

VOLUNTEERING IN AN IGNATIAN SPIRIT

The Jesuit Volunteer Community

Frank Turner

IF WE ACCEPT the perhaps outmoded idea that a 21st birthday is a 'coming of age', then the Jesuit Volunteer Community in Britain (JVC) attained its majority in 2008. JVC expanded quite vigorously in the early years, starting with two communities but reaching a plateau at four, after which it has not expanded further. Its US counterpart sent volunteers on international placements almost from the outset, but the British office placed people only in Britain and, at the beginning, took only British volunteers. Later, though reaffirming the decision to arrange placements only in Britain, JVC nevertheless started to accept volunteers from many countries, becoming the multicultural organization that it is today.

JVC is just one of many estimable volunteering schemes in Britain. Some programmes are managed by religious congregations such as the Vincentians; there are 'gap years' for students before or after university; there are large, established secular institutions such as Voluntary Service Overseas; and there are focused schemes devoted to volunteering in some specific context, such as Israel-Palestine. What, therefore, is distinctive about JVC?

From its beginnings, JVC has seen itself as rooted in four values: community, simple lifestyle, social justice and spirituality. I would like to suggest that these four values express, separately and in their unity, an underlying and integrating principle of *gratuity*, understood as a fundamental response to the gift of life from God in Christ.

Gratuity

We are worth nothing of ourselves, writes Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:5: 'not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God'. 'We' do not even exist only 'of ourselves'. We are radically and ultimately 'from God'. To understand our life, even at its

most arduous and most frustrating, as gift is transformative: it consciously establishes us in right relationship to God, who is the source and the continuous creative sustenance of our being. The Eucharist, 'source and summit of faith',¹ is finely described in Spanish as an *acción de gracias*.

Grace

Surprisingly, in neither the New Jerusalem Bible nor the New Revised Standard Version does the word 'grace' appear in the Synoptic Gospels. Even the Greek *charis* or *charin* occurs only at Luke 1:30, where it is translated as 'favour': Mary is said to have 'won favour' with God, and no one can 'win' grace with God. By contrast, both the word and the underlying idea pervade the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel. The Word made Flesh is 'full of grace and truth', and whereas 'the law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ'. 'From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.' (John 1:14, 17, 16)

This theme is further explored, though again without using the word *grace* itself, in the great hymn of Ephesians 3:16–21.

I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may ... know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever.

Grace, then, works in us to confer strength, experiential knowledge and fullness, to a greater degree 'than we can ask or imagine'. Consciousness of grace gives us freedom, that is, liberation from a spurious self-sufficiency and from fear, while also confirming our responsibility—itself God-given—to share the gift and not strive to 'possess' it.

To become fully conscious of receiving this gift is to be led to the notion of our own giving. In the climactic Contemplation to Attain Love of Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* (Exx 230–237), the person making the Exercises is called to ask for 'interior knowledge of the great good

¹ *Lumen gentium*, 11. And see also *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 10.

received' in order to be 'stirred to profound gratitude'—and from there to love and service. We ponder, systematically and 'with great affection', the gifts we know that we have received from God 'who desires to give even His very self' (Exx 234). We consider how God dwells in all creatures, and in us, 'labours and works for me and for the whole of creation', realising that 'all good things and gifts descend from above' (Exx 236, 237).

Retreatants are presented with the great prayer that offers back to God their 'memory, understanding and will'. The gift is such that nothing further need be demanded. 'Give me love of yourself, along with your grace, for that is enough for me.' (Exx 234) Michael Ivens proposes that "your grace" here seems best understood not as an addition to the love of God, but precisely as the grace to love God'.² The love of God (love on the part of God) inspires the love of God (love for God) since 'love consists in a mutual communication between two persons' (Exx 231).

