call a universal spiritual malaise. Our spirits are wounded—they have been separated from God—and they do not know how to heal themselves. In order to be able to live in hope again, and to sustain that hope, our spirits need to be healed.

The opposite of hope is not hopelessness. The opposite of hope, what hurts us the most, is not to expect anything anymore, to succumb to apathy, to monotony, boredom and indifference. This is what kills us.[10] True hope is passion and clamouring for truth and so the real illness behind our despair is this lack of passion for truth. In the climate of decadence that reigns in our present postmodern situation, everything seems to conspire so that the human person is not able to think and react anymore. Apparently, all that is left is to abandon ourselves to immediate pleasures, because the search for meaning has failed us, and we need somehow to fill the emptiness that consumes us. Yet, it is possible to point out some hints to help us in this search for lost meaning that will also begin our process of healing.

[8] As explained later, I am not talking here about physical or even psychological illnesses that might be cured with medication or therapy, but rather a spiritual illness which ultimately can only be cured through God's grace.

[9] For a detailed study of the diverse types of illnesses (somatic, psychic, spiritual) and their respective therapies see F. RIVAS, *Terapia de las enfermedades espirituales en los Padres de la Iglesia,* Madrid: San Pablo 2008.

[10] Cf. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, "Jesucristo: esperanza para el mundo", p. 66.

Firstly, the re-discovery of the other. Our neighbours, by the simple nature of their existence, are already a reason to live and to live together, because they challenge us to come out of ourselves, to live an exodus without return in our commitment to them, in love.[11] And then, the re-discovery of God and our need for God. For, at the end of the day, it is only God, through Jesus, in the Spirit, who can heal us. *You shall give birth to a son, and you will give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people...* The name 'Jesus' means 'Yahwe saves' or, in other words, 'cures'. This image of Jesus as healer, as we well know, is quite widespread in the New Testament—an image which brings together the themes of redemption and salvation. This image of Jesus as 'medic' or healer is strengthened by the plurality of meanings given to two Greek words used widely in the New Testament which express this experience of "feeling oneself healed". These terms are the verb *sôtsô* and the noun *sôtería*, which do not only mean to 'free, get out of danger or save', but also 'heal or cure'. Jesus brings health wherever he is; he is a healer who offers God's salvation, and through his action (or rather presence) the health and well-being of persons and the society as a whole increases. This, of course, is part of Jesus' mission to bring about the reign of God.[12] The salvation that Jesus announces is gratuitous love, never expecting anything in return. It is a salvation that can only be offered to those who are 'unsatisfied' (those who are not able to satisfy their needs), to the desolate, and to those who have a sense, a conscience, of being incomplete and, in one way or another, of being 'sick', of lacking health. This is good news for us, because that is our universal present situation. And in this way, Jesus can become our hope.

1.2. Church and hope

> The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men [sic] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. (*GS* 1)

Where does the Church, as an institution, stand in this 'age of despair'?[13] This beginning sentence of Vatican II's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* assures us that the Church shares in all the aspects of the lives of God's people. But does it have today the capacity to guide the faithful through the dark tunnels of hopelessness and take them into the light? And if it believes to have the capacity to do this, will the faithful be willing to

[11] Cf. J. BRONTE, "Cristo, 'nuestra desesperanza', revela el sentido de la vida y de la historia" in *Scripta Theologica* 33 (2001), pp. 829-830.
[12] Cf. RIVAS, *Terapia de las enfermedades espirituales en los Padres de la Iglesia*, pp. 16-17.
[13] Here when I talk about 'Church', I mean the Catholic Church, of which I am a minister, and the only one which I profess to know fairly well. However, this question could be extended to include other faith traditions. Where do they stand in this 'age of despair'? How do they respond to the needs of their members? What could we, as Catholics, learn from them? Unfortunately, the exploration of the answers to these questions is beyond the scope of this study. But for the little connection I have had with other faith traditions, my intuition is that their issues would not be so different from our own.

follow? Or is the Church also in a state of paralysis, incapacitated by this crisis of despair? For indeed, this crisis of hope seems to have crept even into the lives of those who profess a religious belief.

Much, in fact, has been written about the various crises that the Church has gone through since its beginnings, and especially since the Second Vatican Council. Of the initial resistance, following the Council, to changing the old habits that screamed 'we have always done it this way' and that during many years never tired of repeating 'everything new is bad'. Despite all this, many kept alive the hope that the Council would provide the impetus needed to leave behind, once and for all, the archaic forms of security that had kept the Church paralysed for hundreds of years, to finally allow it to explore new possibilities beyond all the limits which had been imposed until then. Several years followed during which new processes of renewal were thought of, new ideologies were debated and new utopias were dreamt, all hoping for great results. But this promised *aggiornamento* of the Second Vatican Council, to bring the Church into step with the signs of the times, despite its initial gains, led to eventual disillusionment as the years saw many of those reforms undermined or slowly eroded. If today we add to this disappointment the present postmodernist rejection to all types of institutions, the tragedy of the sexual abuses perpetrated by the clergy and religious, and the scandals of the financial affairs of the Vatican, it would be safe to say that until not long ago there would not have been much reason to count on the Church to be a beacon of hope for the faithful, not to mention those of other faith traditions or none at all.[14]

And yet, despite this seemingly dire situation, we do witness 'seeds of hope' among the youth who have mobilised en masse to accompany popes on world-wide peregrinations in the last thirty years; among those who have chosen to testify to their faith in situations of civil conflict and wars; among those whose total commitment to the poor and the marginalised in the name of Jesus have cost them their prestige, their securities and even their lives. The Church's work is not done yet! And it certainly cannot give up and turn its back on its mission. The Church's service to hope in our time has in fact become more urgent and necessary than ever before. Perhaps the difference is that now, more aware and accepting of its failures and limitations, it can approach this task with greater humility, always remembering that its message has to be centred in the announcement of Christ as hope for the world in our situation today—a proclamation that cannot be separated from the example of those who witness to it.[15]

[14] The words, actions and proposed reforms of Pope Francis might just bring about the changes expected for so long!

[15] Cf. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, "Jesucristo: esperanza para el mundo", pp. 44, 46. In regards to this proclamation, the author adds: "What is most difficult is that the message that we proclaim has stopped being relevant… How to

1.2.1. Striving to maintain and proclaim hope

> We live in an age of despair, not only because people had built their hopes upon shaky foundations, but also because many of us had been hoping for the wrong things.[16]

How to understand the dynamics of hope in our present time? Many people are unable to move forward, to confront the future with clear conviction and expectations, as they try to make sense of the disruptive character of history, the discontinuity between what they expect and actually happens, suffering that baffles and disorients them. Yet hope can also be the propelling force in all human initiative and certainly in our 'Christian' initiative. Some within the Christian tradition (theologians and practitioners alike), see the present crisis of despair as an opportunity for the Church to develop a genuine Christian hope.[17] For Albert Nolan this has to do with the *who, what, why* and *how* of our hope as Christians. We are able to hope against hope because our hope is *not based upon signs*, but is based on God and God alone. God is the *who* of our hope and we strive to put all trust in God. History has taught us that no fallible, weak individuals, institutions or ideologies can be relied on totally and all of the time. But for this hope in God to be 'genuine', says Nolan, we have to be honest and clear about how we see God and whether what we expect from God is what God wants and can give us: many of us have fallen into despair because we have been *hoping for the wrong things* for too long. The *what* of our hope, the right object of this Christian hope, is and should always be the coming of God's reign or, in other words, for the will of God to be done. Translating this into human terms, Nolan talks of this *what* as the common good, *what is best for the whole of creation.* In the past, the object of Christian hope has not been genuine, because it has too often been *selfish, self-serving, egocentric* and *narrow-minded.*

Why do we hope or are able to hope? Because we rely completely on God's work in the whole of the universe. Our faith tells us that it is God who, since the beginning of history and up to now, keeps all things going, and that God's work is still present even in the bleakness that surrounds us and consumes us. This belief calls us to look at life *with an attitude of hopefulness,* to look for and to recognise those signs of hope that shine through the cracks of this darkness: more involvement in the peace movement as a result of wars; more compassion in the face of terribly suffering and violence; a greater awareness of the undeniable need for change in the Church's structures as a result of sexual abuse scandals.

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recover in these times of disillusionment the strength of hope that can make our proclamation credible once again? How are we going to proclaim Christ as hope for the world, if people cannot read in our lives and in our faces that he is our hope, our 'joyful hope'?... The key to the proclamation is not mainly in the constancy or quality of its content, not even in the way that it is transmitted, but in the credibility of its witnesses", pp. 51, 62, (my translation).

[16] Cf. NOLAN, *Hope in the Age of Despair,* p. 7.

[17] Besides Albert Nolan's work, see T. RADCLIFFE, "El sacerdote: entre la crisis y la esperanza": *Selecciones de Teología* 44, n° 176 (2005), pp. 346-354. Original en francés: "Les prêtes et la crise de désespoir au sein de l´Église", *La Documentation catholique* 2322 (2004), pp. 888-895.

And finally, *how* do we develop a genuine Christian hope? Not only by being hopeful, says Nolan, but by *acting hopefully*. That is what he sees as the most valuable contribution that as Christians we can make in this age of despair, responding to God's 'challenge' to us to take God more seriously as the only real basis for hope in the world: acting hopefully, making the *who,* the *what* and the *why* of our hope a reality in our lives, so that we can be "an encouragement to those who have lost all hope".[18]

God does not make bad things happen so good things can occur as a result. Yet, could we as Christians be grateful for this crisis of hopelessness in the Church which allows us to share in the crisis of despair that afflicts our societies? Could we even take joy in it, with the deep conviction that our Church will come out renewed as a result of this present crisis? The birth of the Church was the outcome of a major crisis, and its story has been forged throughout history through a series of crises which have refounded it, renewed it, rejuvenated it. The Eucharist might be our sacrament of hope, says Timothy Radcliffe, but the institution of this sacrament occurs at the same time in which all hope is lost; starting from this point onwards, everything falls apart for Jesus' disciples. Their experiences of Jesus' resurrection and the advent of the Holy Spirit would instil new hope in their lives, but Jesus' absence was soon sorely felt by the next generation of Christians, who had never seen the Lord in person. The hope that Jesus would come again kept the new Christians going for a while, but Jesus did not come as expected.[19] And as a result, a new understanding of the mission and purpose of the Church had to be arrived at: helping to bring nearer the reign of God in the here and now, until all things are fulfilled in the Lord.

Radcliffe is one of those who believe we should live this crisis of hopelessness with joy. In times of crisis, he says, God breaks through our armour of self-sufficiency and arrogance to reach down to the deeper and more vulnerable parts of our lives, to transform us and configure us to Jesus' way anew. And this should indeed be a source of joy, because we have been created to live as Christ and be like Christ and to be his witnesses. And yet, the Church's irrelevance as witness of God and its lack of a proper moral voice has been evidenced by the fact that the teachings of the institutional Church have been sorely disconnected from the reality of most of the faithful. The abyss between ecclesial doctrine and their daily lives has been deeply painful to watch, for too long. And perhaps this the reason that the words and actions of Pope Francis have restored so much hope in the Church and are signs of hope to many others—because they are trying, among other things, to breach that abyss. They are already beginning to answer the question of how the present crisis of

[18] Cf. NOLAN, *Hope in the Age of Despair,* pp. 5-12.
[19] Cf. RADCLIFFE, "El sacerdote: entre la crisis y la esperanza", pp. 346-349.

hopelessness can renew the Church as an institution and help it become a true witness of hope...

> ...by moving towards a Church that offers more security to young people; a humbler Church as humble as its Lord. Recreating a Church that is less clerical and secretive, more transparent, where lay people will see their dignity as baptised Christians acknowledged. This crisis could mark the end of Church perceived as multinational, distant and bureaucratic. It could then become a community of disciples of Jesus Christ.[20]

A community that witnesses to the hope we have in Him. And because of this hope, we can confront this generalised state of hopelessness or desperation in the world. We continue to hope against all hope, even when there might not be visible signs of hope. But we also do it with humility, because nowadays we have a greater conscience of the fragility and vulnerability of the human person. Getting back onto the path of hope does not mean that we will not meet along the way detours that could take us back to the road of hopelessness.[21] Luckily, we do not have to walk this path alone—not only fellow travellers but also experienced guides might be available as we tread forward on this journey.

1.2.2. A particular challenge: religious life and hope

> The cries of God's people... demand peace, justice and hope.[22]

Men and women religious have often been considered to be witnesses of hope. But is this true nowadays? Are they still fulfilling this function in and for the world? And do they have a role to play in relation to this aforementioned 'crisis of hope'? There is no doubt that the changes brought about by the Vatican Council had also great repercussions in religious life. These changes certainly led to necessary modifications to the way in which religious life was conceived before and were characterised by several 'more's' or 'greater's': more personal freedom, greater internal pluralism and openness to the world, greater participation in the making of decisions, greater communication and exchange in their personal lives and greater respect for individuality. But it also led to the situation in which religious life finds itself today, be it as a direct or indirect consequence of these changes: a religious life characterised by a lack of vocations, a diminishment in their influence in the different social, political and cultural spheres, the ageing of their congregations, a sense of loss of identity and the apparent irrelevance of their way of life.[23] As a result, there has been much disillusionment, much bitterness and disappointment. For many religious, the key question that remains in their

[20] Cf. RADCLIFFE, "El sacerdote: entre la crisis y la esperanza", p. 354, (my translation).
[21] Cf. VIDAL, "Creer en tiempos de desesperanza", p. 844.
[22] Cf. A, NICOLÁS , *El horizonte de la esperanza. La vida religiosa hoy,* Salamanca: Sígueme 1978, p. 40.
[23] These assertions describe primarily the experience of the Western world to which I belong. My limited contact with women and men religious from other parts of the world tells me that their current reality is probably different. Moreover, it is clear that the present situation of religious life has also been affected by several other cultural and sociological factors which are not directly related to the religious sphere.

minds is of an existential nature: "does our way of life have a future?" This question, in turn, is connected with another query: "does our way of life have relevance today?" The answer to both questions should be in the affirmative, and should be based on the fact that the future and relevance of religious life is based above all on its witnessing and prophetic qualities. And I would like to suggest that a very particular witness they can offer the world is precisely a testimony of hope. A hope which, despite all the present challenges already mentioned, they still experience in and through consecrated life in the service of God's reign.

The Vatican II documents *Lumen gentium* and *Perfectae caritatis* make specific reference to the prophetic and eschatological dimensions of religious life.[24] At the same time, John Paul II, in his post-synodal exhortation asserts that "the prophetic character of consecrated life was vigorously affirmed by the Fathers of the Synod".[25] Thus, in continuity with the prophets of old...

> …consecrated life experiences a strong call: on the one hand, to give testimony of the Lord to a world that ignores Him too frequently, and on the other, to take a stand in favour of the poor and marginalised of our modern societies...[26]

And "a special persuasive force of this prophecy is derived from the coherence between the announcement and the way of life" (*VC* 85). In their humanity and humility, there are many men and women religious who give testimony with their lives of a radical search for the reign of God, and this makes them signs of hope. To the extent that—with their virtues and faults—they aspire to follow Jesus radically in their vocation, they will continue to be symbols and models of hope. And this is so because for many they are also visible signs of a God who does not abandon the world, who gives of Godself in gratuity and until the end. They will continue to be signs of hope if they do not retreat and if they never give up on anyone or anything. But they will not be signs of hope if they separate themselves from the pain, if they do not console, if they move away from reality and turn cold in the sight of the one who suffers.

This prophetic dimension of religious and their ability to witness to hope is a grace from God, but they can also give life and nurture this hope. Firstly, by never forgetting that they are followers of Christ and therefore are destined to walk his same steps. In this following of Christ, they incarnate a particular form of *memoria Iesu* (cf. *VC* 22), which is sign for all the

[24] Religious are called to *manifest, show* and *give testimony* before all the faithful to the new life conquered by the redemption of Christ and the great sovereignty of His power (*LG* 44); and *to be a special sign* of heavenly benefits (*PC* 12), *give* collective *testimony of poverty* (*PC* 13) and *build* the body of Christ (*PC* 14).

[25] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata,* n. 84. The document strongly emphasises this prophetic dimension of consecrated life.

[26] Cf. P.-H. KOLVENBACH, *"*Profetismo de la Vida Consagrada*"* in *Claretianum* 39 (1999), p. 373-374, (my translation).

people of God (cf. *LG* 44; *PC* 1), and a source of their hope. And religious can also revive and give life to hope by learning to wait:

> It is interesting how Heidegger understands the wait as the most profound meaning of service. Waiting with a reverent attitude and with an acute sensibility to the requirements of this age, we [religious] serve truth as it unfolds before our eyes.[27]

Religious are so used to 'act', to react instantly, and to 'do' things, that it is almost impossible for them to persevere in the waiting, observe with patience, and live in their interiority the questions and unknowns.[28] And yet, this also *is* to act. Waiting is not something passive: it has to do with listening, observing, and even sensing actively all that takes place around us, without rushing, without getting ahead of the Spirit.[29]

There is no question that religious, both individuals as well as communities, have often been symbols of hope in extreme situations of conflict and violence in many parts of the world. It is sufficient to recall Maximilliam Kolbe or Edith Stein, whose names have been engraved in history. But there are many others, unknowns, who are equally inspiring. During his tenure as Master of the Order of Preachers (the Dominicans), Timothy Radcliffe tried to visit most the Dominican communities around the world. On one occasion he and his companions went to visit a convent of Dominican nuns in the northern part of Burundi, at the same time when the ethnic conflict between Hutus and Tutsis started anew. The whole country lay blackened and dead. All the crops had been burnt. When they were getting close to their destination they saw in the distance a green hill and on top of it, the convent.

> Six of the nuns were Tutsi and the other six were Hutu. The monastery was one of the few places where the two ethnic groups lived together in peace and love. All had lost almost all their relatives in the killings... I asked them how they managed to live in peace with one another. They answered that besides doing their community prayer, they always listened to the news together, so that in this way they could share everything that took place. None of them should feel alone in her pain. Slowly, the members of all the ethnics groups realised that the convent lands were a safe place, and they began to gather in their church to pray, and then

[27] Cf. B. FIAND, *Luchando con Dios. La Vida Religiosa en busca de su alma,* Madrid: Publicaciones Claretianas 2002, p. 25 (my translation).

[28] "More difficult even is to confront the issues of our time and wait humbly until the correct questions are first formulated to then be able to answer them". Cf. FIAND, *Luchando con Dios,* p. 26. On this topic, Bernard of Clairvaux talks about a 'prophetic wait', seeing the prophet as someone who is waiting for the arrival of the Lord and his reign. "The prophet believes firmly in what he does, even if it he does not see it with clarity. He lives the reality of what he does, in spite of not possessing it in plenitude". Cf. KOLVENBACH, "Profetismo de la Vida Consagrada", p. 371.

[29] In contrast, forcibly displaced people have had to become used to 'non acting'; they live their lives in constant waiting; waiting for things to happen, for others to make them happen. Yes, as mentioned, though their waiting might look like something passive, it is not. It is, as we shall see later, an intrinsic part of what allows them to share in the prophetic dimension of being witnesses of hope.

> planted their crops next to it. It was a green zone—and a sign of hope—in the midst of a country totally laid waste. [30]

These "are eloquent signs, that generate consequences", affirms Radcliffe. And so they are. One of the consequences is that those who live in violence discover that it does not have the last word. That there are alternatives, and that it is possible to combat this violence with love, compassion and mutual respect. These Dominican nuns not only "spoke" these values; they lived them in an open and prophetic way and through this they were able to create an oasis of hope.

Usually, when internal conflicts erupt in countries and foreign personnel is ordered to evacuate, missionaries are the last ones to leave or the only ones to remain, risking their own lives to protect the lives of those they serve. In 1997, while I lived in Cambodia as a lay missionary (with a North American missionary order) and was teaching at the local university, one such armed conflict erupted between the armies of the two Prime Ministers who, up until then, had been sharing power. After three days of intensive combat, 90% of the foreign personnel (diplomatic service, entrepreneurs) had been evacuated. Those who had stayed were mainly the missionaries. A considerable portion of the population had also abandoned the capital, fearing that the devastating experience of 1975, when the Khmer Rouge descended on the city, would repeat itself. The 'battle' only lasted one more day (with the surrender and escape of the defeated Prime Minister), although the pillaging and violence continued for another week. On the fourth day, I went to see how things were at the University and there I ran into two of my students. They were visibly surprised to see me and they exclaimed: "Teacher, we thought you would have left by now!" And then they added, in a supplicating tone I will never forget: "Please stay. If you all go, the world will forget us again, as they did in 1975".

Furthermore, religious are also called to be signs of hope for the world in the day to day events of ordinary life. Perhaps it is 'easier' to be a symbol of hope in those extreme moments when all is lost, including the most basic of 'belongings' such as security and peace. It is 'easier' to be a witness when the heroic response of a group of consecrated religious—speaking in action, word and presence against the injustices and violence all around them—is more evident and apparently more radical. But religious are also asked to give a testimony of hope and to help give meaning to the life without meaning of many of the people they serve, in the ordinary, the commonplace. Maybe in these cases the difficulty resides in their lack of visibility, of exposure. Not all of them have the international media

[30] Cf. T. RADCLIFFE, *¿Qué sentido tiene ser cristiano?: el atisbo de la plenitud en el devenir de la vida cotidiana*, Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer 2007, pp. 42-43, (my translation).

taking photos of every single one of their actions, in the way that they have been following the daily movements of Pope Francis. What has been interesting to see is that the 'ordinary' actions of this Pope have been the ones which have attracted the most attention: his old shoes, his simplicity of dress, his choice of where to live, his greater availability.

Perhaps the 'circle of influence' of religious has diminished, but there is no doubt that it still exists. And this influence resides in the fact that many people still see religious living another 'story'—one that speaks of the Kingdom. They are the ones who live for the Kingdom, for the time when, like Julian of Norwich used to say, "all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."[31] So, the question that religious often ask themselves (and that others pose to them) whether religious life has a future or not, has only one answer: "it has a future if we [religious] build it, if we know how to continue listening to the creative and prophetic word of God and to the clamours of God's people who demand peace, justice and hope."[32] Forcibly displaced people are among those whose clamours *demand peace, justice and hope*. We are used to thinking of them in this way. But perhaps we are not so used to thinking of them as being able to *be signs of hope for the world.* Yet, as we will try to show, they do share this prophetic role with consecrated religious and, in fact, as we will see in chapter 5, have been signs of that hope to them.

1.3. Spiritual theology and hope

> Spiritual is everything that through the action of the Holy Spirit unites the person with Christ [and makes him or her like Christ]... it is everything that, through the work of the Holy Spirit, becomes a motive of personal union with God.[33]

Much has been written about hope from within the fields of dogmatic and biblical theology, and we will engage in dialogue with some of their expositors in the next chapter. However, very little is found on the subject from the point of view of spiritual theology. Part of the reason, I suspect, is that this 'baby sister' of the other theological branches has only come into its own in recent times—towards the latter years of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th. Though perhaps we should speak instead of the renewed theological interest for a "spiritual theology" as such at this time, since it has been argued that the beginnings of this 'new' branch of theology can be traced to the point when it starts to detach itself from the framework of the so-called monastic theology, in the 12th and 13th centuries.[34] Be as it may, it has been in the last decades that spiritual theology has emerged (although not yet by total

[31] Cf. T. RADCLIFFE, *El Oso y la Monja*, Salamanca: Editorial San Sebastián 2001, p. 13.
[32] Cf. NICOLÁS, *El horizonte de la esperanza. La vida religiosa hoy*, p. 40.
[33] Cf.T. SPIDLÍK and M. RUPNIK, *Teología de la evangelización desde la belleza*, Madrid: BAC 2013, p. 10, (my translation). Original in italian: *Teologia pastorale. A partire dalla bellezza*, Rome: Editorial Lipa 2005.
[34] Cf. G. MIOLI, "Teología espiritual" in S. de Fiores and T. Goffi (dirs.), *Nuevo Diccionario de Espiritualidad*, Madrid: San Pablo [5]2000, p. 1839.

consensus) as a theological science with acknowledged *contents* of its own—contents not studied by the other branches of theological knowledge (scriptures, dogmatics, moral theology, liturgy, canon law...), or at least not studied in the concrete sense in which spiritual theology does so.[35]

The formal object of spiritual theology is the Christian life, not so much for what it is in and of itself, but rather in the extent to which it is assumed, appropriated and lived by each person. It has to do with taking conscience of this particular way of Christian life through one's experiences rooted in history; with appropriating the word of revelation in one's life of faith, hope and charity.[36] We note here the close approach of spiritual theology to the *person,* who is the subject of the spiritual experience, and to *history,* as the place in which this lived experience takes place.[37] Further, all authors who study spirituality systematically talk of the process and development of the Christian life—the fact that there is growth is unavoidable. Some speak of this process as being *on the way*, of fulfilling an itinerary, something inherent in the act of being a Christian; while others speak directly of growth, of maturing in Christ, with its associated stages along the way which need to be lived through and in some sense overcome. What it is being referred to here then is a 'living process' that has a special dynamism, and which begins with the taking conscience of one's personal responsibility over one's own life before God.[38] In this process we need to remember that our spiritual experience as Christians is closely connected with the nature of the path we follow, and therefore, when we talk of Christian spiritual experiences we cannot ignore the process of one who follows Jesus. It is absolutely necessary to assume the way of Jesus and also to remember that this process is not about searching for our own perfection alone; it is a process *in* Christ, who promised to be with us until the end of times (Cf. Mathew 28:20). Further, the community aspect is essential to the Christian process and is inherent in the act of 'being' in Christ; it is a path of solidarity and companionship with our brothers and sisters. Finally, it is

[35] Cf. A. GUERRA, *Introducción a la Teología Espiritual,* Santo Domingo: Editorial de Espiritualidad del Caribe, EDECA 1994, pp. 68-69.
[36] Cf. GAMARRA, *Teología Espiritual,* p. 14. Moioli adds: "Spiritual theology presents itself once again as the *task* of theology, a task which consists in not closing oneself arbitrarily within the sphere of Christian objectivity, but rather in staying open to the understanding of its 'living it out'; in other words, of the objectivity made "one's own" or of the appropriation of this objectivity." Cf. G. MIOLI, "Teología espiritual", p. 1845 (my translation).
[37] Cf. GAMARRA, *Teología Espiritual,* p. 21. In terms of this 'experience', we need to be aware of the fact that this word refers both to an objective encounter with reality and also to the subject who, through this encounter, establishes a relationship of knowledge and understanding. Thus, every experience implies simultaneously a certain receptivity or passivity, due to the presence of a concrete reality, and a reaction of our conscience that interprets the impression left by this reality, accepts it or rejects it, and if necessary, organises it for future use. Cf. BERNARD, *Introducción a la Teología Espiritual,* p. 25.
[38] Cf. GAMARRA, *Teología Espiritual,* p. 249.

a process that leads us to fulfilment, plenitude, to 'saving our life' and 'finding it' (Cf. Mark 8:35; Mathew 16:25).[39]

Spiritual theology has to be contextual theology: a theology that affirms that 'this is where we stand and from here it is where we do our theology and our reflection', without of course obviating the tradition and history that precedes it, informs it and nurtures it. As we have mentioned before, the methodology of spiritual theology is both inductive and deductive. It is inductive because it deals with spiritual experiences—the reality of faith lived by the subject is the basic material used later in subsequent reflections. And it is deductive precisely because it considers these experiences within the context of specific traditions, rooted in history and past reflection. And yet, for an inductive spirituality, one that wants to have its starting point in the present time, it is essential to have the greatest possible objective knowledge of this present time and, therefore, it cannot exclude the analysis of the situation given by the social or other sciences: "In this inductive method, after 'seeing' we are called to judge, or if we prefer, to illuminate; and here the social sciences are also of great value" (Cf. *GS* 44).[40] Part of this 'greatest possible objective knowledge' requires us also to consider that the Christian experience is never *pure* communication, but rather that its description is always the object of an interpretation. Thus, the spiritual experience, which provides the basis for the elaboration of a spiritual theology, should always be an experience subject to critical analysis. We can see how this has worked through Christian history. In reality, it has been the great spiritual masters who have known best how to filter the immediate experience to extract from them valid teachings that allow us to identify the authentic Christian experience.[41]

This authentic Christian experience cannot be separated from the main aspects of our history of salvation: creation, the tragedy of sin, its consequences and therefore, redemption. It must take into account the totality and breadth of the work of Christ, seen in the unity of creation and redemption, as the work of the Holy Trinity, of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.[42]

> What is spiritual in Christian tradition is an action of the Holy Spirit that spreads throughout the whole universe, which makes that all things, events and peoples remind us of God, talk to us of God and of God's wonders—especially those of the history of salvation—that orient us to God, transmit God to us and, finally, reunite us with God.[43]

The appropriate place for a spiritual reading of these events, of this tradition, has to be within an ecclesial context. This means that we need to take into account all that belongs to the

[39] Cf. GAMARRA, *Teología Espiritual,* pp. 271-272.
[40] Cf. GUERRA, *Introducción a la Teología Espiritual,* p. 86 (my translation).
[41] Cf. BERNARD, *Introducción a la Teología Espiritual,* pp. 60-62.
[42] Cf. SPIDLÍK and RUPNIK, *Teología de la evangelización desde la belleza,* p. 14
[43] Cf. SPIDLÍK and RUPNIK, *Teología de la evangelización desde la belleza,* p. 10, (my translation).

memory of the Church, that transcends the present, always open to the efforts of each historic period, and which is able to integrate numerous traditions into one. In effect, it is possible that the Spirit has already given to another ecclesial community, or to the Church in another apostolic tradition, the gift to read and understand reality and elaborate a theological and pastoral framework that might be fruitful in our situation. There is no doubt that, as an aid to our spiritual reading, the contribution of another ecclesial community, is by far, superior to any other. And, in our case, this will include the ecclesial community of forcibly displaced peoples of faith.

We will address, in the next section, how these elements of spiritual theology we have highlighted so far are relevant to our exploration of a possible spirituality of hope in the lives and context of forcibly displaced peoples. For now, it is important to point out that they, the shunned and rejected of the world, also have a word to say in spiritual theology and not only about their own situation. The poor perceive in a different way the word of salvation which has been addressed to them with special predilection. They perceive it better than those who run the danger of distorting it, because it gets in the way of their personal plans. The poor have a word to say to the 'spiritual enterprise' and it, in turn, has the duty to listen to it, reflect on it and serve it.[44]

1.3.1. What is the real question?

> But what does it mean to put all one's hope and trust in God? That, I suggest, is the major theological question of our time.[45]

This is Albert Nolan's assessment of the present situation concerning 'the age of despair' he believes we are presently living through. "It is a particularly difficult question", he adds, "because for very many people today God is dead or irrelevant, a meaningless concept. To many, putting all one's hope and trust in God sounds like a pious cop-out". Of course, Nolan's assertion leads to another basic and logical question: why did God become irrelevant? It is not within the scope of this short essay to address this question (one which could be answered not only from a theological point of view, but from many others—philosophical, socio-economical, historical, etc). Yet, I would like to suggest, at the risk of oversimplifying a terribly complex subject, that God 'became irrelevant' because we arrived at the conclusion that either God could no longer provide for our needs (no matter how much we prayed, tragedy, suffering and evil still persisted) or that we no longer needed God, because—putting death and some incurable illnesses aside—we could take charge and be in

[44] Cf. GUERRA, *Introducción a la Teología Espiritual*, pp. 91-92.
[45] Cf. NOLAN, *Hope in the Age of Despair*, p. 6.

control of our destinies.[46] One of the major consequences of this present age of despair might be the realisation that we do need God after all. But it is possible that many people need to be reminded that God is still there. In fact, that God has never left. And who better to do this than those who have never forgotten it; in fact, those who have put all their trust in this belief—forcibly displaced people of faith.

1.3.2. Forcibly displaced peoples and a living spirituality of hope: guiding lights in the darkness of despair?

We have mentioned that the formal object of spiritual theology is the appropriation in one's own life of Christ's way of life, as presented in God's word of revelation to humanity. This growing assimilation of the mystery of Christ in the life of a Christian is a constant and gradual process that culminates in perfection or holiness. If spiritual theology deals with the spiritual experiences of particular subjects within the context of a specific tradition, history and past and continuous reflection, what can it then say to, and do for, forcibly displaced peoples? Being a contextual theology, its starting point must be the forced displacement experience, taking into account its causes, its consequences and its lived reality. But, from a methodological point of view, what is also required is a theological-spiritual reading of this lived reality, which goes beyond an analysis of data based on the cultural, sociological or psychological environments forcibly displaced people occupy. This spiritual 'reading', once interpreted, permits us to elucidate some of the defining aspects of a spirituality of displacement, and in the case of this paper, of the particular elements of a spirituality of hope in the context of forced movements of people. We will endeavour to do this in the remaining chapters of this work. Earlier, we affirmed that forcibly displaced people have the capacity to restore to us this gift of universal hope we so badly need in this 'age of despair'. In this section, we simply would like to enunciate some initial intuitions that might suggest reasons for why this may be the case—intuitions that, once again, will be developed further in later sections.

Firstly, one of the fundamental aspects of a spirituality of hope in forced displaced peoples is that they must literally hope against all hope. They must continue hoping even when there are no visible signs of hope anywhere around them. Living in extremely harsh environments, in many instances lacking some of the basic needs such as water, food and shelter, they often struggle to survive. And often they do not. Particularly vulnerable, as we would expect, are the elderly and the younger children. Despite acknowledging the darkness, the bleakness and the apparent hopelessness of the situation, forcibly displaced peoples must continue

[46] Others might add that God became irrelevant because God did not care for us, or that we finally realised that God did not exist.

'walking', placing all their trust in the God of life, even when death is all around them. Their hope is then based on the 'possibility of the impossible', of believing that the impossible does happen. [47] Secondly, a spirituality of hope in the forcibly displaced is characterised by a great deal of paradox. This paradoxical character of hope points to the possibility that realities that in principle should only be bearers of damnation and death could become bearers of life and blessing: it is possible to love our greatest enemy, who by a twist of fate becomes our neighbour in a refugee camp, who offers a piece of bread or a blanket that saves the life of our dying child. It is possible that a life could be turned upside down and be transformed as the fruit of an encounter—a child soldier who refuses to kill his brother and thus begins a journey of healing and reintegration. Thirdly, it must be a spirituality of hope that is based on the belief in a God who never abandons forcibly displaced people despite all evidences to the contrary. A God who is present in their extreme suffering (because God has lived it) and somehow will make sense of that suffering, even if there does not seem to be a conceivable way for this to happen. A God who always finds new ways to come and meet them, who never gives up on them and never stops caring for them. And fourthly, it must be a spirituality of hope that is based on companionship, solidarity and relationship: forcibly displaced persons will not survive on their own. And if they do, they might never recover from the trauma they have experienced, for invariably their survival would have been at the cost of some else's demise. Hope that is shared is hope that is nourished and nurtured, especially when it is the last thing that is left.

The hope of forcibly displaced peoples is a hope that has had to survive the in-survivable. And this is the reason that their testimony of hope is so credible. As we have expressed before, the key in the proclamation of hope does not reside in the consistency or the quality of its content, nor even in the way that it is transmitted, but in the credibility of the witness. In the case of forcibly displaced people this credibility means that their hope can simply be expressed through a smile—words are not needed—because one who has lived through hell and can still smile, is an icon of hope.

1.4. As a way of synthesis: seeds of hope that need planting

Where do seeds of hope come from? The great storyteller Megan McKenna tells a lovely parable of a woman who wanted peace in the world, peace in her own heart and all sorts of good things, but who was terribly frustrated, sad, on the verge of despair. All she could see around her was a world of negative news, of war, environmental degradation, confict within families... all "dark stuff" that hinted to a world falling apart. So she decides to go for some retail therapy. She goes to a nearby shopping centre and after walking a while enters a store

[47] Cf. E. RONCHI, *El desafío de creer hoy. La belleza de la fe y la esperanza*, Madrid: Edición Paulinas 2011, pp. 48-51.

at random. She goes in and suddenly recognises Jesus. She knows it is Jesus, because he looks just like the holy and devotional cards she has seen before. She finally gathers the courage to come over to the counter and asks him : "Excuse me but, are you Jesus?" He replies, "Yes, I am." She asks him what he is doing there, and he replies that he works in the shop, that he owns it. "What kind of store is this?", the woman asks. Jesus replies that it is an all-purpose shop. They sell everything. Whatever she wants, she can find there. "What do you want?", he asks. "I don't know", she replies. So Jesus tells her to take her time, to look around the shop and when she finds what she needs to make a list and come back and see him. She does just that. She starts walking up and down the aisles and she gets more and more excited. Everything is there: peace on earth, no more wars, no hunger or poverty, careful and appropriate use of natural resources, no more drugs, peace in families, clean air. She writes furiously and by the time she gets back to the counter she has a long list. She gives it to Jesus, who looks at it and then looks at her and smiling says: "no problem". Then he bends down behind the counter, rummages a bit and picks all sorts of things. He stands up and lays out several packets. "What are these?", the woman asks. Jesus replies: "seed packets. This is a catalogue store. A place of dreams. You come and see what it looks like and I give you the seeds. You plant the seeds. You go home and nurture them and help them grow".[48]

The seeds of hope come from the divine farmer, from God, the Father, through his Son, in his Spirit. They are gift. They have been given to us and placed for safekeeping in the safest place possible: in the depths of our hearts. But sometimes these places of safety can be difficult to reach. We surround them with impregnable vaults so no one can come and take away what we value and treasure most. It is alright if we go there often enough so we can remember the way to let ourselves in. But when we do not come near them for long periods of time, we can forget the way. And then we ourselves are kept out, and can no longer get in! We are called to 'go into our hearts' and reach for those seeds of hope often (all the time!) so we can plant them. The story of refugees is the story of those who have being pushed out of their homes and their lands and have been kept out, for long periods of time, sometimes forever. But for many of them there is a place from which no one can keep them out. They know the way to this safe place, and never forget where it is, for they go there every moment they can. There they find their own seeds of hope and plant them. And because they have enough to give away (that is what happens when seeds are planted and they bear fruit and produce more seeds), they share them with those of us who have lost our way. And sometimes, when we allow them to, they show us the way to our own vaults and give us access back to the gifts we have received from the divine farmer.

[48] M. MCKENNA, *Parables: The Arrows of God*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1994, pp. 76-77.

Chapter 2

In search of a lived spirituality of hope

Hope sees what is not yet and what it will be. Loves what is not yet still and what will be.[1]

We have seen that the formal object of spiritual theology is the Christian life as it is assumed, appropriated and lived by each person. It has to do, specifically, with taking conscience of and appropriating the mystery of Christ in our lives, in and through our own spiritual experiences. But we also do this within the context of our specific tradition, rooted in history and in continuous reflection. Our appropriating of God's word of revelation in our life of faith, charity and hope thus requires a dialogue between the experiential process and a set of agreed-upon 'reference points'. Our understanding of this revelation has evolved throughout time, through reflection and praxis, and given rise to a broad body of theological concepts and insights—reference points—in diverse theological fields. Having begun to explore the experiential dimension in the previous chapter, the main objective of this chapter is to help us understand the concept of hope and its 'reference points' from the more traditional dogmatic, biblical and eschatological points of view (sections 1 and 2), and also to continue to explore—from the perspective now of those 'reference points'—what a lived spirituality of hope might look like, always within our context of forcibly displaced people (section 3). The chapter ends with the image of 'seedlings of hope looking for fertile ground' as a synthesis of the main points presented (section 4).

2.1. Understanding hope

But hope, says God, it sure surprises me.[2]

And if hope surprises God, what chance do we, mere humans, have to understand it! Yet, we must try! And the point of departure must in fact be our human existence. The reality of God enters into the very definition of what it means to be human. From the beginning of our existence, we have been given by God the radical capacity to go beyond ourselves to reach out toward that which transcends us (the Absolute) and which raises us to a new level of existence—the grace of sharing in the life of the Absolute.[3] For a long time hope has been understood as the "elevation of the will", made possible by grace, by which we can expect a sharing in this eternal life as well as expect the means to attain it, confident not of our capacities but of the divine assistance of God.[4] We could sin against hope by despair (no

[1] Cf. CH. PÉGUY, *Le Porche du Mystère de la Deuxième Vertu,* Paris: Editions Gallimard 1929, p. 20, (my translation from the French).
[2] Cf. PÉGUY, *Le Porche du Mystère de la Deuxième Vertu,* p. 29.
[3] Cf. R. P.MCBRIEN, *Catholicism,* New York: HarperCollins 1994, p. 205.
[4] "Specifically, hope is the enduring orientation of the human will toward final union with God, considered as a goal that can be attained with God's help, but without divine help impossible to attain". Cf. J. PORTER, "Hope"

longer trusting in God for our personal salvation) or by presumption (expecting that we could either be saved without God's assistance or that the omnipotence of God's mercy meant that our personal conversion was not required). The individualistic, non-relational nature of this approach was noted in that it often spoke of '*my* hope for salvation'. In traditional Catholic theology, hope has been identified as one of the theological virtues, although in the past it was rarely spoken of in connection with the two other theological virtues, faith and love. By hope, the human person is oriented towards an ultimate personal union with God—a process that begins from baptism and continues during one's lifetime and beyond. This object of hope, based in an '*already* but *not yet*' aspect, gives hope its eschatological dimension.

We now take a look at these various aspects of hope, from our renewed understanding of these elements. What has changed in particular is the individualistic, non-relational nature mentioned before, which has now been replaced by a more collective/communal approach, which demands greater commitment from every believer. This new approach, as we will see, is upheld in two significative Church documents: *Gaudium et spes* and *Spe Salvi*. In this section then, we consider the role of hope in 1) the fulfilment of personal human experience, 2) within the Church as a community of transforming power, 3) guided by hope as a theological virtue that leads us on onward in 4) our *already* but *not yet* dimension (eschatological aspect), and 5) within the tradition of the Church and its teachings.

