

Arrupe 2020 Project



Bulletin #2

October 13, 2020



**“CREATING
OPPORTUNITIES”**

Inter-Provincial Formation Center
St. Francis Xavier
Society of Jesus

Direction and Editing
P. Juan Miguel Zaldua, SJ
Superior of the Inter-Provincial Formation Center

Redaction
Juan Carlos Sierra, SJ

Editing
Oscar Alfredo Freitas, SJ

Design and Illustration
Jorge Luis Cervantes, SJ

Photography
Jeackson A. Vargas, SJ

Translation to English
Brad Mills, SJ

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CIF San Francisco Javier
Bogotá

CALLE 7 SUR. 18 NO. 34-18, BARRIO SAN ANTONIO, BOGOTÁ

TEL. 289 15 44

E-mail: arrupe2020@gmail.com

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“I URGE YOU TO REFLECT ON “LIFE AFTER THE PANDEMIC,” FOR WHILE THIS STORM SHALL PASS,ITS GRAVE CONSEQUENCES ARE ALREADY BEING FELT. YOU ARE NOT HELPLESS. YOU HAVE THE CULTURE, THE METHOD, AND MOST OF ALL, THE WISDOM THAT ARE KNEADED WITH THE LEAVEN OF FEELING THE SUFFERING OF OTHERS AS YOUR OWN. I WANT ALL OF US TO THINK ABOUT THE PROJECT OF INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT THAT WE LONG FOR AND THAT IS BASED ON THE CENTRAL ROLE AND INITIATIVE OF THE PEOPLE IN ALL THEIR DIVERSITY, AS WELL AS ON UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO THOSE THREE TS THAT YOU DEFEND: TRABAJO (WORK), TECHO (HOUSING), AND TIERRA (LAND AND FOOD). I HOPE THAT THIS TIME OF DANGER WILL FREE US FROM OPERATING ON AUTOMATIC PILOT, SHAKE OUR SLEEPY CONSCIENCES AND ALLOW A HUMANIST AND ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION THAT PUTS AN END TO THE IDOLATRY OF MONEY AND PLACES HUMAN LIFE AND DIGNITY AT THE CENTRE.”

POPE FRANCIS

LETTER TO THE POPULAR MOVEMENTS

VATICAN CITY, APRIL 12, 2020



"Angels Unawares". life sized bronze sculpture that represents a group of migrants and refugees of varied cultural and racial origins and from various historical periods. Image can be found at: <https://www.vaticannews.va/es/papa/news/2019-09/papa-inaugura-esultura-que-recuerda-desafio-evangelico-acoger.html>

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WHO ARE WE?

We are a group of Jesuit theology students from Latin America and the Caribbean sensitive to the living conditions of Venezuelan migrants in Bogotá.

What do we do?

We accompany a population of migrants who live close to our house of formation in an integral and holistic way. During the pandemic, we have decided to offer assistance to them in their vulnerable circumstances. There are a total of three migrant homes we visit, where we accompany 139 migrants.

Why do we do it?

We are convinced that fraternal closeness and Christian solidarity with the most vulnerable is a sign that announces the arrival of a more just and humane society.

How do we do it?

Thanks to the generosity and solidarity of many people.



TESTIMONIES

TOWARDS A FRATERNAL RECOGNITION OF THE MIGRANT



Mrs. Patricia and Mr. Pedro Tarazona are a family of Colombian businesspeople who have supported with commitment and generosity the initiatives to accompany the migrant population. They tell us: “For us it is a joy to share what God has allowed us to harvest with those who are most vulnerable, in this case with our Venezuelan brothers and sisters. They contribute many things to our society: their culture, their labor, and they benefit the economy by contributing to an increase in consumption. But more important than all of this is the commandment of our beloved God: to help the stranger.