In his *Autobiography of 1940*, the Scottish poet Edwin Muir suggests:

If anyone examines his life, he will find that most good has come to him from a few loyalties, and a few discoveries made many generations before he was born, which must always be made anew. These too may sometimes appear to come by chance, but in the



Christ Baptizing Men whose Souls Ascend to God the Father in Heaven, by François Maître

² Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 175.

infinite web of things and events chance must be something different from what we think it to be As I look back on the part of the mystery which is my own life, my own fable, what I am most aware of is that we receive more than we can ever give; we receive it from the past, on which we draw with every breath, but also—and this is the point of faith—from the Source of the mystery itself, by the means which religious people call Grace.³

Muir's 'we receive more than we can ever give' echoes Paul's 'What do you have that you did not receive?' (1 Corinthians 4:7) To know this truth could fill us with a sense of resentful despondency, as if legitimate pride in our own autonomy were cruelly punctured and as if no effort, however persistent, could ever discharge our indebtedness.

Earning and Giving

But we try to repay, not from a dull sense of obligation but because giving, inspired by a sense of all that we have received and continue to receive, is simply *right*. This interior spirit, of course, is not restricted to the work that is unremunerated. In the case of paid work, wages are a due and necessary recompense for people's time, effort and skill, providing them with a livelihood. But, fortunately, many people work not only in order to earn their living, essential as that is, but also give a 'gratuitous' surplus of attention and dedication, for the sake of the work itself and of those whom it serves.

John Ruskin wrote in 1862, amid the full flood of industrialisation:

Observe, the merchant's function (or manufacturer's ...) is to provide for the nation. It is no more his function to get profit for himself out of that provision than it is a clergyman's function to get his stipend. This stipend is a due and necessary adjunct, but not the object of his life.⁴

In a market-dominated society, this attitude towards the meaning of paid work is at risk, especially when a job hardly seems worth doing but must be done in order to earn a living. But volunteering—when work, skill and attention are manifestly given without seeking for financial reward—remains able to express the universal spirit of gratuity.

³ Cited in Alan Ecclestone, *Gather the Fragments*, edited by Jim Cotter (Sheffield: Cairns, 1993), 254.

⁴ John Ruskin, 'The Roots of Honour', in *Unto This Last and Other Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 178.

An organized volunteering scheme such as JVC does not sit airily above the world of money: the Jesuits pay to sustain the organization, and the team which supports the volunteers and administers the programme is (rightly) paid, like Ruskin's clergyman. Conversely, people may volunteer for a range of motives, not all of which arise out of pure gratuity: to gain a foothold in an organization; to have the opportunity to travel; to learn new skills or foreign languages; or to experience other cultures. Mixed motives are never absent from human decisions, and their lurking presence does not and should not prevent decisions from being made.

Nevertheless, to be a year-long volunteer in JVC is to commit oneself to living explicitly in the spirit of gratuity during that time, and thereby to allow that spirit to inhabit one's own consciousness. In the words of the great Jesuit missionary to India, Pierre de Ceyrac, '*Tout ce qui n'est pas donné est perdu*'.⁵ The heart of such gratuity lies in the prayer expressed in George Herbert's poem 'Gratefulness':

Thou that hast giv'n so much to me,
Give one thing more, a gratefull heart.
See how thy beggar works on thee

By art.

He makes thy gifts occasion more,
And sayes, If he in this be crost,
All thou hast giv'n him heretofore
Is lost.

...

Wherefore I crie, and crie again;
And in no quiet canst thou be,
Till I a thankfull heart obtain

Of thee:

Not thankfull when it pleaseth me;
As if thy blessings had spare dayes:
But such a heart whose pulse may be
Thy praise.⁶

⁵ Pierre Ceyrac, *Tout ce qui n'est pas donné est perdu* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2000): 'All that is not given is lost'.

⁶ George Herbert, 'Gratefulness', in *The English Poems of George Herbert* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), 435–436.