2.1.1. Fulfilment of personal human existence

To come to an understanding of what it means to be human, we need to reflect on what it is we are and what we do. According to Heidegger, our human existence seems to be characterised by certain polarities or tensions that express themselves in contradictions: *existence* vs. *finitude*: we are free beings and yet we are also limited by our concrete situations, our race, intelligence, opportunities; *rationality* vs. *irrationality*: we search for truth and yet we are governed by irrational forces; *responsibility* vs. *impotence*: we know what we should be doing and yet are also incapable of doing it: *anxiety* vs. *hope*: we feel threatened by the negativity and absurdity of the world, and yet we hope that somehow life is worth living; *individual* vs. *society*, we are fiercely independent, and yet realise that we can only fulfil ourselves through our interactions and relationships with others. It could be said that the polarity anxiety/hope in a way encompasses the rest. If our existence is marked by living out the tension between these polarities, we can never be free from anxiety. We are also anxious about death, but recognising its reality as the boundary or limit of our human existence helps us see that death can also be a force that introduces a wholeness and unity

in R. P. McBrien (ed.), *The HarperCollins Encyclopaedia of Catholicism*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers 1989, p. 638.

into life: we look for all possibilities on this side of death and try to bring them into some kind of unity.[5] Hope, moreover helps us see these possibilities for the future as such.

The Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch—who is credited with helping recover hope from 'oblivion' and with contributing to the rediscovery of the role hope plays in reflecting on Christian existence—argued that our being cannot be understood adequately except in connection with our unquenchable propensity to hope for the future. According to him, so deeply rooted is this attitude that one might conclude it is part of the very essence of human existence. We realise ourselves in projects, as we seek to overcome the difficulties and the limitations of the here and now, subverting the existing order if necessary.[6] In fact, for Bloch, one of these greatest limitations is that the person is still an incomplete being, "something that has yet to find itself", and that does not yet enjoy its true identity. The messianic hope at the core of the Judeo-Christian religion constitutes the greatest witness to support Bloch's thesis. From it comes his conviction that "where there is hope there is religion", the reverse also being true: "where there is religion there is hope". The New Testament reflects this conviction that the human person's present condition is provisional: *what we will be has not yet been revealed* (1 Jn. 3:2). Our salvation is still partial and incomplete (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12), so our sense of the present is anchored in the future. God did not say to Abraham what he was, but promised him what he would be. Only in the future will we be able to attain our goal of fulfilling our own identity.[7]

We see the tension of this 'incomplete nature' also present in the root of our hope, which has a double dimension: metaphysical and historical. The metaphysical nature refers to the transcendence of the human spirit to reach that absolute we mentioned earlier, to which it moves but which it can never reach.[8] The historical nature encompasses the promise of God, anticipated in the prophets, and accomplished with the advent of the fulfilment of time in

[5] Cf. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism,* pp. 121-122.

[6] "For Bloch man is he who hopes for and dreams for the future; but it is an active hope which subverts the existing order... Hope thus emerges at the key to human existence oriented towards the future, because it transforms the present... For Bloch, what is real is an open-ended process". Cf. GUSTAVO GUTIÉRREZ, *a theology of liberation,* Maryknoll: Orbis 1973, p. 216.

[7] Cf. G. O'COLLINS, *El hombre y sus nuevas esperanzas,* Santander: Sal Terrae 1970, pp. 31-35. Original in English: *Man and his new hopes*, New York: Herder and Herder 1969. Bloch's quotes in this paragraph are cited from O'Collins' book.

[8] As Benedict XVI puts it: "...man's essential situation, the situation that gives rise to all his contradictions and hopes [is that]... in some way we want life itself, true life, untouched even by death; yet at the same time we do not know the thing towards which we feel driven. We cannot stop reaching out for it, and yet we know that all we can experience or accomplish is not what we yearn for. This unknown 'thing' is the true 'hope' which drives us, and at the same time the fact that it is unknown is the cause of all forms of despair and also of all efforts, whether positive or destructive, directed towards worldly authenticity and human authenticity". Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Encyclical Letter, Spe Salvi* http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html, n. 12. Accessed 11 November 2013.

Christ. It is still pending consummation on the final, definitive manifestation of Christ. We are saved in hope, not in possession; that is why we live by faith, not by what we can see.

The promise of God and our experience of it lived in our encounter with Christ, as we *walk* in time, is manifested in the concrete signs that history offers us, and in which we can recognise the imprint of the presence, word and promise of God.[9] The imprint of that presence has been with us from the beginning of creation: we were created in the image of God to become *like* God, in God's likeness. We are therefore, *memoria Dei,* remembrance and longing of God, which defines our being and our given destinies.[10] This is what makes us hope-filled beings, and what helps us understand that 'absolute hope' which goes beyond each of our smaller, concrete hopes, because the memory of our origin anticipates, in trust, the meaning of our end—absolute beginning and end are the same reality. In between, our God of hope intervenes in history, creating, liberating, accompanying, calling and choosing, and loving God's people according to God's promise. It is the continuous memory and recalling of that divine action that helps us recognise that, precisely in the moments of greater disaster and calamity, the people of God have opened themselves up to new forms of hope and to the possibility of greater human fulfilment and a deeper relationship with God, always trusting in that promise:

> The promise becomes concrete through alliance, responsibility, inheritance and filiation... [It] has thus become the supreme root of hope. It is no longer only the memory of its origin, present though veiled, nor the anticipated desire for its object that are the sources of our longing. The promise-filled Word, which has shown its mercy in the death of Christ and its power in his resurrection, has sent to us the Spirit of promise, has poured out the love of God in our hearts. Christianity is the religion of fulfilled hope and anticipated consummation.[11]

2.1.2. In the Church as a hope community of transforming power

And yet, even though Christianity might be defined as a religion of hope, classical Christian theologians gave little attention to it. Thomas Aquinas, for example, only devoted a few sections to the theme of hope in his *Summa Theologiae* (questions 17-22 in II-II, which deal mainly with hope as a theological virtue, fear in relation to hope and the sins against hope). As with Bloch in philosophy, it is the protestant theologian Jürgen Moltmann who is credited with injecting new life into the discussion about hope and its role in our Christian existence. Deviating from an individualistic, non-relational approach, he sees hope as a virtue by which *we* take responsibility for the *future,* but not simply *our* individual future. Since hope is oriented toward the Reign of God, not as heaven alone but as the renewal and recreation of the whole world, we are responsible for the future of the world. The future holds the

[9] Cf. O. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *Raíz de la Esperanza,* Salamanca: Sígueme 1995, pp. 23-24.
[10] Cf. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *Raíz de la Esperanza,* pp. 487-497.
[11] Cf. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *Raíz de la Esperanza,* p. 495, (my translation).

primacy. In fact, in one sense, Moltmann argues that all theology is eschatology, *hope seeking understanding*.[12] We live our Christian existence within the horizon of expectation of God's reign. Jesus' resurrection is the first fruits of this Reign, and we share in this future of the risen Christ. What God has revealed is not information about another world, but God's promise about this one in relation to the future[13]:

> Hope's statements of promise however, must stand in contradiction to the reality which can at present be experienced. They do not result from experiences, but are the condition for the possibility of new experiences. They do not seek to illuminate the reality which exits, but the reality which is coming. They do not seek to make a mental picture of existing reality, but to lead existing reality towards the promised and hoped-for transformation.[14]

Moltmann's theology has the capacity to show to what extent Christian hope liberates a force, which is both critical and mobilising, that induces us towards a constant protest against, and an exodus from, the present negative circumstances in each moment.[15] But (and sometimes Moltmann has been criticised for a lack of clarity in expressing this), such force *has* to be rooted in humanity's concrete historical experience, with its present joys but also its oppression and suffering: "To hope does not mean to know the future, but rather to [accept] it as a gift. But this gift is accepted in the negation of injustice, in the protest against trampled human rights, and in the struggle for peace..."[16] This is what is meant by taking 'responsibility for the future' as mentioned above, and which J. B. Metz has taken up and developed further in what has been called 'political theology'. Following the line of thought which we have seen proposed by Bloch and Moltmann, he attempts to show the implications of eschatology and hope for political life.[17]

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[12] "Moltmann attempts to reformulate the theological questions under his eschatological-political horizon. He assumes as object of theology the eschatological future, which coincides with the only pending human problem, the future of humanity... Revelation is understood from the horizon of promise. Christ is already present to history as the one who will come to fulfil it in plenitude... The ultimate justification [of this eschatological theology] rests in the fulfilment of the promise already signified in the resurrection of Jesus", Cf. VIDAL, "Creer en tiempos de desesperanza", p. 850.

[13] "... revelation speaks to us about a God who comes to meet us and whom we can only await 'in active hope'. The present order of things, that which is, is profoundly challenged by the Promise; because of his hope in the resurrected Christ, man is liberated from the narrow limits of the present and can think and act completely in terms of what is to come. For Moltmann, a theology of hope is simultaneously a theology of resurrection". Cf. GUTIÉRREZ, *a theology of liberation,* p. 217. This is so because "the resurrection is the promise of God for the resurrection of humanity and the new creation of all things. It is so in that Christ's resurrection creates a history and future where death no longer has the final claim on life... In essence, Moltmann's view of eschatological promise is that this promise is God's pledge to humanity. It is a pledge to create a qualitatively new future which has already come into existence, in part, through the presence of God making and sealing the promise which has been given. This promise causes those receiving the promise to align themselves with the future that God will bring into existence and therefore may be said to contradict the unfulfilled present". Cf. T. HARVIE, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics of Hope: Eschatological Possibilities for Moral Action,* Surrey: Ashgate Publishing 2009, pp. 17-18.

[14] Cf. J. MOLTMAN, *Theology of Hope*, New York: SCM Press 1969, p. 18.

[15] Cf. N. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, "Escatología y Virtudes Teologales" in A. Cordovilla (ed.), *La Lógica de la Fe: Manual de Teología Dogmática*, Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas 2013, p. 656.

[16] Cf. GUTIÉRREZ, *a theology of liberation,* p. 218.

[17] Cf. GUTIÉRREZ, *a theology of liberation,* p. 220.

Facing the holocaust of the Jewish people, J. B. Metz argues that we can no longer do theology with our backs turned to human suffering and its social causes; without trying to give a public response. What is sought is to formulate a Christian eschatological hope in our present society's situation. God's historical intervention in Jesus of Nazareth manifests that this world is to become what is not yet, but what it can become through humanity's responsible freedom and the eschatological intervention of God in the resurrection of Jesus.[18] We are called to build a new world, to engage in 'political theology', which critiques the city according to the standards of the Reign of God.[19] Metz's eschatological expectation does not situate us before "the promised city of God", as a distant goal towards a fulfilled reality, but rather converts it into a commitment for the Christian person, who is called to be a "collaborator" of the promised reign of peace and universal justice.[20] The Church is a community of hope which as a relational community lives always, even unto death, for the other, in love of neighbour.[21]

And death, as Karl Rahner points out, helps us to relativise all our grand designs. We might be called to build a new world, but only in God do we have hope to do this. And this 'way of hoping' makes us free, for what we hope for we cannot present in advance, and what we enjoy here and now is not ultimately what we hope for: the Christian "is not a person who grasps for something tangible so that he can enjoy it until death comes, nor is he a person who takes the darkness of the world so seriously that he can no longer venture to believe in the eternal light beyond it".[22] Perhaps we do need to take 'the darkness of the world' seriously enough so that besides believing 'in the eternal light beyond it' we can be also agents of this light. But we must always remember also that humankind as a whole is itself in process of development toward a reality beyond itself—the Reign of God—ahead and not above. We hope not only in our own salvation, but in the salvation of others and of the whole world.

2.1.3. Hope: a theological virtue that leads us onward

This new emphasis on the virtue of hope and on the future helps give us a better grasp of the meaning of hope as theological virtue. As such, it cannot be separated from its two 'sisters', faith and charity.[23] Theological virtues are inseparable, since they have a common origin,

[18] Cf. VIDAL, "Creer en tiempos de desesperanza", pp. 854-855.
[19] Cf. MCBRIEN, *Catholicism*, p. 935.
[20] Cf. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, "Escatología y Virtudes Teologales", p. 656.
[21] See Cf. J. METZ, *Theology of the World*, New York: Herder & Herder 1969, pp. 107-140, for his development of these notions.
[22] Cf. K. RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, New York: Seabury Press 1978, p. 405.
[23] It is helpful to consider what the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) says about theological virtues, which provides a good summary to the discussion that follows: "The human virtues are rooted in the theological

move towards the same goal and give dynamism to the one unique life of the Christian. They are unified in the common root of basic confidence or trust of the creature in God.[24] In his beautiful poem about hope, Charles Péguy has a lovely image of Hope as a little girl walking between her two older sisters, Faith and Charity. *The faith that I love the most*, begins the poem, *is hope*. He continues:

> *Faith does not surprise me...*
> *Charity does not surprise me...*
> *But hope, says God, it sure surprises me.*
> *Even Myself...*
> *That those poor children should see how all these things happen and yet believe that tomorrow will be better.*
> *That is certainly surprising and sure the greatest marvel of our grace.*
> *And even Myself, I remain surprised.*
> *And my grace has to be a great force indeed...*
> *What I admire, says God, is hope.*
> *That little hope that seems like nothing.*
> *That little girl hope.*
> *Immortal.*
> *That little girl, a little nothing*
> *Alone, taking along the others [faith and charity] will cross the finished worlds...*
> *Faith goes by itself...*
> *Charity marches unfortunately alone.*
> *But hope does not tread alone. Hope does not walk by itself. To hope, my daughter, it is necessary to be happy, truly, it is necessary to have obtained, received, a great grace.*
> *Little hope advances between her two older sisters and is not acknowledged...*
> *In between.*
> *Between the two.*
> *To make her follow that rough path to salvation.*
> *The blind do not see...*
> *That she in the middle leads her two older sisters...*
> *She, that little one, leads everything.*
> *Because Faith does not see but that which is.*
> *And she sees what it will be.*
> *And Charity does not love but that which is.*
> *And she loves what it will be...*
> *Hope sees what is not yet and what it will be.*
> *Loves what is not yet still and what will be*.[25]

virtues, which adapt man's faculties for participation in the divine nature: for the theological virtues relate directly to God. They dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have the One and Triune God for their origin, motive, and object. The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being. There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity", nn. 1812-1813. In the case of hope, it is referred to as the supernatural virtue through which we expect, in trust, the grace from God in this world and eternal glory in the next.

[24] Cf. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, "Escatología y Virtudes Teologales", p. 725. The comments in this section and the next on 'eschatological hope' offer a summary of her excellent exposition on these subjects.

[25] Cf. PÉGUY, *Le Porche du Mystère de la Deuxième Vertu*, pp. 15-29. The verses of the poem presented here have been selected from these pages (my translation from the French).

Péguy describes faith as a faithful wife, while the image he uses for charity is a loving mother, who is all heart. But hope is this little girl, a 'little nothing', whose life has just begun, who still plays with her dolls. But this little girl will traverse worlds, leading her sisters, and all of us. To believe in the God who is manifested to us, to hope in the God who is promised to us, and to love the God who loves us, is the foundation of the relationship in dialogue between the human person and God in Christ, which the Spirit interiorises in the life of each believer. This relationship develops as a dynamic process in the framework of the community of faith, hope and charity which we call the Church. We now look at the theological virtues as a way of being, always in process of growth, trusting and loving.

A way of being. Faith, hope and charity, as theological virtues, should be contemplated firstly as *modes or ways of being*, profound dispositions that rooted in the individual's own identity define him/her as such (character, identity).[26] Faith, hope and love are gifts of grace and the new relationship that this grace installs in us is to be made sons and daughters of God. This grace penetrates us as God's own light, so that, being illuminated in all our being, we can perceive God as origin and end goal. The presence and action of the Holy Spirit unfolds in the triple dynamic of these three fundamental ways of existence—revealing structural expressions of being and doing as Christians—which help us be and live as new persons. Thus, these three theological virtues affect the totality of our relationships with God, neighbour, the world and the self.

Always in process of growth. This presence of God which transforms and lifts the creature must be actualised at each moment so that we can live in conformity to what we are, while at the same time remembering that all human action and decision can contribute or be an obstacle to the fulfilment of our being sons and daughters of God. Thus, conforming ourselves to Christ is a process.[27] This is what we refer to as 'life's growing in grace', and the virtues find here their proper place, as dynamics of this growth. In them resides what is characteristic of the new existence in Christ. They help make the believer ever most disposed

[26] "Saint Paul summarises Christian existence in terms of faith, hope and charity. Faith in the resurrection of Christ, constituted by God as Lord and Saviour of humanity, dominated by the power of sin and death; hope in future salvation, as definitive revelation of the glory of Christ resurrected and participation of the person and of the world in it; love of Christ, fulfilled in love and service to our neighbour". Cf. J. ALFARO, *Esperanza Cristiana y Liberación del Hombre*, Barcelona: Herder 1972, p. 35, (my translation). This Pauline vision of the Church as a community unified in Christ and sustained by the Spirit in the unity of faith, hope and love, has been expressed thus by Vatican II: "Christ, the one Mediator, established and continually sustains here on earth His holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as an entity with visible delineation through which He communicated truth and grace to all" (cf. *LG* 8).

[27] Christ is the exemplary model of our believing, hoping and loving as expressions of the fundamental attitude of being sons and daughters of God which express Christian existence: "Seeking after the glory of Christ, the Church... continually progresses in faith, hope and charity, seeking and doing the will of God in all things" (cf. *LG* 65).

to receive this grace, to welcome the divine self-communication, which is concretised in an increase in trust (*faith*) in God, from whom all is *hoped* and who we *love,* and to respond to this being graced in gratitude to the God who gives of Godself.

Trusting. As mentioned earlier, theological virtues are inseparable. They are unified in the common root of basic trust of the creature in God. Those who believe are defined as those who trust in the Lord (cf. Ps. 25:3), which shows that hope is a fundamental dimension and expression of faith. To hope in the Lord is to believe and to believe is to hope in the Lord... Old Testament hope is trusting hope, in reference to the fidelity and salvific power of YHWH, the God of the Covenant, the hope of Israel (cf. Jer. 14:8). Believing in God and hoping in God dissolve into one another in the divine word-promise, and because of this they are vitally united in the link of trust.

Loving. The certainty of hope roots itself in the *love of God for us,* foundation of our hope in future salvation: *Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts in the Holy Spirit that has been given to us* (cf. Rom. 5:5). Based on this love of God, poured out in our heart by the Spirit and present in the core of the person, there is hope for those who have been justified by faith. This love brings about a response in us, also of love, that sustains our assured trust of being loved by God. To trust in God is to abandon ourselves to God, to open up in our own existence a total disposition to give ourselves to Christ. As often repeated in the Scriptures, this new existence in Christ is characterised by the holy triad of faith, hope and love (Cf. 1 Tes. 1:3, 1 Cor. 13:13, Gal. 5:5, Rom. 5:1-5, Eph. 1:15-18; Col. 1:3-5; also found in Paul's thanksgiving at the beginning of his letters). Hope is a dimension of loving faith. The formula faith-love is probably the original one, as it sums up the Christian attitude of loving God and one's neighbour, to which soon would be added *hope*, so important in the practice of Christian life, especially in its dimension of patient perseverance on the face of tribulations.[28]

2.1.4. In the already *but* not yet: *eschatological hope*

Suffering tribulations is something that is usually thought of when the word eschatology is mentioned. This is part and parcel, we believe, of what we will have to go through at the end of times. But eschatology does not refer only to these end-of-times events. It has to do also with our expectation of and relationship to them. In this sense eschatology is something changing, dynamic, as our knowledge of it evolves, and we approach the 'ultimate' things. We now look at some of the aspects of eschatological hope: walking towards plenitude, fulfilling the goal of our existence, as we 'move into' Christ, and together 'into' glory.

[28] Cf. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, "Escatología y Virtudes Teologales", pp. 713-734.

Plenitude. As Christians, we believe that through the incarnation, God's irruption into the world constitutes the decisive event which gave history its definite orientation towards this 'ultimate' destiny. In reality, the use of the term eschatology in Christian theology is the result of a re-elaboration of the theology of hope, where faith invites us to look at this final destiny—ours and of humanity. Such destiny, already present in the world and in history through Christ, will reach its fulfilment as renewal of everything created in the consummation of a New Creation. Christian faith promises us *this* life transformed, renewed, consummated, taken to its plenitude. In this process, the Holy Spirit will guide us toward this plenitude of truth and will introduce our life and our glory in God. We do not know what this plenitude will look like exactly. Eschatological affirmations cannot be absolute certainties, since this would not leave space for faith or hope. As such, eschatology is an anticipatory look of the future from our present experience of salvation.

Goal. Christian hope does not only look to the Trinitarian life as the goal of our existence, but it also walks towards it. Such hope is founded on and made possible by God's drawing near to the world since creation, and will be consummated through the mission of the Son and the Spirit, fulfilling the goal that the divine will had pre-established since the beginning: to recapitulate in Christ all things (Cf. Eph. 1:10), so that God will be everything in all (Cf. 1 Cor. 15:28). From this, we can see that the proper goal of eschatology is certainly 'the end', but understood with three meanings: end as fulfilment or consummation; end as finality or sense, and end in terms of chronological time.

Moving 'into' Christ. There is a gap in the Christian person between an already given fulfilment and the consummation of that to which he/she is still open. We participate already of the salvation of Christ, and in this sense we have already entered in eschatological time, but also all Christian existence is a process of conformation with Christ (to be in Christ)—our entire Christian existence is a process of assimilation in us of the death and resurrection of Christ, who has been and will be with us til the end of time**.** The New Testament never speaks of the parousia as the return or second coming; it is rather waiting for someone who is already present, not absent. Christ is already with us (through his incarnation, life and resurrection), but humanity is still not what it will be; we still do not have the form of existence of Christ in glory.[29] The *parousia* is the solution to this lack of adjustment. It is more about our 'moving' towards the consummated form of existence of the risen Christ than his coming back to us.

[29] "Without doubt, the feature which better characterises the singularity of Jesus is the key of the 'ultimate' (or eschatological), and the definitive. What this means is that in him is already anticipated—and is 'made flesh'—the fulfilment and plenitude of God's salvific action: and no longer as judge, but above all as saviour of the world". Cf. M. GESTEIRA, *Jesucristo, Horizonte de Esperanza: Jesús de Nazaret, Personaje Histórico,* Madrid: PPC 2011, p.12, (my translation).

Moving together '**into**' **glory.** And we do this 'moving' together, as a community. Our eschatological hope can and should be a mobilising force that is reflected in historical commitment. Our world will be transformed and consummated by Christ's powerful presence, but this glorious encounter of 'that day' can and should be anticipated 'each day', in the concrete demand of the love towards our neighbour, in our relationship with the poor, in the community, in liturgical celebrations. In other words, it is an active hope that sees the present as the beginning of that hoped-for consummation. The work of believers must give testimony and anticipate that which is proclaimed. To wait for the coming in glory, is to move towards it, fulfilling it, accelerating it.[30]

2.1.5. The Church tradition and its teachings: Gaudium et spes *and* Spe Salvi

> We can justly consider that the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping... [31]

T*he work of believers must give testimony and anticipate the hope which is proclaimed*. Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* makes clear the collective responsibility we hold of nurturing and promoting hope, which in turn entails 'cultivating our moral and social virtues':

> Let everyone consider it his sacred obligation to esteem and observe social necessities as belonging to the primary duties of modern man. For the more unified the world becomes, the more plainly do the offices of men extend beyond particular groups and spread by degrees to the whole world. But this development cannot occur unless individual men and their associations cultivate in themselves the moral and social virtues, and promote them in society; thus, with the needed help of divine grace men who are truly new and artisans of a new humanity can be forthcoming (*GS* 30)... the will to play one's role in common endeavours should be everywhere encouraged... (*GS* 31)[32]

[30] Cf. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, "Escatología y Virtudes Teologales", pp. 631-655. González de Cardedal emphasises the importance of this collective historical commitment: "Ancient philosophies and theologies have understood hope mainly in individual terms. This perspective is only partial, since we need to understand hope from the point of view of our neighbour: from 'us' as a collective and from God who became man. Through the incarnation, God entered into our nature, and Jesus allowed himself to be at the mercy of finite and sinful freedoms. From within them he has hoped for all. Because in him God's absolute love has been manifested and this love expects absolutely everything for everyone... The undoubtedly most beautiful phrase ever written about hope finds it ultimate meaning in the lips of Christ: *I hope in you for us.* Christ, brother of all men and women, lived it before the Father. The 'us' is all of us, since he was not ashamed to calls us his brothers and sisters (Cf. Heb 2:11-12, 17). After him, we all can and should repeat it. The 'you' is also every person, but above all God". Cf. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *Raíz de la Esperanza*, p. 21, (my translation).

[31] Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, *Gaudium et spes*, promulgated by his holiness, Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html. Accessed 11 October 2013, n. 31.

[32] The document goes on to say: "We can justly consider that the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping... (*GS* 31). So from the beginning of salvation history [God] has chosen men not just as individuals but as members of a certain community. Revealing His mind to them, God called these chosen ones "His people" (Ex. 3:7-12), and even made a covenant with them on Sinai. This communitarian character is developed and consummated in the work of Jesus Christ. For the very Word made flesh willed to share in the human fellowship" (*GS* 32).

Moreover, hope does not diminish the importance of our duties in this life but rather gives them special urgency:

> [The Church] further teaches that a hope related to the end of time does not diminish the importance of intervening duties but rather undergirds the acquittal of them with fresh incentives. By contrast, when a divine instruction and the hope of life eternal are wanting, man's dignity is most grievously lacerated, as current events often attest; riddles of life and death, of guilt and of grief go unsolved with the frequent result that men succumb to despair (*GS* 21).

Christian existence, therefore, is existence *in* hope, but also existence which seeks to give hope to others. Insofar as the Church offers a credible witness to the truth, it will arouse the world to a "lively hope" in the coming of the Reign of God.[33] But we must be clear as to what, as Christians, we may hope.

In his encyclical letter, *Spe Salvi,* Benedict XVI argues that a dialogue between Christianity and the postmodern world is needed to provide a critique of its concept of hope. And in this dialogue, Christians too, within the context of their knowledge and experience, will learn anew in what their hope truly consists—what they can offer to the world and what they cannot offer (Cf. *SS* 22). Because of our fragile freedom, we have to accept that the kingdom of good will never be definitively established in this world: "Anyone who promises the better world that is guaranteed to last forever is making a false promise; he is overlooking human freedom. Freedom must constantly be won over for the cause of good" (*SS* 24). Our great hope can only be God, who has loved us unconditionally and who sustains the whole life.[34] And again, it is *our* hope, not a hope that has an individualistic understanding of salvation.[35] Our relationship with God is established through communion with Jesus. Being in communion with him draws us into his being for all. And the love of God is revealed in responsibility for others (Cf. *SS* 29).

How can we learn to hope? What are the 'settings' for learning and practicing hope? A first essential setting is prayer, which causes in us to undergo a process of inner purification that

[33] "Now, the Father wills that in all men we recognize Christ our brother and love Him effectively, in word and in deed. By thus giving witness to the truth, we will share with others the mystery of the heavenly Father's love. As a consequence, men throughout the world will be aroused to a lively hope—the gift of the Holy Spirit—that some day at last they will be caught up in peace and utter happiness in that fatherland radiant with the glory of the Lord" (*GS* 93).

[34] "Man's great, true hope which holds firm in spite of all disappointments can only be God—God who has loved us and who continues to love us 'to the end', until all 'is accomplished' (*SS* 27).

[35] Benedict XVI sees the root of this individualistic approach in the foundations of the modern age, particularly as expressed in the thought of Francis Bacon: "How did we come to conceive the Christian project as a selfish search for salvation which rejects the idea of serving others?.. Thus hope too, for Bacon, acquires a new form. Now it is called: *faith in progress*... At the same time, two categories become increasingly central to the idea of progress: reason and freedom... [these two] however, were tacitly interpreted as being in conflict with the shackles of faith and of the Church... The nineteenth century held fast to its faith in progress as the new form of human hope, and it continued to consider reason and freedom as the guiding stars to be followed along the path of hope". Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, nn. 16-20.

opens us up to God and to our fellow human beings (Cf. *SS* 32). Prayer is followed by action and suffering as settings for learning hope:

> All serious and upright human conduct is hope in action... it will always be true that our behaviour is not indifferent before God and therefore is not indifferent for the unfolding of history. We can open ourselves and the world and allow God to enter: we can open ourselves to truth, to love, to what is good. So on the one hand, our actions engender hope for us and for others; but at the same time, it is the great hope based upon God's promises that gives us courage and directs our action in good times and bad (*SS* 35).

Like action, suffering is a part of our human experience, and stems partly from our finitude, and partly from our sinful attitude and actions. And we should certainly do all that is within our power to reduce suffering. But it is only God who can eradicate it by eliminating the power of evil that has a hold in our world: only a God who has personally entered history through becoming a man and suffering within history. "Through faith in the existence of this power, hope for the world's healing has emerged in history... It is, however, hope—not yet fulfilment; hope that gives us the courage to place ourselves on the side of good even in seemingly hopeless situations" (*SS* 36). A final setting for learning and practising hope is judgement. Through God's taking on the condition of the sufferer, this innocent sufferer has attained the certitude of hope:

> There is a God, and God can create justice in a way that we cannot conceive, yet we can begin to grasp it through faith. Yes, there is a resurrection of the flesh. There is justice. There is an "undoing" of past suffering, a reparation that sets things aright. For this reason, faith in the Last Judgement is first and foremost hope—the need for which was made abundantly clear in the upheavals of recent centuries. (*SS* 43).

Benedict is convinced that the question of justice constitutes the essential argument, or in any case, the strongest argument in favour of faith in eternal life. Only in connection with the impossibility that the injustice of history should be the final word does the necessity for Christ's return and for new life become fully convincing. Only God can create justice. And faith gives us the certainty that God does so. The image of the Last Judgement is not primarily an image of terror, but an image of hope; for us it may even be the decisive image of hope (cf. *SS* 44).[36]

[36] That is why faith in the last judgement is before all and above all hope, hope of the mistreated of this world, for the victims of all kinds of injustice. But hope not understood as vengeance, or settling accounts, but rather as an acknowledgment of their situation and as renewing reparation of that situation. God can create justice in a way that we cannot conceive. Cf. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, "Escatología y Virtudes Teologales", p. 672. And the image of the Last Judgment can also be an image of hope because Christ does not come to judge the world, and less to condemn, but to save; what judges me is my actual attitude towards Christ. The idea of judgement gives its ultimate foundation to that of responsibility. Each person determines his or her destiny in the exercising of his freedom, in his or her own life. Yet, we are under God's judgement both as unique individuals and as humanity, so that God's judgment comes to us both as individual beings and as a corporative/communal being. From this, we would need to consider both the solidarity in guilt as well as our personal responsibility, our own and non-transferable responsibility, pp. 664-670.

2.2. Hope in the Word of God

Whoever is joined with all the living has hope. (*Ecclesiastes 9:4*)

Unabated suffering and hardship are impossible to bear. Unless we find some source of consolation in our lives, we will not survive. For Christians, especially those who find themselves in situations of apparent hopelessness, the Sacred Scriptures can be a source of great consolation. They reveal the drama of the history of salvation as planned by God and constitute the account of God's relationship with God's people throughout that history. We are part of that history even today (*joined with all the living* as well as with those who have gone before us), and see the basis of our relationship to God in these accounts. There is too wide a variety of themes in the Scriptures connected with the word hope (and associated terms such as *expect, wait, trust* and *rely*), as well as those depicting its relationship with the two other theological virtues, *faith* and *charity*, to include them all in this short study. In this section we concentrate, therefore, on those themes that bear relevance to our particular theme of a spirituality of hope in the lives of forcibly displaced peoples. The narration of the history of salvation of the people of God, as presented in the Scriptures, is after all, of a people who from the beginning of creation have always been in movement, being displaced, seeking refuge.[37]

2.2.1. In the Older Testament

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah... I will be their God, and they shall be my people... for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. (*Jeremiah 31:31-34*)[38]

This is God's promise to God's people, the basis of their hope, for a promise always gives hope, especially if that hope comes from God. In the OT hope is never set on people but rather on salvation, deliverance, light, end of distress. It must not be set on riches (Ps. 52:7; Job 31:24), on one's own righteousness (Ezek. 33:13), on others (Jer. 17:5), on religious centres (Jer. 7.4), on idols (Hab. 2:18) or on power or alliances (Hos. 10:13). Basically then, it must not be set on anything that we could count on or control. Hope is only to be set on

[37] Unless otherwise noted, the information in this section comes from the following sources: H. BIETENHARD, K. STOCK, and J.M. LOCHMAN, "Hope" in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity, Vol 2 (E-I)*, English Translation. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2011, pp. 593-597; T. PRENDERGAST, "Hope" in David N Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol 3 (H-J)*, New York: Doubleday 1992, pp. 282-285; P. POUCOUTA, "El Apocalipsis Joánico" in M. Quesnel and P. Gruson (dirs.), *La Biblia y su cultura. Jesús y el Nuevo Testamento*, Santander: Sal Terrae 2002, pp. 455-469. Original in French: *La Bible et sa culture*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer 2000; J. ZIESLER, *Paul's Letter to the Romans (TPI New Testament Commentaries)*, London: SCM Press / Philadelphia: Trinity Press International 1989; J. GOLDSTAIN and P. VAN IMSCHOOT, "Espérance" in *Dictionnaire Encyclopedique de la Bible*, Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers n.v. 2002, pp. 440-441; S. GARCÍA RODRÍGUEZ (dir.), *Concordancia de la Biblia – Nuevo Testamento*, Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer – Ediciones Mensajero 1975; and D. GARLINGTON, *Faith, Obedience and Perseverence: Aspects of Paul's Letter to the Romans,* Tübingen: Mohr 1994.

[38] Unless noted otherwise, all scripture quotations in this section come from the NRSV translation.

YHWH and his grace, which is always gift, but will never disappoint us because it is rooted in God's promise and covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). Hope itself is God's gift (Ps. 62:5).

This kind of hope of Israel in God is new; no worshipers of other gods had ever called them 'my hope'. This hope in YHWH, waiting upon him and relying on him, is rooted in the confession of trust in YHWH as we find it particularly in the psalms. In place of something that is hoped for, we find the one from whom all things are hoped. In particular in moments of crisis, of persecution, of forced displacement, the word of God as expressed in Jeremiah, echoes in the ears and hearts of God's people: *there is hope for our future, says the Lord, your children shall come back to their country* (Jer. 31:17). And this hope has a solid base: the fact that God exists and acts in the lives of God's people.[39] The goal of hope is YHWH's reign, his kingdom on the new earth, Israel's conversion as well as the conversion of other peoples and the new covenant (Isa. 25:9; 49:6; 65:17-25; Jer. 31:31-34; Hos. 3:5). In Israel there is phrase, a formula, to describe the righteous, those who believe in YHWH: "those who wait for the Lord" (Ps. 37:9). Here we see the intrinsic link between faith and hope, to the extent that they come to mean the same, to stand one for the other. And the reason or link that sustains them both, as mentioned earlier in our discussion of the theological virtues, is trust. The believer is the one who never doubts that God is God and abandons his or her life totally in God. And as expressed beautiful in Habakkuk, he or she waits in trust that God will surely act: *For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not delay* (Hab. 2:3).

2.2.2. In the New Testament

> Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be." (*Romans 4:18*)

Even if the noun 'hope' (Greek *elpís*) is not found at all in the Gospels and the verb 'to hope' only appears five times (with the OT sense of 'to trust', cf. Mathew 12:12), the idea of hope, as confidence in God whose mercy and goodness we can rely on and whose promises cannot fail, is everywhere presupposed. In the Synoptic Gospels this notion of hope is conveyed through the sense of 'expectation', generated by Jesus' preaching of conversion in the face of the imminent advent of the reign of God (cf. Luke 2:25). The evangelists urge their communities of believers to steadfast patience and to 'keeping watch' (cf. Mark 13:37). In the

[39] "For us, and for the Greeks, there is an element of risk in hope. If I say 'I hope to come', I mean that I wish to come, and probably think there is a good chance that I shall come, but cannot be certain of coming. In the Bible, on the contrary, hope has an element of security and even certainty. The ground of this characteristic of biblical hope is the reliability of God and his promises: that is its second notable characteristic. People in the Bible may hope, not because of a calculation of what is probable, nor as a form of wishful thinking, but because God is who he is, and therefore provides confidence in facing the future". Cf. ZEISLER, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, p. 132.

Epistles, the motivation of hope rests in its object, that for which it waits, which in turn leads to patience and endurance. One of the best known passages which encapsulates much of this theology is found in Romans 5:1-5:

> Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Suffering might not always produce endurance—it can also lead to despair; and endurance might not always build good character—it could lead to a desire for vengeance. But Paul's point is that for the person of faith, this will be so. Our human life is marching onwards towards God and 'spills' onto God, who welcomes it without dissolving it or annulling it, but instead affirms it in love—which has been already demonstrated with the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the reason that hope, etymologically and existentially united to faith in the Old Testament, appears now so to intrinsically connected to love.[40]

For Paul, Abraham is a model of hope. When humanly speaking, Abraham had nothing to hope for, he still hoped, putting his trust solely in God. And he could do this because of his faith. Continuing the tradition from the OT, NT faith is essentially hope (the words seem interchangeable), though now based on Jesus' life, death and resurrection. The *Letter to the Hebrews* closely links the 'full assurance of faith' (10:22) to the 'confession of our hope without wavering' (10:23). And Paul reminds the Ephesians that before their encounter with Christ they were without hope and without God in the world (2:12). Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1). Like faith, hope is the gift of our Father in heaven (2 Thess. 2:16). The triad of faith, hope and love, which we have seen earlier, is especially important for Paul and present as triadic formulas in his Letters (1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Thess. 5:8). The Christian life is described in terms of the faith and love of those who hope for the eschatological consummation of the New Creation. (1 Thess. 3:6; Gal. 5:5-6). A mark of love is that it hopes all things (1 Cor. 13:7).

The hope of Christians is deliverance, righteousness, resurrection, eternal life, and the vision of God (Rom. 8:22-25). Thus, it reaches beyond death and has a universal goal without being based on anything human that we can depend on. At the same time, it is personalised, for Christ himself is our hope (1 Cor. 15:19; Col. 1:27). Christ's resurrection allows Christians to hope in the future of him who came and is now exalted (Phil. 2:9), while living

[40] Cf. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL "Jesucristo: esperanza para el mundo", p. 55.

in the tension between the *now* and the *then:* "by faith we wait for the *hope* of righteousness" (Gal. 5:5) and "in *this hope* we were saved" (Rom. 8:23-24). This focus is particularly present in John who points to the present union of the disciple with Jesus the Revealer (realised eschatology) and the believer's continuing and future union with Christ in the Father's glory (futurist eschatology). Being a Christian means being born again to a living hope (1 Pet. 1:3) and being ready to give an account of that hope in our lives (1 Pet. 3:15). This hope is that of being saved when judgment comes (1 Thess. 5:9), of experiencing filiation and the redemption of the body (Rom. 8:23) and life with Christ (1 Tess. 5:10). As we would expect, these biblical themes support the theological assertions presented in the previous section.

At the beginning of this section we mentioned that the Greek noun *elpís* was used as a term for hope. In reality, two terms are used in the NT in relation to hope: *elpís* refers to hope as an ultimate goal or as fulfilment of promises. But when we want to talk of hope in the present time, hope lived in difficult times of persecution, fragility and suffering, the term that is used is *hipomoné,* which translates as endurance, staying firm, constancy, trusted waiting. In the Pauline texts, it appears as a fundamental attitude of Christians who trustingly await the reign of God and the coming of Christ as a eschatological fulfilment of God's promises. This waiting connotes a great capacity for patience, perseverance and a will of resistance to adversity, to persecutions, to all types of suffering. In this way it is presented as constitutive attitude of hope, to the point that it substitutes it.[41] Indeed, in the post-Pauline literature, perseverance takes the place of hope as a characteristic of faithful discipleship (Titus 2:2; 1 Tim. 6:11). Christians are called upon to be steadfast in bearing sufferings so that they not be put to shame on the day of judgment (1 Pet. 4:14). This call is also present in the Book of Revelation, which urges confidence and patient endurance from believers. In those tempestuous times, the mission of the Church was to hold fast and, above all, to give testimony of hope, lived out in true conversion. And there was great reward to those who endured: to the poor, the humble and the oppressed who put their trust in God alone (Ps. 18:3), Jesus promised the possession of the benefits of salvation of the reign of God (Mathew 5:3-12; Luke 5:21-26); the Beatitudes promised them the future fulfilment of their hope.

[41] Cf. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL "Jesucristo: esperanza para el mundo", p. 66. Benedict XVI points out the connection between the OT and the NT in the use of this term: "*Hypo-mone* is normally translated as 'patience'—perseverance, constancy. Knowing how to wait, while patiently enduring trials, is necessary for the believer to be able to 'receive what is promised' (Heb.10:36). In the religious context of ancient Judaism, this word was used expressly for the expectation of God which was characteristic of Israel, for their persevering faithfulness to God on the basis of the certainty of the Covenant in a world which contradicts God. Thus the word indicates a lived hope, a life based on the certainty of hope. In the New Testament this expectation of God, this standing with God, takes on a new significance: in Christ, God has revealed himself. He has already communicated to us the "substance" of things to come, and thus the expectation of God acquires a new certainty", (Cf. *Spe Salvi* 9).

