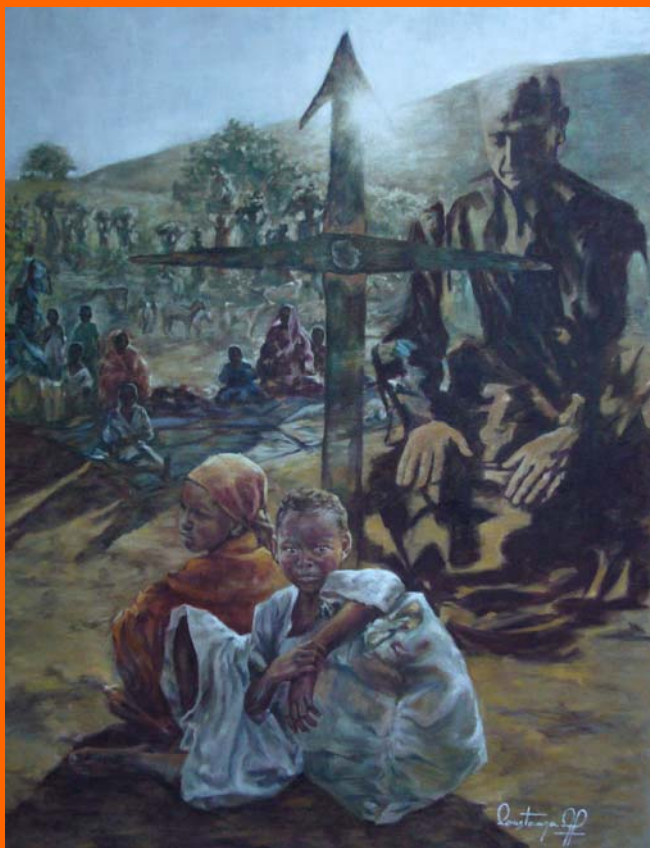


## Prayer to the Christ of the refugees



by Father General of the Society of Jesus, Adolfo Nicolás SJ

*Chiesa del Gesù, Rome, 9 November 2008*

Jesus, our Lord and Brother, listen to our humble prayer:

Here we are, your friends, your brothers and sisters, travelling companions of your refugees. We remember today another of your friends, who spent his life seeking your face: your servant Pedro Arrupe, ‘a FIRE that kindled many fires’. It was he who taught us that you love to hide yourself precisely in those places where humanity’s incredible and most spontaneous beauty is denied.

True humanity and the essence of his truth are not on sale in our city centres, but in poor neighbourhoods abandoned in their misery, in refugee camps, in corners of the world where people suffer and are oppressed or excluded. This is where we can meet you and rediscover our own hearts. It is when we come to the edge, to the border of what is human, that we discover the centre, your centre and our centre.

Your paths are not our paths; your ways of acting are not like ours. Jesus, our brother and friend, open the eyes of our hearts, so that we may learn to look for you where you really are, waiting and calling for our attention. May we never pass by without giving you the smile you need, may we never pass by as if you didn’t exist, or were invisible in the fine streets of our city. May we never come to believe that you have less right than we do to live and enjoy. May we rediscover in you, foreigner, immigrant, refugee, anyone who is somehow ‘different’, the humanity we are always on the verge of losing.

Like many of the refugees, our brothers and sisters, you had to leave your hometown in order to be born, to leave your country to survive, to hide yourself to elude the hostile scrutiny of the authorities, to suffer total abandonment on the cross. All around us, we meet hundreds of our brothers and sisters who have faced and are still facing such experiences. They can help us to understand you and to see your face anew, this time with African, Slavonic, Asian features, different from our own. Guide us, Jesus of ‘unattractive appearance’, so that we will not lose this great opportunity of meeting you and of changing our hearts at last.

Jesus our brother, change our way of looking at and feeling about our neighbours. May we not just say “What a pity”, “How terrible”, when we hear their stories. May we see you in these stories and feel in our hearts “Jesus lived like this”. We are not meeting marginalised people, but you, and in this meeting help us to be reborn with a new humanity.

Amen