Values

JVC characterizes itself as a 'values-based' organization. This is a complex claim. A 'value', after all, is no more than what is valued, by an individual or by a society—and not necessarily for noble reasons. Economic value, as Adam Smith acknowledged in the eighteenth century, is set 'not by any accurate measure but by the higgling and bargaining of the market'.⁷

And economic value is manifestly central to contemporary societies. Karl Polanyi's classic book *The Great Transformation* traces how this has distinguished them from most other societies in history. The promotion of economic growth (which may or may not involve personal enrichment) has not been seen as a justification for actions and behaviour in everyday life except in market societies. Indeed under other conditions the accumulation of goods might well be regarded as anti-social, as a *failure* to uphold the values of a society. As the narrator of John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* remarks acerbically:

The things we admire in men, kindness and generosity, openness, honesty, understanding and feeling are the concomitants of failure in our system. And the traits we detest, sharpness, greed, acquisitiveness, meanness, egotism and self-interest are the traits of success. And while men admire the first they love the produce of the second.⁸

Values, then, are not self-justifying: they depend upon a particular process of evaluation in a particular context. Nor are they self-subsistent: their meaning may be profoundly changed by being combined with other values. 'Economic growth' plus 'strong social protection', for example, combine to suggest a social-democratic political ideal; whereas 'economic growth' plus 'maximal entrepreneurial freedom' lead to US-style liberal capitalism. 'Economic growth' cannot be evaluated on its own, but only as part of a configuration of purposes and practices.

It is consequently never enough to proclaim values. One has to explain how to resolve clashes and tensions between them. One of the Directorates General of the European Commission is named 'Freedom, Security and Justice'. There are acute institutional tensions in the

⁷ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations: Books I–III* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), 134. The obsolete word 'higgling' here has a contemptuous ring, hovering somewhere between 'niggling' and 'haggling'.

⁸ John Steinbeck, *Cannery Row* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), 123.

implementation of these three 'values', especially since, in this context, 'justice' in fact means policing.⁹

Human life is lived amid all kinds of tensions between and among principles and values, none of which can of itself be asserted as absolute. In an essay of 1970, the philosopher Eric Voegelin wrote:

Existence has the structure of the In-Between ... and if anything is constant in the history of mankind it is the language of tension between life and death, immortality and mortality, perfection and imperfection, time and timelessness; between order and disorder, truth and untruth, sense and senselessness of existence If we split these pairs of symbols, and hypostatize the poles of the tension as independent entities, we destroy the reality of existence as it has been experienced by the creators of the tensional symbolisms.¹⁰

All our definitions, argues Voegelin, are provisional, since we participate in a reality that cannot be observed from an external vantage point. All our symbolic constructions express a *perspective*, an experience within reality, and cannot pretend to take final possession of truth. They are part of reality in process.

To express a set of values, then, is to symbolize what Ignatius would call a 'movement of the spirit', and so to commit ourselves to live in accordance with that spirit. Our expression will be persuasive to others in so far as they recognise the values we proclaim as conforming to their own sense of what constitutes a good life, and in so far as we succeed in living by those values.

To speak of *moral* values is to raise the stakes by defining what is empirically valued in terms of morality: identifying the desirable with the good. Just as with any value, however, even when moral values are almost universally invoked, they are just as insistently understood in diverse ways. The fundamental value of 'human dignity' is scarcely questioned. But as soon as we apply it to a specific human practice, its meaning is contested. For example, many secularists will appeal to 'human dignity' as a justification for euthanasia, whereas Christians will invoke it as grounds for preserving life.

⁹ I have no room to explore the possible tensions among the JVC values.

¹⁰ Eric Voegelin, 'Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History', in *Collected Works*, volume 12, *Published Essays, 1966–1985* (U. of Missouri P, 1990), 119–120.

Once we have a cluster of declared central values (such as community, simple lifestyle, social justice and spirituality), however, whether 'moral' or not, we have the basis for a whole way of life that is valued: no one value attains its full expression or its full coherence without the others.

Community

The fact that JVC participants live together in community is crucial to the volunteering programme. (In contrast, Jesuits themselves will normally be ascribed to a community, but may live alone should their mission require it.) This practice of shared living can be understood at different levels.

First, it is a formative antidote to the pervasive individualism of the culture from which many of the volunteers come. Within this culture what ideas of community do exist are often impoverished. In 1999 the British Prime Minister Tony Blair defined community instrumentally, in a speech to the Economic Club of Chicago, as 'the belief that partnership and cooperation are essential to advance self-interest'. If self-interest is the goal, it may well be served by 'partnership and cooperation', but the result is certainly not 'community'.