2.3. Lived hope

> That little hope that seems like nothing. That little girl, a little nothing. Immortal.[42]

A life based on the certainty of hope is lived hope. Hope speaks of fidelity, endurance, patience, magnanimity, creative and trusting effort. It speaks also of neighbourliness, communication, of welcome, trust, language, prayer.[43] Lived hope speaks of individual attitudes and dispositions, of community responsibility and action. It speaks also of possibilities, of taking risks, of being 'un-intimidated'. It speaks of having courage. It speaks of God, of course. And lived hope speaks of liberation. It has to be liberating, for if we no longer have to fret about our ultimate destiny, then anguish and anxiety have no place in our lives. Instead, our lives can be sign and *praxis* of hope to others:

> The NT calls 'God of hope' the one who resurrected Jesus Christ from the dead. This act of God, rescuing him from death and making him the Lord-Giver of life of the living and the dead, has created a new hope with respect to the future. With it, a freedom has appeared to live the present and a capacity to serve our neighbour hitherto unsuspected. They, who do not have to look after themselves—since God looks after their life and their death—when they live as Jesus lived, can care for their neighbour unconditionally and bring about historical hopes from an eschatological hope.[44]

2.3.1. Liberating hope

> I hope because the core of Christianity is not what I do for God, but what God does for me; I have hope because the centre of my faith is not my works, but the works of God. Salvation consists in that He loves me, not in that I love him.[45]

The point of departure of a theology of liberation is the primacy of praxis with the oppressed and the marginalised. It uses a socio-analytical reading to search for the causes of injustice and how to overcome them, while it continues to be rooted in faith in a God who acts in ways which are liberating. A major challenge in this endeavour is to find ways to speak of God, and of hope, in the midst of these injustices, from which the Church itself is not always exempt. We hope because our faith does not reside in our works, but the labours of God. And we hope because our faith in God leads us to believe that God can and will eradicate evil and its fruits of violence, suffering and injustice. This belief and hope are based on the eschatological promises we have referred to before, and the power to transform unjust social structures which they imply.

God's Promise which continues to be gradually revealed in all its universality and concrete expression: "...is *already* fulfilled in historical events, but *not yet* completely; it incessantly projects itself into the future, creating a permanent historical mobility. The Promise is

[42] Cf. PÉGUY, *Le Porche du Mystère de la Deuxième Vertu*, p. 23.
[43] Cf. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *Raíz de la Esperanza*, p. 18.
[44] Cf. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *Raíz de la Esperanza*, p. 16, (my translation).
[45] Cf. RONCHI, *El desafío de creer hoy*, p. 48, (my translation).

inexhaustible and dominates history, because it is the self-communication of God".[46] In other words, this self-communication of God points toward the future and, at the same time, this Promise and Good News help reveal believers to themselves and broaden the perspective of their historical commitment here and now. We have already seen the centrality of this commitment and responsibility in Moltmann's and Metz's eschatological-political horizons. Their approach was needed to move forward our understanding of hope from something needed for *my* personal salvation to an acknowledgment of its role in the renewal and recreation of our world—already oriented towards the reign of God. Hope in the resurrected Christ can indeed be a liberating force that both critiques our present unjust circumstances and impels us to collaborate in bringing about the promised reign of peace and universal justice. But we cannot lose sight of the fact that it is the liberating action of Christ that is at the heart of this historical transformation, not our own:

> We find here a unresolved problem, posed in various ways: *the relationship between faith and ideology*, between theology and ethics, between the eschatological hope and historical projects, between the ultimate and the penultimate, between the Kingdom of God and human values, between salvation and liberation. Beyond the nuances in differences between Moltmann and Metz, their eschatological hope was to explore new attempts of historical and ideological mediation as a response to the scandal of the injustice in our world.[47]

The liberation of the person and the kingdom of God will appear as magnitudes which mutually demand one another. Fulfilment and consummation continue to be gifts and the historical projects of liberation cannot be confused with final salvation, but the condition of possibility of salvation is indeed liberation, and the utopian project of Christian salvation can only be made credible by articulating (and carrying out) these practical human projects.[48] Moreover, it can no longer be denied or ignored that the fulfilment we wait and hope for is a universal human society which fulfils its goal in the participation of the life and glory of God, and not the fulfilment of individual destinies that have to do with personal happiness. Hope has always and essentially been hope for the others; only thus can hope really be a lived liberating hope.

2.3.2. A hope that does not diminish in the eyes and hearts of the forcibly displaced

Forcibly displaced people cannot 'afford' to despair. And they *tell* us that we cannot either. That in fact we have an obligation not to despair. Valens (following E. Fackenheim's *commandment to hope*[49]) speaks of an *ethical imperative,* a duty, *not to despair,* impressed on

[46] Cf. GUTIÉRREZ, *a theology of liberation,* p. 161.
[47] Cf. VALENS, "Creer en tiempos de desesperanza", p. 855.
[48] Cf. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, "Escatología y Virtudes Teologales", p. 675.
[49] Cf. E. L. FACKENHEIM, "El mandamiento de esperar: respuesta a la experiencia judía contemporánea" en AA. VV., *El futuro de la esperanza,* Salamanca: Sígueme 1973, pp. 97-100.

us from the victims. It is an imperative firstly from history, form the past, that comes from the victims who beseech us not to despair because this would mean granting a second victory to the perpetrators—of violence, injustice and murder—and inflicting a second death on the oppressed. And it is an imperative imposed on us from the present—for the violence, injustice and killing still continues today.[50] This imperative then, requires action, but it also demands us to be aware of the consequences of those actions, of our projects, our institutions and even of our humanitarian interventions and intentions, if our involvement is to avoid generating more victims.

Hope is active, not passive. As such, it cannot be reduced to simply resisting. It does require resistance, but also courage and will, anticipatory imagination and endurance, and the hope that every human person will know fulfilment and justice. What we hope for is an "absolute future" (Rahner) for humanity, an unimaginable future without God, a future that is God—a God of redemption, resurrection and life.[51] Many of us (especially in the developed world) might lack this type of hope, but it abounds among the poor and the oppressed, the shut out and the shunned, the forcibly displaced—especially in those for whom faith is a non-negotiable part of their lives. They hope, against all evidence to the contrary, that there is meaning in their suffering and that somehow their existence will find fulfilment (cf. the Beatitudes). And they hope they will be given justice, because *God can create justice in a way that we cannot conceive.* God's Promise assures them the impossibility that the injustice of history will have the final word.

In their 'simple' *faith* they continue to believe in God—'simple' because there is no complexity in their statement of faith: God exists, God gives us life, God is faithful, God will deliver us, we shall see God one day. And somehow many of them also continue to have faith in humanity, broken and fragile, sometimes inhuman and cruel, but redeemable and capable of surprises. They continue to *love* their broken fellow human beings, in solidarity with their common pain, sharing it and often giving of themselves, in whatever way they can, to alleviate it. They seem to be impelled in doing this by a basic trust in the world (different from their trust in the Other or another) and in a supreme order that rules it and fills it with sense, and therefore, in the future as something that deserves to be waited for. *Hope* of life even where there only seems to be darkness and emptiness. And this *hoping*, *believing* and *loving* is the fruit of the Spirit's grace in their lives. It has to be, because it goes beyond anything that could have a human or historical foundation, and even beyond anything we could demand.

[50] Cf. VIDAL, "Creer en tiempos de desesperanza", pp. 873-880.
[51] Cf. VIDAL, "Creer en tiempos de desesperanza", p. 880.

We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. In the case of forcibly displaced people, suffering certainly does not always produce endurance. For many it leads to despair and a feeling of having been abandoned by the world—a world that created their situation in the first place, that turned their lives upside down, but that now does not care what happens to them. And endurance does not always build good character. For some, their impetus for survival, what keeps them alive, is a thirst for vengeance against their perpetrators. Faith and hope and love, poured out by the Spirit in their lives, are needed to purify and transform their suffering, their endurance and their character. And when this happens, their capacity to *boast in their sufferings* becomes a source of inspiration and challenge to all of us. Their endurance in hope challenges the endurance of our hope, our audacity and capacity to take risks for the good of others. It is as if we are being asked 'Do you live fear-filled or hope-filled existences? *They, who no longer have to look after themselves—since God looks after their life and their death*—and strive to live *as Jesus lived*, know deeply in themselves to be held in God's hands, and it is this knowledge that truly liberates them.

Hope liberates and gives 'wings' to those whose wings have been clipped over and over again, sometimes to the root. It provides the possibility and audacity to risk and engage in folly—is it not folly to believe that things can change, to see beauty in ramshackle refugee camps, to fall in love, to invite new-born life into the chaos and tragedy that surrounds them? And the possibility to engage in the folly of love—to come out of themselves, those who 'have nothing to give'—and care for their neighbour unconditionally. Hope keeps them going after three years of treading through several countries to get to a port, board a rickety boat, be packed like sardines and risk death to arrive to a 'promised land'; always motivated by the love of children left behind, of families, spouses and friends, for whom they are a sign of hope, an object of hope, an anchor of hope.

As we have mentioned before, hope in them (in us) is not something passive; it is endurance, active and persevering resistance; it is to stand squarely and face adversity head on. Because it is precisely in adversity and in testing that hope is exercised. And hope finally is patience, which is also one of the defining characteristics of the way of life of forcibly displaced people—always waiting for resettlement, for the next shipment of food and water, for opportunities for education, for a medical appointment. Their patience is a challenge to our various forms of impatience, to us who think that we have waited long enough, that things do not change, that our situation only gets worse. Their patience relativises our impatience.

2.4. As a way of synthesis: seedlings of hope looking for fertile ground

We have hope only when we know that someone is waiting for us.[52]

The capacity to appropriate the mystery of God in our life is a gift from God; it cannot happen without God's grace. At the same time we are called to collaborate with this grace by opening ourselves up to receiving this gift. But to receive it, we must first 'extend our arms' so the gift does not fall to the ground. However, extending our arms is not enough. They have to be strong arms, held up firmly so they can receive and bear the weight of such 'hefty' gifts as hope, faith and love. Similarly in our case, we need a strong and fertile ground that can receive and bear the seedlings of hope we long to plant. We are constantly searching for this fertile soil, but unfortunately in many cases in the wrong places:

> Day by day, man experiences many greater or lesser hopes, different in kind according to the different periods of his life. Sometimes one of these hopes may appear to be totally satisfying without any need for other hopes... When these hopes are fulfilled, however, it becomes clear that they were not, in reality, the whole. It becomes evident that man has need of a hope that goes further. It becomes clear that only something infinite will suffice for him, something that will always be more than he can ever attain (*SS* 30).

Benedict XVI insists that we need the *greater and lesser hopes* that keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope, which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain. God's love alone can be that fertile soil in which we plant our seedlings of hope.

The *Letter to the Hebrews*, as an extended exhortation to a community wavering in its commitment in time of persecution, introduces the anchor as an image that symbolises hope (Cf. Heb. 6:18-19). Royo Marín describes in a poetic fashion the way in which this symbolism 'works':

> As the sailor secures its boat with the long chain of an anchor, tied down to the depth of the sea, we too have the little boat of our soul united to God through the anchor of Christian hope. This anchor of our hope is 'secure and firm', because it is planted not in the earth, but in the deepest part of heaven.[53]

Our hope is planted in the deepest part of heaven, in God's love for us. It is an active hope, in which we struggle to prevent things moving towards the "perverse end". It is an active hope also in the sense that we keep the world open to God. Only in this way does it continue

[52] Cf. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *Raíz de la Esperanza,* p. 51.

[53] Cf. A. ROYO MARÍN, *Teología de la Esperanza: Respuesta a la angustia existencialista,* Madrid: BAC 1969, p. 208, (my translation). Alfaro complements this imagery by affirming that: "To hope in God is to have the courage to cut the moorings that keep us tied to the tangible securities of all those things over which we have control, and to throw the anchor of our existence on to the fathomless depths of God's love, which is revealed vastly in the Cross of Christ (Heb. 6:18-20)", cf. ALFARO, *Esperanza Cristiana y Liberación del Hombre,* p. 43, (my translation).

to be a truly human hope (Cf. *SS* 34). The true measure of humanity is essentially determined in relationship to suffering and to the sufferer: the capacity to suffer for the sake of the truth is the measure of humanity. Yet this capacity to suffer depends on the type and extent of the hope that we bear within us and build upon (Cf. *SS* 38-39). The question *of* hope is the question *for* the other, for solidarity, for God. Hope in God is possible only when its divine reality is mediated in the world through words, actions and loving gestures that signify it and make it present.

SECOND PART

Living hope: a non-negotiable imperative in the lives of forcibly displaced peoples

Who did you see?

Who, who did you see along the way,
who, who did you see?
Who, who did you see along the way,
who, who did you see?

We saw a child,
sheltered from the burning sand,
in flight from a king,
adrift from home.
He seemed like one of us.

Who, who did you see along the way,
who, who did you see?

We saw a man,
prone beneath an olive tree,
with death in his eyes,
estranged from home.
He seemed like one of us.

Who, who did you see along the way,
who, who did you see?

We saw a woman reaching for her dying son,
held back by police,
no heart for home.
She seemed like one of us.

Who, who did you see along the way, who,
who did you see?

We saw a crowd,
robed in white before the Lamb,
their journey now done,
at last at home.
They seemed to call to us.

What, what did you do along the way,
what, what did you do?
What, what did you do along the way,
what, what did you do?

We walked and walked,
walked with woman,
man and child.
Together we walk,
and head for home,
and Christ is one of us.
And Christ is one of us.

Andrew Hamilton SJ

Chapter 3

The forced displacement experience

The grand essentials of life are something to do**,** something to love**,** something to hope for**.**
Thomas Chalmers[1]

When things are going well, we might find it easy to expect that they will continue to go well. When things go wrong now and again, it might still not be too difficult to hope that they might soon improve. But what happens when things are going bad, really bad, and continue to get only worse, over a long period of time? When the *grand essentials of life* are missing, and have been missing for months and years. Is it possible to keep on hoping then? Particular difficulties might require those *greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day* (cf. *SS* 31). In the case of refugees this might be that their food, shelter, and other basics needs for survival will be provided for. Perhaps that, if they 'get lucky', they might have access to educational opportunities or even find some remunerable work to help support their families. But the endless disappointment, hardship, and meaningless in their lives, day in and day out, can only be faced and overcome through that great hope *which must surpass everything else.*

To try to understand how the lesser and greater hopes, and that great hope 'work' in forcibly displaced people's lives, we need to know and understand their reality. The first aspect we must recognise is that for them this reality is not optional—it is imposed. In other words, they have had little or nothing to say about the factors which caused their situation (especially if it is the result of civil conflict and generalised persecution); have little or no control over their present living conditions (whether it be in refugee camps or in urban settings) and have little or no possibility to change their future. Part of their reality has also much to do with their identity—not only how they perceive themselves, but also how they are perceived by others and even defined by them. The options and possibilities available to forcibly displaced people in fact depend on this definition, which in turn determines their legal status and their being able to access and demand certain rights. This again is something over which they have little control. Because this definition is of paramount importance in determining their present and future reality, we begin this chapter by looking at some of the criteria used to 'define' forcibly displaced persons. Secondly, we attempt to answer, at least to some extent, the question "what does it mean to live as a forcibly displaced person?" looking first at the causes behind their forced movement and then at three particular elements that also determine and 'define' their daily lives—identity, space, time. Thirdly, we try to ground these elements in concrete 'examples' of displaced peoples' lives through sharing real stories of displacement.

[1] Thomas Chalmers (1780 –1847), was a Scottish minister, professor of theology, political economist, and a leader of the Church of Scotland and of the Free Church of Scotland.

The fourth section, which poses the question "who is my neighbour?" introduces a new definition for the forcibly displaced as 'one who is in need'. As we will see, it anticipates the content of the following chapter on the needs of the forcibly displaced and the ways we are called to respond to them. As previously done, we attempt to summarise the main points of the chapter through a particular image, namely 'seeds of hope that die'.

However, before we begin to look at these aspects in more detail, it is important to recall the limits imposed on this study. This paper is not specifically about forced displacement issues—its politics and policies, its economics, and its ethical, social or legal considerations. It is not about developing a comprehensive theology or even a spirituality of forced displacement and migration, either. As stated before, our goal is to explore a particular aspect of that spirituality, namely hope; what it might mean in and for the lives of the forcibly displaced, and what it might say and offer to us. The main objective of this chapter then is to act as the second section or side of a diptych (chapter 2 constituted the first section) to provide some additional 'reference points'—in this case from the lived reality of refuges—to help us understand how the forced displacement experience affects their lived out hope.

3.1. Who are forcibly displaced peoples?

Forced displacement today, as never before, is a complex global phenomenon, affecting every continent and region of the world. A combination of factors—political, religious, economic, human rights, the environment—generate mass movements, causing people *to leave their own country by a mixture of fears, hopes and aspirations which can be very difficult, if not impossible, to unravel.* The complexity of the current issues is evidenced by the need to create new terminology that attempts to describe and define the situation and status of those forced to migrate:

> We now distinguish asylum seekers, stateless persons, illegal immigrants, undocumented people and rejected asylum seekers. We also speak of mass expulsions, ethnic cleansing, forced migration, internal displacement, involuntary repatriation and imposed return.[2]

This terminology is supremely important since it does not only 'classify' people on the basis of the cause or reason of their forced movement, but also helps determine what kind of protection and what rights, if any, they are entitled to. In addressing status determination one of the more contentious issues has been determining whether a person should be considered an asylum seeker or refugee or a migrant:

> Asylum and immigration remain strictly different in nature and in scope: whereas asylum is seen as a human right—the right to seek asylum rather than the right to be granted asylum—for persons fleeing because of a reasonable fear of persecution, immigration refers to "voluntary" moves of populations triggered by socio-economic factors. The specific causes

[2] Cf. JRS, *Everybody's Challenge: Essential Documents of Jesuit Refugee Service 1980-2000,* Rome: JRS Publications 2000, p. 129.

> and conditions of the flight of asylum seekers allow them to apply for a certain protection which is legally defined under binding international or regional instruments. Indeed, the persons concerned are entitled to certain rights... Despite this legal distinction, drawing a clear dividing line between the "forced" and the "voluntary" population flows is rather theoretical. In reality, the displacement phenomenon is often prompted by a mixture of overlapping factors; identifying the prevailing cause is therefore difficult."[3]

It has long been argued that some of the factors which distinguish an asylum seeker or refugee from a migrant is the haste with which the decision to leave one's home has to be made, whether a person has a choice or not as to his/her destination, and the coercion and fear which makes a person decide to move.[4] *Fear* is in fact the determining factor. The term *refugee* is defined by the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 based on this aspect.[5] But since this definition refers only to individuals in *fear of persecution,* regional organisations in both Africa and Latin America have developed definitions which more accurately cover mass displacements resulting from the social collapse brought about by various types of conflicts and human rights abuses.[6] The Catholic Church and other religious institutions have also sought to broaden the understanding of the definition to take into account these additional factors. Thus, following Catholic Social

[3] Cf. S. BOUTRUCHE, "Immigration and asylum in the harmonisation policies of the EU: the need for balance" in D. Turton and J. González (Eds.), *Immigration in Europe: Issues, Policies and Case Studies,* Bilbao: Universidad of Deusto 2003, p. 76. The author suggests that, to meet the needs and protect the rights of the forcibly displaced, asylum and immigration issues should be thought of in a complementary way instead of the contradictory way which has long prevailed: "Putting a stress on the positive interdependence of these two issues would potentially allow for a more coherent EU policy in the field of forced and voluntary migrations... Reconsidering the impact of immigration policy on the asylum regime also requires developing a set of rights for the immigrants themselves. The recent EU initiatives aiming at combating smuggling and trafficking of human beings must be welcome. They seem to initiate a change in the conception of the migrant, who is no longer seen merely as a smuggler but as a victim entitled to certain rights", p. 86

[4] Cf. JRS, *Keeping Hope Alive: Who finds refugee in Britain?* London: Andes Press Agency 1996, p.72.

[5] "The term refugee shall apply to any person who as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it". Grounded in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of human rights 1948, which recognises the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries, the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted in 1951, is key legal document in defining who is a refugee, their rights and the legal obligations of states. It constitutes the centrepiece of international refugee protection today. The Convention entered into force on 22 April 1954, and it has been subject to only one amendment in the form of a 1967 Protocol, which removed the geographic and temporal limits of the 1951 Convention. The 1951 Convention, as a post-Second World War instrument, was originally limited in scope to persons fleeing events occurring before 1 January 1951 and within Europe. Removing these limitations, the 1967 Protocol gave the Convention universal coverage. Cf. http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49da0e466.html. Accessed 12 November 2013.

[6] Cf. JRS, *Everybody's Challenge,* p. 15. The 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol have since been supplemented by refugee and subsidiary protection regimes in several regions, as well as via the progressive development of international human rights law. Some of these additional protection regimes include the Organisation of Africa Unity (now African Union) Convention governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, adopted in Addis Ababa, 10 September 1969 and the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, adapted in Colombia, 19-22 November 1984, which sets out regional standards for refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama.

teaching, Catholic organisations use the expression *de facto refugee* to refer to *all persons persecuted because of race, religion, membership in social or political groups,* and to *the victims of armed conflicts, erroneous economic policy or natural disasters* (no. 4). And for *humanitarian reasons,* this expression is used to refer to internally displaced persons, that is, civilians *who are forcibly uprooted from their homes without crossing national frontiers* but who *suffer the same type of violence as refugees* (no. 5).[7] In recognising the economic factors involved, the document states further that "in the case of the so-called 'economic migrants', justice and equity demand that appropriate distinctions be made. Those who flee economic conditions that threaten their lives and physical safety must be treated differently from those who emigrate simply to improve their position" (no. 4).

The difficulty in providing an all-inclusive definition of a refugee is thus symptomatic of the complexity of the issues in the field of forced displacement and the diversity of agents involved. A person who is recognised as a refugee in Latin America may be no more than an asylum seeker in Australia. The Geneva Convention's definition tends to be more restrictive, while the Convention of the Organisation of African Union's is broader.[8] Some countries even use the Geneva Convention definition to restrict the right to asylum, aiming to keep asylum seekers at a distance. The complexity of factors is also evidenced by the rise and continuous growth of a new a field, a new academic and practical area of study, that deals with this tragic phenomenon. But this is the reality—forced displacement is not going away anytime soon—and there is a need to have agreement on terms, policies, and common ways of understanding issues, so there can be a concerted and strategic approach to deal with them. But the necessity to come up with legal terms, definitions, instruments for protection rights, etc. should never make us forget that we are dealing with human beings whose individual lives have been altered, against their wishes and hopes, forever.

3.2. What does it mean to live as a forcibly displaced person?

> I simply can't build my hopes on a foundation of confusion, misery and death... I think... this cruelty will end, and that peace and tranquillity will return again.[9]

The reasons for forced displacement and refugee flows are complex. Among the most significant we encounter: wars, civil and international conflicts, instability or the collapse of nation states that can no longer provide for their populations, repression by states of their own

[7] PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE AND PONTIFICAL COUNCIL "COR UNUM", *Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity,* Rome, 1992. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/corunum/documents/rc_pc_corunum_doc_25061992_refugees_en.html. Accessed 10 October 2013.
[8] Cf. JRS, *Everybody's Challenge,* p. 129.
[9] Cf. A. FRANK, *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl.* Introduction by Eleanor Roosevelt, New York: Bantam Books 1993, p. 237.

citizens, persecution involving a broad range of human rights abuses, prolonged economic insecurity, environmental dislocations and 'natural' disasters or catastrophes, famine, poverty, economic failure and religion.[10] Thus,

> The breakdown of conditions that once provided with the means to survive in their traditional communities and in their own countries is accelerating the movement of people... Environmental devastation... has emerged as a powerful motivation for a large-scale human displacement. Researchers estimate that 10 million people are already environmental refugees. The breakdown of sustainable community... is another of the major reasons for today's massive forced displacements... Ethnic conflict breaks down communities... Again and again today's conflicts target the family unit... In our time any method of splitting the family is fair game. Children are abducted to become child soldiers.[11]

Furthermore, the decision to flee or to take refugee may be augmented by very personal experiences such as the fear of immediate attack, rape or violence, the experience of detention without trial or of political imprisonment, or the experience of torture and repeated attacks or death threats.[12] Looking at these causes, it is not difficult to understand the oft expressed assertion that human rights violations lie at the root of displacement, and that often, "the social context of these human rights violations is characterised by lawlessness, arbitrariness, and impunity".[13] Considering all these factors and circumstances, what does it mean then to live as a forcibly displaced person?

Whatever the causes, all experiences of forced displacement have one thing in common: events, conditions or circumstances have made staying in one's own country or home untenable, insufferable or impossible. These experiences also share other common characteristics: absence of other options (forcibly displaced people are 'forced' to escape); having to leave everything behind (homes, properties, family, friends, loved-ones, culture, language); little or no welcome and hospitality in the places where the displaced search asylum (from distrust and fear to outright xenophobia); lack of safety and security in the

[10] It is paradoxical that religion should often be a factor in the root causes of forced displacement of peoples, but not surprising. In many cultures and nations religious beliefs not only affect an individual's personal relationship with God, and how that God is perceived, but also determine patterns of behaviour, ethical responsibilities, and the way one is called to relate to people of other faiths. When seemingly irreconcilable differences arise, conflicts arise as well. Thus "religion has long been implicated in why people must seek refuge". Cf. S. NAWYN, "Faith, Ethnicity, and Culture in Refugee Resettlement" in *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49, (July 2006), no. 11, p. 1510. It has also been pointed out that: "... religious aspects are frequently the most profound and demanding motivations both for xenophobic movements and for those who oppose them, based on attitudes which promote openness to the stranger in need. It would not be difficult to demonstrate how both possibilities are born from the radical ambiguity of religion. In effect, in the history of religions we find moments in which God looks after the helpless strangers, together with other moments in which God demands the harshest of separation from them, and even, violence against them". Cf. R. AGUIRRE, *Ensayo sobre los orígenes del cristianismo. De la religión política de Jesús a la religión doméstica de Pablo*, Estella (Navarra): Verbo Divino 2001, pp. 99-100, (my translation).

[11] Cf. JRS, *Everybody's Challenge,* p. 139-140.

[12] Cf. JRS, *Keeping Hope Alive,* p. 72.

[13] Cf. O. AGBONKHIANMEGHE, "Key Ethical Issues in Practices and Policies of Refugee-Serving NGOs and Churches" in David Hollenbach (ed.) *Refugee Rights. Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa*, Washington: Georgetown University Press 2008, p. 226.

present and the future (physical and sexual abuse, both in refugee camps and in urban settings, seems to be widespread); no delimited period of time for their suffering (their situation can become protracted in certain cases for dozens of years); very little or no opportunities for education especially after the primary years (and particular so for young girls); vulnerability to constant violence (both individual, institutional and structural); and in many cases, little or no access to the most basic of needs: water, food, and shelter. When a conflict affects a large part of a country's territory, the humanitarian catastrophe becomes irreversible and the prospect of a lost generation becomes more than a possibility. Of course, it is always the women and children who are most vulnerable, with a greater risk of becoming victims of prostitution, of constant violence, of recruitment by rebel forces to fight wars they did not begin or even understand. As Lluís Magriñà, former international director of JRS put it concisely and pointedly:

> The true history of wars around the world can be read on the faces of refugees. Entire generations in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe have known only life in a refugee camp. Communities are dependent on aid, cultures are eroded, and education is hard to come by. Hopelessness sets in, human dignity is sorely tested. To be a refugee means to live on the edge of society, socially and politically marginalised.[14]

Can we call this life? It is this too bleak a picture? An exaggeration? Anyone who has lived in a refugee camp, even for a short period of time, will be able to attest to the reality of the description given above. A reality that today is mirrored more and more in urban refugee settings, as well. Of course, the difficult conditions that prevail in most refugee camps and in urban refugee encampments only contribute to exacerbate the violence and the abuse, to the point that they become the norm: either people have given up trying to do something about it, do not 'see' the violence anymore, or are fearful of becoming its victims. I remember driving through Kakuma refugee camp in the Northern part of Kenya ('home' at the time, in September 2010, to close to 80,000 refugees) and being witness within a few minutes to two acts of violence: two men fighting, literally at each other's throats, and another man hitting his wife repeatedly in the face. In both cases, people walked past them without even trying to intervene.

To live as a forcibly displaced person means to live in constant danger, in constant fear. Even when there seems to be peace and a relative normality in their lives, the forcibly displaced fear that violence and renewed loss might take place again. But despite this fear, there are signs of life and signs of hope: people falling in love, getting married, having children, daring to make plans for the future when they 'get out' or are 'allowed in'. People daring to look for and find goodness in those around them. And daring to look for and find beauty in dilapidated refugee camps or tiny one-room slum dwellings that house ten people,

[14] Cf. JRS, *In the footsteps of Pedro Arrupe: Ignatian spirituality lived in the service of refugees*, Rome: JRS Publications 2007, p 40.

piled on top of each other each night. And daring to create beauty: a chipped, half-faded earthen vase holding red, yellow and orange plastic flowers placed on top of a box that makes for the only table in a tiny room; images of snow-capped mountains from old calendars pinned on thatched walls. It is difficult to describe this capacity to see beauty where only hideousness abounds, where no beauty should be found. Etty Hillesum, the young modern mystic, experienced this capacity and described it in these words:

> How is that this stretch of heathland surrounded by barbed wire, through which so much human misery has flooded, nevertheless remains inscribed in my memory as something almost lovely? How is it that my spirit, far from being oppressed, seemed to grow lighter and brighter there? It is because I read the signs of the times and they did not seem meaningless to me... there among the barracks, full of hunted and persecuted people, I found confirmation of my love of life.[15]

Such paradox, in terms of life and death, joy and despair, has likewise been described by Nicolae Steinhardt, a Romanian intellectual, victim of the repressive communist government in Romania during the 1960s, who spent four years incarcerated in various dehumanising prisons: "In this sinister place [*Reduit* prison] I was to live, beyond unreality, the happiest days of all my life. How happy can one be in cell n. 34!"[16] For both, Hillesum and Steinhardt, it was their faith in God that helped them make sense of the paradox. Initially distant from God, each of them experienced a life-changing spiritual conversion in the very midst of great tragedy. Their disrupted, restless lives found meaning in God and were deeply transformed, so they came to find joy where there should not be any joy, and beauty, where no beauty should be found.

For forcibly displaced people of faith, it is that faith that leads them to find hope where no hope should be found. Their faith and hope give them the capacity to believe that their lives can have meaning and are worth living:

> As a Christian, my prayer and my faith give me strength to advocate for us refugee women. One of the prayers I recite daily is the Hail Mary. When Mary was blessed, the child of her womb was also blessed. I believe when God blesses women, others are blessed too. This supports my belief that if women are educated, others will benefit too: in their home, in the

[15] Cf. E. HILLESUM, *An interrupted life: the diaries, 1941-1943 and letters from Westerbork, with a foreword by Eva Hoffman*, New York: Henry Holt and Co. 1996, p. 209. Westerbork was a transit camp in the east of the Netherlands; though not itself a concentration camp, it would be the last stop before Auschwitz for more than 100,000 Dutch Jews. Etty Hillesum volunteered to accompany the Jews arrested in the roundups to Westerbork, where she worked in the camp hospital. Eventually, she would be also sent to Auschwitz, where she would die.

[16] Cf. N. STEINHARDT, *El Diario de la Felicidad*, Traducción y edición de Viorica Patea, con Fernando Sánchez Miret y George Ardeleanu, Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme 2007, p. 57. In another part of the book Steinhardt writes: "In cell n. 34, joy... and pain (because the cold is terrible, the food is lacking, the water still has worms, the environment is heavy like a horror film; the punishments are endless—each comment by the jailers comes with blows in the chin and the head) so intrinsically unite that everything, including the pain, is transformed into an ecstatic and uplifting joy... The suffering we assimilate turns, all of a sudden, in euphoria", p. 62, (my translation). Originally from a non-practicing Jewish family, Steinhardt was baptised in the Orthodox tradition while in jail, and later became a monk.

> community, and in the nation. Indeed, it has been said that if you educate a man you educate an individual; if you educate a woman you educate a nation. *Mrs Wubu.*[17]

In deciding to undertake advocacy for women's education in the refugee camp in Guinea where she lived, Mrs. Wubu mentioned that she began by analysing gender roles in her home country of Liberia. Through that analysis she came to the conclusion that women should have equal rights and the same degree of representation as men. She saw that through her role she could help bring about, in the future, this needed change. Her *identity* as a woman and educator, her ability to effect change in the *place* where she lived, and the opportunity to have an influence on *future* generations, were all essential in her belief and hope that change could indeed take place. We look now briefly at these three essential aspects in all of our lives, namely identity, space/place and time, and specifically how these aspects play a role in the lives of the forcibly displaced and in their capacity to hold on to hope.

3.2.1. Identity

> There is no question of idealising exile or forced displacement. Let us not be confounded. Its sheer existence is evil...[18]

Often times, when people working with the forcibly displaced describe their resilience, their courage and their capacity for survival, in their admiration they might give the impression of idealising or even romanticising the situation in which they find themselves. Of course, this is not the case. As Pablo Alonso reminds us in the above quote, the sheer existence of exile and forced displacement is evil. Perhaps one of the most dramatic consequences of this evil is the dehumanising effect that it has on the displaced as their sense of identity is rapidly eroded and erased. One of the first casualties of this erosion of identity is the loss of an individual's name. Proper names are replaced by collective terms such as 'the refugees', 'the asylum seekers', 'the migrants', 'the forcibly displaced', and sometimes by more derogatory epithets such as 'queue jumpers', 'illegals' or the all-encompassing damaging 'they'. We know that emotionally and psychologically, human beings like to hear their names spoken, they need to be addressed in a personal way. I will never forget a comment made by an asylum seeker from Croatia, Viktor, who I used to visit every week in Melbourne: "Father, you are one of the four people in this city who know my name, and one of only two who uses it when he talks to me". The pain, as he spoke these words, was plainly visible. Perhaps even more dehumanising is the use of numbers to replace displaced people's names. This is common practice in centres of detention for asylum seekers. I also remember vividly a guard asking an asylum seeker I had gone to visit: "Are you 3327?" and his answering defiantly: "No, I'm not 3327. I am Mustafa". In their own defence, immigration officials argue that using numbers is the only way to cope with the large quantity of 'residents' in their centres, to avoid confusion

[17] Cf. JRS, *God in Exile: Towards a shared spirituality with refugees,* Rome: JRS Publications 2005, p. 91.
[18] Cf. JRS, *God in Exile*, p.17.

between people with similar names and to make processes more expedient and efficient. But it is worth wondering how they would feel if 'officer' or 'watchdog' were the only names people used to address them, even when off-duty.

Displaced people's identity is also lost when they lose the ability to perform the roles that for many years have helped define them. This is certainly true when we speak of professional roles such as being teachers, doctors, counsellors, carpenters, mechanics, farmers, but also of relational roles such as being a father, a mother, a daughter or uncle. *Who* I am in relation to another is *what* for many of us determines *how* we see ourselves and define ourselves. In some instances, displaced people are able to recover these roles in refugee camps or in urban settings, or are even called upon to use their limited skills to fulfil these roles in the absence of those who have been formed to perform them. But often, this is not the case. Either their professional skills are not recognised in a foreign country or those professional roles are assigned to other non-refugee staff. This of course denies the forcibly displaced the opportunity to occupy their endless hours of 'wasted' time and denies them also their right to be productive, and to have a say in their own destinies, so that frustration eventually leads to despair and a loss in their sense of dignity: "Adults lose their roles, their skills and dignity. Communities are forced into dependency. Cultures atrophy. Lost generations linger in legal, social and political limbo, highly ignored by the international community..."[19]

3.2.2. Space: 'real' and artificial borders

The life of a displaced person, figuratively speaking, occurs within four walls or within four three-metre high metal fences (in cells or detention centres), or within kilometre-long fences constructed with thorn bushes or barbed wire (refugee camps). This image of the "four walls", however, is not always a metaphor—I met an asylum seeker once who had been kept locked up in a small suburban detention centre for more than five years because his country of origin would not allow his repatriation. Having visited him there several times, I can attest that those *four walls* were very real for him.

Similarly, in the case of Viktor, who I mentioned earlier, the reason only four people knew his name in Melbourne was that he almost never left his home. His life elapsed within the four walls of his tiny home. He had moved from Sydney after several months of living in the streets there, barely surviving. He spoke little English (we conversed in French) but knew well how to fish and that had kept him going. He eventually applied for asylum in Melbourne, on the advice of a relative from home. This gave him a bit of security—a place to stay, the assistance of the NGO I volunteered with, which also provided him with food. Viktor needed this assistance in particular because he still suffered from mental health issues

[19] Cf. JRS, *Everybody's Challenge,* p. 123.

resulting from trauma he had experienced several years before in his home country. An older man now, it had become increasingly more difficult for him to cope with his illness. He had ventured once out of the house to take the metro to visit the offices of our NGO, which were not too far. But as he made his way through the train tracks, someone yelled something at him he could not understand (unknowingly, Viktor was probably walking in a place he should not have) and he had gotten quite frightened. Since then, he only dared to go out at night and walk around the streets close to the house.

But even when forcibly displaced people are allowed to walk 'freely' in the streets, many experience an overwhelming feeling of being 'boxed in', of being 'fenced-in', enclosed. They experience 'artificial' but real borders, barriers, frontiers, that limit their freedom and their capacity to hope:

> It is a fact that humans divide space in order to move with inclusions and exclusions (e.g. depending on passports or money), with more or less violent *borders* and peaceful *frontiers.* The different locus of each one determines movements and ways of feeling, thinking, willing, and acting in relation to others. Parties have to be aware of their *glocal* [global-local] *loci,* which is interdependent with other *glocal loci*.[20]

For the forcibly displaced, these *ways of feeling, thinking, willing, and acting in relation to others*, have a lot more to do (almost in their entirety, some would argue) with exclusion than inclusion. They are kept locked-in to be locked-out, and to be left-out. And this reality is closely connected with the factor of identity we mentioned in the previous section. Not only do forcibly displaced people experience an erosion of their own identity, but when they experience hostility and alienation, they are constantly reminded that they cannot aspire either to make their own the identity of their 'host':

> Every social group generates rules of discrimination to safeguard their identity and differentiate themselves from others. Above all, the group safeguards with special zeal its borders, the places of contact—physical or cultural—with others, with the exterior world, because these contacts, which are unavoidable, threaten its identity. This is why, in the same way that gates to battlement walls are guarded or customs check-points are placed along borders, guidelines and norms are established and caution is called for when relating to strangers. [21]

The consequence of this is that many forcibly displaced feel not only that they never 'belong' but also that *they are not invited* to belong. And of course, this is where the movement from hostility to hospitality, mentioned earlier, is truly necessary if the forcibly displaced are ever going to be able to fulfil their hope to feel once again at home. To feel at home despite the outward and interior differences that separate them from others: their race, the colour of their skin, their spoken and body language and even the way they use and live time.

[20] Cf. E. LÓPEZ P., *Excessive Love amidst the Unforgivable: Political-Mystics &* Mestizo-*Forgiveness in Conflict & Peace.* Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor in Theology for the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2010, unpublished, p. 238.
[21] Cf. AGUIRRE, *Ensayo sobre los orígenes del cristianismo*, p. 100, (my translation).

3.2.3. Time: a mechanism of exclusion?

In Time, a science fiction film (Andrew Niccol, 20th Century Fox/New Regency, released October 2011) set in the year 2169, tells the story of human beings who have been genetically engineered to be born with a digital clock. At the age of 25 people stop aging, but their clock begins to count down; when it reaches zero, a person "times out" and dies. Time can bought, exchanged and added to increase one's life-span. And one's own time can also be sold. In fact, time has now become the international currency, and all goods and services are paid with it. As expected, this leads to abuses and crime, to time-hoarding and an ever-widening gap between time-rich and time-poor people. After paying some 'time' debts, the mother of the main character in the film, Will, is left with only one and a half hours to live. That should be more than enough to reach home on the bus, where her son awaits her to 'transfer' more time into her body clock. But when she tries to get on the bus, she discovers that the bus fare has been increased to 'two hours'. It is a two-hour walk back home, so she is forced to run. As we watch her desperately trying to stop vehicles on the road to give her a lift, the obvious question in the viewers' mind is: "Will she make it?"

This is a question in the minds of forcibly displaced people all the time. *Will we make it? Will we be resettled to another country before we die in another violent attack to our refugee camp, or die of illness or even of old age here?*[22] *Will we make it out of this detention centre and regain our freedom? Will this rickety boat make it to shore, to safety and liberty?* Forcibly displaced people live time wondering whether they will make it, and they live time always in waiting. In refugee camps they wait for the handing out of food, to be assisted in the medical dispensary, for an opening in a formation or educational course. In urban settings, they wait for their protection cases to be finally resolved, for medical assistance and care in hospitals, for someone to offer them a job. Certainly they always wait for those three truly durable solutions to their plight: to be resettled, to be allowed to return to their home countries, or to be allowed to stay and live in their present host country. And they also wait

[22] A recent phenomenon has begun to occur in the past few years in the field of forced displacement: as a consequence of protracted stays in refugee camps (some for close to 30 years), refugees awaiting resettlement or the possibility of return to their home countries, have begun to die of old age. This 'simple' fact should be a source of great sadness to our humanity—being witness to the unfulfilled hope of those who hoped until death. Paradoxically, population ageing (and population decline) has become an issue of great concern in many European nations and the more developed Asian nations. Among the various policy reactions that have tried to find ways to deal with the complicated combinations of various social and demographic changes that cause population ageing, one that has received special attention has been replacement migration as means to offset population decline, especially at key working ages in the future. However, there is still no agreement among those working within the migration field as to whether stimulating immigration will provide any solution to the issue, or whether governments will take up stimulating immigration as a goal for yet some time. Cf. J. DÍEZ-NICOLÁS, "The EU and Ageing Population, Implications for Migration Flows" in Antonio Marquina (Ed.) and Tai Hwan Lee, *Perspectives on migration flows in Asia and Europe,* Spain: UNISCI 2001, pp. 61-90; and S.-L. LEE, "Trends and Projection of Population Changes in East Asia: Population Ageing and Migration Flows in South Korea and Japan" in the same publication, pp. 33-59.

for and hope that nothing will happen to them. Their existence is always at the mercy of time, and at the mercy of others who 'own their time'.