Mrs. Aurora has a home that she rents exclusively to Venezuelan migrants, offering to them a supportive and highly important service. In her view, we are all brothers and sisters. In addition, at one point in her life she was a victim of forced displacement and knows first-hand how extremely difficult such an experience is. She tells us: “Thank God I was fortunate to find a helping hand that assisted me in that time of crisis. Now, God has given me this opportunity to give back in a similar way and to help many migrants have a place to live. Although I do not have enough resources to meet all of their needs, I know that I contribute toward improving the living conditions of some families. It gives me great satisfaction to contribute a small grain of sand toward improving the situation of some migrants.”

The St. Ignatius Social Outreach Group at St. Francis Xavier Parish (a Jesuit parish in the vicinity) tells us:

“It is important to help migrants because God wants us to focus our support and our work on the people most in need. Who more important to support than migrants, who have been deprived of everything? They have lost their home, country, people, land, resources, livelihood, and family, coming to our country as strangers. We are convinced that migrants are our brothers and sisters living in a difficult situation, and that we as the Church must practice the teaching of Jesus to provide shelter to the outsider. That is why we assist the migrant outreach effort and seek to make them part of our community. We want them to feel welcomed, valued, respected and supported.

Migrants teach us tolerance, inclusion, and perseverance; they show us their appreciation with a grateful and joyful heart. They remind us that we as Colombians have had similar difficulties in our past, and that Venezuela was our refuge in the most challenging times for our country. In this way, our families are connected to their families.”



CURRENT CONTEXT

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WORK OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE MIGRANTS

THE INTERAGENCY COORDINATION PLATFORM FOR VENEZUELAN REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS (PLATAFORMA INTERAGENCIAL DE COORDINACIÓN PARA REFUGIADOS Y MIGRANTES VENEZOLANOS, R4V) OFFERS THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE LABOR SITUATION FOR MIGRANTS DURING THE PANDEMIC:

- The substantial reduction in economic activity has caused a decrease in the supply of jobs, a reduction in working hours, and a decrease or complete elimination of income. Thus, it is impossible for many migrants to find the resources necessary for daily sustenance. As a result, poverty and inequality have affected many migrant and refugee workers, as well as other workers in host communities.
- The workers affected by the pandemic in Colombia include, to a large extent, refugees and migrants from Venezuela. Their ability to send remittances to their families and generate livelihoods to overcome the crisis has greatly diminished. A large part of the Venezuelan migrant population lacks social protection and regularized immigration documents; as a result, they face limitations in their access to public services and, in general, in the exercise of their economic and social rights.



- Reduced employment can lead to increased xenophobia and discrimination, due to increased competition for employment and training between the population in the host communities and refugees and migrants.
- The impact is greater in the informal economic sector, particularly impacting street vendors, those who work for certain digital platforms such as food delivery, the underemployed, and sectors with a high percentage of female employees, such as commerce, food service, and tourism.
- Domestic workers face challenges arising from the health crisis in at least two particular ways. On one hand, they face an increase in domestic responsibilities which do not result in increased compensation, such as taking care of children during school closings, and caring for sick and disabled people. On the other hand, they are often asked to stop working by the families they assist because they are considered a risk of contagion, and have difficulty traveling to their places of work due to mobility restrictions.



ACTIVITY UPDATE

ARRUPE 2020 ACTIVITIES DURING AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER

Food

- In the Restrepo migrant home, a box of dry food was provided for 22 migrant families on two occasions, and a kit of food and hygiene items was provided for 9 children.
- In the San Antonio I migrant home, food and hygiene kits for 4 children have been delivered twice. Likewise, a box of dry food was delivered for approximately 25 migrants, and a delivery of assorted food items was provided on two occasions by the St. Ignatius Social Outreach Group at St. Francis Xavier Parish.
- In the San Antonio II migrant home, food and hygiene kits for children were delivered: 14 kits financed by the Ignatian Youth Network of Colombia (Red Juvenil Ignaciana, Colombia) and a 14 financed by the Arrupe 2020 project's own funds. Likewise, most of the food donations offered by the St. Ignatius Social Outreach Group at St. Francis Xavier Parish have been sent to this migrant home.