Admittedly community is not without an instrumental function; it is fortunate that what is good may also be useful. For we accomplish much more with the help of others than all of us would have accomplished working on our own. A Chinese pastor, Ting Kuang-Hsun, wrote this in 1989 about his experience of how synergy transcends pragmatism:

To me, an incompletely Christianized intellectual with a sprinkling of Confucian elitism, it was quite a pilgrimage to come to realise the spiritual potential of human social organization. There is an inspiration in human fellowship enabling comrades to rise to levels unattainable by mere individuals. Common purpose and common enthusiasm transform and uplift We open ourselves to the sacred and to encountering God as we dive into the depths of human relations, no matter how secular they seem.¹¹

More profoundly, community is useful, and even good, because of a fundamental spiritual truth, perhaps best articulated by the fourth-century bishop St Basil in his *Greater Rules*. Basil, who had himself been a hermit,

¹¹ Quoted in Ecclestone, *Gather the Fragments*, 111.

firmly discourages the assumptions that were then prevalent about the pre-eminence of the solitary life for those without a rather extraordinary vocation:

Our Lord, in loving each human being right to the end, ... put on an apron and washed the disciples' feet. So what about you, living entirely on your own? Whose feet will you wash? ... To whom will you offer brotherly service? How, in the home of a solitary, can you taste the joy that is evident where many live together? ... Besides this, Christ's commandment to love does not allow us to be solely concerned with our own interest. 'Love does not seek its own interest.' (1 Corinthians 13:5) The solitary life, by contrast, seeks exactly that, namely the advantage of the individual In the second place, it is difficult for solitaries to correct their faults. They do not have anyone to point them out.¹²

Basil gives the *theological* basis for this praise of community: 'Yes, it is God's will that we should be indispensable to one another, so that we can be in unity with one another'. To live in community, he implies, is vital to spiritual growth because it guards us against abstract humanitarian sentiment—that is, believing that we love humankind without actually loving any specific person. This remains a temptation to those who work for social justice at the macro-level. They can find themselves assuming that they do not have the time for individual people who are poor or excluded, and who might make demands on that invaluable time.

Living in community brings us face to face with our own



¹² Basil the Great, *The Greater Rules*, section 7, cited in Tomáš Špidlík, *Drinking from the Hidden Fountain: A Patristic Breviary: Ancient Wisdom for Today's World* (Minneapolis: Cistercian Publications, 1993), 215.

faults, or simply with our limits—of patience, generosity, stamina. Those who live alone may perhaps go for a whole day without encountering any will, any set of priorities, other than their own. How can spiritual realism be sustained in these conditions?

Community is thus not the least of the challenges volunteers encounter in JVC. Communities are formed ‘intentionally’, not simply through circumstance (such as the need to economize by sharing the rent of an apartment). Yet, just as in an Ignatian religious congregation, the members do not choose each other’s companionship on grounds of personal liking or even compatibility. Clashes of personality are immediate and threaten the community’s peace. As every family knows, it is often most difficult to be respectful and loving with those who are physically and emotionally closest to us.

Finally, given the way in which JVC in Britain has recently evolved, the year in community will demand a growth in intercultural as well as interpersonal acceptance and sensitivity. It also requires a sometimes painful recognition of the need both to be open to the other and to respect boundaries.

Simple Lifestyle

In its commitment to simplicity, JVC has built on an ancient tradition perhaps more honoured in religious life, in certain lay movements, and in some protestant and nonconformist Churches, than among Roman Catholic laity. It has also anticipated some powerful contemporary movements.

One may read the value of ‘simple lifestyle’ as a contemporary rendering of the religious vow of poverty, a new term devised to avoid some of the misconceptions invited by the word ‘poverty’ in a world where billions of people verge on destitution. This task of clarification, however, can be done from within the term poverty itself, as by Johann-Baptist Metz, who unites its mystical and its political significance:

Poverty as an evangelical virtue is a protest against the tyranny of having, of possessing and of pure self-assertion. It impels those practising it into practical solidarity with those poor whose poverty

is not a matter of virtue but is their condition of life and the situation exacted of them by society.¹³

JVC communities are in practice 'poor', because their budgetary allowances are minimal and because they are located in areas of social deprivation which the volunteers in some measure (though by no means fully) share. But the commitment to 'simple lifestyle' connotes something subtly distinct (though not separable) from 'poverty'. It is a lifestyle, not a circumstance. In our present age it can be seen as a corrective to consumerist social attitudes that embody an often unwitting contempt for the needs of others—attitudes which have also helped to generate the current threats to our environment.