It has been argued that the mechanisms of exclusion today have less to do with taking over spaces and territories than with appropriating the 'time' of others; that the new axis of social conflicts resides on imposing on others our concept and use of time. Whether we realise it or not, a good deal of the personal or collective decisions we adopt imply decisions about the time of others, in the past and in the future.[23] As mentioned earlier, for a refugee this might have to do with someone else's decision on how long his application process for protection will take, or for an asylum seeker, how long she will be kept locked up in a detention centre. But what conditions this imposition of time even more is the difficulty inherent in the fact that 'human times' are not determined exclusively by the measurements of 'physical time', but rather *they contain categories that take into account personal dispositions, the character of a particular period, the social environment and the cultural moment...*

> Human time is more complex than anything a given chronology can establish. Time determines meaning. An event is not limited to its taking place, but rather it takes place with a given, concrete relevance, and in accordance with that relevance, the past and the future are reorganised. The possibility and the need to reinterpret the past and to rethink the future in virtue of the events that take place in the present are part of the human condition which expands in time.[24]

In the film we alluded to earlier, Will's mother does not make it. So Will decides to take revenge against those who have managed to continually increase the 'time-cost' of living in poorer areas of cities, robbing the poor of their time for their own gain. His past, and his future, are now reorganised according to the relevance of the death of his mother in the present:

> ...the past [determination time] is the irreversible intrusion in our lives; the future [hope time] is the openness to chances and possibilities; the present [freedom and realisation time] is the time of freedom, discernment and choice... Parties can relate to the past through what we call 'memory stories' that had a referent. The memory story is... a story present in '*absentia*' of a past that once existed. The person can relate to the present through what we call 'present story' that has a referent now... Lastly, the person can relate to the future through what we call 'anticipation stories'... An anticipation story can be a 'fictional story' based on new creative combinations in the imagination which derive from previous old and new experiences thanks to one's own personal or to other persons' stories.[25]

A holistic time structure, past-present-future, constitutes then another criterion to help us understand the reality of forcibly displaced people of faith and in particular their living out a spirituality of hope. Past events have taken them to the situation where they find themselves

[23] Cf. D. INNERARITY, *Ética de la Hospitalidad*, Barcelona: Ediciones Península 2001, pp. 161-162.
[24] Cf. INNERARITY, *Ética de la Hospitalidad*, pp. 163-164, (my translation).
[25] Cf. LÓPEZ, *Excessive Love amidst the Unforgivable*, pp. 235-236.

now. It is here and in the today that their hope has to be nurtured, in concrete ways, so that what they hope for now—a new creative story—can become a reality in the future. And this hope derives from the past and present experiences of a community of faith that bases its 'story' on the past, present and future story of salvation brought about through the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus.

3.3. Stories that open our eyes and our hearts

> You want to know about the kingdom of night? There is no way to describe the kingdom of night. But let me tell you a story... You want to know about the condition of the human heart? There is no way to describe the condition of the human heart. But let me tell you a story... You want a description of the indescribable? There is no way to describe the indescribable. But let me tell you a story... *Elie Wiesel*[26]

A Hebrew proverb says that stories are told not to get children to sleep, but to awaken grown-ups. There is no doubt that in telling stories we 'awake' to meaning in our lives. As individuals and as communities we live through stories that give shape and objective to our experiences, filled with joys and sorrows. Stories make up history. History tells stories. As Christians, we derive our hope from living within a particular story—the history of salvation. Forcibly displaced people, as mentioned above, also derive hope from this story, and they transmit this hope through their own personal stories of endurance, resilience, and survival.

Although it is often quoted that a picture is worth a thousand words, and certainly images of forcibly displaced people can often reveal a great deal about their plight, this can never compare to listening to the stories told by them in their own words. It is imperative, therefore, that we take time and reflect upon these stories and the ways we are invited to respond to them. Volunteers or staff working with refugees might ask them to share their stories to learn about them, about their difficulties, their needs, so they can help them. Usually, in these cases, the information that is revealed is factual—a simple and straightforward record of events easily understood, but mostly devoid of an affective quality. That is not to say that refugees might not express, in some cases, a great deal of feeling—of pain, suffering, frustration, and anger—as they narrate their stories, but more often than not those feelings are restrained, withheld. But there is another level of story-sharing, in which these feelings can only be revealed when a deeper relationship is established between the narrator and the hearer.

In some cases forcibly displaced people might chose to take refuge in silence, the price of recalling and articulating their experience being simply too high to pay. Others, however, might feel a responsibility, a deep-seated duty to recall and offer as many details, and as

[26] Quoted in Richard Leonard's *Where the Hell is God?* Mahwah, New Jersey: HiddenSpring/Paulist Press, 2010, p. x.

accurately as possible, of their terrible odyssey, for to "tell their stories accurately is an act of piety to those who have died and a testimony that gives value to the narrator's life."[27] The gravity of these stories demands that we listen to them with utmost respect. They stir up in us a response that might surprise us, that draws us into a space that might be new, unknown and frightening, and thus might incite us to run away, to avoid being drawn into this daunting place. It is in situations like this that we must make a decision, to either say "stop, I need to hear no more", or to open ourselves to the possibilities that these revelations can bring:

> Many times deep stories are told, sometimes at night, which are narrated with difficulty and make heavy demands on the hearer. They bless both the refugee and volunteer by bringing the two together. When this happens, both have acknowledged their mutual need. The volunteer has been able to communicate hope, a vision of the possibilities of life; the refugee has been able to free the volunteer for the kind of friendship that alone can help him or her bear the burden that the story imposes.[28]

We approach now three of these stories of displacement, by a refugee, an internally displaced person and a migrant. We do so knowing that as readers we hold a responsibility towards those who narrate these stories to try to understand what they have gone through, to 'hear' in them the testimony they give to the many who *have died* and to the more who have struggled for so long trying to uphold the *value of dignity* in their lives. And we do so in the hope that, in 'listening' to their stories, we might be able to discern and understand better their particular way of relating to God, which hopefully will enrich our own way.

3.3.1. Taona's refugee story[29]

> Taona was born in Mozambique, after the insurrection by the anti-communist Renamo movement had already ravaged much of the country. By the time he was ten, he knew more about death than life. Then his father was blown up by a landmine and a few days later, their village was burned down. His mother decided they had to run for their lives so they fled to Zimbabwe. Taona spent the next three years in the Mazowe River Bridge camp, one among some 30,000 refugees, behind a barbed wire fence. The things he remembered from home were fire, guns, hunger and death.
>
> Taona fell sick and came to our hospital. He was diagnosed with cancer. When I first met him, the growth in his belly was so big, and he had already lost so much weight, that he could no longer walk unaided. Nevertheless, he insisted on sitting outside on the veranda to watch the nurses and other patients.

[27] Cf. A. HAMILTON, "On the borders of life" in Adrian Lyons (Ed.), *Voices, stories, hopes. Cambodia and Vietnam: Refugees and Volunteers. Members and friends of the Jesuit Refugee Service,* North Blackburn, Victoria: Collins Dove 1993, p. 153. Hamilton continues: "These stories include their readers but in the same way as they are included in religious ritual. We are included in events that remain mysterious to us and which are to be entered and pondered with respect".
[28] Cf. HAMILTON, "On the borders of life", p. 153.
[29] Told by Dieter B. Scholz SJ, JRS International Director, 1984-1990. Cf. JRS, *In the footsteps of Pedro Arrupe,* pp. 22-23.

> Taona was brave. I never saw him cry. Yet whenever a spasm of pain set in, his expression would change and his face suddenly seemed like that of an old man. Each time I visited him, he asked if I could find some medicine to take the growth out of his belly. Each time I had to tell him that I had failed.
>
> One day I asked Taona if there was something else I could do for him. He hesitated and then, in a voice even lower than usual, he enquired if he could have a bar of soap. He added that never in his whole life had he had one all for himself—not at home in Mozambique, nor at the camp, nor here at the hospital. The other visitor who had come with me was already at the door of the intensive care ward when Taona made a sign to call me back. Could he make a second wish, he asked. Could he also have a towel? He had never had his own towel either.
>
> When Taona got his bar of soap and towel, he decided they were too precious for everyday use. He kept the bright red and yellow towel neatly folded beside his pillow an underneath the towel, the bar of soap.
>
> After each painkiller and before falling asleep for a few hours, he would pull the bar of soap out from underneath the towel, hold it to his nose, draw in the smell with his eyes closed and then place it back under the towel.
>
> Late on Saturday evening, I was called to the hospital. Taona's end was near. His face was peaceful now and for the first time since I had met him, he looked like the 14-year old boy he was. The towel lay neatly folded by his pillow.
>
> The following morning we buried Taona in the small cemetery behind the hospital. His grave had been dug in the far corner of the cemetery, reserved for Mozambican refugees who died in the hospital. Government officials told us to keep their bodies separate. One day, the Mozambican authorities might wish to claim them. Taona was covered by a clean white sheet and wrapped in a new reed mat, which was tied at the feet, the waist and the neck. When Taona was lowered into the grave, an old woman stepped forward, knelt down and carefully placed the towel and bar of soap by his head. The soap was still in its wrapping...

There are thousands of stories like Taona's; simple stories, powerful stories. His own story encapsulates many of the elements that make up the 'typical' refugee experience. He and his mother were victims of a conflict they did not start, a conflict they were not involved in. They were simply innocent bystanders caught up in a cycle of violence, of power struggle, of greed, of conflicting interests. As woman and child, they are representatives of 80% of the refugees in the world today—the most vulnerable of the refugee population. And in Taona's case, even more so because of his illness. Scholz's incisive remark: *By the time he was ten he knew more about death than life*, summarises pointedly the reality of most refugees, where death not only consumes the body (his own and his relatives'), but also annihilates possibilities, relationships, the future. Taona also symbolises the endurance and courage of many refugees in the face of indescribable hardships and suffering: *Taona was brave. I never saw him cry.* Scholz's acknowledgement, *Each time I had to tell him that I had failed,* reminds us that there is simply no way to address all the needs of refugees—they are unsurmountable—and those who try, need to learn this lesson fast. Refugees often lack even the smallest of material possessions, of belongings. *He had never had his own towel.*

What does it do to one's hope to never have had something of one's own? Something or someone you cared about and care for? As Taona's body is lowered into the grave, an old woman steps forward—*a* member of his community, whose love and care for him are signified in the simple but sacramental sign of placing Toana's bar of soap and towel next to his body. A bar of soap that was still in its wrapping. A towel that never to go be used, to fulfil its purpose. How many unfulfilled possibilities of refugees have remained in their 'wrappings', have never been used?

3.3.2. Concepcións story of internal displacement[30]

> "I would like peace, peace forever, no more war, no more killings". For Concepción, peace essentially means justice and reconciliation and is her deepest wish and hope.
>
> Concepción's story reflects that of many other Colombians, who have been forced to move from place to place to survive, because they live in territory contested by armed groups whose unrelenting activities have become more degrading than ever.
>
> Concepción, a farmer, lived in the area around the Catatumbo river in Norte de Santander in northeast Colombia. Suddenly she and her family found themselves caught up in the violence. Constant threats and persecution forced them to leave their home and to go to the city of Cúcuta, on the border with Venezuela. But the worst was yet to come: Concepción's son 'disappeared' on his way to work on a farm.
>
> In her search for the truth, Concepción found herself face to face with her son's killers, in proceedings created by the 2005 Justice and Peace Law. When she asked insistently for her son's body, a paramilitary commander owned to responsibility for his murder but said his body had been thrown into the river and was impossible to find.
>
> This unspeakably painful experience left a deep mark on Concepción's life, to the point that, in her own words, she has "freed herself from fear". She is not afraid to uncover the truth and persevere for justice. Although she understands Colombia's transitional justice process clearly, Concepción feels this is not the kind of justice she wants. No compensation or reparation can bring back her son and her dreams.
>
> But her wounds are healing. For seven years, Concepción and other women in her community have been meeting once a week. Through attentive and respectful listening, mutual support and prayer, they try to heal each other's wounds of war.
>
> Aware of their rights, the women work to prevent tragedies like theirs from happening again. Part of their time together consists of driving around the streets of their community, searching for other women who have not yet embarked on the path to reconciliation, to join their shared longing and work for peace.

As it is the case in Concepción's story, most internally displaced people are often forced to move more than once, lacking the possibility to remain in a permanent, designated place of refuge. Being in their own country means that they are not offered the protection (or at least

[30] As told by Oscar Javier Calderón Barragán, coordinator of the JRS project in Cúcuta, cf. http://www.jrs.net/Voices_Detail?TN= DTN-20130628014402. 'Concepción' is not her real name.

the possibility thereof) of the international community to the same extent that refugees are. Often their displacement is dependent on the movements of warring groups, who rarely respect their condition of civilians and instead abuse them and use them for their own purposes. And because their own government is too busy fighting the rebels or other armed groups, they cannot expect to be protected by the authorities. In fact, in many cases it is that same government which, whether as a consequence of regarding them as the enemy or of simply seeing them as collateral damage, persecutes them and inflicts violence in their lives. Concepción's son's disappearance is sadly another common element in the lives of the internally displaced. Young men are often seen as collaborators of opposing bands or as potential future enemies able to brandish weapons, and the smallest sign or indication (even if it is only perception) of substantiating those conjectures can lead to their disappearance and eventual death. *For Concepción, peace essentially means justice and reconciliation and is her deepest wish and hope.* Her story is a story of reconciliation and justice, but this is the case because she has made it so. Aware of her country's transitional justice process (in some countries a process such as this could not yet even be dreamt of!), she has made it clear that she is not interested in any compensation or reparation. Nothing can bring her son back. The only thing that can bring her peace is healing, and she has realised that this process takes time. Moreover, she has also realised that this is a process that she cannot go through on her own. Reconciliation requires that people come together and *in respectful listening, mutual support and prayer, they try to heal each other's wounds of war.*

3.2.3. Myriam's story of migration[31]

> Myriam's long journey began when she was twelve years old. Both her parents died of illness that year, a few months apart. Soon after her father died, her uncle told her that she had to leave their home; they could not look after her anymore. She had only had a couple of deficient years of schooling, so she had never learned to read or write.
>
> Myriam lived in the streets of her West African city for a long time; she is not sure for how long. She begged for her food and that way she managed to survive. But it did not take long before a young adolescent girl living in the streets caught the attention of older men. Of that time in her life, Myriam simply says that 'some men offered to help me' now and again. She never says what they asked in return.
>
> One of these men offered to take her to a different country, to give her a place in his home. She thought her life might be able to improve and she accepted. There was nothing for her to leave behind. They travelled for several days by car (always at night) and finally got to their destination. As he had promised, he allowed her to stay in his home, with his family. She was expected to work, to look after the children but was never allowed to go to school. But the man's wife did not like her and beat her often, sometimes several times a day, whenever her husband was away on business, which was often enough. Finally, one day, during one of his business trips, she told Myriam that she had to leave the house. And so she began to live in the streets again. More begging and more men who 'offered to help'.

[31] Not her real name.

> Myriam fell pregnant when she was fifteen. She gave birth to a baby girl and somehow managed to convince a store owner to allow her to spend nights in the back shed of the shop. The baby survived a bit more than a year, but after a short illness, she died. Myriam had not been able to get the medicine that she needed to save her.
>
> Back in the streets, another man offered to 'help'. This one offered to pay her way to Europe on a small boat. They were not far from the coast, only a few hours away, so he said he would take her there and arrange everything. Europe sounded good, so she said yes. When the man asked her if she would be willing to pay back the money, she said that if she had it, she would. The man said that he was sure she would find the way. He did not give her an address or the name of a contact on the other side of the sea. Nothing more was said.
>
> I met Myriam in a detention centre, where she had been taken after the boat which brought her to Europe was intercepted. When I asked her what she wanted to do when she got out, she said she wanted to go to school. She had never learned to read or write, and she wanted to have an education. She was not sure how she would go about doing this, but trusted that others might be able to help her again. She needed not ask what they might want in return. She thinks she knows that already.

Myriam's is perhaps not the 'typical' story of a migrant deciding to leave her country of origin in search of a better life. But it is not as if she has had options to make such a decision anyway. In all of her short life others have made decisions for her. Myriam could not be considered a refugee or an internally displaced person. But she has certainly been a victim of forced displacement, facing great vulnerability most of her life, as a young woman always in risk of abuse. Someone like her should be able to access some type of complementary protection, but she needs to ask for it. Yet, all she wants is to leave the detention centre and somehow start her education. Constant hardship in her life has taught her not to depend on or trust in anyone but herself. So far she has been able to survive, and, could someone *like her*, she would seem to ask, expect anything more?

Our answer to Myriam's tacit question should be "of course!" Anyone—including those forcibly displaced such as Myriam, Concepción and Taona—has a right to expect much more from all of us! *Stories make up history.* Their stories, their lives, also make up and form part of our history of salvation. It is not *my* salvation, but *our* salvation, where the imperative to love God and to love one another as Jesus loved us stands at the core of our existence. It is an imperative that calls us not only to *be* neighbours, but to *act* as neighbours to one another.

3.4. So, who is my neighbour?

Go and do likewise (*Luke 10:37*)

Whenever Christians hear this question they usually associate it with the parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Luke 10:25-37). As with all parables, its purpose is to teach us a lesson, to guide us in our journey of life as we walk it together, hand in hand with our brothers and

sisters. And as it is the case with all of Jesus' parables, this story asks us also to go beyond our set norms or schemas, to go one or two steps beyond our usual expectations and preconceived ideas.[32] The commandment to love one's neighbour was already written in the law (cf. Lev. 19:18)[33], and so *wanting to justify himself*, the lawyer poses this question to Jesus—who is my neighbour?—so Jesus can affirm him and express before others that he is doing what he is supposed to: he is fulfilling the law. But in answer to his question, Jesus does not provide a list of people who fall within the category of a 'neighbour'. Instead, he tells a story. *As individuals and as communities we live through stories that give shape and purpose to our experiences...*

This story is about someone who has been hurt and is in need. About some people who choose not to help him, and someone who does. About two people who are considered religious (by the listeners of the story) and one who is not. It is about someone who is shown mercy in his need, by the person he and many of us would least expect. Jesus' answer to the lawyer's question then is that being a neighbour is showing mercy and acting with compassion towards those around us who are in need. Necessity is the basis of our neighbourliness, regardless of whom the parties—the helper or the needy person—are, or of how similar to us (in race, nationality, skin colour, gender) or how close to us they are. In fact, they can even be our enemies! Being a neighbour means that divisions fade, that barriers come down. Finally, another important aspect of our neighbourliness is that it requires active compassion. We do not wait to be asked for help, but actively look around and offer it when it is needed. It is then a way of life, and attitude to life, that opens new possibilities for relating to one another, based on the commandment of love and compassion.

In the case of forcibly displaced people it could be argued that they are all in need and therefore that each one of them *is* our neighbour. And so they are! And we are called to find, to the best of our abilities, ways to respond to those needs. This question of who *is my neighbour*, however, is not only addressed to us who have greater resources, who are able to provide humanitarian assistance, health, education programs, and options for improving other

[32] In Jesus' parables, "the action (as well as the final intention) tends to be unique (two parallel arguments usually do not appear together) and is aimed at stirring the hearts of his listeners, not so much with a view towards mere moral action, but rather moving them to a deeper conversion: towards the acknowledgement of the 'reign of God' and its saving presence (and consequent adherence and following)". Cf. GESTEIRA, *Jesucristo, Horizonte de Esperanza*, pp. 71-72 (my translation).

[33] It is interesting to point out that Jewish law also included the injunction, not only to love one's neighbour, but also the stranger: *When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God* (Lev. 19:33-34). Although this injunction is somewhat connected with the theme of regarding one's neighbour as someone in need, the command in this case, more specifically, has to do with a duty of welcome to a stranger, to provide hospitality, and to treat him/her as one's own, for that is how Israel had lived much of its history—as strangers in strange lands.

people's lives. This question is also posed to each displaced person in relation to his or her companions. There will always be one of them who is in greater need than any other. Especially in the case of those who fall through the cracks, who for one reason or another are not able to access any kind assistance, it falls on their fellow displaced to act as their neighbours. They, in fact, understand each other's needs better than anyone else. Being a neighbour means sharing of what you have, and in the case of many forcibly displaced people, what little they have is hope. They are called to share it with one another as much as to hold it for themselves.

3.5. As a way of synthesis: seeds of hope that die

> Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit (*John 12:24*)

Not all forcibly displaced peoples are able to hold on to hope forever. Some fall into despair. Their adversities overpower them and overwhelm them. The loss of all material possessions, relationships (family and friends), culture and traditions, their identity, is just too much to bear. Some people of faith even lose it. Their seeds of hope have either been too weak, too underdeveloped to survive, or they fall on rocky, non-fertile ground. And sometimes, they fall, weak and fragile, among thorns that choke and suffocate them. Forcibly displaced people have to contend with unbearable hardships in their lives, but unwillingly, in our efforts to help them we can sometimes cause them more harm than good. It is actually possible to quench people's hopes unintentionally, by always treating them as victims, as 'simple' beneficiaries of our charity; by making them dependent on us by assuming that they have nothing to contribute to their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others; by denying them their value and dignity, by tacitly implying that their judgment and their contributions are not required. The grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, but is not able to bear fruit, because it does not find what it needs to sustain it, nurture it, and make it grow.

Forcibly displaced people have little or no power to effect change in their lives. They have not created their situation of exile, whose sheer existence is evil. Many have been robbed of their identity, forced to occupy foreign and inhospitable spaces, condemned to live life 'in waiting'. They cannot even claim 'time' as their own. And yet, their stories of courage, resilience and survival tell us that death should not and does not have the final word. Forcibly displaced people have certainly been victimised, but 'victim' is not yet another label they want to be imposed on them. They have been 'defined' enough—a refugee, a forcibly displaced person, a migrant. But *a* refugee does not hope; *an* internally displaced person does not hope; *a* migrant does not hope. It is those like Taona, Concepción and Myriam who hope. Labels do not hope; only people do.

Chapter 4

Responding to a forcibly displaced person's hope

> Although we might want to show sympathy for the poor, the lonely, the homeless and the rejected, our feelings toward a stranger knocking on our door and asking for food and shelter is ambivalent at the least. In general, we do not expect much from strangers... People who are unfamiliar, speak another language, have another colour, wear a different type of clothes and live a life style different from ours, make us afraid and even hostile.[1]

Forcibly displaced people of faith have placed their hope in God. They trust that in God they will find meaning to their suffering. They hope that God will deliver them from the tragedy in which they find themselves. They pray that God will send 'angels' who will look after them. Those angels... they are us, all of us. Not because we are spiritual beings without sin or fault, but because the Spirit of God in our lives impels us to be messengers of God's love to all of God's creatures. We have been created by God to fulfil God's ministry of love and compassion and to respond to our neighbour in need. Our compassionate response to the hope forcibly displaced people have placed on us is best manifested through the gifts of hospitality and solidarity: welcome and companionship. Only through welcoming them and *being* in solidarity with them—placing ourselves "in their shoes"—will we be able to discover the hidden gift of hope forcibly displaced people hold and are able to offer.

Being messengers of God's love is not easy. It is not easy even when the recipients of that message are our friends and loved ones. But it is particularly difficult when those who 'knock on our door' are so different from us that we feel at a loss as to what to do. Or when there are so many knocking that we feel overwhelmed by the task. And if we are honest with ourselves, it is also not easy because sometimes we are afraid. We are afraid of what extending a helping hand might do to us: inconvenience and disturb our comfortable lives, change us, hurt us? But none of these reasons is powerful enough or valid enough to turn our backs to the suffering of our brothers and sisters. Having just learned about the tragic reality of the forcibly displaced, in this chapter we consider what and how our response to their plight should be. We look first at the principles that should guide that response, both from a humanitarian point of view and from what our Catholic tradition has said on the matter (section 1). Sections 2 and 3 look in detail at the themes of hospitality and solidarity within the Christian tradition. The chapter ends with a reflection 'seedlings of hope in need of care and affection' which strives to recapitulate the main points presented (section 4).

4.1. Why respond?

> The God of the Bible is a God who wants an order of right and justice.[2]

[1] Cf. H. NOUWEN, *Reaching out: the three movements of the spiritual life*, New York: Doubleday Co. 1975, p. 48.
[2] Cf. F. J. DE LA TORRE DÍAZ, "Los pobres, la pobreza, la justicia y la caridad" in *Estudios Eclesiásticos*, Julio-Septiembre 2013, Vol 88, no. 346, p. 546.

We simply cannot remain indifferent to the plight of over forty million displaced people in the world. It is a question of humanity, of human rights and of being faithful to the faith we profess. In other words, we respond because as human beings it is our responsibility to care for our fellow human beings, and as Christians, it is inherent to the mission we have been entrusted—to proclaim the Good News of salvation. We have a responsibility to uphold the human dignity of every person and a mission to ensure the possibility of fulfilment of every person's potential. The salvation we proclaim is not only for the afterlife, but a salvation for the here and now that liberates people from any form of captivity and heals peoples' wounds. Ultimately, we respond because what we desire is the universal good for all.

4.1.1. A question of rights

> A refugee situation is a difficult one. We are people with many problems. Our rights are not respected in our land of origin and often neither in the land of asylum. We are without a voice and when we try to speak, our voices are not heard. But we have our lives and that is our biggest hope. We shall one day return to our homeland, where there will be peace for all and we shall live together, build our lives anew, and have a chance to plan for our lives and our future. *Kwizera Jean de Dew, a Burundian refugee in Tanzania.*[3]

The real basis of all human rights is the dignity of the human person. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrined this principle in its preamble: "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world..."[4] There is great debate among the international community concerning the best way to respond to the plight of forcibly displaced peoples, but unfortunately not much agreement, as particular interests suggest different ethical systems and practical solutions as the bases for that response. But are rights relative? The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, passed without dissent on 10 December 1948 and representing "a worldwide statement of ethical behaviour that member states have agreed to"[5], seems to suggest that they are not.

Justice demands that everyone be given his or her due, which in turn requires that the human rights of every human being be recognised. If we accept this definition, then an important corollary is that social justice is also a dynamic concept whose requisites only reveal themselves little by little, since humanity did not become conscious of every human right all

[3] Cf. M. RAPER and A. VALCÁRCEL, "Refugees and forcibly displaced people" in *Christian Perspectives on Development Issues*, Ireland: GENPRINT 2000, pp. 82-83.
[4] Cf. UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR) http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Language.aspx?LangID=eng. Accessed 20 November 2013.
[5] Cf. C. BAGHDADY and R. VANDERBERG, "Immigration in the 21st Century – The Need for an Ethical Approach: The Canadian Experience" in F. Bagio and L. Zanfrini (Eds.), *Migration Management and Ethics: Envisioning a Different Approach*, Milano: Polimétrica 2006, p. 58. The authors point out that several articles of the Declaration are especially relevant to the topic of forced displacement and migration, including Article 22 (on economic, social and cultural rights), Article 23 (on the right to work), and Article 25 (on a standard of living adequate for health and well-being).

at once. In fact, it is most likely that we will enact new rights in the future as we become aware of aspects that need special protection.[6] But beyond the concept of rights, there is a basic moral imperative that as human beings we are called to respond to: save lives. Morality has to do with right behaviour towards one another. Justice requires the righting of wrongs. The moral thing is to make sure that no human being suffers because of the actions of others. The just thing is for those responsible to repair the damage that has been done and to restore relationships. In our 'small', ever more interconnected global village it has become increasingly difficult to separate the moral from the just thing, because most of our actions have now repercussions which no longer absolve us from responsibility.[7]

As human beings we recognise the importance of human rights, justice and morality, but as people of faith, we must not forget the fundamental role that charity should also play in our response to the needs of our neighbours: "Both charity and justice need to be present in those of us who have been re-born in Christ. The *First Letter of John* affirms that 'everyone who loves is born of God' (4:7) and that 'who does right has been born of him' (2:29)". [8] In fact, it could be argued that charity has gone always ahead of human rights, paving the way for them to be recognised. Justice has then 'codified' the demands of charity, mainly because civil laws are usually more adhered to in obedience than our consciences. But charity impels us to look beyond justice, so that we do not simply limit ourselves to do what is required, and forget to look at each individual as a son or daughter of God, our brother and sister in Christ.[9] There is no doubt that forced displacement is a consequence of violations of fundamental human rights. Protection of the vulnerable is itself a right, and should be a prerequisite mechanism to safeguard the well-being of vulnerable people threatened with displacement: "Ethical norms of justice and human rights necessitate international refugee protocols and conventions that are not simply reactive but essentially proactive".[10] At the same time, these instruments need to be complemented by concrete actions. Campaigns, research and awareness-raising projects, public education and advocacy, all based on learnings gathered

[6] Cf. L. GONZÁLEZ-CARVAJAL, *El clamor de los excluidos*, Santander: Sal Terrae 2009, p. 156.

[7] In response to the Lampedusa and other similar tragedies, the Jesuit Provincials of Europe and the Middle East and of Africa-Madagascar, recently issued a statement on migration and asylum today. They reminded us that: "Europe must accept its share of responsibility for global migratory flows. Many European states or their corporations supply arms to Africa, often covertly. These arms supplies fuel conflicts, which, in turn, fuel migratory flows. Our world is so interconnected that we cannot place the border of our concern at the Mediterranean... Whatever the reasons, the Lampedusa tragedy shows that we are called back to our basic human duty to save lives. We cannot escape that moral imperative". Cf. Statement of the Jesuit Provincials of Europe and the Middle East and of Africa-Madagascar, *Migration and Asylum today – "We cannot set borders to our concern".* http://www.jesuits-europe.info/docs/Provincials% 20of%20CEP%20and%20JESAM%20on% 20Migrant%20issues.pdf. Accessed 6 November 2013.

[8] Cf. L. GONZÁLEZ-CARVAJAL, *Con los pobres, contra la pobreza*, Madrid: San Pablo 1991, pp. 115-116.

[9] Cf. DE LA TORRE DÍAZ, "Los pobres, la pobreza, la justicia y la caridad", p. 547 and GONZÁLEZ-CARVAJAL, *Con los pobres, contra la pobreza*, pp. 117-118.

[10] Cf. AGBONKHIANMEGHE, "Justice for the Displaced: *The Challenge of a Christian Understanding*" in Daivd Hollenbach (ed.) *Driven From Home: Protecting the Rights of Forced Migrants*, Washington: Georgetown University Press 2010", p. 47.

from the field, and rooted in solid Christian social teaching, must be undertaken to defend the rights of the forcibly displaced.[11]

4.1.2. A question of faith: Catholic Social Teaching and the Common Good

> Everyday human interdependence grows more tightly drawn ... As a result the common good, that is, the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment, today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. *(GS* 26)

The foundation of Catholic Social teaching is the proper understanding and value of the human person. It seeks to articulate the ethical implications of this proper understanding of the dignity of all individuals.[12] Catholic Social teaching has a long and rich tradition in promoting hospitality to the vulnerable stranger and defending those who have been forcibly displaced. Such tradition, as we would expect, has the Scriptures and the life and model of Jesus as the basis for its teaching: "Our common faith in Jesus Christ moves us to search for ways to treat all immigrants in a spirit of solidarity. It is a faith that transcends borders and bids us to overcome all forms of discrimination and violence".[13] Five principles emerge from this teaching, which help guide the Church's response on forced displacement (remembering here that the broader definition used by the Church includes those forced to leave their nations due to unbearable economic conditions in their home countries, often grouped under the label of 'migrants' or 'immigrants'): 1) people have a right to find opportunities in their homeland, but if these are lacking, 2) they have also the right to migrate to support themselves and their families; 3) in particular, refugees and asylum seekers, escaping war and persecution, should be afforded protection. At the same time, 4) sovereign nations have the right to control their borders, to determine whether protection is indeed required and to ensure that new arrivals do not pose a risk to their citizens. In balancing this tension between the needs of those who seek refuge and those who are able to provide it, 5) it should never be

[11] Some practical examples of these activities include: church organisations, non-government organisations and other advocacy groups which have joined to speak in opposition to the use of anti-personnel landmines and other 'small' weapons; speaking up for stateless persons and defending the rights of children not to be used as pawns and combatants in wars; highlighting the decline of protection for refugees in camps, when these become militarised or their civilian nature is compromised; speaking up against unjust government practices and policies regarding urban asylum seekers, detention of asylum seekers and inadequate procedures for determining refugee status. Cf. RAPER and VALCÁRCEL, "Refugees and forcibly displaced people", p. 83.

[12] "...the guiding principle of all of the Church's social doctrine is a *correct view of the human person* and of his unique value, inasmuch as 'man ... is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself'. God has imprinted his own image and likeness on man (cf. Gen 1:26), conferring upon him an incomparable dignity..." Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter, Centesimus Annus,* on the hundredth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum,* 1 May 1991. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus_en.html, no. 11. Accessed 20 November 2013.

[13] Cf. CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES, *Pastoral document on Migration*: *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey*, January 2003, no. 19. http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/strangers-no-longer-together-on-the-journey-of-hope.cfm. Accessed 5 November 2013.

forgotten that the human dignity and human rights of all people should always be respected.[14] This respect should be reflected in government policies, in the provision of basic services (health, education, housing, job opportunities) and in making all possible efforts to create an atmosphere of hospitality for those who seek refuge. It might seem challenging to reconcile these principles, but it is possible to do so:

> The Church recognizes the right of a sovereign state to control its borders in furtherance of the common good. It also recognizes the right of human persons to migrate so that they can realize their God-given rights. These teachings complement each other. While the sovereign state may impose reasonable limits on immigration, the common good is not served when the basic human rights of the individual are violated.[15]

This search for the common good also recognises that as long as the root causes for forced displacement—wars, injustice, religious intolerance, civil conflicts, environmental degradation, poverty—are not addressed, the movement of peoples will continue unabated. At the same time, the search for the common good also recognises the contribution that people from different cultures and backgrounds offer to their places of refuge. The common good is best served when *all* people are able to make their own contributions to social and economic life, engage in productive work, and lead fulfilled lives. Society best functions when decisions are made seeking what benefits everyone, and not just the few, and when it recognises that all should be given the opportunity to realise their full human potential.[16] The question, therefore, is not whether to stop migration altogether, but how to address and remedy the issues that make it a forced and imposed movement. Thus, Catholic Social teaching "emphasises the necessity of a global ethical framework that prioritises solidarity and justice for refugees and forcibly displaced people... where human rights and justice serve

[14] "In a certain sense, the source and synthesis of these rights is religious freedom, understood as the right to live in the truth of one's faith and in conformity with one's transcendent dignity as a person". Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Centesimus Annus* , no. 47.

[15] Cf. CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES , *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey*, nos. 33ff. Further, when these rights are violated, such action puts into question the 'moral basis' of a nation to 'control' its borders: "The moral basis for the nation state... lies in its capacity to provide for the dignity and freedom of its citizens and for the human rights of all within its territory. The responsibility to provide protection to refugees, and to all persons who are found to be without the protection of any state, is shared by all sovereign states. When the maintenance of state sovereignty is valued above the protection of human rights, the moral basis of state sovereignty is called into question. Protecting citizens and residents is a broader obligation for a state than simply protecting territory. Human security, that is, security based on human dignity, is a higher value than state security. International relations arrangements can be assessed in view of the human security they provide for those persons without the protection of a state". Cf. M. RAPER, *Precarious lives: Involuntary displacement of people in Asia Pacific today*. http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=18875#.UlZ04Su4bIU. Accessed 10 October 2013.

[16] The CCC says the following in relation to the common good: "The common good concerns the life of all. It calls for prudence from each, and even more from those who exercise the office of authority. It consists of *three essential elements*: *respect for the person* as such—public authorities are bound to respect the fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person; *social well-being* and *development* of the group itself, and *peace*, that is, the stability and security of a just order. Human interdependence is increasing...The unity of the human family, embracing people who enjoy equal natural dignity, implies a *universal common good*. This good calls for an organization of the community of nations able to provide for the different needs... and certain situations arising here and there, as for example... alleviating the miseries of refugees dispersed throughout the world, and assisting migrants and their families" (nn. 1906-1911).

as the primary conceptual markers".[17] Forcibly displaced persons bear rights as every other human being and the securing of these rights poses the imperative to transform unjust structures that create dislocations and imbalances in all sectors (political, economic, social) and in all organisations and institutions. The Church, furthermore, has the responsibility to question and oppose all forms of violation of these fundamental rights no matter the agents and circumstances of such violations.[18]

Participation and solidarity are two other fundamental principles of Catholic Social teaching.[19] Participation "is the voluntary and generous engagement of a person in social interchange. It is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person" (*CCC* 1913). Forcibly displaced people often do not feel they have the option to participate, either in decision making or in carrying out activities that have great bearing in their own lives, let alone in the lives and good of others. We will explore the concept of solidarity in more detail in the next sections, but to highlight its important role in achieving the common good we recall here John Paul's words:

> [Solidarity] is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.[20]

4.2. Hospitality

Foreigners, beggars, they all come from God (*Homer*).

What does it mean to offer hospitality? To whom? For how long? In which manners? Hospitality is a complex subject. The mass movements of people today, both voluntary and forced, make the issue even more complex, for hospitality is no longer an individual issue,

[17] Cf. AGBONKHIANMEGHE, "Justice for the Displaced", p. 45.

[18] Cf. AGBONKHIANMEGHE, "Justice for the Displaced", pp. 45-47. The author continues: "In its clearest manifestation this teaching, tradition, or doctrine enables Christian theology to analyse the crisis of displacement, formulate an in-depth appraisal, and indicate effective responses to the structural causes of this tragedy. Stated differently, in the context of forced displacement, Catholic social teaching offers principles for reflection, criteria for judgment and guidelines for action", p. 47.

[19] Others, besides the ones already mentioned, include the principles of respect for human life, of preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, of association, of stewardship, of subsidiarity, of human equality, and the rights to work and family unity. As mentioned earlier, the Church insists on the right to movement in cases where a dignified working life is threatened by exploitation, economic poverty and discrimination. Keeping families together should be a guiding principle of social life, and this is as important in the case of forcibly displaced peoples as for the citizens of a country. Cf. JRS, *Keeping hope alive*, p. 82-83.

[20] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, on the twentieth anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*, 30 December 1987. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father /john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis _en.html, no. 38. Accessed 20 November 2013.

but a collective problem.[21] One thing that is clear is that hospitality requires welcoming a stranger, trying to the best of our ability and capacity to make her or him feel at home. Sometimes the offer of hospitality is voluntary; at other times it can be 'imposed' on us by circumstances. In some cases, we have even been asked to welcome those who were considered our enemies... until they became our guests:

> In the origins of all civilisations we find the transformation of the enemy into guest: 'You are not like us, therefore we kill you; you are not like us, therefore we listen to you'. But the day the enemy becomes a guest, this is when the human community is founded. Ancient Greece celebrated hospitality as a reciprocal blessing and a mysterious link between the guest and the divinity. Homer wrote: 'foreigners, beggars, they all come from God'.[22]

Thus, in addressing this theme of welcoming the stranger, we do well to remember that two terms are always very close to one another: hospitality and humanity "to the point that copyists have sometimes confused the two and have ended up using one significantly in place of the other. These two words are always indissoluble: *hospitalitas* and *humanitas*".[23] We approach this theme now, not with the intention of providing a comprehensive coverage of all the elements involved,[24] but as always with the intention of finding more 'reference points' that might help offer us a clearer understanding of the role of hospitality in a lived out spirituality of hope in the lives of forcibly displaced people.

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[21] We could also ask, 'why be hospitable in the first place?' Torralba offers three arguments or reasons: 1) anthropological—as vulnerable and fragile beings we depend on one another for survival; 2) theological—the model of hospitality is found in the Trinitarian community of Persons who practice it among themselves; 3) anamnetical—as memory of the lived experience of Israel in Egypt, as an enslaved and exploited people. Cf. F. TORRALBA, *"No olvidéis la hospitalidad (Heb 13,2)" Una exploración teológica,* Madrid: PPC 2004, pp. 9-10.

[22] Cf. O. CLÉMENT, *Dios es simpatía: Brújula espiritual en un tiempo complicado,* Madrid: Narcea 2011, p. 124. Original in Italian: *Dio è simpatía*.

[23] Cf. CLÉMENT, *Dios es simpatía,* p. 128.

[24] The *Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology* gives an excellent summary of the religious background, meaning, and importance of hospitality in the ancient world, Old Testament and early New Testament times. That hospitality in the ancient world was considered a religious act is clear from several Greco-Roman myths where gods are depicted as travelling 'as helpless wayfarers seeking shelter and food'. Such appearances were really tests for the mortals who received them, and their fate, and the blessings or punishment they received, depended on the quality of the hospitality they offered to the gods. The memory of Israel as an exiled nation for some many years in Egypt (cf. Lev. 19:33-34; Deut. 10:19), and God's care for them during their wandering years in the desert (Psalm 78), stand in the background for the call to the Jewish people to offer hospitality. A call which in the Christian Scriptures stresses hospitality to the poor, the helpless and the outcast—who receives them receives Christ (cf. Mat 25:35-36; Rev 3:20), who will recompense them in the end time because the poor cannot repay such hospitality (cf. Luke 14:12-14). The New Testament also presents Jesus as a generous host, particularly in Eucharistic contexts (cf. feeding the hungry in Mathew 14:13-21), as host at the Last Supper (cf. Mark 14:17-25), and in post-resurrection appearances, breaking the bread (cf. Luke 24:13-35) or preparing a meal (cf. John 21). The early Christian Church took seriously this emphasis on hospitality found in the Scriptures (cf. Justin Martyr's *Apology I, 62, 5*) and such welcome became a sign and symbol of the new religion (cf. Gregory of Nazianzus' *Oratio IV, 111, Contra Julianum, PG 35, 648).* In the Middle Ages, hospitality to strangers and pilgrims became a defining characteristic of monasticism. St Benedict, for example, devoted two chapters of his *Rule* to the theme (53 and 61) 'spelling out in great detail the ministry of hospitality that should be afforded all who came to the monastery'. Cf. M. FRANCIS, "Hospitality" in C. Stuhlmueller (General Editor), *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology,* Collegeville, Minn: The Liturgical Press 1996, pp. 443-445.