Health

- The Arrupe 2020 project covered the health care costs of two migrants: the first was a woman who needed iron injections and who could not afford her treatment due to a decrease in her income, and the second was a woman with hypertension who has been unemployed
- In alliance with Jesuit Refugee Services in Colombia (JRS - COL), whose office is based in Soacha (a city in the southern part of the Bogota metropolitan area), Arrupe 2020 helped arrange the medical appointments for 7 migrants with health problems.

Rent payments:

- In the Retrepo neighborhood, the Arrupe 2020 project helped two families leave a home where they paid rent on a daily basis, and move to a home where they pay monthly rent, helping them pay the first month's rent in their new home. (In the long term, it is less expensive for migrants to pay monthly rental as opposed to daily rental; however, many are unable to move to monthly rental homes because they do not have the money for the first month's rent.)
- In the San Antonio I migrant home, which charges daily rent, an adult migrant with a knee disability was assisted in paying his rent. Also, the rental payments were covered for a young migrant suffering from depression and suicidal behavior.
- In the San Antonio II migrant home, the cost of monthly rent and rental debt was covered during the time of mandatory isolation for 25 migrant families, with funds contributed by JRS. In addition, the Arrupe 2020 project helped cover the electricity payments for all the families in the home.

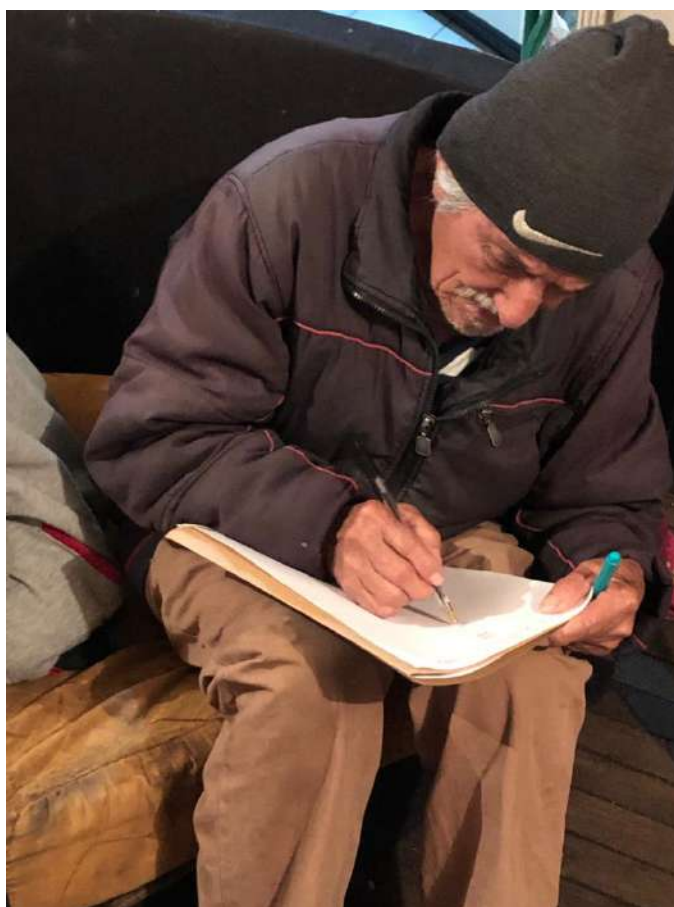


Promotion of the Arrupe 2020 Project:

- Our presence on Instagram continues with a total of 23 publications, consisting of videos and weekly reflections, reaching 149 followers. In addition, emails and audiovisual material have been sent to potential benefactors in England. An article was also published in the magazine of the Colombian Jesuits, describing our community experience of working with migrants, entitled: “Becoming companions of our migrant neighbors” (“Hacernos prójimo de (nuestros vecinos) los migrantes”)