This lifestyle is reflected, for example, in CAFOD's¹⁴ 'Live Simply' campaign: living simply here is not a matter of self-deprivation but of recognising that a way of living which binds us primarily to our possessions will cut us off from other people. It stresses sustainability and solidarity. We know from experience that the power of possessions (or the longing for them) is insidious. It becomes a false God—the 'Mammon' of the New Testament—that competes with the true God for our fundamental loyalties. Only spiritual discipline can withstand this power, and such resistance brings joy and peace. As a colleague at CAFOD, Jim O'Keefe, has suggested, 'We know we are beginning to live simply when we glimpse that we are content with less; when we discover we



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¹³ Johann-Baptist Metz, *Followers of Christ*, translated by Thomas Linton (London: Burns and Oates, 1978), 49.

¹⁴ CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) is the official overseas development and relief agency of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales.

don't have to compete with other people in relation to what they have or what they have achieved'.¹⁵

'We are content with less.' The keynote of 'simple lifestyle' is perhaps this awareness that 'contentment' comes gratuitously, but not randomly: it requires us to cultivate the conditions for a profound reciprocal openness with other people.

Social Justice

In *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, the protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr *contrasted* the virtue of justice with the practice of love.

From the perspective of society the highest moral ideal is justice. From the perspective of the individual the highest ideal is unselfishness. Society must strive for justice even if it is forced to use means, such as self-assertion, resistance, coercion and perhaps resentment, which cannot gain the moral sanction of the most sensitive moral spirit. The individual must strive to realise his life by losing and finding himself in something greater than himself.¹⁶

This passage seems to me to misstate the genuine tension between the individual and the collective. Society, Niebuhr maintains, employs self-assertion, even coercion: individuals (and only individuals) are called to unselfishness. But I would suggest that collectivities can be generous and unselfish; and that individuals may need to assert themselves and to resist in order to be genuinely selfless, to practise that love which is defined as the effective service of the well-being of others (*agape*, not *eros*). Underlying Niebuhr's account seems to lie an unexamined assumption that only individuals are capable of 'love', and that groups intrinsically threaten the individual's purity. A more 'catholic' sense will see groups or communities as the vehicle of social grace no less than of social sin.

Jon Sobrino argues, in clear contrast to Niebuhr, that we distort the gospel's notion of love if we instinctively take it to refer primarily to the charity expressed by individuals in their close relationships. This common move must implicitly either contrast justice with love or, at best, understand it as a secondary and derivative form of love, since (as

¹⁵ Jim O'Keefe, 'Thoughts on *Livesimply* while Overlooking Durham Cathedral', available at <http://www.cafod.org.uk/content/download/22805/286677/version/9/file/Reflection+-+01.doc>.

¹⁶ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (London: SCM, 1963 [1932]), 257.

Niebuhr argues) the search for justice often involves conflict, and it does not presuppose personal intimacy:

By justice I mean the kind of love that seeks effectively to humanise, to give life in abundance to the poor and oppressed majorities of the human race. Justice is thus a concrete form of love in which account is taken of the quantitative fact that its recipients form majorities and of the qualitative fact that they are poor and oppressed.¹⁷

Perhaps, since I helped to compose it, I may be allowed to cite, in support of Sobrino, part of the 'Vision Statement' of my own organization, the Jesuit European Office:

God has created human beings not as separate individuals, but as persons always and essentially in relationship, called to unity. Solidarity (which entails justice and social inclusion) is the fundamental moral imperative that flows from the communal character of human life The Church's political mission derives from the conviction that the quality of human life is profoundly affected in the political arena. Commitment in this arena is integral to the mission of Christ, who empowers his followers to practise that universal love of neighbour which is expressed as the search for social justice.¹⁸

There can be no contrast in principle between social justice and gospel love, even if there is an inherent tension between societal responsibilities and personal relationships.