4.2.1. What hospitality does

Hospitality can be understood from different perspectives and emphases, though certain characteristics or elements are considered essential. We look briefly here at three authors' 'definitions' to help us extract some of these essential aspects:

> The German word for hospitality is *Gastfreundschaft* which means, friendship for the guest. The Dutch use the word *gastvrijheid* which means, the freedom of the guest... [this] shows that hospitality wants to offer friendship without binding the guest and freedom without leaving him alone... Hospitality, therefore, means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place.[25]

In his understanding of hospitality Nouwen stresses the importance of offering friendship and freedom to the one who comes knocking at our door. It is about creating a 'free space' where our guest is able to be himself or herself, without fearing that he or she might be expected to adapt to imposed norms or ways of behaviour. Because the stranger is precisely that, an 'unknown person', and we cannot be sure of his or her intentions, there might also be an initial perception that he or she might be in fact an enemy. This perception can only change through the offer of hospitality which allows acquaintance to be developed.

For Innerarity, hospitality contains an inherent sense of reciprocity, not only in the one particular instance of a host-guest relationship, but in that invariably we take turns being hosts and guests to one another. This means that our being *placed* in this world has a particular structure of reception and encounter: there is a freedom in giving and receiving that goes beyond the imperative of a give-and-take relationship.[26] Thus, he emphasises the importance of mutuality in the encounter between host and guest. In fact, hospitality can produce such strong ties of solidarity between the two that it transforms into 'family' the one who is welcomed. This emphasis on mutuality and solidarity is also present in Russell's definition of hospitality:

> I understand hospitality as the practice of God's welcome, embodied in our actions as we reach across difference to participate with God in bringing justice and healing to our world in crisis... Christ as God's Welcome is a metaphor for God's action in reaching out to us and for our response. In Luke, Jesus is pictured moving from house to house, and table to table.[27]

Her emphasis moreover is in seeing 'God's welcome', the hospitality of God, as the model of our actions and offers of hospitality towards others. As such, our hospitality efforts have also a healing and redemptive power that can help transform situations of injustice and brokenness

[25] Cf. NOUWEN, *Reaching out: the three movements of the spiritual life,* pp. 50-51.
[26] Cf. INNERARITY, *Ética de la Hospitalidad,* p. 13.
[27] Cf. L. RUSSELL, *Just Hospitality: God's welcome in a world of difference.* Edited by J. Shannon Clarkson and Kate M. Ott, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 2009, pp. 2, 113.

in this world. They are 'efforts' because we are called to 'reach across difference', to come out of ourselves and to collaborate with God in bringing closer God's Kingdom.

Although not a theological virtue itself, it is worth noting here the relationship that hospitality holds with the three theological virtues. For the host and the guest, offering and receiving hospitality requires mutual trust and *faith* in the goodness of the other. The guest trusts that he will be welcomed and treated well, while the host has faith that the unknown guest will not repay him with violence or abuse. Although he cannot be certain, the guest *hopes* that the host will receive him, he puts his hopes in that welcome. And hospitality is a direct consequence of *charity* as universal love, without conditions or requirements.[28]

4.2.2. A rich tradition: examples of hospitality in the Older and New Testaments

> Welcoming the stranger, a characteristic of the early Church, thus remains a permanent feature of the Church of God. It is practically marked by the vocation to be in exile, in diaspora, dispersed among cultures and ethnic groups without ever identifying itself completely with any of these. Otherwise it would cease to be the first-fruit and sign, the leaven and prophecy of the universal Kingdom and community that welcomes every human being without preference for persons or peoples. Welcoming the stranger is thus intrinsic to the nature of the Church itself and bears witness to its fidelity to the gospel.[29]

The Bible is a narration of the history of salvation of the people of God; a people who from the beginning of creation have always been in movement, migrating, displacing, seeking refuge. The Bible in fact begins with the movement of God's Spirit over the face of the chaos (Gen 1:1) and ends with John the Evangelist in exile, on the Isle of Patmos, writing the Book of Revelation: "The biblical story which begins with migration, ends with migration and exile. Between those two events the uprooted people of God seek safety, sanctuary and refuge".[30] And they seek and offer hospitality. As we approach this subject, it is necessary to remember that hospitality should be studied within the global context in which it develops, since the concept varies throughout places and times. For the purposes of this study, we look at some aspects of hospitality in the Judeo-Christian tradition as presented in the Older and New Testaments and the early Christian tradition. Hospitality, in fact, was one of the social practices most valued in the OT and NT, considered basically from a double perspective

[28] Cf. TORRALBA, *"No olvidéis la hospitalidad*", pp. 9-10. The author adds: "To the extent that we exercise the practice of hospitality we make ourselves into the likeness of God, Source and Horizon of all hospitality... In this sense, hospitality is a social virtue, but it could almost be considered as a theological virtue, because it divinises the human person, it exalts her", p. 24 (my translation).

[29] Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *Instruction Erga migrantes caritas Christi (The love of Christ towards migrants),* Vatican City, 3 May 2004, no. 22**.** http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_migrants_doc_20040514_erga-migrantes-caritas-christi_en.html. Accessed 7 October 2013.

[30] Cf. J. MARUSKIN, "The Bible: the ultimate migration handbook" in *Church & Society*, 95, n° 6, Jl-Ag 2005, pp. 77-90, which provides a concise but detailed description of this 'migration history' through the Old and New Testaments.

closely interrelated: as a duty to welcome the stranger/the one in need (moral dimension) and as a blessing/reward for the host (theological dimension).[31]

Older Testament

The memory of Israel as an exiled nation for many years in Egypt, and God's care for them during their wandering years in the desert, constitute the basis for the strong call to the Jewish people to offer hospitality to strangers and displaced peoples:

> You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (*Deut. 10:19*)... You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt (*Exod. 23:9*)... When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God (*Lev. 19:33-34*).

Israel could not forget what it had lived through and survived thanks to God's protection and faithfulness.[32] And this memory would give the virtue of hospitality a significant place in diverse aspects of Israel's life:

> Within the scope of biblical tradition, hospitality could be defined in multiple ways: as *law*, since it is already present in the moral and legal codes of the Old Testament; as *practice*, since it is exercised by the patriarchs of the people of God; as *custom*, because it is already described as a living tradition in the tribe of Judah; as *ritual*, since exercising hospitality implies a series of steps, routines, gestures and words which are repeated periodically; as *duty*, because it is lived as an imperative of quasi-categorical order... and as *moral value*, because hospitality is contemplated as horizon of meaning in the lives of many biblical characters.[33]

We find numerous accounts of hospitality in Old Testament texts.[34] A comparison between these texts reveals a typical or characteristic narrative schema in these accounts: 1) arrival of the guest; 2) welcome of the guest; 3) service to the guest; 4) words uttered by the guest; 5) listening to and welcoming the words uttered by the guest; 6) departure of the guest.[35] The visit of the three men to Abraham and Sarah (cf. Gen. 18:1-16) by the oaks of Mamre, for example, follows this narrative structure. In analysing this text, and other similar ones, we observe that it is often God who sends the guest, as in the case here of the guest-angels, while in other cases the guest is someone who travels because of fidelity to God (cf. Tob. 7:1). In

[31] Cf. F. RIVAS, "Modelos de hospitalidad en la primera Carta de Clemente a los Corintios" in Carmen Bernabé and Carlos Gil (eds.), *Reimaginando los orígenes del cristianismo. Relevancia social y eclesial de los estudios sobre Orígenes Cristianos*, Estella (Navarra): Verbo Divino 2008, p. 376.

[32] As these texts from the Older Testament show, the experience of uprootedness and forced displacement would lead the people of Israel to institute legal provisions that protected the rights and guaranteed the well-being of people in similar conditions, Cf. AGBONKHIANMEGHE, "Justice for the Displaced", p. 40.

[33] Cf. TORRALBA, *"No olvidéis la hospitalidad"*, p. 8.

[34] Cf. Gen. 18:1-16 (Abraham); Gen. 19:1-15 (Lot); Gen. 24:1-67 (Rebecca); Jos. 2:1-24 (Rahab); Judges 4:17-22 (Jael); Judges 6:11-24 (Gideon); Judges 13:1-24 (Manoah); Judges 19:1-25 (of a concubine); Judges 19:11-30 (Gibeah); 1 Kgs. 17:7-16 (a widow); 2 Kgs. 4:8-17 (a Shunammite); Tob 7:1-17 (Raguel).

[35] Cf. I. FORNARI-CARBONELL, *La escucha del huésped (Lc 10,38-42): la hospitalidad en el horizonte de la comunicación*, Estella (Navarra): Verbo Divino 1995, p. 113.

later Jewish tradition, to highlight the value of hospitality, it will be said that welcoming a guest is to welcome the *Shekina*, the divine presence.

Abraham welcomes the guests respectfully but at the same time quite earnestly since this welcome is recognised as the duty of service to guests. The strangers' words soon disclose their identity and mission, and at the same time, reveal a message. In all texts, the guest will be a bearer of some type of message, and generally, the reality of the Word of God will emerge through his actions and words. The 'turning point' in the narration takes place in the action of receiving, which includes both the initial attention and welcome to the guest and then the welcome of his words. This disposition to listen to the words uttered by the guest, to listen to his message, points to a dual perspective in the action of offering hospitality: the host's home becomes a place of welcome of the one in need, but also the place where the Word of God is welcomed. The first action represents an opening to the guest in need, while the second an opening up of the one who offers hospitality, but who is in need to deepen his knowledge of the Word, of the Torah.[36]

New Testament

In the New Testament hospitality is directly related with the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth, both through his words and actions. Through the incarnation and the arrival of Jesus as 'visitor', as guest in our world, the concept of hospitality changes radically. The welcome to the stranger is no longer based, as in pagan antiquity, in the belief that the guest is mysteriously protected by God. It is no longer based either, as in the Older Testament, in the idea that the guest could be a messenger of God. Now it is God, incarnated, who is identified with the forgotten, the lost and the humble. Whoever welcomes them, welcomes the Lord (cf. Mathew 10:40; 18:5; 25:35-43),[37] for whom hospitality was an essential aspect of his public life and ministry. And to those who receive them (and him), Jesus offers and provides the 'hospitality of God':

> [It is] clear how often in this Gospel [of Luke] significant events and exchanges take place in the context of meals and the offering (or non-offering) of hospitality in general. Hospitality, in a variety of expressions, forms a notable frame of reference for the ministry of Jesus. But there is more than that. Luke sees the whole life and ministry of Jesus as a *"visitation"* on God's part to Israel and the world.[38]

[36] Cf. FORNARI-CARBONELL, *La escucha del huésped,* pp. 114-115, 141-145.
[37] Cf. CLÉMENT, *Dios es simpatía,* p. 126.
[38] Cf. B. BYRNE, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel,* Collegeville: The Liturgical Press 2000, p. 189. We see instances of this divine 'visitation', for example, in the Visitation to Mary (a model of compassionate hospitality, who welcomes the Son of God, so he can fulfil his mission in history; cf. Luke 1:39-45); in Jesus' visit to Zacchaeus (the socially marginalised experiences the divine hospitality; cf. Luke 19:1-10) and in the *visitation* of the Risen Lord to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (the travelling 'guest' becomes a host; cf. Luke 24:13-35).

From the start this raises the question: how will this guest, this visitor be *received*? The critical point is that those who do receive him find that Jesus invites them into a much wider sphere of hospitality: the 'hospitality of God': "The One who comes as visitor and guest in fact becomes *host* and offers a hospitality in which human beings and, potentially, the entire world, can become truly human, be at home, can *know* salvation in the depths of their hearts".[39] As we will see later, forcibly displaced people can have a similar effect in our lives: the ones who come as visitors and guests, in fact become our hosts, offering us a hospitality that allows us to become truly human and find salvation and meaning, in the depths of our hearts. For it is in listening and receiving the stranger and the foreigner that we become conscious of God's revelation, and thus the guest becomes a source of our liberation and salvation, and also of our own self-imposed judgement:

> A God who knows what it is to a foreigner and not be welcomed in his own house (John 1:11, he came to his own and his own did not receive him), but who continues to call at our own so that we will open the door to him: "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me" (Rev. 3:20).[40]

The new life in Jesus, the 'new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead' (cf. 1 Pet. 1:3), sets the new Christians apart from the rest of society. Their common belief in the Lord establishes a fraternity, a new 'extended family', made up of the sons and daughters of God and Jesus' brothers and sisters. And hospitality becomes an essential means to keep this extended family together, through very practical ways:[41]

> ...to modern readers this may sound banal. In the early church, however, hospitality was vitally important. Unless someone offered a room, the church could not meet at all... Moreover, a wandering apostle like Paul himself was constantly in need of board and lodging. In short, the church could not function without hospitality, and this is why it appears so often in lists of virtues.[42]

Moreover, in their new way of life, hospitality represented a way through which Christians could solve issues of conflict with their neighbours, who not always accepted the reality to which they bore witness through their life together.[43] In this life, they considered themselves

[39] Cf. BYRNE, *The Hospitality of God,* p. 189.
[40] Cf. RIVAS, "Modelos de hospitalidad en la primera Carta de Clemente a los Corintios", p. 397, (my translation).
[41] Cf. RIVAS, "Modelos de hospitalidad en la primera Carta de Clemente a los Corintios", pp. 376-377.
[42] Cf. ZIESLER, *Paul's Letter to the Romans,* p. 303. Some examples of this emphasis on the virtue of hospitality include: *1 Tim 3.2*: Now a bishop—overseer—must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher; *Titus 1.8:* For a bishop—overseer—as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled; *1 Pet 4.9*: Be hospitable to one another without complaining; *Romans 12.13:* Contribute to the needs of saints, practise hospitality, and *Heb.13.2*: Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.
[43] Cf. L. BRETHERTON, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity*, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Company 2006, p. 113.

'foreign residents' whose only true homeland was now heaven (cf. Phil. 3:20), but could still feel welcomed wherever they could find a Christian community. That 1 Pet. 4:9 (*Be hospitable to one another without complaining*) should make a strong *invitation* to exercise hospitality shows that in certain communities this practice was no longer being carried as a habit, probably due to the high costs incurred and the abuse of hospitality by certain guests.[44] But what should be especially remembered is that those who have been sent by Jesus do not ask for alms; they provoke hospitality, and when someone opens their home, then the Reign of God comes to that house, because opening the door to strangers, sharing table with them and listening to their words, is the best symbol of that radical reversal of values that Jesus calls the Kingdom of God.

4.2.3. What hospitality requires and what it gives in return

> Hospitality is not optional for Christians, nor is it limited to those who are specifically gifted for it. It is, instead, a necessary practice in the community of faith.[45]

Hospitality is everyone's 'business' and every Christian's responsibility. It is part and parcel of what it means to be members of the community of faith which is the Church, and thus we should be clear about what it requires. We believe that God makes Godself present to us through our interaction with other persons, so we extend a welcome to others on the basis of hearing and learning and trusting in the possibility that Christ is present in them. To welcome another person or group requires that we look at 'where they are coming from', and that we address the social context out of which our engagement arises. In other words, our hospitality needs to be 'situation-variable'. If for example we hear a person crying out in pain, hospitality demands addressing the issues of pain, not just offering comfort.[46] Hospitality, in particular when it demands welcoming a large number of people, requires sacrifice, since it can turn upside down our comfortable lives or create a heavy strain on our already meagre resources. However, this sacrifice also needs to be shared, for we cannot expect a few to provide for the needs of many, especially if the few are already the poor of this world—so hospitality also requires *burden-sharing*.[47]

As Church, hospitality is best practiced when we are clear about both our own mission as an institution—to share the Good News—and the need to live out the hospitality we have

[44] Cf. RIVAS, "Modelos de hospitalidad en la primera Carta de Clemente a los Corintios", p. 396.
[45] Cf. CHRISTINE POHL, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian tradition*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1999, p. 31.
[46] Cf. RUSSELL, *Just Hospitality*, p. 105.
[47] "Practically, hospitality demands sacrifice. In various parts of the globe, concrete evidence exists of how a massive and sudden influx of refugees provokes a radical reconfiguration of the political, economic, and social landscape of host communities... The disproportionate burden born by poorer nations offering hospitality to refugees translates into an ethical obligation on the part of richer nations to take more responsibility for meeting the needs of displaced people. In other words, considering the strain imposed on an already impoverished economy by unregulated refugee flows, the notion of burden-sharing assumes critical importance ...", Cf. AGBONKHIANMEGHE, "Justice for the Displaced", p. 48.

received from God in ways that break down barriers between ourselves and other people.[48] And because Christian hospitality reflects this divine hospitality, when we fail to provide it, it can be especially distressing. Particularly if we reflect on the liberality of God in our world of abundance, it is difficult for us to claim that we have 'no more room' or that our resources have been exhausted. When forcibly displaced people are shut out and are thus exposed to danger, or when homeless persons are left outside on freezing nights, "it is rarely morally sufficient to say that there was not enough room".[49] Part of the issue here is that 'our resources' are in fact everybody's resources, that justice and solidarity and fraternity require an equal distribution of these resources and goods, as well as an equal distribution of opportunities. As we have seen in the previous section, this requires that institutional and structural conditions be created so that persons can flourish and have something to say about how they want their lives and communities to be shaped.[50]

Hospitality requires that we act in response to a request for shelter and welcome. But at the same time, it requires certain passivity, because our response in fact is to an invitation that the world is offering us, frequently without our previous consent. Thus, passivity precedes activity. There are many instances in human relationships in which the initiative belongs to others. Within the context of hospitality as gift, the key is that we live this invitation not as something that opposes our freedom, but rather as something that is intensely voluntary. We make ourselves available to the requirement of the world, always attentive to what is different from us—to the other and the others. This is not always easy, because to the extent that this ethics of hospitality requires generosity, openness and a favourable disposition towards the unknown, it is also demands that we open ourselves to instability, vulnerability and fragility. It is not easy, but it is an essential element of what it means to be human. We would lose something if we tried to eliminate uncertainty from human life. If we tried to control everything, our lives would be impoverished. [51]

In giving hospitality we receive much in return. Welcoming the stranger is not only about helping or offering services or material things to others. It also implies a conviction that they have something important to tell us, that we should listen and welcome their words. The stranger, the foreigner, the one who is not like us, has something very important to unveil for us. Hospitality is to open the doors of our home, but also of our culture and our heart. We have something decisive—divine—to learn from the one who is the most stranger and in need at our door.[52] This openness can also foster unity without risking uniformity and can lead to

[48] Cf. RUSSELL, *Just Hospitality,* p. 118.
[49] Cf. POHL, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian tradition,* p. 129.
[50] Cf. RUSSELL, *Just Hospitality: God's welcome in a world of difference,* p. 122.
[51] Cf. INNERARITY, *Ética de la Hospitalidad,* pp. 13-14, 38.
[52] Cf. AGUIRRE, *Ensayo sobre los orígenes del cristianismo,* p. 119.

communities being built out of difference, not sameness. We are able to discover new ways of being human by overcoming our parochial biases and ethnocentric prejudices. The 'either/or', the 'right or wrong', the 'win or lose', have no place in the giving and receiving of hospitality. Instead, there are numerous options for ways to faithfully express our unity as human beings and 'build' humanity.[53] As mentioned earlier, in this exchange of hospitality we encounter the first manifestation of our general humanness.[54] This is probably the reason that, when we transgress the duties of good hospitality, it is regarded as something cruel, perhaps even justifiably punishable. Dante, for example, reserves the final, most glacial hell, to this perverse host.[55] Through this building of our humanity, we also 'build' our identities. The basic relationship between host and guest in the action of hospitality constitutes an example of the fact that our identities are built in reciprocal relationships: there is not one without the other. As human beings we have formed one another in an exchange of giving and receiving. As guests and hosts we live in a certain kind of dependency. This capacity to give and receive, of acknowledging and being acknowledged, requires our being disposed to give up certain claims, of recognising that we are always in one way or another indebted to someone else (cf. Rom 12:13). And once again, it requires our capacity to be vulnerable. But because our vulnerability is mutual we are able to strengthen one another.[56]

Finally, hospitality allows for reconciliation to take place: "We are called to build communities of hospitality that foster reconciliation among all those [we] serve as a sign of the Kingdom in our world".[57] A hospitable environment can create an atmosphere of safety, radiating trust and kindness. For those who have experienced violence, in particular during most of their lives as in the case of forcibly displaced persons, trust, kindness, and safety are the things most sorely lacking in their lives. An atmosphere of trust makes human

[53] Cf. RUSSELL, *Just Hospitality: God's welcome in a world of difference,* p. 65.

[54] In many cultures, the foreigner/stranger who arrived uninvited was considered a 'no person'; someone without rights, even the right to demand protection from the community, because there was no social relationship with him or her. The offering of hospitality constituted the beginning of that relationship. Bernabé describes how this process took place in early Christianity: foreigners had nothing to do with the origins, history and tradition of the new city they arrived at. They were strangers to all that constituted community there, an ordered space bounded by limits which separated it from all the rest, which was in turn considered threatening. To find orientation in this new community, the foreigner needed the protection of someone from within, who could help incorporate him into the community and could also answer on his behalf. This relationship, established between the new arrival and the head of a family who looked after him, is what we term hospitality. And it changed, at least temporarily, the status of foreigner who now became a guest. Cf. C. BERNABÉ, "Del Dios desconocido al Dios universal: los extranjeros, la ciudad y los inicios del cristianismo" in AA. VV., *El extranjero en la cultura europea de nuestros días,* Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 1997, pp. 493-495. This new 'identity' as guest made the 'no person' into a 'person', and not just any person, but someone who had a privileged position, since he or she could now be received with honour. Cf. TORRALBA, *"No olvidéis la hospitalidad",* p. 15.

[55] Cf. INNERARITY, *Ética de la Hospitalidad,* p. 13.

[56] Cf. INNERARITY, *Ética de la Hospitalidad,* p. 58.

[57] From the letter by Adolfo Nicolás SJ, *Hospitality fosters reconciliation,* commemorating the 30 years of the Jesuit Refugee Service. Cf. http://jrsusa.org/theological_reflection_detail_continue?TN=DTN-20111109052359&L=EN. Accessed 25 September 2013.

communication possible again. Hospitality, and all that it entails, reaffirms that violence is now past and provides a space for the vulnerability required by and for healing. Taking the initiative to offer hospitality is something we can do to create an environment in which reconciliation can happen.[58]

4.2.4. Engaging in active hospitality

The true guest is the guest that stays (*D. Innerarity*).

Chapter 14 of the gospel of Luke begins with Jesus' going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the Sabbath (cf. Luke 14:1, 7-14). When he notices those guests who, arriving first at the banquet, inevitable go for the higher, more honourable place, he tells them a parable. He advises them that they should in fact choose the lower places, so that when the inevitable rearrangement of seats according to rank takes place, they will not be humiliated by being requested to move to a lower spot. In the final part of the passage, Jesus continues the theme of the banquet, turning now from the guests to the hosts and offering once again some counsel. He suggests that when offering hospitality and issuing invitations to others, we should not invite our friends and relations because they might be able to repay us and invite us back. Instead, he says, 'when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind'—invite the asylum seeker, the refugee, the migrant—because they cannot repay you! This might not seem practical or even make sense to us, but it is the true sign of hospitality—to welcome those who seemingly have nothing to offer. Though in reality, as we have been stressing all along, they do.

This is not to say that hosting one's loved ones is not hospitality. Of course it is! But we cannot stop there. One of the characteristics of offering hospitality as Christians, of practicing God's hospitality, should be that we are "constantly looking for ways to empower those who are seen and treated as outsiders in the institutions where we work and live".[59] This is what we have learned from Jesus in the gospels. Within the context of Jesus' message, the advent of Christianity represented a place of welcome for the disinherited, a space for receiving the displaced and the indigent.[60] We cannot limit the extent of our hospitality to what is comfortable and uncomplicated. Instead, we must strive to make sure that:

[58] Cf. R. SCHREITER, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies,* Maryknoll: Orbis Books 1998, pp. 88-89.
[59] Cf. RUSSELL, *Just Hospitality: God's welcome in a world of difference,* p. 14. The author adds: "...from this it would seem that hospitality can be understood as *solidarity with strangers*, a mutual relationship of care and trust in which we share in the struggle of empowerment, dignity, fullness of life. The word for hospitality in Greek New Testament is *philoxenia*, love of the stranger. Its opposite is *xenophobia*, hatred of the stranger. The ministry of the church is to be partners with strangers, to welcome those whom Christ welcomed, and thus learn to be a community in which people are made one in Jesus Christ in spite of their differences".
[60] Cf. TORRALBA, *"No olvidéis la hospitalidad"*, p. 147.

> ... our practice of hospitality can be nourished and strengthened in relationships that point to God's concern to mend the creation and that are a sign of God's care, rather than a focus on human limitations. We know that what we do is inadequate, but we include God in the relationship, confident that the mending can be brought about by God, despite our limited efforts of hospitality. Hospitality is a gift of God to us, one that we need to practice, so that we are more open to its blessing.[61]

4.3. Solidarity

When evening comes**,** you will be examined in love.
(St John of the Cross, Sayings of light and love, 60)

It is our common faith in Jesus Christ which impels us to search for ways that favour a spirit of solidarity among all peoples. In this quest our starting point is the reality of God's solidarity with us—*not that we have acted in solidarity, but that God did so first* (cf. 1 John 4:10), which brought us salvation and redemption. God's solidarity with us through the incarnation of Jesus is redemptive because it makes possible our solidarity with him, and through this solidarity with the Son we are made sons and daughters of God. And our hope resides in this![62] This faith and hope transcend all kinds of borders (not only physical, but also ideological, social, political, economical) and call us to overcome all manner of violence and discrimination. Only through solidarity will we be able to build relationships that are just and loving between rich and poor nations, between groups and individuals, and also between the rich and rich, the poor and the poor.[63]

The principle of Christian solidarity is based in Jesus' constant assertion, through his words and actions, that 'our' neighbour is every other human being, including those outside of our own group, including even those who are our enemies, those who might hate us and curse us (cf. Luke 6:27-35). In other words, the value for Jesus is not 'same-group' solidarity but 'human-race' solidarity. This is not to say that loyalty to and solidarity with our social group has no longer a value, but it means that human solidarity becomes more important to us than any group solidarity: "The only way to ensure that none of our group loyalties ever becomes selfish and sinful is to subordinate them to the more basic value of solidarity with the human race".[64]

Solidarity with the human race also means that those who *have more* have the obligation to *do more* for those who come knocking on their doors, in need, in want. Of course, this obligation is not always met, especially in the case of forcibly displaced people. Part of the reason is that most asylum seekers crossing borders in search of safety stay close to their

[61] Cf. RUSSELL, *Just Hospitality: God's welcome in a world of difference,* p. 117.
[62] Cf. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL, "Jesucristo: esperanza para el mundo", p. 60.
[63] Cf. NOLAN, *Hope in the Age of Despair,* pp. 45-46.
[64] Cf. NOLAN, *Hope in the Age of Despair,* p. 108.

countries of origin. Somalians and Sudanese move into Kenya, Haitians cross into the Dominican Republic, Syrians seek refuge in Jordan. The countries in the Middle East take turns welcoming waves of refugees from one another, as conflicts erupt and die out in the various nations in the region. Only a few years ago, Syria served as home for over a million Iraqi refugees; today, it is Jordan who has welcomed over 600,000 Syrians into their borders since civil war exploded in Syria in March 2011.[65] Of course, these numbers make those received by Southern European nations pale in comparison, even if these countries constantly complain and watch in fear as the number of asylum seekers knocking at their doors climb by a few thousand every year.

Solidarity also requires that we adapt our concept of freedom. Taking other persons into account, helping them, is one of the essential limits of my freedom. The 'I am free to do what I want' is not the freedom of the children of God. We are all called to be responsible for one another and share, in the here and now, a common place, time and destiny. The freedom that God has conceived for the human person is a freedom which entails being responsible for the life and destiny of those who are around us. "Am I my brother's keeper?" If our way of looking at life is truly based on our Christian faith, then 'we have to be our brothers' and sisters' keepers'.[66] Of course, this means that our brothers and sisters are also our keepers, and that they have the responsibility to help us in whatever way they can. In the case of forcible displaced people this means that they are required to make ethical claims on us not only as beneficiaries, but also as sources of theological and spiritual transformation. And this they do. In his Letter to the Whole Society of Jesus on the celebration of the founding day of JRS (14 November 2005), Peter-Hans Kolvenbach emphasises this point saying: "Despite being kept in the shadow of injustice and evil, refugees are a witness to survival in the face of adversity. This directs us towards the light of the Lord".[67]

4.3.1. How solidarity works

> Nowadays, I never say "no" to people who ask for help. Even if something is beyond my capabilities, I say: *This is as far as I can go, but please let me ask someone else who may be able to find a solution.* This puts people at ease. (*R. Rama, ethnic Karen Christian from Burma and former refugee who worked as a programme assistant for JRS in Thailand*).[68]

[65] In late October 2013, it was calculated that out of a population of 22 million Syrians, four million had been internally displaced within the country and two million refugees (half of them children) had crossed borders over to Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan. One of the biggest refugee camps was in Jordan, the camp of Zaatari, with a 'population' of over 120,000 people. Cf. D. LÓPEZ GARRIDO, "Los refugiados de Zaatari, el drama de Siria", in *El País*, Monday 21 October 2013, Year XXXVIII, Number 13263, p. 31.

[66] Cf. CONFERENCIA DE OBISPOS CATÓLICOS DE CUBA, *Carta Pastoral "La Esperanza no defrauda" (Romanos 5,5)*, 8 septiembre 2013. http://www.zenit.org/es/articles/cuba-construir-un-futuro-mejor-que-el-presente. Accessed 25 September 2013.

[67] Cf. AGBONKHIANMEGHE, "Justice for the Displaced", p. 43.

[68] Cf. JRS, *God in Exile*, p. 31.

Solidarity with the human race does not mean that I have to respond to all people, in all situations, at all times. What Rama's words above remind us about solidarity is that we have to acknowledge our limitations and trust that others will pick up wherever we leave off. Solidarity *with* the human race has to include also solidarity *by* the human race. Each one of us is called to be in solidarity with one another and so build the 'solidarity factor' up. And what this does, as we mentioned in a previous section, is to serve the common, universal good. We recall John Paul's words once again: *[Solidarity]i s not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good.*

Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that 'loving our neighbour' has global dimensions in an interdependent world. But that it also has personal dimensions that go beyond the feeling of *vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes* of others. We start with ourselves, and this personal dimension requires that we go beyond simple tolerance, that we go beyond even a 'simple' respect for and acceptance of others' differences. It requires that we open ourselves to others and that we exercise liberality in trying to understand other ways of life different from ours, and that we strive to recognise what we can learn from them:

> [This] liberality does not propose to disregard our own position, but rather to broaden the scope of what is possible, so that the horizon of what is valuable is not reduced to what is valuable in our own way of life... We can do it because we know that our familiar world or our personal identity are interpretations that accept alternatives, that does not exhaust the scope of what is possible.[69]

Sadly, when we stay behind the walls of tolerance, or in fact retreat into our bunker of intolerance, we close ourselves to these new possibilities. Then, we no longer see 'neighbours' knocking on our doors, but intruders or invaders that want to take over our homes and everything that belongs to us:

> An analysis of immigration policies reveals that we have passed from a *gift* policy... to a *guilt* policy... In the first case, the reception of immigrants is seen as a generous act of recognition of the Other as the holder of rights and bearer of legitimate cultural differences. In the second, it is viewed as a limited concession of rights to avoid jeopardising... national identity, since each concession is seen as a guilty yielding of sovereignty "in one's own home"... The shadows... are clearly visible: the stigmatisation of the Other as guest "in our house", whom we tolerate temporarily produces feelings and attitudes of closure and xenophobia...[70]

[69] Cf. INNERARITY, *Ética de la Hospitalidad,* p. 154, (my translation).
[70] Cf. E. PACE "Between guilt and gift: the politics of identity and immigration policy in Italy" in D. Turton and J. González (Eds.), *Immigration in Europe: Issues, Policies and Case Studies,* Bilbao: Universidad of Deusto 2003, pp. 152, 156.

This stigmatisation also produces feeling of frustration and anger. Yet, living and acting in solidarity also reveals that there is strong correlation between the well-being and happiness of others and own my happiness. Happiness describes the space of movement of a good life, in which what is good for me is not what is exclusively good for me. I experience a way of life that is good for me as the fulfilment of a possibility of life of which I can also say that it is or could be a good way of life for others.[71]

4.3.2. Beyond tolerance—in "the shoes of the other"

> Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (*Mathew 18:3*)

Solidarity means putting ourselves "in the shoes" of the other, trying to imagine, to the best of our ability, what it must be like to live in their situation and in their conditions. In the case of forcibly displaced peoples, it also means putting ourselves "in the ragged and worn-out shoes" of their constant anguish and fears, of dislocation and rejection, of exclusion and suspicion. Of course, it is impossible for us to know—and perhaps more importantly to feel—what the life of a forcibly displaced person must be like. But we must try. Most of us have had experiences of some kind of displacement, within our countries or abroad, for shorter or longer periods of time: job transfers of ourselves or our parents when we were children, study-abroad opportunities, volunteer experiences, cooperation/development programs. It is true that in most of these cases, the displacement has been a matter of choice, of personal decision. But recalling the sense of feeling lost, anxious and out-of-ease, at odds with our new environment and people around us, can help us gain an insight into the experience of forcibly displaced peoples. And then we must multiply that insight, or rather the feeling behind that insight, by a factor of a hundred or more.

Somehow children can do this much more easily than us, perhaps because when they see a need they right away dream of possibilities for meeting such need, without worrying too much about the 'buts', about the difficulties, about the presumed risks involved. I was once giving a talk about the plight of forcibly displaced people to a group of kindergarten students. We had talked about conflict and war, and together we had 'brainstormed' about all the things that refugees had to leave behind, only being able to grab in a hurry whatever little they could carry in their hands and shoulders as the sound of exploding mortar and rockets quickly approached their villages. I worried that perhaps my description had been too graphic, too much to understand for this group of five year olds. Surely, the last thing I wanted to do was to traumatise them! But most of them 'knew' about war, or at least had heard what a war was like, and could actually imagine themselves grabbing that special toy or

[71] Cf. INNERARITY, *Ética de la Hospitalidad,* p. 41.

pet, or blanket as they rushed out of their home, in their parents' arms. They were truly putting themselves in 'the shoes' of refugees and exercising solidarity! At that moment, a pensive, thoughtful five-year old boy, who had been eyeing my with great intensity all along, raised his hand and asked me: "does that mean their houses were all destroyed, that they won't have a place to go back to?" I replied that in most cases that would be so; that some of them might not return until years later, or perhaps never again. The image of children his age without a home must have struck a deep chord because he said: "then I'll talk to my parents when I get home tonight and will ask them if some of them can come and live with us". That is solidarity put into action! The kingdom of heaven has been reserved for the children or for those who like them, act in 'child-like' solidarity to their neighbours.

4.4. As a way of synthesis: seedlings of hope in need of care and affection

> So through their dignity, refugees have unknowingly offered me a glimpse of the Kingdom. I remember... how surprised I was to meet not human rags, but upright men and women. Schools were already at work well before we arrived and projects were not lacking. Our mission? It was first and foremost a look, that of hope: to recognise the seeds of the Kingdom. And then to feed them so the yeast would not suffocate and the dough would rise. *Christopher Renders SJ* [72]

Hope is that 'habit of the heart' that qualifies a genuinely Christian attitude and conduct, giving us the capacity to do and to endure what we must throughout our lives.[73] We need to nurture and foster this habit of our hearts so that it does not lose its habitual character. How are we called to do this? In terms of the seeds of hope we carry, we need to care for them lovingly and constantly. In regards to the seeds of hope of those who have suffered so much, as forcibly displaced people have, we need to extend that care through our offering of hospitality and our living in solidarity with them. In striving to do this, we would do well to remember the 'golden rule': *in everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets* (Mathew 7:12). *Do to others as you would have them do to you*. This 'doing', as we have mentioned earlier, requires practical and tangible actions and strategies. But it also requires something which perhaps we have not thought much about: it is a *doing of the heart*; in other words, an 'interior doing'.

The *Beatitudes* (cf. Mathew 5:3-16) which provide the 'guidelines' to follow to enter the Kingdom of God reflect this type of doing. If we consider them attentively, we realise that we are before a special way of doing, because Jesus points out situations or attitudes rather than actions. Situations which in a way are independent of us, like those of the afflicted, the persecuted, the insulted; attitudes that consist in being poor of spirit, meek, hungry and thirsty

[72] Cf. JRS, *God in Exile*, p. 118.
[73] Cf. V. CAMPS and A. ÁLVAREZ, *Esperanza cristiana y utopías. XXIV Foro sobre el Hecho Religioso,* Maliaño (Cantabria): Sal Terrae 2001, p. 29.

of justice, pure of heart. Even those who are called to be peacemakers and merciful (more 'active doing'), are meant to build peace and show mercy not as isolated gestures, but as constant ways of being, which are reflected in constant attitudes of pacifying, forgiveness and compassion. The *doing* typical of a Christian then, of one who labours for the Kingdom, is a *doing of the heart*, a profoundly new attitude which is sign and fruit of God's Kingdom and its proclamation.[74]

This habit of the heart, this doing of the heart, can and should be applied to our offer of hospitality and solidarity; they should not be limited to their literal sense of receiving a stranger in our house or putting ourselves in someone else's place, but as fundamental attitudes toward our fellow human beings in need, which can be expressed in a great variety of ways.[75] Our response towards forcibly displaced peoples has nothing to do with their having hidden 'treasures' (which they do!), but with their having been shut out and shunned. This response is clearly present in Jesus' option for the physically and spiritually marginalised. No one should be left out of the banquet, of the table sharing, of the wedding feast. But it is not simply a matter of opening the doors so all can come in. Some are not able to reach the celebration, because of lack of resources, of infirmity, of ill-health, while others are prevented, kept captive, separated, left outside. In Jesus' world, making sure everyone can get to the banquet requires extreme measures, like leaving the ninety nine sheep to go out in search of the lost one. It is that attitude of a caring parent who looks everywhere for a lost child. Nothing else matters but that it is his or her child and that it is lost. Our response to the hope forcibly displaced people have placed on us requires that we do all that we can to make sure they do not only get into the feast, but are also able to contribute to it and enjoy it fully.

[74] Cf. C. M. MARTINI, *¿Qué debemos hacer? Desconcierto e inquietud del hombre contemporáneo*, Santander: Sal Terrae 2013, pp. 27-28. Original in Italian: *Che cosa dobbiamo fare*, Milano: Edizioni Piemme 2011.
[75] Cf. NOUWEN, *Reaching out: the three movements of the spiritual life*, p. 48.

Chapter 5

Hope in action: the JRS experience

> I consider this as a new modern apostolate for the Society [of Jesus] as a whole, of great importance for today and the future, and of much spiritual benefit also to the Society... In the light of our Consultation... I have decided to set up within the Curia a service to coordinate Jesuit refugee work, which will henceforth be referred to as the *Jesuit Refugee Service* (JRS)...[1]

With these words Fr Pedro Arrupe launched the Jesuit Refugee Service on 14 November 1980. Deeply moved and shocked by the plight of thousands of Vietnamese boat people and refugees, he had written the previous year around Christmas time to Jesuit Major Superiors around the world asking them to do what they could, starting in their own countries, to respond to such a tragic situation. Later Father Arrupe would recall the extraordinary response. Material aid in the form of food supplies, medicine and money were swiftly made available and deployed. Jesuits from around the world responded to the call by their superiors for volunteers to share their pastoral and administrative skills and their know-how in different fields, while others began direct action using the media to influence government and private organisations to mobilise as many people and resources as possible.

Thirty three years later, JRS continues to respond to the ever changing and increasing needs of forcibly displaced people around the world. It does so in very practical and concrete ways, guided by those principles of Catholic Social teaching and the Church's tradition of promoting hospitality and care for the displaced that we explored in the previous chapter, as well as by its particular way of proceeding rooted in the Ignatian tradition. In this chapter we take a look at several aspects of this organisation, including its history (section 1), its specific way of proceeding in its service to the forcibly displaced (section 2), and some of its core values (section 3). Throughout the years, JRS staff and volunteers have learned much from forcibly displaced people about peace, reconciliation, healing and ways to spread hope in the varied circumstances in which they find themselves (urban settings, detention centres, educational initiatives), and thus they have much to offer us in the way of theological reflection to obtain valuable insights into the spirituality of hope of the forcibly displaced. We explore some of these learnings and insights in sections 4 and 5. The customary image of 'seedlings hope' provides a synthesis to the main points presented, in this case as we watch those 'seedlings of hope grow'.

[1] From a letter by Fr Pedro Arrupe, then Superior General, to all Jesuit Major Superiors, 14 November 1980.

5.1. A short history of the Jesuit Refugee Service: response to the greatest need

> The history of JRS is about the lives and hopes of people we know personally. This personal knowledge constantly transforms our understanding.[2]

Already in 1980 it was clear, however, that the immense challenges of the refugee crisis could not be met on an ad-hoc basis. Greater organisational structure and resources would be needed to ensure a response that would be both effective and provide durable solutions. Thus, JRS was born, designed to be both a spiritual and practical response to the plight of refugees at that time, and to coordinate Jesuit efforts worldwide. Sharing Fr Arrupe's belief that this was a challenge every member of the Society of Jesus could not ignore, his successor, Father General Peter Hans-Kolvenbach, affirmed the whole Society's commitment to this service to refugees and called it a "real test of our availability today".[3] This meant that not only Jesuits, but also those working with them in their institutions and ministries—members of other religious congregations as well as lay people—formed part of the organisation from its very beginnings.