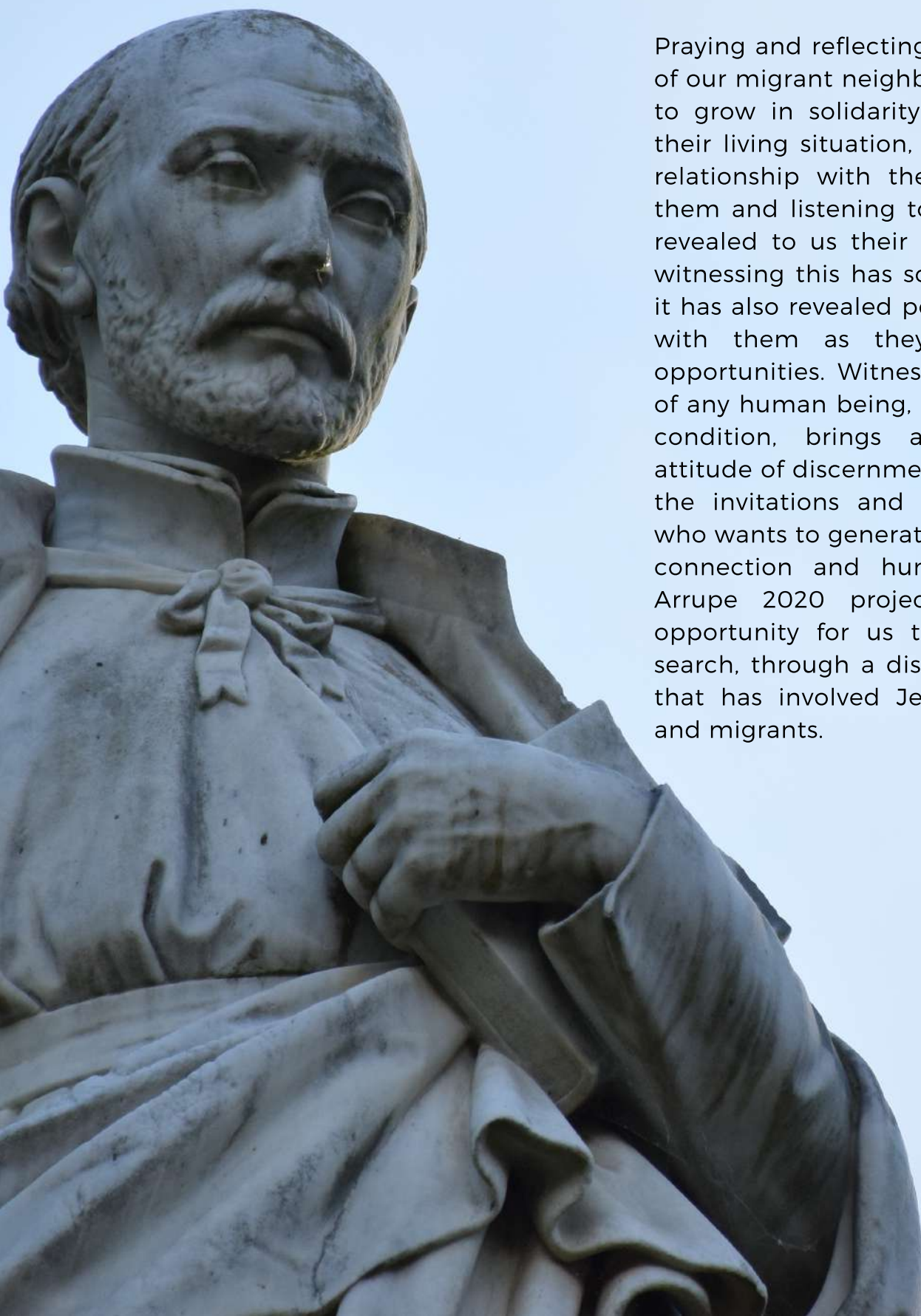
Workshops for entrepreneurs

- During the month of September, we started a training program for entrepreneurial initiatives, designed and undertaken by migrant communities. This process consists of 4 face-to-face meetings with migrants where we help them initiate small entrepreneurial projects. In these meetings, we address personal growth, strategic planning, basic financial notions, marketing, and product promotion. For these workshops we have organized ourselves into three nuclei: a group of 5 migrants focused on selling fruits and vegetables on the street, a group of 4 migrants focused on sewing and making clothing, and a group of 14 migrants focused on seeking employment and other creative entrepreneurial initiatives.