What transforms the JVC value of social justice into more than a 'moral obligation', as Niebuhr might understand it, is once again the notion of gratuity. This value includes both faithfulness to the people we encounter along our way and an exigent long-term commitment to transforming the systems that exclude or oppress them. The JVC year, for many volunteers, amounts to an education in how these dimensions are always in tension (even at the basic level of time management), yet are mutually constitutive. Personal kindness is not yet justice, though it is touching and indispensable in itself: but social activism that becomes

¹⁷ Jon Sobrino, *The True Church and the Poor* (London: SCM, 1985), 48. Sobrino's position is not developed as a conscious attempt to refute Niebuhr. I have contrasted these two positions at greater length in 'Justice as a Value', *The Month*, 26/9–10 (September–October 1995), 363–367.

¹⁸ Available at www.ocipe.info.

ruthless and lacking in compassion is far from the justice that is, as Sobrino writes, 'a primordial and irreducible form of love'.

Spirituality

It may seem strange to count spirituality as one 'value' among others, when it seems rather to be the basic stance on life that underpins all value-choices, though it would be equally strange not to recognise it as a pillar of JVC. Christian spirituality is evidently not equivalent to 'interiority', the practice of taking one's external experience sufficiently into personal reflection: that practice might indeed be a value. Spirituality is, in the first place, simply a commitment to live in the power of the Holy Spirit, and to remain under all circumstances conscious of that commitment. To cite Gerard W. Hughes, the spiritual life may be understood as 'the deepening awareness of the life within us now, awareness of the transcendent, always greater, God within us now as the source and giver of all life and our life'.¹⁹ Such an awareness is the foundation of all authentic values.

The previous paragraph gives to spirituality a specifically religious, indeed Christian, context. But the notion of spirituality is not limited to that context; as John Cottingham points out:

We find the term [spirituality] used in connection with activities and attitudes which command widespread appeal, irrespective of metaphysical commitment or doctrinal allegiance. Even the most convinced atheist may be prepared to avow an interest in the 'spiritual' dimension of human existence, if that dimension is taken to cover forms of life that put a premium on certain kinds of intensely focused moral and aesthetic response, or on the search for deeper reflective awareness of the meaning of our lives and of our relationship to others and to the natural world.²⁰

In the Ignatian context of JVC, however, spirituality retains its Christian specificity, even if not all JVC volunteers enter the programme formally as Christians. It evokes the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, which are described as 'any means of preparing and disposing

¹⁹ In a talk—somewhere and some time—from which I retain only this note!

²⁰ John Cottingham, *The Spiritual Dimension: Religion, Philosophy and Human Value* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 3.

our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after their removal, of seeking and finding God's will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul' (Exx 1).

Perhaps the key is in this phrase 'rid itself of all its disordered affections'. All the values discussed in this essay can be respected and treasured; and all can be distorted and travestied, including spirituality itself when it is seen as an escape from the urgent practical demands of life. God's Spirit is the giver of wisdom and courage *for* life.

In its true form, integrated with the commitments to community, simple lifestyle and social justice, spirituality therefore symbolizes the profound truth that all these values and practices need to be *discerned*, so that we may know what is of the Spirit and what is not. It is spiritual discernment that prevents 'community' degenerating into the kind of *esprit de corps* that excludes outsiders and privileges insiders; that prevents 'simple lifestyle' from becoming an arid frugality, denying conviviality or hospitality; that saves the search for social justice from an angry contempt for those whose convictions and interests are opposed to our own; and, not least, that protects 'spirituality' itself from a mere esotericism that the importance of the physical and the moral. Spirituality has a built-in ability to criticize itself.

If all this sometimes seems impossible, the experience of the grace of God, mysteriously encountering and inspiring our own freedom to give of ourselves, shows precisely that God can do 'more than we can ask or imagine'. Ultimately, JVC is a witness to that faith.

Frank Turner SJ, a Jesuit of the British Province, is director of the Jesuit European Office, OCIPE, in Brussels. From 1990 to 1994 he was chair of the Jesuit Volunteer Community, UK.