And from the outset, JRS' response was more than simply material. As Fr Arrupe put it, what was needed was a service that would be "human, pedagogical and spiritual". What was needed, from the beginning, was a ministry that would listen to refugees, to their problems, their concerns, their hopes and fears; a ministry that required *being with* refugees rather than *doing* things *for* them. The essence of this ministry was presence, which meant that JRS staff could never be far from the ground, from where refugees themselves were. This presence led to awareness of the issues directly affecting refugees and through this knowledge JRS has

[2] Cf. JRS, *The Wound of the Border: 25 years with Refugees,* Rome: JRS Publications 2005, p.10. The history of JRS is a 'living' history, not only because it is a story that continues to develop and unfold, but because, as these words by Mark Raper SJ, former international director of JRS show, it has been written (and lived) and continues to be written by refugees and forcibly displaced peoples who are the object and subject of JRS' existence.

[3] In 1983, the 33rd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus—its highest decision making body—had reaffirmed the Society's concern for refugees, encouraging the universal Society to respond to the "sad plight of millions of refugees searching for a permanent home, a situation brought to our special attention by Fr Arrupe." Cf. General Congregation (GC) 33, 1983, no. 39. After being developed over a number of years, the mission of the Jesuit Refugee Service was officially articulated and endorsed in 1995 by the Society's 34th General Congregation, which once again renewed the call for the whole Society's involvement in this most important ministry: "There are over 45 million refugees and displaced people in today's world... Often lodged in the poorest of countries, they face growing impoverishment, loss of a sense of life and culture, with consequent hopelessness and despair...The Jesuit Refugee Service accompanies many of these brothers and sisters of ours, serving their cause in an uncaring world. The General Congregation appeals to all Provinces to support the Jesuit Refugee Service in every way possible". Cf. GC 34, 1995, Decree 3, *Our Mission and Justice,* no. 65. Finally, the last General Congregation in 2008 confirmed the previous Congregations' directives regarding the Society of Jesus' commitment to the forcibly displaced: "this Congregation reaffirms that attending to the needs of migrants, including refugees, internally displaced, and trafficked people, continue to be an apostolic preference of the Society. Moreover, we reaffirm that the Jesuit Refugee Service adhere to its present Charter and Guidelines". Cf. GC 35, 2008, Decree 3, *Challenges to our mission today,* no. 39v.

been able to continuously design, develop and implement projects, as the needs and hopes of refugees have evolved within specific locations or changed from one place to another. Addressing these needs has meant not only providing services to meet them, but also finding ways to determine their causes, which in many cases were not only preventable but also unjust.

In the 90's, as JRS grew on the ground and expanded to many more countries, this expansion was matched by the establishment of advocacy offices in Washington, Geneva and Brussels. Direct service and efforts to ensure structural and institutional changes have always gone hand in hand: the concerns raised by JRS personnel on the field translated into advocacy issues at these international policy centres. And yet, despite this growth and expansion, JRS has managed to keep bureaucracy at bay and to remain a 'light' organisation[4], flexible, always on the ground, ready to move with the people, to go where the need is greatest and to address challenges and needs that no one else is responding too. These essential 'criteria' are not new and not only reserved to JRS; they are the criteria set up by St Ignatius and his early companions in the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus to help discern the priority of ministries to fulfil the Society's mission.[5]

The way of involvement of JRS has equally evolved throughout the years. Initially all its work took place in refugee camps, usually on the borders of countries neighbouring nations immersed in conflict and war. Some of these camps still exist today, after ten or fifteen or more years of existence. And JRS is still there, if its assistance is needed. This aspect of JRS is very important, for one of the objectives of all JRS projects (and indeed of JRS itself as an organisation) is to move on once the needs that gave rise to these projects have either been met or no longer exist (Cf. Guidelines of the JRS, no. 15).[6] As we saw earlier, in recent years the refugee population has moved out of camps and into urban settings, especially into the larger cities of Africa or the Middle East. And as they have moved, JRS has moved with them. Today, more than 50% of JRS' activities take place in these urban settings, supporting

[4] "JRS opts for a personal style of presence, and deliberately keeps its administrative structure as light as possible. JRS is not normally equipped to undertake large-scale emergency or infrastructure projects" (Guidelines of the JRS, no. 6), cf. JRS, *Everybody's Challenge*, p. 18.

[5] Cf. CONSTITUTIONS AND COMPLEMENTARY NORMS OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS, Part VII, nos. 622-3. In addition, JRS chooses situations where it can make a particular contribution because of its expertise in specific areas, because partners are already established there, or because its presence can enable others to become involved.

[6] A good example of this took place in Cambodia. After years of accompanying refugees along the Thai-Cambodian border, when these returned home in 1993, and services on the border were no longer needed, JRS set up projects in the country to assist them in their return, especially those who had been victims of landmines and left disabled. This work was conceived as part of the much-needed national reconciliation. As this service became now a work of development, rather than something specifically set up for refugees, the responsibility was eventually transferred from JRS to Jesuit Service Cambodia.

urban refugees. The rise in numbers of internally displaced peoples (IDPs)[7] around the world also meant that JRS activities had to be adapted for this new forcibly displaced population. And sadly, as we will see in another section, one area that today requires more and more of JRS' efforts and resources is the ministry of presence, service and advocacy on behalf of asylum seekers kept in detention centres.

Today JRS works in more than 50 countries around the world and the history of JRS continues to unfold. It is a history whose last chapter all of JRS workers and volunteers, and especially the refugees and forcibly displaced people they serve, would like to write. But this is not possible yet. As David Townsend SJ points out:

> Refugees rewrite the history of the world, from the point of view of the dispossessed and powerless. They... reveal the structural sin embedded in the world's contemporary systems. They reveal a task still to be accomplished.[8]

Unfortunately, carrying out this task has become more challenging in the past fifteen years, as developed nations have either lost interest in particular local conflicts or have experienced 'humanitarian burn-out'. In the introduction to this paper, we cited the recent tragedy that took place in the Mediterranean sea, where over 300 asylum seekers lost their lives on the way to Lampedusa. Several meetings of European nations ensued to discuss a way to prevent future similar tragedies, but no consensus could be arrived at. This is symptomatic of the present climate asylum seekers face: increasingly neighbouring or developed nations refuse to accept them or try to send them back to their places of origin, even when it is still unsafe for them to return. Immigration policies, as we have already mentioned, have also become harsher throughout the world, becoming more oriented to excluding people rather than welcoming them. And a climate of hostility towards refugees means that their plight and their suffering are often ignored.

5.2. JRS' 'way of proceeding': accompanying, serving and defending the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced peoples

> The simple fact that JRS exists, and is present where they are, is for refugees a sign of hope. But JRS will never consider itself as an institution that just accompanies people in hopeless situations. If JRS is present, it also works for advocacy. This is crucial because it is a question of justice.[9]

The motto of JRS is 'to accompany, to serve and to advocate' for the rights of refugees. But this is more than a motto: these three pillars stand together and combine to generate and

[7] As mentioned before, IDPs are persons who have also been forced to leave their homes, their lands and loved ones behind, but have remained within their countries of origin, without crossing international borders.
[8] Cf. JRS, *The Wound of the Border*, p. 36.
[9] Cf. JRS, *In the footsteps of Pedro Arrupe*, p 15.

uphold hope. And this hope, as we will read throughout the sections in this chapter, is real. JRS workers know, because they have heard it expressed and voiced by the people they serve over and over again, as in the case of Treza Debasay, an asylum seeker from Eritrea in a transit camp in Shousha, Tunisia:

> Hope is the living bread for human beings, it is what gives them courage and widens their vision for a better life. Sr Elisabeth (JRS staff) brought a wave of hope for us refugees by visiting our tents even during the hottest weather here in the Sahara. Each day, she visits different communities of refugees, from Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and others. She tells us to be hopeful, to see a future beyond the daily stress and survival. The sisters are teaching many women how to make dresses, providing material for free to those who are interested. They are busy the whole day, going from one student to the next, to guide them as they sew. This pastime has served to divert our minds from the stress we are under, to help us relax while we work, to share our talents, and to spend time together. Try to imagine how difficult it is to build hope among refugees living in the open desert. But this is just what is being done by the sisters. Their names are printed in our hearts.[10]

What Treza describes here in the essence of accompaniment. *Sister Elizabeth visits our tents even during the hottest weather here in the Sahara...* How can we define 'accompaniment'? Perhaps the first thing to remember is that accompaniment means being *a companion*. While this might sound obvious, it is perhaps something we tend to forget too often and too easily! True companionship—a life-giving endeavour—can never be one-sided; it requires mutuality. We are companions; we accompany one another, we share 'bread' together, that which nourishes and gives us life. As Fr Deogratius Rwezaura, former project director in the Kibondo Camps (Tanzania) puts it:

> [Our work] was not just about JRS accompanying the refugees; we accompanied one another. Our goal and vision was to build a community of hope through prayer and worship, reconciliation, concern for the poorest of the poor, visits and care for the sick, and, most importantly, through the celebration of life together.[11]

As we have remarked earlier, the temporal quality of hope is such that the past, the present and the future combine to create a continuum that not only reflects a past-present/cause-effect dimension, but is also anticipatory of the future that is already being created in the present. Hope is 'nurtured' in the today, in concrete ways (learning how to make dresses, celebrating life together), so that what is hoped for now can become a reality later, in a distant or not-so-distant future. And there is nothing more concrete than accompaniment and physical presence:

> Moreover, presence can be a sign. That a free person chooses willingly and faithfully to accompany those who are not free, who had no choice about being there, is itself a sign, a way of eliciting hope.[12]

[10] Cf. JRS, *Revista Servir*, no. 52, November 2011, p. 5.

[11] Cf, JRS, *In the Footsteps of Pedro Arrupe,* pp. 25-26. Fr Rwezaura continues: "We did not offer services to the refugees; we responded to their needs together... We worked together and through this experience, we recognised one another's strengths and weaknesses. We created a stimulating atmosphere in which to offer service and advocacy. Refugees identified with JRS and were part of our mission and family".

[12] Expressed by Mark Raper SJ, former JRS International Director, as he explained JRS' ministry of pastoral accompaniment among refugees. Cf. JRS, *Everybody's challenge,* p. 85.

I find it telling, though not surprising, that of the three pillars of JRS—accompaniment, service and advocacy—the one less written about in reflection documents about JRS' work throughout the years is service. It is telling because of the three, the one that actually appears in the name of the organisation is 'service'. But it is not surprising because there is no doubt, looking at the hundreds of educational, health, development, counselling, self-reliance and many other projects that JRS has developed and implemented, that JRS has indeed provided great service to thousands upon thousands of refugees. What is worth pointing out is the emphasis on the approach with which this service has been provided: service is always based on the needs of refugees as identified by the refugees themselves, always responds to these needs directly and practically, and is always offered not as a work of charity, but as a matter of justice.[13] This approach is guided by the mandate given to the Society of Jesus with regard to the promotion of justice as an absolute requirement of the service of faith (cf. GC 32, decree 4), and informs the advocacy efforts of JRS in identifying the root causes that force people to flee, so that these can be addressed and hopefully remedied. Unfortunately, and realistically, it will take a long time before such remedies can have their desired effect. So, in the meantime, JRS' advocacy efforts are also targeted to prevent abuses being inflicted on refugees and to improve their quality of life.

As mentioned in chapter 4, JRS advocacy follows the Catholic Church's expanded understanding of the word 'refugee' and thus encompasses victims of armed conflicts, erroneous economic policy, natural disasters and internally displaced peoples (IDPs). As stated in JRS' advocacy manual, it carries out advocacy through a wide range of activities:

> Seeking opportunities to advocate for those whose needs are forgotten by others; addressing both the immediate needs as well as longer-term policy objectives of specific groups; being closed to the people concerned, and supporting their hopes and aspirations; giving people the opportunity to tell their stories; creating spaces for dialogue between the centres of power and those who want to bring about positive change; tailoring [its] approach to make it appropriate to local conditions, reflecting local needs, resources and opportunities; and prioritising [its] efforts on the basis of the value that JRS can give to supplement the work of others.[14]

[13] It must be acknowledged, at the same time, that service towards the refugee 'cause' has required other forms apart from direct programs or projects. "For this reason I would say that our service to refugees through political analysis, research, reflection and public debate, in order to deepen the awareness of this great human tragedy of our time at all levels of public life, is perhaps more urgent today, when refugees face open hostility and closed borders in many countries, than a decade ago, when world-wide compassion and generosity extended them a warm welcome", thus wrote Fr Kolvenbach in a letter to the whole Society in 1990, cf. JRS, *Everybody's Challenge,* p. 53. A group of JRS workers at a seminar in Kigali in August 1995, answering the question *'What do you regard as essential to JRS?',* replied: "JRS' style of service is human and spiritual, seeking the long term good of the refugees, while not neglecting needs that are immediate or urgent. Our service is pastoral and educational, most often with a training component". Cf. JRS, *Everybody's challenge,* p. 73.

[14] Cf. JRS, *Advocacy in Jesuit Refugee Service,* Rome: JRS Publications 2011, pp. 3-4. Looking at this listing, it becomes clear that "advocacy [is] a multifaceted reality that assumes various concrete forms besides the defence of human rights. The guaranteeing of conditions such as education, microcredit schemes, income-generating projects, skills acquisition, and women's empowerment, all of which further the socioeconomic development of

Some of the primary areas and issues within which this advocacy takes place include: education, protection of internally displaced persons, food security, urban refugees, detention issues, protection to prevent return to unsafe countries, seeking durable solutions (i.e. voluntary repatriation, integration in countries of asylum or resettlement in third countries), landmines and cluster munitions, child soldiers, sexual and gender based violence, climate induced displacement and peace and reconciliation initiatives. As this list shows, the challenges are many and complex and require an in-depth knowledge and experience of the issues involved. This is the reason why advocacy cannot be separated from the two other JRS pillars of accompaniment and service. *Accompaniment becomes advocacy when an appeal is made by a JRS staff member, on behalf of a refugee, to an outside party that can provide help.*[15] It is this unique perspective on refugee issues, deriving directly from JRS' accompaniment and service, that allows its advocacy to offer help, hope and a voice to vulnerable people on the move.

5.3. Hope and hospitality: two basic values of JRS

As stated in its *Strategic Framework* for 2012-2015, the mission of JRS is based on faith in a God who is present in human history, in all of its joyful and tragic moments. It is inspired by the compassion and love of Jesus for the poor and the excluded and by the seven core values which inform all the work it does: compassion, hope, dignity, solidarity, hospitality, justice and participation. With respect to hope, this value states: "JRS aims to give hope to refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. We provide a spiritual and practical response to their plight". In regards to hospitality, "JRS aspires to be hospitality in action. We walk alongside, accompany and offer hospitality to the most vulnerable, those 'at the frontiers of humanity'"...[16]

5.3.1. Hope and faith: what distinguishes JRS

> Working with refugees, I realise more and more that unless I give myself, it would be better that I gave nothing. People who are starving, homeless, friendless, so easily lose the sense of their human dignity. It is not enough to give them what they need. I must give in such a way that my giving restores their self-worth, their human dignity, in such a way that their hope and trust in mankind are rekindled.[17]

displaced populations, are among the different facets of advocacy". Cf. AGBONKHIANMEGHE, "Key Ethical Issues in Practices and Policies of Refugee-Serving NGOs and Churches", p. 228.

[15] Cf. JRS, *Advocacy in Jesuit Refugee Service,* p. 4.

[16] Cf. JRS, *Strategic Framework 2012-2015,* Rome: JRS Publications 2011, p. 7. As one of the strategies to promote hospitality, the *Framework* lists "We will oppose xenophobia and all forms of marginalisation and exclusion, and defend the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to full protection", p. 14.

[17] This reflection, shared by Bill Yeomans, an English Jesuit who accompanied refugees in Asia Pacific for many years before his death in 1989, captures the spirit of service of JRS. Cf. JRS, *In the footsteps of Pedro Arrupe*, p 14. Father Kolvenbach echoes his words as he comments: "What is very clear is that JRS brings hope. Refugees understand that you are people who are interested in them, who really believe that they have a future. The way of acting of JRS is real grace. It is involved with people who are victims of injustice, of

It is not easy being a humanitarian worker; to witness day in and day out scenes of human pain and suffering in some of the harshest and most violent places in the world. And yet, even as a relief worker you can choose to either remain 'distant' (in a professional sense, which means that you can still be sympathetic and empathetic to people experiencing such suffering) or become personally involved in the lives of those you serve. But if you choose the latter, as most JRS staff do—you have to allow yourself to be touched and moved in such a way that their suffering becomes also part of you. As Fr Kolvenbach used to say: "it is much easier to... help in a way that you do not suffer. You just do your job. But this will not be the way for those who work in the framework of JRS".[18] This is part of that "giving of yourself" that Bill Yeomans speaks about in the above quote. Giving of oneself in such a way that it rekindles their *hope and trust in humankind.* (cf. GC 35, decree 2, *A fire that kindles other fires*). It sounds right and it sounds good, but it does not always feel right or good, in particular in those situations where we feel powerless to do much about the great suffering we encounter. It is at these times that our faith in a God who encountered suffering and made it God's own, makes all the difference. And if this is true for us, it is more so for the refugees themselves. A Burundian widow from Lukole camp in Western Tanzania once said: "God understands us because He has also lost a son".[19] The mystery and meaning of suffering encapsulated in one sentence! And because God understands, we may never lose confidence that God will answer our prayers, even if that takes a long time. Nathaniel, a former catechist working with JRS in Tanzania, and who had been a refugee most of his life, puts it this way:

> There are many difficulties and little joy for us refugees, yet it is impossible for a Christian to lose hope. The patience and endurance I need come from God. After more than 30 years of being a refugee, I am confident God knows when I will return home to Burundi.[20]

JRS personnel often talk about their encounters—seeing them as a gift for which they are truly grateful—with people of deep faith, who live out that faith not only through devotional practices but through great generosity, sharing the little they have, because that is what the Christian gospel message—or the message of their own scriptures in other faith traditions—calls them to do. This generosity leads to mutual sharing, growing and surviving together in what otherwise would be an uncompromising environment.

By its essence, the giving of oneself should be a gratuitous act, because it is an act of love. Love is at the core of and the key to gratuity. Some might feel that it is politically incorrect to speak of our engagement with refugees in terms of love. Perhaps they think it is not

violence, of disorder, who are really in despair and it gives the best of itself so that refugees can come out of their despair", p.15.

[18] Cf. JRS, *In the footsteps of Pedro Arrupe*, p. 17.

[19] Cf. JRS, *God in Exile*, p. 18.

[20] Cf. JRS, *God in Exile*, p. 33.

professional enough. But throughout the years I have met many JRS people who talk about their relationship with refugees in terms of friendship, in the language of love. They talk about individuals, mentioning them by name... those whose names have been imprinted in their hearts. And that is the only possible way, when you truly care about people; they are no longer "impersonal masses" or simple statistics, but persons of value and gifts, with their own unique story and history.

As people of faith, our service to refugees is rooted in the sacred reality that each person has been created in the image and likeness of God, and deserves to be treated as such. Not all JRS workers would necessarily define themselves as 'people of faith'. But without wanting to sound paternalistic, I believe they are. If we consider faith as that which gets us out of bed each morning (the belief that every human being has basic rights that can never be negated), as that on which we put our trust (the dignity and value of the human person and their capacity to respond in kind to generosity and compassion), as that which is the non-negotiable in our lives (the sacredness of life), then we all are people of faith. For many JRS personnel, these 'faiths' are also accompanied by a belief in a God who has created each human person in love, to live life abundantly and to the fullest. And for many, this belief translates into practicing a particular set of rituals and adhering to what are commonly called religious conventions; they are happy to be part of a church.[21]

As representative of the Catholic Church, JRS wears a distinctive badge. In fact, it is this religious 'affiliation' (seen from the outside), this basic and essential motivating aspect (as experienced from the inside) that I believe constitutes the greater differentiating factor between JRS and other organisations. Even in countries where, for political or ideological reasons, JRS has had to register as a non-government charitable organisation (rather than as a religious one), it has never hidden purposely this fundamental faith value. In camps, in detention centres, in urban settings, JRS is acknowledged as a religious, Christian organisation, and as far as I know, this has never been a limitation or a hindrance to carrying out its work.

> Today, JRS is and operates as an agency. The choice of an agency profile is simply what we call in our language *an apostolic instrument,* to give greater effectiveness to JRS' activities. In order to enter countries, to work in the camps under UN coordination and to cooperate with other groups in serving refugees, JRS presents itself as a non government organisation, in the same way as a school or a university has a secular identity. Yet it is a faith organisation, and

[21] Even those who initially join JRS because they are attracted and impressed by its work with refugees, by its *ethos*, its way of proceeding, and who at the time claim not to profess any affiliation to a religious community, have often expressed how their time with JRS, and especially through witnessing the faith of those they serve (refugees and asylum seekers of many faith traditions) has opened in their lives possibilities to explore a religious dimension they had not considered before.

> first of all a refugee service. We only have to open the bible to see that JRS responds directly to the commandments of the Lord. To work with refugees is already in line with the Gospel.[22]

The majority of people JRS has served in the past thirty three years are neither Catholic nor Christian. If for no other reason, this is simply due to the geographical distribution of the areas of major conflicts in the world during this period of time: Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. And yet, in the best of circumstances (when they are not hindered by erratic assumptions, preconceived biases, unfounded fears), people of faith, regardless of their faith tradition, somehow learn to recognise a deep sense of commonality with other people of faith.[23] I remember having dinner once with an Iraqi doctor, an asylum seeker who stayed at one of our JRS shelters in Sydney. He was a highly educated man and a deeply devout Muslim. During dinner he asked me to explain to him our Christian belief about the Incarnation. It was not your typical over the table conversation! As I tried my best, clumsily I must confess, to explain what it meant for us as Christians to believe that God, in God's profound and unconditional love for us, had decided to enter into the human condition and become man, he listened carefully, and I could see how hard he tried to understand what I was saying. But he could not. In his concept of God, as I understood it, the divinity could not become human, for it went against the very same essence of what God is. He actually apologised for not being able to agree with me! But he also thanked me, because he said that, for the first time in his life, he felt able to express his faith freely to a person of a different faith tradition.[24] And then he said something that was certainly the biggest compliment he felt he could give me: "Father, you are a man of God".

Rooted in their deep experience of their God, refugees have taught us much about hope, courage, solidarity and generosity. They have lost almost everything, but their faith gives

[22] Extract from Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ's talk to the JRS Regional Directors, Rome, 23 June, 1997. Cf. JRS, *Everybody's challenge,* p. 78.

[23] Working as it does in many countries where Christianity is a not the religion of the majority of the population, means that some of JRS staff in these countries are also non-Christian. Attracted by JRS' commitment and mission to reach out to refugees and internally displaced people, they join JRS, even if this means facing hardship and challenges. A young Muslim woman from Ambon island in Indonesia relates: "Difficulties soon arose. Displaced Muslims remained suspicious of JRS. To make matters worse, my mother was angry and afraid when she heard I was cooperating with Christians; I could be targeted as a traitor and even killed. I was threatened and my neighbours avoided me, spreading false rumours about me. This made me sad, but I persisted. I believed I was on the holy and true path of God, and he would protect me... Gradually, my family started to believe in my work, especially my mother. She is so proud of me now, telling visitors at home of my service among displaced people. As one who believes in God, I always pray according to my faith. Before, I never bothered about other religions; in JRS I learned how to live with them, to love without distinction because all people are equal." Cf. JRS, *God in Exile*, pp. 34-5.

[24] This religious freedom, as a right, is paramount in JRS' pastoral approach to refugees: "JRS has a pastoral and human obligation to defend and promote this basic human right to freedom of worship, whether the refugees are Muslim, Buddhist or Christian. Conversely, no religious practice may be imposed on refugees either by force or through the 'blackmail' (whether subtle or not) of assistance offered exclusively to those who attend religious services." Cf. JRS, *Everybody's challenge,* p. 91.

them the determination to live and hope for a better future. And their faith impels us, as people of God, as Church, to do all we can so that they will not be disillusioned:

> For the Church, the refugees are a constant reminder that the people of God is essentially a pilgrim people, never settled, always on the move, always searching, always reaching out further. We must be a Church of mission, not of maintenance, whose task is ever to question prevailing attitudes and structures, especially those that discriminate against the poor and oppressed.[25]

5.3.2. Hospitality: being welcomed by messengers of God

> To accompany refugees is to affirm that God is present in human history, even in most tragic episodes... In companionship with Jesus Christ and serving his mission in the midst of refugees, JRS can be an effective sign of God's love and reconciliation.[26]

In an earlier chapter, we referred to the movement that can take place from hostility to hospitality. Fr Lluís Magriñà, former international director of JRS, beautifully summarises what this movement means in the context of forcibly displaced peoples and how such movement can lead to healing:

> Hostility comes from ignorance, hospitality from openness. Hostility towards strangers is born in a heart with barriers, hardened and incapable of seeing richness in diversity. The collective hostility of the western world can be healed by learning from hospitality in other cultures. The shift from hostility to hospitality happens when one experiences welcome, the gift of opening oneself to the reality of an individual or a family of refugees.[27]

In the earlier story told by Treza, she spoke of Sr Elisabeth's visits to the refugees' tents, to their homes. Sr Elisabeth would have been welcomed in each one of these tents with care, with warmth, with joy. During her initial days in the camp, she would have been a stranger, yet another humanitarian worker who had come to the camp to offer help and services. And that she had done. But her presence in their homes, her efforts to come and meet them where they were, meant that she had given these refugee women the opportunity to act as her hosts. True accompaniment leads to true hospitality, where hosts and visitors exchange places, as

[25] Part of a statement given by a group of JRS regional coordinators at a meeting in 1985 in Chiang Mai. JRS, *Everybody's challenge,* p. 71.
[26] Cf. The JRS Charter, no. 15.
[27] JRS, *In the footsteps of Pedro Arrupe*, p. 41. In his message for Lent 1998, John Paul II, using the scripture verse, *Come, 0 blessed of my Father, for I was poor, marginalized and you welcomed me!*, as his theme, emphasised the ever greater need to offer welcome in a world characterised also by an increasing hostility: "Every Christian feels called to share the pain and difficulty of the 'other' in whom God Himself is hidden. However, this opening to the needs of others implies a truly warm welcoming... This atmosphere of welcoming is increasingly necessary in confronting today's diverse forms of distancing ourselves from others. This is profoundly evidenced in the problem of millions of refugees and exiles, in the phenomenon of racial intolerance as well as intolerance toward the person whose only "fault" is a search for work and better living conditions outside his own country and in the fear of all who are different and thus seen as a threat... As regards these people, the welcoming of them remains a challenge for the Christian community which cannot ignore its obligation to respond so that everyone is able to find living conditions suitable to the dignity of a child of God!" Cf. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/lent/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_09091997_lent-1998_en.html Accessed 7 October 2013.

each one welcomes the other into the other's 'sacred space', regardless of the physical conditions of those abodes.

Some of my most vivid and cherished memories of the three years I visited the Villawood detention centre in Sydney are the times when I visited several Sri Lankan families in the low security area of the compound. These families lived in small houses (usually two families sharing the facilities) and had access to a kitchen where they could cook their own meals. Invariably I would be welcomed with a very sweet hot cup of tea and biscuits and, on some special occasions, I would be offered a delicious meal of fish curry and rice. I would always arrive after the midday meal, so I usually ate alone, with the family sitting around me, watching me eat. At first this was a bit disconcerting and uncomfortable, but I soon grew accustomed to this situation. I remember particularly the first meal Reneka served me. The food was delicious, and I made sure to express my pleasure in eating it, not only through words (her knowledge of English was limited and my Tamil inexistent), but with gestures and signs and sounds of delight, for I could see how much pleasure she derived from my enjoyment.

I had met the family initially a few months before in another detention centre on Christmas Island, and at that time, because of the lack of facilities such as they had now, they had been unable to host me as they would have wanted. But she had promised that, if she ever made it to Sydney, she would cook me a meal I would never forget. She fulfilled that promise, several times over. The family was eventually given protection by the Australian government and allowed to stay in Australia. Reneka had given birth while she and her husband were still in detention. They wanted to baptise their son into the Catholic faith, and asked me to do the baptism, but we had to wait until they had been released. We could have done it in the detention centre, but they did not want a record of any kind that showed that their son had ever been kept in a place of detention, and certainly did not want it to appear in his baptism certificate. Their son had been born on Easter Monday, so Reneka and Reuben chose to name him 'Risen' to celebrate the gift and mystery of new life in our Risen Lord. As Reuben put it so aptly: "we too have risen to a new life in this country we can now call our home". To me this family's gratitude, affection and hope spoke of God. Their faith in God kept them going through some of the most difficult moments of their journey to Australia. During their perilous journey in a small, rickety boat, they thought several times that they would surely perish, but never doubted that God was with them: "He always protected us".

5.4. A mutual journey of self-discovery: teachings and learnings on peace, reconciliation and healing

> I see a tremendous opening for the Society, and not only as regards work among refugees. This work will be a school in which we learn many things.[28]

Conflicts and wars always lead to violence. These conflicts cause rifts between people and the violence that ensues ends up splitting them into bands of perpetrators and victims. But it is not always clear (especially to those deeply involved in large scale and long lasting conflicts) who is the perpetrator and who is the victim. For it is not uncommon that reversals of fortune turn one into the other, several times over. What it is clear is that in these cases division is always present, and peace is always absent. And the longer these conflicts last, the more difficult it becomes to unite warring factions and to re-establish peace. What makes it even more complicated is that in many cases these conflicts pit brother against brother, neighbour against neighbour, friend against friend. We might expect to be attacked, hurt and killed by an enemy, but what do we do when the one attacking, hurting or killing us used to be 'someone like us', even a close relative or a dear friend?[29]

Peace building and reconciliation have always been key aspects of the ministry of JRS, beginning at the grass root level, bringing together families in conflict, holding peace and reconciliation workshops, creating safe-heavens and spaces of healing. I witnessed examples of such safe-heavens in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Northern Kenya during my short visit there a couple of years ago. These spaces are surrounded (and protected) by fences made of thorny bushes. From the outside, they are far from inviting, but once you cross the gate and enter one of these 'sanctuaries', a sense of peace and a feeling of hospitality envelops you. There are trees and bushes and even some flowers planted everywhere. Tables and chairs have been placed under the shade of these trees, so people can come, sit and talk about their differences. Several counsellors and facilitators, all of them trained by JRS, all of them refugees themselves, run different programs (which include massage and reflexology!) and counselling sessions. There is no recrimination, no pointing fingers, no blaming. None of these have a place here. The goal is reconciliation and fostering anything that leads to it. Witnessing to reconciliation is a role the Church should play everywhere, without exceptions. These safe heavens have been of great importance especially for women and children, the most vulnerable, offering them a space for healing in an ever present harsh environment.

[28] Fr Arrupe said these words during a meeting in Thailand with Jesuits involved in the new apostolate with refugees. He pronounced them on 6 August 1981, the day before he had the stroke (as he returned to Rome), which left him partially paralysed and permanently impaired his speech.

[29] "As people who have suffered multiple trauma and loss, refugees also need to regain internal peace. Many refugees find themselves paralysed by their distress. Some harbour resentment and even hatred because of wrongs inflicted. These feelings then become in themselves a reason to survive, at worst finding expression in armed struggle". Cf. JRS, *Horizons of learning, 25 years of JRS education*, Rome: JRS Publications 2005, p. 76.

Working and being with refugees has taught us about our own hatred and antagonisms, the lack of peace in our hearts and in our own 'developed' nations and in our communities, the need for reconciliation and healing. It is often said that the best students are those who are willing to learn and that an important part of teaching well is being able to foster that desire for learning and growth. If we think we have nothing to learn from someone, then there is little they can teach us. Thankfully, for those who have been part and continue to be part of JRS, their work with refugees has always been considered a school "in which we learn many things". And it has always been "adult-based education"—within an atmosphere of mutual sharing, respect, openness, interaction, companionship and a sense of shared responsibility. The deep faith and unfailing hope of refugees "have led us to rediscover these spiritual values in our own lives... we have found Christ again in the faces and lives of these abandoned people, a Christ who is beckoning and calling us to follow Him".[30]

Refugees have much to share and contribute to host countries, either during limited periods of time, as they await safe return to their homelands, or as future permanent residents and citizens, where their contributions will be offered through a lifetime. And they are usually so grateful to their hosts that they feel compelled to keep giving back over and over again. They enrich these countries with new cultures and languages, with new perspectives and imagination. But the gift that is perhaps the greatest and the most needed, as we have been emphasising throughout this paper, is the gift of hope. It is amazing to see how easily and readily hope and solidarity emerge when a refugee shares his story, her feelings, his life. I have seen it many times. Part of it, I believe, is the message, but almost as importantly is the delivery of such message, in particular if the refugee's faith and religious beliefs have been an essential part of their survival. In those cases, the message is shared without resentment, without guilt tripping, without remorse and often without blaming those who caused them so much pain. And the 'clue' to this, as we have mentioned before, is the fact that refugees cannot afford to live in the past: it is too painful, too soul-destroying, too disempowering. They can only afford to live in the present, think in the present, work in the present. For many, the present continues to be a struggle: learning to adapt to new homes, cultures, languages in a land foreign to their own; or returning home to rebuild from the ashes what violence and hatred have destroyed. For many too, the trauma and pain they experienced will continue to haunt them, possibly throughout their lives. But they have to do all they can to continue living, moving forward, and this endeavour requires all the energy they have. Living in the present is another lesson we can learn from refugees. It is a lesson worth learning, because it will help us recover that peace we lack in our hearts.

[30] Part of a statement given by a group of JRS regional coordinators at a meeting in 1985 in Chiang Mai. JRS, *Everybody's challenge,* p. 71.

5.5. Spreading the message of hope

Always be ready to give an account of the hope that is in you (*1 Peter 3:15*)

5.5.1. Moving into the cities: urban refugees

In line with the global urbanisation patterns affecting especially developing countries, it was not unexpected that refugees should eventually move out of refugee camps and into the cities. This movement has brought adverse issues of its own. Asylum seekers in urban settings often experience rejection, xenophobia, prejudice based on stereotyping, resentment, hatred and violence. In some developing countries this resentment would seem to have some foundation. Citizens of those countries, where resources are scarce, where poverty is the rule and where unemployment runs rife, see asylum seekers and refugees getting 'special privileges' and being offered opportunities that are not available to them. This can certainly happen and JRS has had to be extremely careful in many situations to avoid creating inequalities that can lead to rejection of the very same people they seek to protect. One of the guiding principles has been to involve the local communities (and make them beneficiaries) of projects that JRS sponsors and sustains.[31] This not only avoids creating such inequalities, but also fosters integration and builds a sense of community. When you work side by side with the 'other', when you have an opportunity to listen to his or her story, to realise that they are not so different to you after all, and especially that they do not pose a threat to your way of life (and indeed can enrich it and enhance it!), then you are more willing to let them stay and more open to welcome them into your home.

JRS has continued its policy of employing, as much as possible, refugees or ex-refugees to provide its services in urban settings.[32] This moving account by Peter Balleis SJ, current JRS international director, witness to the reason they can be so effective:

> For me, accompanying Mama Marceline and Mama Jeanine (JRS nurses) through the streets of Johannesburg was like walking with two angels. Others may not recognise Marceline and Jeanine as angels, but the sick they visit know very well they are messengers of loving care, bringing words of hope and encouragement... How can women who have suffered so much keep reaching out to others who are suffering? Marceline and Jeanine are also refugees who

[31] Earlier in 2013, JRS published its first handbook for working with urban refugees. The document, based on the experience gather over many years in different parts of the world, presents first a list of the guiding principles that underpin JRS work in urban settings. It then details, in six sections, the major challenges faced by urban refugees (access to health, social and other basic services; securing livelihoods that not only provide economic self-sufficiency, but that also restore dignity, confidence and hope as well as promote integration; access to psychosocial and mental health support; access to education; access to material and basic needs; and protection and legal rights). Each challenge is addressed through two fundamental questions: 1) What are the underlying values and principles that JRS must safeguard as it addresses this challenge?, and 2) How can JRS best address this particular need and implement responses based on practical methodologies and strategies? Cf. *Working with Urban Refugees: A handbook*, Rome: JRS Publications 2013.

[32] "Whenever possible, JRS consults, trains and recruits refugees, and encourages them to participate in planning, implementing and reviewing projects". (Guidelines of the JRS, no. 41), cf. JRS, *Everybody's Challenge*, p. 24.

> lost their home and people they love... I ask Marceline and Jeanine what keeps them going. From where do they get their motivation, compassion and patience? They know what it means, they reply. As refugees, they have their own tragic stories to tell. And "they are our people".[33]

They are our people. This assertion does not necessarily mean that they come from the same country. In a capital city like Johannesburg one encounters refugees from several neighbouring African countries—Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi. Marceline and Jeanine affirm this connection because they know very well what these refugees have suffered and understand what they are now going through. These 'angels', messengers of God's love, have been there before. *They are our people... they are like us.* Through their shared experience, any possibility of exclusion or rejection just melts away. How this contrasts with expressions like 'they do not belong here', 'he is not one of us', 'go back to where you belong'!

In European cities, asylum seekers and refugees from African countries cannot 'hide'. Their appearance betrays them, so that 'he is not one of us' (together with all that this attitude connotes) is the expression they continuously read in the faces of the people they meet wherever they go. I never fully understood the effect this has on a person's psyche until I experienced something similar a few years ago. As part of my early formation as a Jesuit, I used to visit asylum seekers at the detention centre in Melbourne in my capacity as chaplain. After a year, some of the detainees got to know me fairly well. I was absent for the summer months and by the time I resumed my visits to the detention centre, I had grown a very dark beard. As I walked into the men's area I was greeted by a group of Iranian asylum seekers. When they saw me, they all commented on it (most of them were now clean-shaven) and one of them, with a grin on his face, exclaimed, "you now look more like a terrorist than we do!" They all laughed and I shared in their laughter. Later on, when the visiting period was over, I told one the guards that I was ready to leave. He smiled at me and said, "Of course you are!" It took me a little while to realise that he thought that I was actually one of the asylum seekers. Unknown to me, I had dropped my visitor's pass somewhere, so the guard assumed that I was joking about leaving. And he wasn't about to let me go! At that point, one of the men from the group came over and said to the guard, "it's ok, he is not one of us!" Still, the guard was not too convinced and only believed me when the other chaplain who was also visiting the centre told him that I was with her.

I still remember the fear and anxiety I experienced when I suddenly felt myself a prisoner there. In the years since I have also often reflected on those words, 'he is not one of us', and on what makes us feel that we are accepted and belong, or that we are ostracized, feared and rejected. And I have also wondered how is it that our appearance, which in turn connotes—

[33] JRS, *Revista Servir*, no. 55, March 2013, Rome: JRS Publications 2013, pp. 3-5.

whether accurately or not—a particular culture, background or religion, has so much to do with how we are treated. A few years later, when I let my beard grow again, I was reminded of this experience over and over again as I got on airplanes and people looked suspiciously and sometimes fearfully at my backpack; or as others left empty seats next to me in the train, or yet as others stared at me as I walked down the street. These experiences raised some challenging questions for me. As we live out our faith and mission as people of faith, do we truly believe that Jesus' message of compassion and justice is intended for all peoples, especially for those who suffer from persecution, alienation or abuse? In our service of faith, directed towards the justice of God's Kingdom, how do we make sure that we do not create and promote an exclusive Kingdom? And what do I need to learn and understand about others in order to avoid falling into this trap?

5.5.2. Detention Centres

Governments use detention centres (sometimes called transitional processing centres) to place asylum seekers who arrive in their countries without identifying documents or visas. While most organisations working with forcibly displaced people would agree that such places might be needed (especially to carry out medical, identity and security checks), what they truly object to is such detention becoming arbitrary and indefinite. Sometimes these centres are built in very remotes areas. This fulfils at least two carefully, well-thought out objectives. First, they intend to give the message to future asylum seekers that if they risk coming to these countries, they will be imprisoned, sometimes indefinitely, for no other crime than trying to escape persecution and death. Second, these remote, prison-like structures fulfil the purpose of keeping asylum seekers out of sight (and thus 'out of mind'), so that the general population can feel 'safe and protected'.[34]

However, these centres as well as other unfair detention policies (and in some cases illegal) since they breach international treaties and obligations (e.g. keeping minors and other vulnerable people in detention), that attempt to act as deterrents to 'prospective' asylum seekers, usually fail to have an impact because for refugees nothing they find in places of asylum can be more horrendous than anything they have left behind. Besides, when you have escaped persecution, war and death, all you can think about is reaching a safe place. Something within you tells you that those waiting on the other side of the border or across the sea will surely understand what you have endured, will surely have compassion and will surely, once they know what you have gone through, have no choice but to welcome you and offer you asylum. You might hear about those detention centres where others like you have

[34] Even when detention centres are located within a city, sometimes they are disguised so well (no descriptive signs outside, high walls and fences surrounding the compounds, extensive fields all around) that neighbours do not even realise they are there.

been imprisoned for months or even years awaiting for their asylum cases to be resolved. But you think to yourself "that's only for those who are not real refugees; once they hear my story, surely, they will believe it". But in many instances, this is not the case. And perhaps there is nothing more soul-destroying, demoralising and hope-killing to asylum seekers than being told their stories are not true.[35] That and being kept indefinitely in prison without having committed a crime, not knowing when you might be let out. An asylum seeker once told me: "I wish I had committed a crime and been sentenced to a jail period. At least then I would know when I'd be coming out". The adverse psychological effects of detention have been well documented.[36] I remember the story of a young man who had been kept in detention for nine months. In his arm he sported a neat row of small orifices, nine in total, caused by cigarette burns—one for each month of his imprisonment, he had said. He was getting ready to add a tenth. The tragic consequence is that people who have already suffered so much in their lives are made to suffer even more. How to bring hope to these places? The JRS way: through presence and accompaniment, through offering services and through unfailing advocacy.