IGNATIAN REFLECTION

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES



Praying and reflecting about the reality of our migrant neighbors has caused us to grow in solidarity and concern for their living situation, and to enter into relationship with them. Contact with them and listening to their stories has revealed to us their profound needs – witnessing this has scandalized us, but it has also revealed possibilities to walk with them as they seek new life opportunities. Witnessing the suffering of any human being, regardless of their condition, brings about in us an attitude of discernment, seeking always the invitations and footsteps of God who wants to generate greater fraternal connection and human dignity. The Arrupe 2020 project has been an opportunity for us to engage in this search, through a discernment process that has involved Jesuits, benefactors and migrants.

As we have reflected about what to do and how to respond, it has become clear to us that we must walk together with migrants in a spirit of community and support. We feel called to partake in their joys and sorrows. This confirmation, in part, has illuminated a way forward. Our accompaniment must be fraternal, which, without a doubt, must help give relief to their vast socioeconomic needs; but it must also shine light upon their own potential to build options to improve their life conditions. From this process of reflection, together with the time we have spent with our migrant neighbors, we have decided that we must promote initiatives for production that allow migrants to manage their life projects with greater autonomy. Achieving this is a tremendous challenge, but it is also the key to a positive and favorable integration process for the migrants.

This anecdote helps describe how we were inspired to respond to the migrants' needs: thanks to a donation from the St. Ignatius Social Outreach Group of a large amount of Bonlce bars (frozen juice ice cream bars – popular snacks in Colombia), two migrants were offered the opportunity to undertake a small income-earning enterprise. On another occasion, the Tarazona family generously offered a migrant mother the possibility of selling flowers (carnations) and face masks. Witnessing and appreciating the fruits of these experiences gave us the idea to accompany and promote small entrepreneurial projects. We saw that entrepreneurial initiatives are possible, but they require careful consideration, planning, preparation and accompaniment that is adapted to the reality of each family and the economic context of southern Bogotá.



From these experiences, and from carefully considering the many challenges of the current context, we have created a structured process for accompanying and training entrepreneurs. In this initiative, we seek to discover and build sustainable opportunities together with the migrants. This process of accompaniment must seek to identify the human capital that is present, engage in projection and planning, and carefully design the finance of the projects. Through this process, we seek to support entrepreneurial ventures among the migrants, both economically and in terms of planning and training. Together, we hope to face the challenges that arise.

To discover and learn all this, it has been necessary to listen to ourselves, to the migrants, and to benefactors; that is, it has been vital to listen to the entire community. In addition, we have learned from the experiences of accompaniment to entrepreneurs that JRS-Colombia carries out, and learned from the entrepreneurial experiences of the migrants themselves. We pray that St. Ignatius and Father Pedro Arrupe intercede for us and the migrants as we put these initiatives into action.

Juan Carlos Sierra, SJ



FINAL WORDS OF GRATITUDE

The Arrupe 2020 Project is possible due to the collaboration of many hearts filled with a spirit of solidarity. Due to the support and generosity of many people, we are able to accompany the Venezuelan migrant population residing in the San Antonio Sur and Restrepo neighborhoods of the city of Bogotá. Our project is now moving towards the construction of new sustainable opportunities for migrants. Through this newsletter, we wanted to share with you about our work, allow you to partake of the fruit of your contributions, as well as invite you to continue dreaming together with us.

We want to express to you our most sincere gratitude, for it has been evident to us that solidarity and compassion are signs of the Kingdom of God, announcing the possibility of a more just and fraternal society. In these times of pandemic, be assured of our prayers for you and your entire family. We pray that God continues to bless you abundantly with his graces.

We entrust ourselves to St. Ignatius of Loyola and Father Pedro Arrupe to continue to intercede for all the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in our world.



CONTACT US



@arrupe2020



(+57) 321 93 333 73



arrupe2020@gmail.com



BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

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