5.5.3. Education in the margins

From its beginnings, JRS has had an emphasis on education which has distinguished it from other non-government and international government organisations which deal with more basic issues such as food, water, clothes, medical assistance and shelter. These, of course, are sorely needed, but following its criteria for projects, JRS seeks to meet needs that others do not respond to. And while these basic needs are basic for survival, education is basic and essential for growth, development and creating possibilities for the future.[37] Education is yet another aspect that highlights the specific 'temporal' experience of displaced peoples. Whether they have had access to formal education or not in the past, they recognise the importance that such education will have in their future and in the future of their children.

[35] People who have worked and accompanied asylum seekers and refugees for a long time know that a 'criteria of truth' is not always the best way to assess their stories. Are all stories factually accurate? Not always. But those assessing asylum claims have an obligation to dig deeper into the reasons why this might be so. Sometimes asylum seekers are told (by others seeking asylum or people smugglers) to 'embellish' their stories or add some details because by doing so they will be granted protection. In some cases, asylum seekers are so deeply ashamed of what has happened to them, that they cannot bring themselves to tell their 'true' stories, as was the case with two young African men I knew who had been raped by their captors.

[36] Cf. JRS EUROPE, *Becoming Vulnerable in Detention: Civil Society Report on the Detention of Vulnerable Asylum Seekers and Irregular Migrants in the European Union* (The DEVAS Project), Brussels: JRS Publications 2010.

[37] "No one [education] project is like the other. However, despite the inevitable differences, there is what we may define as a universal *way of proceeding* in the JRS approach to education. Projects across the world may differ one from the other, but ultimately they are underpinned by a shared set of principles and criteria which reflect the basic mandate of JRS and which have developed over the years. Chief among them is a stress on working in partnership with refugees and offering them the necessary support and training to enable them to eventually take over projects themselves. Another criterion is a preferential option for refugees who in some way are at risk of being vulnerable or disadvantaged, like women, landmine survivors, and those who are physically challenged". Cf. JRS, *Horizons of learning*, p. 9.

And so, regardless of the precariousness of their present condition, they will make whatever sacrifices are required to have access to education—building makeshift schools themselves, sharing their meagre resources to provide for teachers when needed, walking hours to and from school. Through these initiatives education can have a transforming and enabling power not only for the children but for the refugee community as a whole, helping them to look beyond the trauma of displacement, rejection and exile and empowering them to charter the path of their own future:[38]

> Education never fails to bring hope. This is the primary reason for the commitment of JRS to education, that it lights a candle in places of darkness like refugee camps and detention centres. The process of learning instils pride in refugees for what they achieve in their—often seemingly hopeless —present and gives them valid expectations for a better future. This tangible hope is life-giving, because it spurs refugees beyond mere survival to being fully alive.[39]

But just as education opportunities promise refugees hope in exile, their absence can often lead them to despair, because they recognise in this deficiency yet another barrier that renders them more vulnerable and powerless than before. Many of them resent bitterly having been forced to lose such precious opportunities for education:

> Asylum seekers detained in western countries often face this predicament, they become obsessed with the frittering away of time. In Malta, Wedeb, a 15-year old girl from Eritrea, was detained for more than a year before the government adopted a policy to free unaccompanied minors. She would sit crouched in the corner of her crowded dormitory, clenched fists defiantly pressed against her cheeks to stem tears of helplessness as she said angrily: *The days are passing so fast, already so many months have gone by and we have learned nothing. What future is there for us when we leave?*[40]

As mentioned above, JRS has moved with the people, both literally and figuratively, as they themselves have moved. Initially, most educational activities were concentrated in primary education, but as the years went by and the childhood population grew into adolescence (supplemented by young people who were in that age range at arrival in the camps),

[38] JRS has recognised this value from the start and has made education one of its key services and advocacy issues: "JRS considers access to education to be both a human right and a means to build peace and development. Education plays a critical role in sustaining the daily lives of many forcibly displaced people. JRS considers education to be one of the four fundamental pillars of humanitarian assistance, along with food, healthcare, and shelter. Like healthcare, education has a preventive [present] dimension and the potential to pay future dividends", Cf. JRS, *Advocacy in Jesuit Refugee Service*, p. 8. This preventive dimension is linked to the capacity of educational programs to create a "framework of normalisation, dignity, and hope by offering a well-structured set of activities and social interaction". Cf. Entreculturas, *Educación en tiempo de espera. Un derecho vulnerado para millones de personas refugiadas y desplazadas*, Estudios e informes 3, Madrid: Entreculturas 2010, p. 56, (my translation).

[39] Cf. JRS, *Horizons of learning, 25 years of JRS education*, p. 11. "A school, however makeshift, does introduce a comfortable and reassuring sense of normalcy to the unnatural and often very limited environment of exile. It sets attainable goals in the here-and-now, like a school-leaving certificate, and empowers parents to be responsible for their children's destiny, and their own. These goals, which offer 'something' to take 'somewhere' makes the hoped-for future present, because their ultimate end is the acquisition of knowledge and skills to use in the country of origin or of resettlement. And this is achieved in very practical ways, by drawing on today's perceived strengths and needs to shape a brighter tomorrow", pp. 11-12.

[40] Cf. JRS, *Horizons of learning, 25 years of JRS education*, p. 12.

secondary education became also a priority. In the past few years, JRS has moved into providing access to higher, tertiary education for refugees both in refugee camps and urban settings. Worthy of mention is the Jesuit Commons – Higher Education on the Margins (JC-HEM) project, which through collaboration between JRS and Jesuit universities, provides access to higher education through using online technology in learning sites located within refugee camps.[41] One such site is located in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Northern Kenya, close to the border with South Sudan, which I also visited a couple of years ago. It is hard to imagine that such a place might even exist in this remote place located in the middle of the Turkana desert. And so, crossing the thorny bush fence that surrounds this 'centre of higher learning', is like witnessing a miracle. And in fact, it is short of one, as those who have set it up and maintain it would tell you. These 'tertiary learning sites' are proof that where there is a will, there is a way. And that, as refugees never tire of assert, as long as there is hope, everything is possible.

5.6. As a way of synthesis: seedlings of hope that are able to grow

> St Ignatius called us to go anywhere we are most needed for the greater service of God. The spiritual as well as material need of nearly 16 million refugees throughout the world today could scarcely be greater: God is calling us through these helpless people. We should consider the chance of being able to assist them a privilege that will, in turn, bring great blessings to ourselves and our Society.[42]

Throughout this paper we have often referred to refugees and other forcibly displaced people as those who have been shunned and shut out. We have seen that hospitality means receiving strangers into our homes with care, compassion, openness and an attitude of mutuality and self-sharing—all aspects of what we could summarise in one word: love. But in the case of refugees, we have noted that this is also a question of justice, because in many cases they have been treated as criminals, when their only 'crime' has been to do all they could to survive and keep their loved ones alive. Earlier we articulated and commented on the connection that exists between justice and love, the former being a concrete way to the latter.[43] In the case of refugees, this means that we have a responsibility to 'bring them' back into society. As Fr Kolvenbach has stated, "They have the right to be brought back. I am very grateful for what is done not just to help refugees pass the time, but to help them to

[41] Cf. http://www.jesuitcommons.org/?bid=40&fid=200&nid=60.
[42] From the letter by Fr Pedro Arrupe, then Superior General, to all Jesuit Major Superiors, 14 November 1980.
[43] This is succinctly and clearly expressed by Dieter B. Scholz SJ, former JRS International Director: "Charity should permeate our relationship with refugees, and justice be our criterion when having to bear judgement on the politics involved in the refugee crisis of our time. I do not see many signs of hope that a rapid change for the better is imminent. But I do believe that a shared commitment to charity and justice on the part of those working with refugees can gradually transform the quality of the refugee problem itself, making the suffering of millions of people less unbearable and giving hope without which no person could live. In that sense, I fully agree with a UNHCR poster which says: *The refugee problem isn't hopeless. Unless you think so*". Cf. JRS, *Everybody's challenge,* p. 69.

prepare their future".[44] As we have seen, education and training have played and continue to play an essential part of this preparation for the future, as have also done the fostering and creating spaces of healing, peace and reconciliation. All of them have provided the fertile soil, warmth, water and nutrients that "seedlings of hope" carried in the hearts and hands and faces of forcibly displaced people need in order to grow. And one essential "nutrient" we have alluded to already is dignity. Or as Fr Mateo Aguirre, former JRS Regional Director in West Africa, puts it "the dignity of hope". This means that refugees are not only recipients of material support, projects, or services discerned and provided by their carers, but are themselves the drivers and shapers of activities that make it possible for them to fulfil their desires and dreams.

[44] Cf. JRS, *In the footsteps of Pedro Arrupe*, p 16.

Chapter 6

The gift of hope: a 'hidden' treasure

> If there is no longer hope where you are, then you have to do all that you can to get to a place where you can at least cultivate that hope. No matter at what price.[1]

Throughout this paper we have strived to explore what a spirituality of hope in the lives of forcibly displaced people might look like; to understand how the forcibly displaced might live out in and through the Spirit that 'habit of the heart', that capacity to do and to endure whatever they must in their journey of appropriation of the mystery of Christ in their lives. We have looked at the situation of hope in the world, and come up with some 'reference points' to guide us in this understanding, both from the perspective of traditional theology and from the lived reality of the forcibly displaced. Looking at the principles that should guide us to respond to the hope forcibly displaced people have placed on us, led us to consider how those principles have been put into practice by a particular organisation, the Jesuit Refugee Service. In this last chapter, we attempt to bring together the insights we have gathered thus far and attempt to give 'shape' to this spirituality of hope. Forcibly displaced people have a fundamental right to speak and express their thoughts and views in their own words. For those of us who have had the privilege of being and working with them, it is not so much a matter of being a 'voice for the voiceless', but of assisting, facilitating and providing ways so that those 'without a voice' are given opportunities to express themselves. This applies not only to situations in which they need to speak up to claim their own rights, but also to those instances where they would like to share their experiences with us. The forcibly displaced have a lot to tell us, and there is much we can learn from listening to them. In that spirit, I would like to hand over my 'voice' in this chapter to the forcibly displaced and allow them to speak...

Russian dolls. You know the type: a small doll which usually opens at the waist to reveal a smaller doll within, which in turn opens again to reveal another, and still another—sometimes four or five in all. Remember the excitement you experienced the first time you had one of them in your hands and uncovered the 'treasures' hidden within? Some of our forcibly displaced friends around the world, in Africa, in Asia, in Latin America, also make 'Russian dolls', or rather they make 'Russian' baskets: finely woven, with colourful decorative patterns, and with tight-fitting covers. Similarly, when you open the larger basket it reveals a

[1] These words were spoken by an Ethiopian asylum seeker who took 16 years to get to Italy, having travelled back and forth through Sudan and Lybia, been thrown into prison, suffered torture and dehumanizing treatment and finally walked through the Egyptian desert, where he suffered from agonising thirst and saw others fall dead all around him. Cf. JRS ITALIA/Centro Astalli (sede italiana del Servizio dei Gesuiti per i Rifugiati), *Terre Senza Promesse. Storie di rifugiati in Italia*, Roma: Avagliano 2011, p. 43, (my translation from the Italian).

smaller one within, which in turn opens again to reveal another, and still another—sometimes four or five in all. A good friend once said to us that accompanying forcibly displaced peoples had been like "finding and opening small baskets, one after the other, discovering unexpected treasures in each".[2] We believe that as forcibly displaced people we hold treasures we can offer the world. For some people hearing this might be a surprise, because they think that people who have 'lost everything' have nothing left to give. For them, our treasures would indeed be 'unexpected'. But we do. We have our suffering to share, or rather, what our suffering and displacement have taught us. They are powerful experiences and lessons, *useful* experiences and lessons we would like to communicate to you. To do this, we revisit in this chapter some of the themes you have read about already in this paper, but now from *our* point of view; themes of mutuality, hospitality, solidarity and identity (sections 1-3). The main section of the chapter (section 4) is what we have termed 'characteristics of hope-gifting', and in it we open those baskets and reveal some of the hidden treasures they hold within. As the term implies, all of these treasures are offered as parts of one same multi-faceted gift—the gift of hope. A gift that needs to be accepted, cared for and shared, if it is to have the transforming potential it holds (section 5). Our reflection ends with the same image that has run through the paper as a connecting thread in the previous chapters: seedlings of hope. And now it is the time for them 'to bear fruit'.

6.1. Mutuality in sharing togehter the message of the Gospel

> Love consists in a mutual communication between the two persons. That is, the one who loves gives and communicates to the beloved what he or she has, or a part of what one has or can have; and the beloved in return does the same to the lover. (*SpEx* 231)

As you have read, our displacement is caused by many different factors: political, social, economic, philosophical, and even religious. Some of us suffer daily persecution in different parts of the world because we profess a particular faith or follow a particular religious tradition. Yet, even if the cause of our displacement is not primarily faith-related, our faith plays a very important role for many of us. We depend on spiritual resources while moving from place to place and our lives are frequently marked by a variety of religious practices.[3] As asylum seekers, migrants and refugees, we embark on dangerous journeys and, as you have seen recently, many of us die crossing oceans and borders. Often we seek and rely on God to overcome apprehension, anxiety and fear of rejection or death. We trust in God to protect us and to guide us, and those of us who are Christians, place our hope in Christ. But

[2] Cf. JRS, *God in Exile,* p. 47. These words were shared by Sr Roxanne Schares SSND (JRS Eastern Africa) in her lovely article on accompaniment, *Discovering Hidden Treasures,* in this publication.

[3] Some of these spiritual resources and religious practices include: visits to pilgrimage shrines before leaving or en route, reliance on the aid of religious organisations and institutions, reciting prayers, carrying devotional objects, fulfilling promises after arriving safely, even embracing the religious tradition of the new country as a way of gratitude or as a way to adapt or integrate to the new culture. See, for example, J. HAGAN, *Migration Miracle: Faith, Hope, and Meaning on the Undocumented Journey*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2008, for a detailed research-based study on the use of these spiritual resources and practices.

we also put our trust and our hope on human assistance from members of religious and other organisations.

Those of you who have worked with us and accompanied us for so many years have been able to help us live better at the margins of life—in refugee camps, urban dwellings for the displaced, and even in host countries which have given us resettlement, but where we still find ourselves living at those margins. Your presence and your care have always given us hope. As our friendships have developed, you have shared with us your own experiences of living 'in the margins'—your increasing sense of despair, your anxieties, and what you call failures to find meaning in life. Many of you have told us that we have been able to help you live better at your own margins of life by enabling you to love and to hope. Some of you have even said that our contribution to your lives has been irreplaceable. And that is how we feel about what you have done for us. We have thus shared our mutual gifts. Together we have learned that real mutuality has to be expressed through the ways in which we speak and act in the world. As long as people continue speaking of forcibly displaced people as 'beneficiaries', as 'victims', as 'those in need', they will continue to see us and act towards us in ways that uphold those concepts. We are more than the labels placed on us; we are real persons. Love consists in a mutual communication between the *two persons.* This is how God sees us, the God we believe in, the God we feel called to profess, within the church and everywhere.

Much has been said about the need to offer us hospitality and to be in solidarity with us. This is indispensable, but the Church's commitment to the forcibly displaced cannot be reduced purely to organising structures of hospitality and solidarity. This attitude would impoverish the riches of our vocation as people of God, called in the first place to proclaim the Good News of salvation and transmit the faith, which "is strengthened when it is given to others" *(Redemptoris missio, n. 2).* At the end of our lives we will be asked about the acts of charity we have done for the least of our brothers and sisters (cf. Mathew 25:31-45), but also about the courage and fidelity with which we have witnessed to Christ.[4] All of us have been called to be heralds of Christ, to go out and get in touch with those people that, for one reason or another, find themselves separated from his fold.[5] Perhaps in some instances we can do this more effectively than you! Our stories of suffering and survival give us credibility before people who are hurting and suffering (and they are so many!) because they can identify with them. This apostolic impulse, the wanting to labour for Christ, the wanting to bring Christ to

[4] Cf. Message of Pope John Paul II for World Migration Day 1998, n. 4.

[5] As mentioned in the *Introduction*, the scope of this study has had to be limited to the experience of Christian forcibly displaced people, and it is their 'voice' we 'hear' in this paper. But experience has shown that many forcibly displaced of other faith traditions also feel this impulse to share their faith with others.

the people and the people to Christ, is strong in our hearts. For this we can rely on the commitment of the Heart of Christ that promises us extraordinary graces. Christ is the only one who can inspire us; the only one who can give us encouragement and hope.[6]

6.1.1. Hospitality revisited

God of heaven and earth, you are the king of nations.
That this nation to which you have sent us be favourable to us.
Help us carry out all the things for which you have sent us here.
That this land may be a source of blessing for us,
And that we, in turn, might be a source of blessing too.
All glory be given to you, sole master of time and all circumstances
(*prayer by Lawrence, a refugee from Gabon*).

You have written extensively already about hospitality, its origins, its characteristics, and what it has meant for us. We thank all of you for opening up your countries, your cities and your hearts to us. Without this offering of hospitality, we literally could not have survived. Perhaps one the hardest lessons for us to learn has been that hospitality is not a one-way street, that it also involves mutuality and reciprocity. It is hard to believe this when you are on the receiving end of such a gift. But we have finally understood that our presence has been a source of transformation in your lives. As one of you shared with us not long ago:

> I soon realised that hospitality was more than simply offering a room—as in a hostel—to someone. It requires opening up two deadlocks: one for the street door and another for the heart. Only then can the feasting and the joy, the difficulties and the dreams slip through the cracks, like subtle flurries of wind. It finally dawned on me that the tightest locks were within me and then, when I opened my hands, unbolted internal armours and allowed life to penetrate the deepest parts of me, the chains were released. It was at that moment that situations of precariousness, marginalisation and injustice—the 'daily bread' of so many people, which were until then unknown to me—became clear. I could no longer be indifferent: the pain of the other manifested itself as a sacred place, almost commonplace, which led me to perceive and interpret reality in a radically different way. Nothing was the same anymore. I stopped interpreting reality as if it were a conflict between 'goodies' and 'baddies', to the point that everything seemed to have been turned upside down: neither the bad were as bad as they seemed, nor the good were as good.[7]

Hospitality *is* a two-way street of mutual ministry where we often exchange roles and can learn the most from those whom we considered powerless or of "no account" because they had ended up at the margins of life. But margins can be places of connection. And when the distinctions of 'margin' and 'centre' begin to blur, as we all share in God's hospitality, we are given a sign that the Reign of God is drawing near.[8] We have learned that not only us but so many other people feel estranged from their loved ones, from their own past, from their own selves and from God. Everybody, it seems, is looking for a hospitable place where they can

[6] Cf. P. ARRUPE, *En Él sólo… la esperanza: selección de textos sobre el Corazón de Cristo. Prólogo de Karl Rahner,* Roma: Secretariado General del Apostolado de la Oración 1982, pp. 15-16.
[7] Cf. J. RÍOS M., *Arando entre piedras, Crónicas de sufrimiento y reconciliación de un abogado en la frontera*, Maliaño (Cantabria): Sal Terrae 2013, p. 31, (my translation).
[8] Cf. RUSSELL, *Just Hospitality: God's welcome in a world of difference,* p. 65.

be part of a community and live without fear. There is so much hostility in this world! We have experienced it so often, and in being honest, we have to say that we have been guilty of it against others, too.

But as human beings we are called to create these hospitable spaces for one another, and as people of faith and hope, it is our duty.[9] How to move from this hostility to hospitality? From considering others a *hostis* to finally seeing in them a *hospes;* from their being labelled an 'enemy' to their being granted the status of 'guest'? It is not easy. As we have seen before, it requires letting go of our prejudices and our fears, recognising that in his/her otherness the stranger can enrich our lives (rather than damage them), and that we need one another, all of us.[10] When hostility is converted into hospitality then fearful strangers can become guests and reveal to their hosts the promise and gifts they carry with them. Even, as it has happened to so many of us, when the guest is unaware of possessing those gifts. Thus a good host must help her guests discover those hidden treasures and then be able to help them develop and deepen them so they can continue their way on their own and bless others as well. Hospitality, as an attitude towards life and others, requires that we affirm one another, especially in this day and age where there is so much self-doubt, so much anxiety about doing what is right.[11]

These are not easy lessons to learn, and often they can be riddled with paradox. We have felt so empty at times, so devoid of our identity, our sense of meaning, even of our emotions and our faith. Our faith has been shaken and our love has grown dim, but hope has kept us going, even when consolation from all that previously sustained us had disappeared. And God's grace has been able to transform the emptiness that comes from fear and suffering into an emptiness that has left space for freedom, to become our true selves—the glass half full needs to be half empty so God can fill it with God's grace. This has required a great deal of patience (not only from us, but from God as well!), but patience is something we have also learned, because our lives involve a great deal of waiting. And so, we have learned to welcome this feeling empty before God, because we have come to realise that this is part of our reality. Through God's grace we have been given the time and humility required to endure what we must until salvation comes, until the time of the Lord is fulfilled.[12]

[9] "[Hospitality] it is not about changing people, but about offering them space where change can take place. It is not about evangelizing or converting them to our particular position, but allowing space for the other to be freed from fear and uncertainty, to be liberated to put down roots of faith and trust, and to bear spiritual fruit. It is not a method of making our God and our way into the criteria of spirituality, but the opening of an opportunity to others to find their God and their way". Cf. CAROLYN BUTLER, "Hospitality and Spiritual Direction" in *The Way*, Vol 52, July 2013, n°. 3, p. 70.

[10] And this includes letting go of prejudices and fears against other forcibly displaced who are seen as strangers!

[11] Cf. NOUWEN, *Reaching out: the three movements of the spiritual life*, p. 61.

[12] Cf. P. VAN BREEMEN, *Como pan que se parte*, Santander: Sal Terrae 1992, p. 115. Original in English: *As bread that is broken*, New Jersey: Dimension Books 1974.

But salvation concerns the whole of life and begins here and now, not only for us, but for you as well. In accepting us, dear friends, you accept Christ marginalised and rejected. And in doing so, you are able to receive salvation for yourselves in the form of liberation from despair, from meaningless in your lives. This is one of the gifts we are able to give to you; our gift of hospitality to you. Mutuality arises as the gift of an encounter where two people, no matter how different, accept one another and share what they are; in giving we receive. These are lovely words, and perhaps they sound a bit utopian, but they describe real events. We have experienced them; many of you have as well.

6.1.2. Solidarity revisited

For the Christian, any rest before the eternal one will be premature.[13]

What can we tell you about solidarity that you have not said already? Those who have accompanied us for so many years have expressed beautifully what solidarity should be and how it should be lived out. We recall their lovely words here:

> We want our presence among refugees to be one of sharing with them, of accompaniment, of walking together along the same path. In so far as possible, we want to feel what they have felt, suffer as they have, share the same hopes and aspirations, see the world through their eyes. We ourselves would like to become one with refugees and displaced people so that, all together, we can begin the search for a new life. This attempt to identify with the poor and rejected, however hesitant and imperfect, has brought us untold blessings... In a word, we have found Christ again in the faces and lives of these abandoned peoples, a Christ who is beckoning and calling us to follow him.[14]

And we have indeed experienced this kind of solidarity![15] What can we tell you about solidarity that you have not said already? What we can tell you is that we want to offer you

[13] Cf. GONZÁLEZ-CARVAJAL, *Con los pobres, contra la pobreza,* p. 100.

[14] Cf. JRS, *Everybody's Challenge,* pp. 70-71. About these 'untold blessings' the text says: "For by their very poverty, they [the forcibly displaced] teach us to become detached from material possessions and ourselves. Their insecurity and uncertainty about the future show us how not to rely merely on ourselves or on human planning. Their cultural values and simple dignity as human beings remind us that a person's worth is determined by what he is rather than by what he has. Their openness and generosity so often challenge us to share with them and others all that we have and are. Their happiness and laughter in the midst of adversity help us understand better the meaning of suffering. Their deep faith and unfailing hope lead us to rediscover these spiritual values in our own lives".

[15] It is worth noting here a recent example of this kind of solidarity put into action. In 2008 Jesuit institutions working with migrants began a campaign against a proposal to reform Spanish Immigration law which would allow the state to sanction (with large fines) anyone who in solidarity helped foreign nationals who lived in Spain in irregular situations. Their *manifesto,* among other things, stressed the value of solidarity with those who lacked access to the most basic of needs, including shelter, food and work. It pointed out that the government of Spain would lose all ethical and juridical legitimacy in legislating against basic Human Rights, with the sole purpose of creating intolerable conditions which would pressure these irregular migrants already in Spain into returning to their home countries or as a deterrent for those thinking about coming here. Through an internet campaign they received more than 30,000 signatures of support and finally the reform did not go through. However, at the end of 2012 a new reform, aimed at amending the Penal Code, threatened with yet another sanction involving penalties of up to two years of imprisonment for anyone who assisted (in the transit or permanence in the country) persons living in Spain in 'irregular situations'. Once again, principles and

our solidarity too; to put ourselves 'in your shoes', to try to understand the sources of your own despair and hopelessness today, so we can help you find meaning in your own lives. If you allow us to, we will walk with you, hold your hands, listen to you and share with you what we have learned. We realise that what we are asking you involves a risk. But hope always involves taking risks—of being disappointed or rejected or hurt. Opening up to another always involves risk—of whether the other will respond as a friend or foe. Yet, while "[h]ope convenes two great forces of the spirit: friendship and antagonism; one positive, the other negative... the first one is more powerful".[16]

6.2. More than a victim: acompanying from strengths, strengthening through accompaniment

> When will it straighten, that curve on the road that prevents me from seeing the horizon?
> When will stop going over my head, that wave that keeps me under water?
> When will it expand, this cramped alley that oppresses us one against the other?
> When will it bring its winds to a halt, this dense storm that distresses, roars and smashes?
> You are the Lord in the «now» who is gestating a time of justice
> a «later» that will inherit your dreams, and the endeavours of the just.[17]

We mentioned before that as long as people continue speaking of forcibly displaced people as 'victims', you will continue to see us and act towards us in ways that confirm this assumption. And the danger is that we might come to see ourselves purely in this fashion too (many of us have already fallen into this trap). Of course we have been victimised over and over again, robbed of our dignity, dehumanised. That is a reality we cannot forget and do not want to ignore. We have greatly appreciated your efforts to restore this dignity to our lives; we need them, do not stop. But we also need to remind you (not all of you, but many of you) that we are much more than passive victims, that we are fighters and survivors, endowed with great resilience, inventiveness, initiative, resourcefulness. If we did not possess these qualities, we would not have lasted very long, even with your help. We have suffered many wounds, and we need much healing in our lives; and your presence and your accompaniment have contributed and will continue to contribute to that healing. But we need you to see beyond our wounds and learn more and more to accompany us through our strengths.[18] Otherwise, you might end getting in the way of our hope!

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values as basic for any nation as solidarity and hospitality were in danger of becoming illegal. And once again, through the efforts of many organisations, individuals and local civil and government institutions, a new campaign "Salvemos la hospitalidad" (*Let's safeguard hospitality*) proved successful. The project for Legal Reform of the Penal Code was approved by the government at the end of September 2013 stating that "the reform expressly excludes penal sanctions in all cases in which the actions [of assistance] have taken place guided by humanitarian considerations". Cf. RÍOS, *Arando entre piedras*, pp. 276-279, 283.

[16] Cf. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL "Jesucristo: esperanza para el mundo", p. 70.

[17] Cf. B. GONZÁLEZ BUELTA, *La pascua de los sentidos*, Maliaño (Cantabria): Sal Terrae 2013, pp. 143-144, (my translation from his poem 'Ahora', originally in Spanish).

[18] A relatively new field of psychology called Positive Psychology emphasises this approach. Traditionally, psychology has been thought of as an area that fundamentally studies the things that are wrong with people and

We do not want to deny that our experiences of suffering have changed our lives and have destroyed possibilities that lay waiting for us. We will never become what we could have if we have remained in our lands. But this new reality, as horrendous and tragic as it might seem, has also opened up new possibilities. Perhaps they are scare, difficult to find, but they are there. *War has changed our life, not our spirit…* The path of healing and recovery will take time. We need time. Many of us have continued to struggle even after having been given the opportunity to resettle in new countries or return to our own. The trauma of the past still haunts us. The journey back to health can only come gradually and for some of us it will never be complete. But we need your encouragement. We need for you to remind us constantly of what we are capable, of what we were capable of doing in the past, and what we are capable of doing now. It is often difficult for us to recognise our strengths, especially in times of peace, of 'normality'. As long as there is threat to our lives, we will do what is required to survive, but how to survive in the drudgery of everyday, ordinary life? We need to be realistic about what is possible and we need you to challenge us in this respect. We trust you because through you accompaniment and friendship you have earned that trust. At the same time we need to be given back control of our lives, at least in those areas over which we can have control; to be given the opportunity to be committed, to have things and projects which will give meaning back to our existence. You have resources, not only material resources, but also access to opportunities and options that we lack and need. We do not demand that you share them; that demand has already been 'imposed' on you by your humanity and your faith; we simply express our gratitude in anticipation for heeding that request to respond. Perhaps we do sound too demanding? We share this with you because we have learned that in your own way you need these things too: you need to be challenged, to be given control back of your lives and the opportunity to be committed. We offer you these opportunities! Is this un-heard of, never-before-thought-of, undreamt of? Well, this is what hope is all about—looking forward to the new, the surprising and the unexpected.

6.3. Our common identity as *the people of God*

> What standard of life is required for Christians? A Christian... denies himself the right to be rich as long as there are so many who are poor and so poor.[19]

We are people of faith and hope and love because we are people of God. Of course, this 'we' does not only refer to us, the forcibly displaced, but to you all as well. This is part of our identity as human beings. And therefore, this 'we' does not refer only to Christians either.

the ways to 'fix' them. This new branch of psychology tries to understand, through scientific observation and research, the processes that lie beneath the positive qualities and emotions in the human person. The object is to obtain new knowledge about the human mind not only to help solve people's mental health problems, but also to achieve greater quality of life and well-being for them through their personal strengths. Cf. M. SELIGMAN, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realise Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*, New York: Free Press 2002.

[19] Cf. GONZÁLEZ-CARVAJAL, *El clamor de los excluidos*, p. 111-112.

Different forms of religious belief and expressions do not preclude anyone from being part of 'God's people'.[20] Yet, within the Church, as a matter of identity another of our constitutive characteristics is our pilgrim nature as people on the move to God.[21] For most of you, this 'pilgrim nature' refers to the interior journeys in your lives on the way to God and God's Kingdom. For us, displaced peoples, this movement to God as pilgrims reflects as much our physical exterior journeys as our transcendent interior ones. Every time we are forced to displace, we *walk in hope to God.* This hope lifts us and guides us towards the overflowing mystery of God, certain that the reign of God is already in us, dynamically, as seed, as ferment. We have learned that our historical responsibility is to multiply this seed, not to spoil it, not to sterilise it, not to let it go to waste. Each one of us contributes to advancing the Kingdom in his or her own way. This is our way. We contribute to the Kingdom *walking away* from war, from persecution, from death, *walking to* God in hope.[22] Of course, it is not always easy, this walking. It is dangerous, tiring, monotonous and it can be body and soul-destroying, unless we find support along the way—not only spiritual but also tangible, physical support. For we cannot walk unceasingly, for ever. Like the Israelites in the desert, we hope to walk to a 'promised land', find a safe place, of refuge, of hospitality, of welcome.

As people of God, another of our constitutive characteristics is that we are different, and this is a good thing. We are different as individuals one from another, but also as cultures, nations, races. And *this is good*, for God *has made us* this way. Forced displacement invites the displaced and their hosts—unwittingly and often unwillingly—to a way of life characterised by 'communion in diversity', which is not always free from tensions.[23] Yet for us who share the Christian faith and hope, if we want to be a living witnessing presence of the gospel in the world as an 'intercultural church', we have to address these cultural tensions. This will require a process of intercultural transformation of our habits, structures

[20] "Catholicity is not only expressed in the fraternal communion of the baptized, but also in the hospitality extended to the stranger, whatever his religious belief, in the rejection of all racial exclusion or discrimination, in the recognition of the personal dignity of every man and woman and, consequently, in the commitment to furthering their inalienable rights". Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Message for the 85th World Migration Way 1999*, 2 February 1999. http://www.vatican. va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/migration/documents/hf_jpii_mes_22021999_world-migration-day-1999 _en.html. Accessed 7 October 2013.

[21] "While on earth she [the Church] journeys in a foreign land away from the Lord... the Church sees herself as an exile" (Cf. *LG* 6)... "On earth, still as a pilgrim in a strange land, following in trial and in oppression the paths he [Jesus Christ] trod, we are associated with his sufferings as the body with its head, suffering with him, that with him we may be glorified" (Cf. *LG* 7).

[22] Cf. J. FLAQUER, "Vidas Itinerantes" in *Cuadernos CJ*, no. 151, Barcelona: Cristianisme i Justicía 2007.

[23] "Migration can be regarded as an invitation to live "communion in diversity". Therefore, the importance of dialogue between cultures and religions must be recognized. The great diversification of origins in migration flows has placed ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue at the centre of the care for migrants and refugees". Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *Starting Afresh from Christ: Towards a Renewed Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees.* Final document of the Fifth World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees, Rome, 17-22 November 2003. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_migrants_doc_2004001_Migrants_Vcongress_%20findoc_en.html. Accessed 7 October 2013.

and spirituality as Church, as well as conversion at all levels—personal, institutional, apostolic and of mission. The 'adventure' of the encounter between cultures reveals once again the pilgrim nature of our lives, as it is both an internal and external journey that affects all aspects of ourselves. It requires that we let go of securities, certainties, the known, the familiar. What we are called to do is to cultivate, to nurture our spiritual, shared lives, with wisdom and prophetic courage, open to the truth about God *that those different form us have discovered.* [24]

If this sounds as if we are trying to tell you what to do and how to live your faith, please be assured that we realise that this need for conversion holds as a true for us as it does for you. We know that we can learn much from you, about the *truth of God* you have discovered. Yet, at the same time, we believe that we have much to offer in the realm of our shared lived spirituality based both on the particular present situations in our lives and on our traditions. Our brothers and sisters from Africa, for example, tell us that:

> For Africans, God is a God who sees all, is present in all, and acts in all circumstances of life... God is not introduced into this ordinary or extraordinary experience as a stranger. God makes it possible; we encounter God in it... who is already present in the realities of our lives... The crucial point here is the belief that one lives under the constant, complete, and compassionate eye of God... Perhaps the most significant aspect of African spirituality derives from the African understanding of life. Simply put, African spirituality is a spirituality of life; it is a celebration of life in all its dimensions...
>
> It is important not to allow what Africans believe about the sacredness of life to be distorted by what the circumstances of life in Africa, such as war and violence, have caused... This expanded belief in the sacredness of life, along with the threat to life under various circumstances, has facilitated the emergence of a true spirituality of the cross and martyrdom in Africa... in standing for life, it stands against all forms of oppression and suppression of human dignity. In this sense we can represent African spirituality as a spirituality of justice, peace and reconciliation.[25]

And this world sure needs greater justice, deeper peace and lasting reconciliation. These are times for us as Christians (and non-Christians) to build bridges, to become and be interested, affectively and effectively, in other cultures, with their own sources of meaning and value, to risk to understand and value what is different because "what makes intercultural harmony difficult is not diversity, but ethnocentrism that generates fundamentalism".[26] And it is this

[24] Cf. C. DEL VALLE, "La interculturalidad: distinto origen, una misma vocación" in *CONFER* 51/Octubre-Diciembre 2012, no. 196 pp. 404-405. The author further asserts that: "Inter-cultural living requires that we allow ourselves be enriched, corrected, confirmed, questioned... by the truth of God that those who are different from us have discovered. To do this we must live in openness to the Spirit... close to others and vulnerable like others without authoritarian attitudes... cultivating our capacity for dialogue; speak our own truth and welcome the truth of others; understand and welcome what others are living, feeling and hoping, allowing ourselves to be challenged and enriched by their search", p. 407, (my translation).

[25] Cf. OROBATOR AGBONKHIANMEGH, *Theology brewed in an African pot,* Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa 2009, pp. 130-133.

[26] Cf. DEL VALLE, "La interculturalidad: distinto origen, una misma vocación", p. 411.

fundamentalism that often requires us as new arrivals in foreign lands to conceal every aspect of our culture and traditions that are different, so we can fit in, or rather, so we do not appear as a threat to the status quo and to recognised 'values' and ways of behaviour. But we know this is not the type of integration the Church promotes or desires, or what God desires.[27] We are called to integrate together the whole of our lives so we can discover the abundant *multi-faceted gifts of God to human beings,* in the midst of our current realities. In the last two chapters of the book of Revelation we see that the author wants to

> ...encourage the hopes of a community forced to find reason of its hope in a reality in which it is necessary to integrate the greatness and the miseries of existence... Heavenly Jerusalem... is suggested as the goal of a humanity convened by God. At the beginning of this last prophecy, the narrator recovers the old promise of Isaiah to announce that in the New City: "He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." (Rev 21:3b-4).[28]

This is the hope we hold, for all of us, and this hope must always be a constitutive element of our identity as people of God. As Christians *we must deny ourselves the 'luxury' to be without hope as long as there are so many among us who are hopeless and so hopeless*.

6.4. Characteristics of hope-gifting

> Do you know the warmth of a smile in eyes that are still flowing with tears? When hope returns to life, our joy is great because they [forcibly displaced people] share their joy with us. (*Fr Oliver Morin*)[29]

A good friend of ours was once asked whether he felt JRS refugee workers and volunteers brought hope to a refugee camp or whether they found it was already there. This was his answer:

> The richness of human spirit that we discover among refugees, including a vibrant hope, is always a surprise... While there may be no rational grounds for believing that what a refugee longs for will actually come about, we also find hope. Hope is not optimism. Optimism expects things will get better. Hope is a virtue grounded in suffering. It is a grace which gives strength. Hope is a promise that takes root in the heart and is a guide to an unknown future... Hope is what enables us to live fully in the present moment... The refugees have a message that our world needs to hear... [and] learn from...[30]

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[27] "In this Document, integration is not presented as an assimilation that leads migrants to suppress or to forget their own cultural identity. Rather, contact with others leads to discovering their 'secret', to being open to them in order to welcome their valid aspects and thus contribute to knowing each one better. This is a lengthy process that aims to shape societies and cultures, making them more and more a reflection of the multi-faceted gifts of God to human beings, (n. 1). Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Message for World Migration Day 2005: Intercultural Integration*, 24 November 2004. http:// www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/migration/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20041124_world-migration-day-2005_en.html. Accessed 7 October 2013.

[28] Cf. J.M. APARICIO, "El areópago de las migraciones: Claves Pastorales en el marco de la nueva evangelización" en *Razón y Fe,* t. 268, septiembre 2013, nº 1379, p. 143 (my translation).

[29] Cf. "Smiling Eyes Amidst Tears", JRS *Servir Magazine,* no. 11, Feb 1998, p. 5.

[30] Cf. JRS, *Everybody's challenge,* p. 86.

Mark is right. And we thank our JRS friends for helping create and sustain places and spaces which have not only helped us survive, but which have also awarded us time and place for growth. Hope needs time and time has taught us many things about hope. Things you too need to hear and learn. We offer and share those learnings with you now, as we open up our 'baskets of hope' one by one.

6.4.1. Our hope in the Lord, Jesus

To live without hope is to cease to live (*attributed to Fyodor Dostoevsky*)

Our hope is in Jesus our Lord. We see ourselves reflected in Him and his story and experience of displacement. From the beginning of his life, he had to flee into exile with his family to Egypt, escaping persecution and death, because a tyrant, fearful of losing his power, decided that children had to die—how painfully similar is this reality to what so many of us have had to live through in our own countries! As we look at his step father, a poor tradesman, and his mother, a pregnant teenager, embarking on a terribly perilous journey, we *see* ourselves. As people who profess this Christian faith, that enduring memory has shaped the way we see ourselves, as nothing else has. When Jesus starts his public ministry, a new period of constant displacement begins in his life. In many occasions, just like us, he has to move on because his adversaries want to kill him (cf. Matthew 26:4; John 7:1). And like us, he did not have a permanent home: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9:58). Moreover, it is because of his care for people like us—*displaced to the unstable margins of society, religion, and politics; outcasts, foreigners, the poor*—that he finds himself in this situation. Jesus was tolerant with sinners, outcasts, and the marginalised not only because of their condition as such, but because beyond lacking protection, they listened to his Word and opened their heart to the love of God with humble faith.[31]

The story of the incarnation is also a story of displacement, of the Holy Trinity's *pitching their tent among us*. The Word of God became flesh and made a dwelling among us (John 1:14). God has migrated and moved out of a distant or remote existence of divinity towards us, to be part of our human history, not in an abstract manner, but in a concrete, palpable experience of establishing a dwelling in our midst (God is always with us!) in time and space. And the Trinity did this, despite knowing the consequences. They knew that Jesus would suffer his passion and death as a result of this choice for us. It is this connection with the Paschal Mystery that gives us the greatest of hopes, for through it our suffering is united with Christ's suffering and finds its meaning.[32] For us the Eucharist is truly a celebration of

[31] Cf . G. M. OTALORA, *El evangelio de los excluidos,* Madrid: San Pablo 2012, p. 12.
[32] Cf. AGBONKHIANMEGHE, "Justice for the Displaced", pp. 41-42.

eschatological hope, a remembrance (*anamnesis*) in which a foundational past event (Exodus-Easter-Passover) takes place in the present moment with our full participation, guaranteeing us and giving us a foretaste of our own future resurrection. We know that if we do not celebrate the Paschal Mystery at regular intervals, we lose our sense of communion and our sense of hope.[33] And yet, because of our circumstances, how often do we miss out in sharing in the Lord's table!

We realise that what we are telling you here is nothing new for many of you. You have heard it before, many times. And yet, do most of you really believe them in your heart to the point that it changes how you see life, how you perceive God and how you relate to others? We believe them, and we want you to believe them, because that makes all the difference! Our hope is sustained by our certainty that God always fulfils God's promise: *I will be with you til the end of times* (cf. Mathew 28:20). God does not abandon us. You might wonder how we are still able to say this despite all we have suffered. But God has not been the cause of our suffering, humanity has. And the promise made by God through Jesus, *I will be with you...* is being fulfilled today and will be fulfilled tomorrow in his Church and everywhere. The wind that propels our Church is the breath of the Holy Spirit, who also protects it, strengthens it and sanctifies it. And so, guided by God's grace, we look at the future in hope, and hope does not disappoint us (cf. Rom. 5:5).[34]

6.4.2. Listening

> The life of a refugee is not easy. What I would say to people who work with refugees is that they should be patient enough to listen with care to what we have to say. Many refugees feel their needs and views are not considered. (*Christine, a Sudanese refugee in Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya*)[35]

From the very beginning, listening has been an intrinsic practice in the exercise of hospitality. In attentive listening—listening with the heart—we are recipients not only of peoples' experiences but also of their suffering and their own lives. You have asked us often to share our stories, to reveal our identity, our origins, our personal journeys, so that you could get an approximate idea of what we have lived through. Sharing the facts was not difficult, but it took us time to trust you, to be able to reveal all the pain beneath the factual events, the frustrations and disappointments and even our failings. Through your gift of listening we

[33] Cf. A. PIERIS, *Mysticism of Service,* Mt Lavinia (Sri Lanka): Logos Printing 2000, p. 77. Pieris adds: "... we have a guarantee that we can see God-in-Christ now, though in some obscure manner because 'eschatology' means that we anticipate *already now* something of what is yet to come; that in the Risen and Exalted Christ, we have a *foretaste* of our own future *already here* on earth; and that, as men and women anchored in the hope of what has been promised as our final destiny, we are called to sojourn in this world as Easter People *already* living in the age that will dawn at the end of time", p. 76.

[34] Cf. CONFERENCIA DE OBISPOS CATÓLICOS DE CUBA, *Carta Pastoral "La Esperanza no defrauda" (Romanos 5,5)*, no. 43.

[35] Cf. JRS, *War has changed our life, not our spirit, Experiences of forcibly displaced women,* Rome: JRS Publications 2005, p. 53.

were transformed from needy strangers to someone who was no longer distant, who felt welcomed. And in that process we realised that we needed to be listened even more. Perhaps you did not notice it at first, but we soon also realised that our words were changing you. What we mean is that your way of listening soon changed; you stopped asking so many questions and taking so many notes, you became more comfortable with our silence. And then you began to ask different questions, whose answers you seemed to need to hear as much as we needed to say them. Finally, you began to thank us for trusting you, but also for bringing about an interior transformation in you, for helping you alter your gaze and acquire new perspectives in life.[36]

Listening is an art that must be developed. It requires the full and real presence of people to each other, and as such it is indeed one of the highest forms of hospitality. But for us, who believe that the Spirit of God is present in each human person, listening takes on a special meaning. When we are truly present, when we welcome the stranger with the hospitality of God, we allow his or her spirit to talk to ours. The Spirit that abides in you is united with the Spirit who abides in us. This is the reason listening becomes a channel of hope as grace, that comes from God and we share with one another. And it is the reason listening can be such a healing service as well. We welcome God's grace and allow it to be communicated and wash over us. From this point of view, every human person has the capacity to be a healer. In listening with attentive interest to a person, to her joys and sorrows, pleasures and anxieties, we discover the wounds that need healing, and are able to offer our solidarity with their pain, which paradoxically is the beginning of the healing process—to heal our pain we must share the experience of that pain with others.[37]

And listening is healing too because in being allowed to share our own stories, we become even more aware of God's loving presence all along in our daily lives. Even when they are terribly painful stories, or perhaps especially when they are so. What a gift it is to be able to share our stories knowing that a compassionate heart will receive them without judgement or condemnation! We wished our stories were different, but they are the only ones we have, and there will be no hope for our future if "[our] past remains unconfessed, un-received and misunderstood. Quite often it is our fear for the hidden moments in our own story that keeps us paralysed".[38] We know that this is not only true of our experience but of yours as well. Some of you have learned to listen to us so well, but have you learned to listen to one another? To your loved ones, to those closest to you? Often it is easier to listen to a stranger than to your own father or sister or closest friend. "But they are not strangers", you would

[36] Cf. TORRALBA *"No olvidéis la hospitalidad",* p. 19, 21.
[37] Cf. NOUWEN, *Reaching out: the three movements of the spiritual life,* p. 43.
[38] Cf. NOUWEN, *Reaching out: the three movements of the spiritual life,* p. 68.

say. Are they not? How well can we know one another if we do not take the time to listen? A good friend who knew us well once said:

> Surely the only way to learn what is the hope of a refugee is to listen to him. Our biggest temptation, on seeing the distress of refugees... is to begin projects, to give material things, to decide *en masse* what the refugees need... But they did not undergo this experience in order to get a shirt or shoes. Their human experience is to be respected... They want to be understood, to be heard. Their frequent question is: Why is God doing this to me? They have a right to ask this question. But it cannot be asked unless someone listens. This is our primary role, to listen to questions, to the longing and to the fundamental human need of refugees.[39]

He is right in all accounts. You want to learn about our hope? Listen to us and to our stories! But also learn to listen to the hope that is in you *as seed, as ferment, so it does not spoil or go to waste*. And learn to listen to the hope that dwells in those around you. Listen to one another with the 'ears' of the Spirit and then allow grace to find a channel and let it flow, freely and abundantly.

6.4.3. Humility and vulnerability

> Our human compassion binds us the one to the other - not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future.
> (*Nelson Mandela*)[40]

How difficult it is for those who lack humility to hope! How difficult too for those who see vulnerability as weakness and will not allow themselves to be vulnerable! This might be one of the main reasons there is so much hopelessness in our world! Pride takes over our lives when we believe that we are better than others because of what we have—our prestige, our looks, our intellect, our material resources—and look down on another, feeling superior to him or her. We experience 'in-vulnerability' when we believe that what we have can protect us from all harm, when we feel self-sufficient, when we judge that we do not need others (including God) for our well-being and happiness. Hope, on the other hand, is precisely what we have when we have nothing: when we have no control over our lives, not enough resources to cover our basic needs, no prospects for today or for the future. Hope is then what we as forcibly displaced persons have, since we have nothing else. We know that God is with us and present somehow in our lives, but we do not even have the capacity to see how God's ways will affect our future. And yet hope enables us to see "the present in the light of some future good, which we realise can only come as gift. Hope is the retrieval of possibilities that come as gift".[41] And that gift we know can only come from God.

[39] Cf. JRS, *Everybody's Challenge*, p. 87.
[40] Spoken at a *Healing and Reconciliation Service for HIV/AIDS Sufferers and for the Healing of Our Land*, Johannesburg, South Africa, December 2000.
[41] Cf. M. DOWNEY, *The Heart of Hope: Contemplating Life, Awakening Love*, Mumbai: Pauline Publications 2009, p. 158.

Does this mean that only the dispossessed and the marginalised can have hope? Of course not. But it might *be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is proud and invulnerable to experience hope* (cf. Mathew 19:24). Yet, as there is a difference between the poor in spirit and the materially poor, there is also a difference between those who have much but would be happy to give it all away, and those who put all their trust on their possessions. The poor in spirit have no power and yet they are full of hope. They are simple and without pretence. They might have possessions and talents, but are not possessed by them. They know how to use the things of this world and how to take others into account without seeing them as means to their objectives. They have the courage to make themselves vulnerable, like Jesus was.[42]

The early Christians facing martyrdom realised the strength of humility, the sacred aspect and power of being vulnerable. Dorotheo of Gaza, a 6th c. spiritual master used to say that humility, more than a special virtue, was a fundamental disposition that conditioned all other virtues, a spirit, a temperament, an attitude of the soul before oneself, God and others. Without humility none of the virtues would know how to exist and without humility it would be impossible to fulfil the commandments (cf. *Didaskalia II*). Christian love is rooted in humility, as Jesus showed us at the Last Supper, washing his disciples' feet. To maintain an attitude of Christian love requires great generosity and a constant struggle against our own selfishness and desire of self-affirmation. Tragically, in our human lives, selfishness tends to slip surreptitiously through the cracks of our generosity and self-giving.[43] But if you want to grow in hope, you must grow in humility and have the courage to make yourself vulnerable. Only then will you be able to see life—and all that it entails—through the lens of hope for what it really is— sheer gift.

6.4.4. Gratitude

> I will call back into memory the gifts I have received... I will ponder with deep affection how much God our Lord has done for me. (*SpEx* 234)

"There is no better gift for people in exile than the hope of peace" wrote Miriam, a fellow refugee from Africa.[44] She had experienced the horrors of war in her own country—so much destruction, violence and death. Yet, she continued to hope that peace would one day reign again, and she and her family would be able to return home. We cannot live without hope, for without it, our human spirit dies. We need to do all that we can to keep hope alive, and one of the best ways we have found to do this is through being people of gratitude. We have seen the difference this makes in our refugee camps, in our urban dwellings, over and over again.

[42] Cf. VAN BREEMEN, *Como pan que se parte*, p. 112.
[43] Cf. VAN BREEMEN, *Como pan que se parte*, pp. 149-150.
[44] Cf. JRS, *In the footsteps of Pedro Arrupe*, p. 43.

Those of us who are constantly complaining about the quantity and quality of the food, the slowness of the services provided, the lack of opportunities for work, soon begin to lose hope and then quickly slip into despair. In contrast, those of us who are able to find reasons to be thankful seem to grow in hope. It is not simply a matter of being optimistic, of deluding ourselves into thinking that things are not as bad as they are, but rather it is about being realistic with a hopeful attitude towards the reality that is all around us. It is about learning to 'count your blessings', to discover them and then to share them. Using the 'lens' of hope to see life and all that it brings us—even the difficulties and hardships—as gift, has helped us to find meaning even in the most difficult situations. Do we welcome these? Of course not. We wish these things had never happened to us, but we can still be grateful for having the certainty that somehow God is in the midst of all the mess, the violence and the inhumanity that engulf us, suffering with us, enduring with us. *God never abandons us*. Moreover, our eschatological hope would lack foundation if it did not go through this bitter experience of what the NT calls *hamartía* (sin) and all its devastating consequences. Without it, our Christian life would stop being eschatological and our hope would turn into 'cheap' hope.[45]

We need to do all that we can to keep hope alive, to make sure that this basic affection, fragile and vulnerable in the best of circumstances, can be transformed into a lasting passion, that faces challenges with courage, and endures them, triumphing over the adverse vicissitudes of our lives. The quality of our hope is manifested in our capacity to take risks, to face these adversities with fortitude and patience, but also in our capacity to continue giving thanks for life, even when life feels unbearable and seems to lack meaning. We must give thanks and do it often, and also do it together. This joint expression of gratitude is an acknowledgment of and commitment to the presence of God in our experience of displacement—ours and yours. For as we have said before, we all find ourselves, at one moment or another in the 'margins' of life. And it is in these margins, these boundaries, that it is possible to discover aspects of reality which remain hidden in other circumstances, and which give us a great appreciation of our experience.[46] In learning to give thanks, often, and together, we have also learned the meaning of gratuity: to give of oneself in love without expecting anything in return. We are convinced, because of our painful experiences, that the more we become 'gratitude people', the more too we will become 'gratuity people'. We must strive to live our lives also in gratuity, modelled in the gratuity of God, who gives of Godself to us at every moment, in love.

6.4.5. Keeping hope alive in the midst of suffering

> As a refugee who spent two years and four months in Wackenhut Detention Centre in Queens before I was granted asylum, I know how important it is to have support from

[45] Cf. CAMPS and ÁLVAREZ, *Esperanza cristiana y utopías,* p. 34.
[46] Cf. APARICIO, "El areópago de las migraciones", pp. 134, 140.

> people who come to help keep hope alive. I am a Christian, and I went to Bible study sessions in detention, which kept my faith alive when it was challenged every day. Refugees come to this country thinking it is a land of freedom—freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from persecution. Detention almost killed my soul. Prayer and humanity saved me.[47]

Simone Weil once observed that the extraordinary greatness of Christianity is not that it provides remedies against suffering, but the perspective that it gives to it. Christianity has never promised us a life without suffering. The Gospels in fact clearly state that in order to attain salvation we have to lose our lives, take up our crosses and follow Christ. But the message of the Gospels is that all this suffering should not be considered as loss. Suffering can surely cause bitterness, but have you ever met people who in the midst of their suffering have become a wonderful grace to others? We have, over and over again. For those of us who embrace the Christian faith, only Christ can give meaning to our suffering. How often so many of us have found the strength to bear our suffering simply by bringing our fingers up to the crucifix around our neck and holding them there, for as long as we needed to do so. This is difficult to explain to people who do not know our faith, who are puzzled by our finding solace and comfort in looking up at Jesus, the Son of God, on the cross. Some would say, as others have before, "if he is the Son of God, let him come down from that cross". But the gospel message, the message that gives us strength and hope responds, "Because I am the Son of God I remain on the cross".[48] How often so many of us seem to forget this message when adversity and suffering enter our lives! When we ask: "why has God done this to me?" or "why has God abandoned me?" God has not done anything or gone anywhere, for God has been there, all along, tied to that cross.

We also seem to forget that suffering and hope as virtue and grace are related. If everything went well for us all the time, if we did not face adversities, illness or pain, then our 'hope' would become that 'cheap' hope we talked about earlier. Suffering and hope are related. As another friend has put it:

> If we suffer without hope, we become more and more resentful, angry, hateful, bitter. If we think we have hope, yet know no suffering, we are naïve, living in illusion, out of touch with what is real. We must live life on life's own terms. And suffering is part of the deal.[49]

We have come to understand our suffering not only as 'part of the deal' but also as a hidden gift, and our wish for you is that you might come to understand it in this way too. We look to it as gift because through it we have come to feel more deeply the love of God manifested in Jesus on the cross, who loved his own to the end. And we have come to understand also that

[47] From a letter by Adelaide Abankwah from Ghana, in a letter to *The New York Times*, February 2000. Cf. JRS, *War has changed our life, not our spirit*, p. 119.
[48] Cf. VAN BREEMEN, *Como pan que se parte*, pp. 143-144.
[49] Cf. DOWNEY, *The Heart of Hope*, p. 159.

our love with and for those who suffer brings them comfort and hope and redeems their suffering in the face of so much evil.[50] Only through hope can we together face that evil in the presence of the living God, with the strength and courage given to those who stand alongside the Crucified Christ and with him "look in hope and confidence to the life and the love of God" even and especially today, when the world as we have always known it seems to be crushing under the weight of hatred and violence.[51] We have the duty not to *hide this hope in the depths of our hearts.*[52] We must offer it to the world, and like all of God's gifts to us, we must offer it in gratitude and gratuity.

6.4.6. Solitude

> In Vietnam there is a popular traditional image to show the difference between heaven and hell. In hell, people have chop sticks that are one kilometre long, so they are not able to reach their mouths. In heaven, the sticks are equally long, but people feed one another.[53]

Loneliness. Many of us have lived alone for a long time. This condition has often been imposed on us because of the circumstances of our exile. Often times we have ended up separated from our loved ones, in raids at night, in bombardments to our villages during the day, split up in confining cells that break up our families. We find ourselves alone and this aloneness can be disheartening and heart-wrenching. But we do not have to tell you this. This perpetual sense of feeling or being alone, even when surrounded by hundreds of people, seems to be one of the most painful malaises plaguing our world today. We feel disconnected, isolated, and oftentimes abandoned as well, but as hard as we try we cannot get over this feeling. It is paradoxical, because sadly, even though we might have a lot of 'room' to welcome others, as long as we are lonely, we do not seem able to open our hearts and our doors to them. We cannot do this be because as lonely people we find it basically impossible to create free space for others. Our own needs to fulfil our inner cravings of loneliness (we keep trying to feed ourselves with kilometre-long chop sticks!) make us cling to others instead of creating space for them.[54] How to come out of this vicious circle? We have discovered once again that only in and through our faith can we transform this source of separation into a possibility of welcome. Only faith and hope can transform loneliness into solitude.

Our Christian tradition has always affirmed that we live in solitude, or rather, that we *are* solitude, as a condition to search for and enter into companionship. It is not only a desire of

[50] Cf. JRS, *God in Exile*, p. 53.
[51] Cf. DOWNEY, *The Heart of Hope*, p. 159.
[52] "Let them not, then, hide this hope in the depths of their hearts, but... express it by a continual conversion and by wrestling 'against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness'". (Cf. *LG* 35).
[53] Cf. J. CHITTISTER, *40 cuentos para reavivar el espíritu,* Maliaño (Cantabria): Sal Terrae 2011, p. 23. Original in English: *40 Stories to Stir the Soul,* Erie: Benetvision 2011.
[54] Cf. NOUWEN, *Reaching out: the three movements of the spiritual life* p. 72.

companionship with our fellow human beings, but that longing for companionship that makes us walk ever in hope towards the Infinite. *You have formed us for Yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless...* Solitude for us as Christians, then, is never a misfortune or an absolute, but rather something that prepares us for a future, that creates the conditions for an encounter and that prepares us for a mission. And as part of this preparation, we have to journey through the desert, wrestle with the powers of evil (without and within us) and be purified of our own selfish desires.[55] Solitude in Christianity, then, has always been understood as preparation for God's mission. But God never calls us simply as an individual privilege. Every call leads to service.[56] As forcibly displaced people, we believe that part of our mission for the Church and for the world is to be constant reminders that as people of God we are "essentially pilgrim people, never settled, always on the move, often alone, always searching, always reaching out further".[57] So we ask you: "What is *your* solitude preparing you for?" Obviously, we cannot give you the answer, but we would like to suggest that part of that mission and task as people of God—you and us together—is ever to question all attitudes, views and structures that are hope-destroying, especially those which discriminate against those who like us, have been often shunned and shut out.

6.4.7. It goes beyond optimism

D. H. Lawrence once wrote that the optimist builds a secure place within a cell, paints the interior of its walls in celestial blue, closes the door tightly behind him and then asserts that he is in heaven. We have already affirmed in different places and in different ways that optimism is not the same as hope. But we believe that it is important to reiterate this point, less we diminish the value of this virtue as divine gift and confuse it with something that we, as humans, can aspire to conjure. It is not that being an optimist is necessarily something bad or wrong. Optimism as an attitude and way of looking at life can actually improve our health and be a factor of well-being and happiness. The danger lies in its degenerating into a refusal to see reality as it is and insist that all goes well even when it is clear that it is not. As believers, we are not optimists, we have hope:

> Filled with hope... is he who knows that the end of the connecting thread of history, which oftentimes appears enigmatic, filled with suffering and even senseless, is secure in the hands of God, and that our journey will eventually lead home, even if it must pass through the anguish of years in exile.[58]

Optimists are those who, analysing the situation of the world, find in it sufficient courses of action to foresee success. They believe that things will go their way or turn out well. As

[55] "Go into the desert not to escape other men, but in order to find them in God". Cf. T. MERTON, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, New York: New Direction Books 1961, p. 53.
[56] Cf. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDEDAL, *Raíz de la Esperanza*, pp. 157-161.
[57] Cf. JRS, *Everybody's Challenge,* p. 71.
[58] Cf. RONCHI, *El desafío de creer hoy. La belleza de la fe y la esperanza*, p. 20, (my translation).

believers, instead, we hope, and not because of the analysis of reality, but because we believe in God's promise and commitment to us that everything in our lives, joys, pains and challenges, and even our suffering, will make sense and are worth the cost, regardless of how things might turn out. The analysis of our situation as forcibly displaced people has rarely led us to find 'sufficient courses of action' to expect success. But our hope has kept us constant and unwavering in believing that what we have gone through, and continue to endure, will unveil its meaning at the appropriate time.

6.4.8. Advent time

> These days many people think: life is coming to an end, this is a great eclipse. Perhaps much later it will be seen as a new beginning as well. (*Etty Hillesum*)[59]

Advent is one of the most beautiful seasons of our Church's liturgical year. We associate it with special colours, rituals and celebrations. The word Advent derives from the Latin term meaning 'coming'. And of course, as Christians what (or rather who), we expect to come is our Lord. It is then a period of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus at Christmas. Those of you who have been with us at this time have often mentioned how our celebrations of Advent in refugee camps or in urban settings for the displaced have been some of the most beautiful and prayerful Advent experiences you have had. Year after year, you said, you have had the intention of 'keeping' Advent better, of being more faithful to this time of waiting, but the busyness of life and all its demands always takes over. We believe this happens because as a whole most of you have lost the capacity to wait. Perhaps you never really had it! Technology and communications keep finding ways to reduce 'waiting time' to a minimum. And this is a pity, because when you lose the capacity to wait, you also lose your capacity to hope. We, the forcibly displaced, on the other hand, are 'Advent people'. As you well described earlier, we are always 'in waiting', waiting for something to happen to us or for us, because we have little control over our lives. This can be very hard and frustrating, but we have also discovered the hidden treasure beneath this reality.

Perhaps a way to explain it is to say that although we live in real time, we also live in 'suspended' time. We live our own time now, but also live in hope for our children's time in the future. We hope for the time in which our children will not have to suffer anymore. We hope that they will have the home we have lost and perhaps have an even better home; we hope they will have the education we have been denied and will be able to fulfil their vocation; we hope they will have the peace that was taken away from us through the violence and hate of others. Of course, we hope for all these things for ourselves too! But we do not limit ourselves to what we need or want. And that is part of what the hidden treasure has

[59] Cf. HILLESUM, *An Interrupted life*, p. 259.

revealed to us: *time-in-waiting* makes more sense, has more 'meaning', when we wait in hope for others. We live in hope for the time of 'what might yet be' beyond every obstacle, towards every possibility for all:

> Our Christian hope in this new millennium does not dishearten. It reads time, even now, as fulfilment of God's goodness, who bears the sin of the world and triumphs over it. It reads time this way because it has learned to recognise the signs created by Jesus surrounding the sign of his death and resurrection, because it has also been taught to discover and read new possibilities.[60]

As you remarked earlier, the temporal quality of hope is such that the past, the present and the future combine to create a continuum. This holistic view or structure of time shows that while past events have taken us to the situation where we find ourselves now, our hope must be nurtured in the present, in concrete ways, so that what we hope for now can become a reality in the future. We live in 'suspended time', but we also live in 'real time'. But so many of you seem to be trapped in this suspended time and forget to live in the present!

6.4.9. Prayer

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. (*Romans 12:12*)

Karl Rahner used to say that praying consisted simply in opening our hearts up to God.[61] We agree! The point of departure for our prayer should not be letting God know the things we need, but the taking conscience of them ourselves so that we can then open ourselves to God. In the 'how' of doing this, we do well to be guided by those experts 'prayers', the psalmists themselves, whose prayer was invariably a 'cry, a clamour' to God: *Uphold me according to your promise o Lord, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope* (Psalm 119:116). The psalmists had already become conscious of the precarious personal and communal situation of humanity, of our finitude and our weakness. And many of them, like us, had experienced a great deal of suffering and pain. They cried out to God and God listened to their cries, as God would later listen to Jesus' own, making him the source of universal salvation because of his solidarity with humanity (cf. Heb. 5:7-9). Our cry today is a prolongation in history of Jesus' clamour on the cross, who continues to identify with all the crucified of this world, with all the forcibly displaced who throughout our long history of suffering and humiliation, have been able to uphold a great sense of solidarity, dignity and the hope that our needs will be heard, even at times when God did not seem to listen and to have forgotten us.[62]

[60] Cf. A. TORNOS, *Cuando Hoy Vivimos la Fe: Teología para tiempos difíciles,* Madrid: San Pablo 1995, p. 170.
[61] Cf. K. RAHNER, *De la necesidad y don de la Oración. Prólogo de J. I. González Faus,* Bilbao: Mensajero 2004, p. 14.
[62] Cf. VÍCTOR CODINA, *Una Iglesia nazarena: Teología desde los insignificantes,* Santander: Sal Terrae 2010, pp. 106-111. The content of this paragraph is guided in part by the ideas the author presents in these pages.

Often you have asked us: "how can you, after all that has happened, still pray?" We can only answer that the invincible power of faith in our lives impels us to hope against all hope and to pray against all apparent failure. We have learned this from Christ. His prayer during the Passion, full of realism (*take away this cup*) was filled with total trust in his Father (*I know you always listen to me)* and of unconditional surrender *(not my will but your own will be done*). Christ's prayer teaches us that we need to centre our loving in God, in God's love, and in God's glory. Only in this way will we be able to place both things together—anguish and trust, will to live and readiness to die, surety in being heard and absolute surrender to our being heard according to our own plans. This is the mystery of our life as people of faith and of our prayer as Christians. Who can understand this? Only the one who prays and pleads. If you want to understand it, do what we do every day, pray, ask, and groan if necessary.[63] Pray, and wait, like we also do every day. Prayer is not about searching. Searching suggests an activity "I have to do something', an impatience. Prayer is waiting. As we have just mentioned, the act of waiting places the emphasis on the other person who is to come, and all we can do is to wait for him or her to arrive. Through waiting we express our powerlessness and our inability to make things happen, and this should be our attitude towards God. We cannot make God come to us. All we can do is wait and be present. Prayer is then to lose control, become vulnerable and allow God to guide us. Prayer is waiting, and this act of waiting moulds and shapes our personality. If we are able to wait, we will become different persons—more attentive, more contemplative, more receptive; we will stop asking and will instead worship and love.

6.5. The one who gives receives more in return

> My companions [forcibly displaced people] taught me how to be and wait with the dying... I learned that dying is part of living.[64]

Throughout the years, you have helped us realise the gifts we hold. And you have encouraged us to use those gifts for the benefit of others who need them so much in our circumstances. Once again we want to say that we rejoice in having been able to give something in return to you throughout the process. In this section, we give back our 'voice' to one of you, to express with your own words, what you feel you have received from us[65]:

> Because of my work with forcibly displaced people, in particular in the area of raising awareness about their plight (talks, articles, panels), I have sometimes been asked, "what has your time with them given you? What have you received from them?" It is a lovely question to be asked, because by the simple fact of asking it, the inquirer assumes that something indeed has been received, that the forcibly displaced have something to offer and that it is

[63] Cf. RAHNER, *De la necesidad y don de la Oración,* pp. 82-83.
[64] Cf. JRS, *God in Exile*, p. 54.
[65] I share here my own personal reflections!

possible to enter and develop a relationship with them. And all of this is true. And yet, it is not that easy to express what those gifts have been, because they go much deeper than the superficial level of 'goods' or 'services' being exchanged. Even the significance of the small material gifts they have given me (a pin, a bracelet, hand-scarf—most of them made by refugees themselves) goes far beyond their monetary value. It is not the object itself, but what each of them represents: friendship, gratitude, commitment, trust, love. What have I received from forcibly displaced people? Certainly more than I could have ever given them! The old saying: *The one who gives, receives more in return*, has certainly be true to my experience with them.

Although we have heard this expression or similar ones many times before, it does not stop many people from thinking that it is paradoxical that those of us who accompany and work with the forcibly displaced might feel this way. To be sure, what is being 'measured' is not the quantity or monetary value of what we have been given, the satisfaction we have received in services provided, the learning of new skills, or meeting new cultures and becoming fluent in new languages. Of course, these things are important and have enriched our lives. But what is being 'measured' rather is the quality of the encounter that has taken place in the giving and receiving. What we mean is that these encounters and the time we have spent with forcibly displaced people have helped us understand better what our humanity is all about and, through the grace inherent in these encounters, we have become *more human* and more who we truly are, who we have been created to be. We have learned ways to become our true selves through sharing in the hardships and suffering of others: "Going beyond fear of suffering to being with those who suffer and even receiving their anguish, although very painful, can be an incredible journey revealing many precious treasures".[66] And many of us would say (and this is certainly my case) that we have found Christ. To become more truly human, after all, is to become more like Him, who is "the model of our humanity".

What do I mean when I say that I have 'become more human', and have 'become more who I am meant to be'. It is very hard to explain, and part of the challenge is that I can only answer those questions from the point of view of my faith in Christ and my vocation as a Jesuit priest. The challenge is in the language I use and making sure it is understood by my listeners. Forcibly displaced people have taught me about hope simply through being present to one another, through witnessing their courage and strength in the midst of suffering, and especially I have experienced hope as God's gift in our companionship. The deep faith and hope felt and shared in our companionship has helped me discover God, once again in the concrete events of ordinary life.

To be sure, forced displacement brings the best and worst in peoples. I cannot romanticise them, the forcibly displaced, their lives or their motivations. But I cannot judge them either. People who have gone through so much suffering, who have lost loved ones to violence and

[66] Cf. JRS, *God in Exile*, p. 54.

> have experienced violence themselves are not immune to turning themselves violent. But my experience has been that most of the forcibly displaced people of faith I have met, have not been this way. I believe this has to do with their faith and their hope, which in turn has led them to act with charity and care towards those around them. Not all forcibly displaced people have been able to sustain that faith. But I speak here of those who have; for them faith, hope and charity have helped them stay true to who they are and who they have been created to be.

6.6. As a way of synthesis: seedlings of hope that bear fruit

> While hope does not take away the pain and bitterness, it is God's gift. It is enough to know that 'God knows'.[67]

The seeds of hope are already bearing fruit in our Church and in our lives! We have come to new ways of understanding mutuality, hospitality, solidarity and identity as people of God who walk together in our journey back to God. We have realised that we truly need one another—those in the 'centre' and those in the 'margins'—and that we can accompany and should accompany one another, not only from our weakness, but also through our strengths. But for seeds of hope to continue to bear fruit means that more things have to change: a common destiny of material goods and freedom are sources of hope; changes encourage the hopes of our people; to secure hope we have to overcome our poverty (both real and of spirit); personal self-realisation is necessary for hope, and the hopes for a better future should include also a new political, economic and social order based on dialogue and greater respect and mutuality.[68]

There continues to be too much suffering in our world, too much despair. What to do in the midst of all this suffering? We need to plant. For the sake of our children and grandchildren the forcibly displaced sow seeds and plant trees of hope, never allowing our creative and regenerative acts to be suffocated by the forces that attempt to oppress and repress the human spirit, especially that suffering of the deepest kind—whatever form it takes in us. So we take heart and keep planting![69] Do we hope only for ourselves or for the world? Of course we hope for all of us, the forcibly displaced, but we also hope *for* you. We know that our hope is not only for us. We hold it as treasure for all those who find themselves seized by despair. In the service of hope we have been called to exercise it, like Christ did, giving his life for the redemption of many.[70] But we want to invite you to hope *with* us too. The wellspring of hope in our world is drying up and we need your help. Come, hope with us for the well to be filled once again and when it does, hope will spill over and will be everywhere, washing us, cleansing us, healing us, and helping other seeds of hope grow and bear more fruit.

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[67] Cf. JRS, *God in Exile*, p. 54.
[68] Cf. CONFERENCIA DE OBISPOS CATÓLICOS DE CUBA, *Carta Pastoral "La Esperanza no defrauda" (Romanos 5,5)*, these sentences are all headings in the Pastoral Letter.
[69] Cf. DOWNEY, *The Heart of Hope*, p. 160.
[70] Cf. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL "Jesucristo: esperanza para el mundo", p. 68.

Conclusions

This thesis has been about hope within the context of the lives of forcibly displaced people—the hope they hold, they nurture and they offer. As we come to the end of this study, we recall its initial premise: that the best response we can offer to the hope that forcibly displaced people place on us is the gift of hospitality and solidarity, and that, through this welcome, forcibly displaced peoples offer us a great gift in return: a discovery and increase of our own hope. In exploring this premise we have been guided throughout the study by the two questions posed by our objectives: 1) What does a spirituality of hope in the lives of forcibly displaced people looks like, and 2) What can we learn from this spirituality that can help respond to the present needs of a world that seems to be afflicted by a crisis of hope? I believe the last chapter has already attempted to provide an ample response to both these questions and to support our premise, so here I would like to simply recapitulate some of the main points already presented. I will do this by diving these conclusions in three short sections that pick up the main themes of the study: *hope*, *the forcibly displaced experience*, and *a spirituality of hope in the lives of forcibly displaced persons.* A final section looks at some *future considerations,* regarding possibilities for further dialogue on the themes we have addressed here.

Hope

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all.

Hope is in short supply these days. We need more of it! Our world it is in the midst of a crisis of despair, so we need to discover new places where we can find wellsprings of hope to sustain us, to help give meaning to our difficulties and to every other aspect of our lives. But do we know what we are looking for? Do we know what hope is? Do we remember? Hope is that habit of the heart that gives us the capacity to do and endure all we must until God's promise is fulfilled in our lives and in the world. It is grace which gives strength, it is a virtue grounded in suffering, it is what we have when we have nothing left. Our great hope can only be God. God is the *who* of our hope, and the *what* of our hope must be the coming of God's reign, that the will of God be done. This is what as Christians we may ultimate hope for, beyond our smaller, concrete hopes. In the context of our Christian lives and faith, it has to be *our* hope, not a hope that has an individualistic understanding of salvation. *I hope in you for us,* is what Christ tells us—the 'us' is all of us since he called us all his brothers and sisters, and the 'you' is also every person, and above all God.

Hope is that theological virtue, that *little girl hope*, who leads us onward towards God's reign, to its fulfilment, and the fulfilment of God's promise to us, to the renewal and recreation of the whole world. God's historical intervention in the world through Jesus has meant that we are already in that process, but have not arrived at its fulfilment yet. It will come through God's eschatological intervention and humanity's responsible freedom. In 'active hope' we are called to build a new world, always critiquing and struggling against present negative and unjust circumstances that prevent its coming about. Hope has to be liberating. As such, it lies at the core of all human initiative and allows us to see the present in the light of a future good, which can only come as gift. It requires waiting and patient endurance that does not give up in the face of tribulations, but stays firm in the divine promise. It goes beyond optimism, the conviction that things will turn out well; rather it is founded in the certainty that things have meaning and sense, regardless of how they turn out.

Where can we find it? This 'thing with feathers' that sings without words and never stops at all? In our loved ones, friends and family? In the Church and especially among its leaders, religious people? We have looked there, and still we have not found enough of it. Where else can we look for it? We need to go to not-thought-of before places, and one of those places is the lives of forcibly displaced people of faith. And yet we reject them, when we need them most, thinking they have nothing to offer; assuming they come to our lands to take what is ours, to change what we know, to destroy what we have built.

The forcibly displaced experience

Who, who did you see along the way, who, who did you see?
We saw a child, in flight from a king,
We saw a man, with death in his eyes
We saw a woman reaching for her dying son,
no heart for home.
[They] seemed like one of us. They seemed to call to us.
We walked and walked.
Together we walk, and head for home,
and Christ is one of us.

We are afraid of the unknown, and the forcibly displaced irremediably represent the different, the strange, the threatening. And yet, while forcibly displaced persons are always an 'other', one of their essential realities is that they are also 'us'. They literally come from every sector of the world, from every major culture and ethnic background. Most of them have been victims of armed conflicts and wars in the Middle East and African countries, but they have also been persecuted in Europe, the Americas and Asia. They are not all uneducated or poor; they are not all black or brown-skinned. They are of every age, men, women, children. And so, their face is our face. What *is* different is what they have lived through. Few of us have experienced the violence, the pain, the dehumanising treatment most forcibly displaced have.

The forcibly displaced are survivors; they are resilient and have a great capacity to withstand unimaginable adversity. Yet, they are human and thus vulnerable, fragile and in need of support. They place their trust and hope in God but also on humanity; they expect us and need us to respond. As people of Christian faith, we are guided in our response to their plight by the principles of our Church's tradition and its Catholic Social teaching. We have seen that the basis of these principles is both the dignity of each human person who has been created in the image and likeness of God, and the inviolability of each person's inalienable rights. These principles delimit our responsibility as nations, but also as individuals and as members of communities and organisations. We have looked at how, for example, the Jesuit Refugee Service has upheld them in fulfilling its mission to accompany, serve and advocate for the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced peoples.

Our compassionate response to the hope that forcibly displaced people have placed on us is best manifested through the gifts of hospitality and solidarity, welcome and companionship. It requires reciprocity (they are our 'neighbours' and we are theirs), vulnerability and mutuality, believing that they have something to offer, that we can learn as much from them as we can teach them, and that they can help us as much as we can help them. To learn these lessons from them, it is necessary that we listen to them, listen to their stories, patiently and respectfully. That we *see them, listen to their call,* and *walk with them on our journey home.*

Spirituality of hope in the lives of forcibly displaced persons

Who wants to resurrect, this world that is dying
Who will sing the alleluia, of that new dawn that is coming.
Who when looking at the land, and observing its tragedies,
Will feel in his heart, the pain of the dying.
Who is able to save, this decadent world,
And will sustain hope for those who have lost it.
Alleluia will sing, whose hope had been lost,
And the land will smile, Alleluia
(*El Aleluya de la Tierra, Brotes de Olivo)*

In living out our Christian life, in our journey home back to God, we seek to appropriate the mystery of Christ in our lives. For each one of us, this appropriation of God's word of revelation in our life of faith, charity and hope will take place within our specific contexts and circumstances and will, in many ways, be determined by them. For forcibly displaced people of faith, who have lost everything, who have been shunned and shut out, and pushed to the extreme margins of humanity, this means that their assimilation in the mystery of Christ will be determined, more than anything, by their capacity to hope against all hope. Surely, it will take place through their living out their faith and through loving and caring for others too, but their life in the Spirit, their spirituality is, above all, a spirituality of hope.

Besides having to hope against all hope, one of the fundamental aspects of this spirituality is forcibly displaced people's belief that, despite every evidence to the contrary, God has never abandoned them, that God is present in their suffering (because God has lived it) and that somehow God will make sense of that suffering. It is also a spirituality that is marked by companionship, solidarity and building of relationships with each other, for forcibly displaced persons will not survive on their own. Their hope is active, not passive: it is endurance; it is persevering resistance that stands squarely and faces adversity head on; it is patience too, for their lives are spent in waiting, for things to happen, for others. Their hope tells them that injustice will not have the final word; that God can create justice in a way we cannot conceive. Their hope provides the possibility and audacity to risk and engage in the folly to believe that things can change, to find beauty where no beauty should be found and to dare to love and even believe that they can care for others. Their endurance in hope challenges the endurance of our hope. They cannot afford to despair, and they tell us that we cannot either—that we have in fact an ethical imperative not to despair, less we devalue and trivialise their suffering.

Their hope has taught them many lessons, 'hidden treasures', waiting to be uncovered and discovered by all of us. Treasures they offer us as gifts. They remind us that our true, ultimate hope can only be in the Lord; that this hope is sustained by the certainty given by our faith that God always fulfils God's promise: *I will be with you til the end of times.* God does not abandon us. They remind us that we must 'listen' to the hope that lies buried deep within our hearts and listen to the hope that dwells in those around us—it is there, because the Spirit of God is in each one of us, and the Spirit is the source of our hope, as grace. They invite us to accept our vulnerability and to act and live with humility, for pride and total self-sufficiency quench our capacity to hope. They advise us to be grateful, to 'count our blessings' and to act with gratuity. Gratitude is a path to hope. And they reveal how they have come to see their suffering as gift, because through it they have come to feel more deeply the love of God manifested in Jesus on the cross, who loved his own to the end. It is only standing alongside the Crucified Christ that we can look in hope and confidence to the life and the love of God in a world filled with hatred and violence.

What else has nurtured forcibly displaced people's hope and can nurture our own? We must allow God to transform our loneliness into solitude so we can prepare for and carry out God's mission for each one of us. We must also learn to wait; to become *Advent* people as they have, for things take time to come (cf. Hab. 2:3), and we must wait together, for *time-in-waiting* makes more sense and has more meaning when we wait in hope with and for others. And we cannot forget prayer. We must pray, like Jesus did. His prayer during the Passion, full of realism, was also filled with total trust in his Father and of unconditional surrender.

Pray. And wait again. Because through waiting we express our powerlessness and our inability to make things happen, and this should be our attitude towards God. We cannot make hope 'happen'; it is grace, it is gift. But in prayer we can open up our aching hearts and lives to God to receive it. That is what forcibly displaced people have done. They have felt in their hearts the *pain of the dying* and so are able to *sustain hope for those who have lost it*. Their hope is not only for them, but for all of us—they carry on, for all of us, the service of hope. They *will sing the alleluia of that new dawn that is coming, and the land will smile and reply 'Alleluia'!*

Future considerations

> And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. [7] Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!" (*Mathew 13:3-9*)

The image of seeds and seedlings of hope has been a connecting thread throughout our study. Seeds that needed to be planted and needed to find fertile ground not to die; seedlings that needed care and affection so they could grow and finally bear fruit. The seeds of hope carried by forcibly displaced people and planted by them in fertile soil have begun to bear fruit—in their own lives and in the lives of those of us who have been fortunate and blessed enough to accompany them and be accompanied by them. But there are still many more fruits to be had, many more seeds of hope to be planted. We need them if our world plagued by the malaise of despair is to be healed.

The intuitions about the spirituality of hope in the lives of the forcibly displaced presented in this paper need to be confirmed by forcibly displaced people themselves. They have begun to do so, but we need to give them more opportunities: to speak, to write, to share with us their insights and experiences. We need to offer greater opportunities for them to come together, among themselves and with other dialoguing partners, to share in theological reflection, to guide and to teach us. And we need to listen ever more attentively to their voices and their stories. The seeds of hope come from the divine farmer, from God, the Father, through his Son, in his Spirit. They are gift. They have been given to us and placed for safekeeping in the safest place possible—in the depths of our hearts. But sometimes we forget that they are. Forcibly displaced people never do, and in their hoping and through their hope they show us the way to our own.

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