

Working with Jesuits for the Greater Glory of God in Amman



We asked two of our colleagues at the Jesuit Center in Amman to share with our readers what it is like to work with the Jesuits. The first reflection is by Raed Khoury, a 38-year-old single man. The second reflection is by Raed Awwad, a 41-year-old married man with two children.

Raed Khoury



For me working with Jesuits is not just a job, rather, it is a mission. It is like being with my own family. And within this family, I find love, care, acceptance, and vocation fulfillment. Not only has the Jesuit Center in Amman, Jordan helped me to live a decent life, but also it provides me with the necessary spiritual

and academic tools to serve better my brothers and sisters in Jordan. I am able to share with others the love and spirit that I have received from the Jesuit community.

The first meeting with Jesuits was in 1997. And it was through Emil El-Dik (a lay worker at the Jesuit Center) who invited me to participate in a two-year theological program at the Jesuit Center. I was a math teacher when I first met Emil, but deep in me, I heard the voice of God calling me to accept this invitation. There were 12 participants in that program; it is the same number of the chosen apostles of the early Church. This number didn't mean anything for others but for me it was a call, inviting me to a deeper commitment with God. I graduated from that program in 1999. Through my study, I came to know Jesuit spirituality theoretically. It was through Fr. Clarence Burby (a Jesuit priest who became my spiritual director) that this spirituality became part of my being and reshaped the way I think. With Fr. Burby and some

of the graduates, I continued my spiritual journey. As a group, we prayed, shared faith, and supported each other. This spiritual journey has opened my mind and heart to see clearly the work of God in my life. The slogan "For God's Great Glory" does not represent a vague sentence anymore; rather, it represents a way of being and a path to discover God's love in all his creatures. In 2004, the Jesuits offered me a generous invitation to get my master degree in pastoral ministry at Boston College. Studying at Boston College not only helped me academically, but also it helped me to see myself as part of a larger family. What touched me most was the love and acceptance I received at Boston College. After 9/11, terrorism and being an Arab were interchangeable. At Boston College, I didn't feel any of that. This experience helped me to accept people from various nationalities, Iraqis, Americans, Filipinos, who participate in the Center's different activities.

Now, I work at the Jesuit Center in Jordan. My aim is to help those who join our programs to discover God's love in their own lives. In the Middle East, we live in a hard situation because of war, conflicts, and poverty. Therefore, my focus is on the spirituality of hope. Essentially, the Gospel's main message is to bring hope where hope is forbidden. To achieve that, I gave workshops about the beatitudes in different parishes, presented workshops about the Revelation of St. John, gave lectures in the Spiritual



Attendees at a Bible studies workshop at the Jesuit Center.

Formation program and presentations for different prayer and youth groups in our parishes. Jordanian spirituality is based on devotional and communal prayers. In our workshops, we try to help participants to experience personal and reflective prayers to deepen their faith and to help them discover God's hand in their life even in the hardest moments of their life, based on a modified version of the Ignatian spirituality to meet the needs of our own participants.

Raed Awwad



My name is Raed Awwad. I was a seminarian for six years. Later, I felt God wanted me to marry. Then as a married man, I wanted to help people to get closer to God. In due course, I started working with the Jesuits. I studied and received a certificate as a tourist guide. Later, I continued my studies at the Jesuit Center

in Amman; and I was awarded a diploma in theology from Bethlehem University.

I have been working with the Jesuit Fathers in Amman, Jordan since January 7, 1999. First as a receptionist, and then step by step I have improved myself with the Fathers' help and by my own hard work. Thereupon, I became coordinator of programs for the Center. Now, I am the receptionist and coordinator of the Retreat Program. I feel that what I do here is not a job but a deep vocation.

Ignatian spirituality for me is living and working in the spirit of Jesus, who came to make people aware of God's willingness to serve them and to show them how they could do the same. Every month we try to schedule a one-day recollection in the Center. During the vacation periods, we organize one-night or two-night retreats outside the Center. And in the summertime every year, we have one long retreat of four days outside Jordan, in Lebanon. Through these retreats, we help the people experience how the spiritual life is a walking with God and a union with him throughout life. God in all things and all things in God!

Editor's note: Just prior to publication, Fr. Al Hicks, SJ, announced that Raed Awwad has been appointed the director of the Jesuit Center in Amman.

New England Jesuits began work in Amman, Jordan in 1987 as part of the Church's work through the Pontifical Mission for Palestine. Jesuit fathers and lay colleagues such as Raed Awwad and Raed Khoury work together in "the service of faithful Christians in different theological and spiritual fields and in pastoral works."



For more information about the Jesuit Center in Amman, visit: www.jesuitcenterjo.org



Baghdad College & Al-Hikma University

2009 REUNION

Fifteen reunions of those educated by the New England Province Jesuits in the Middle East have been held. Ramzi Hermiz, Baghdad College, Class of 1948, is coordinating the 16th reunion to be held in July 2009 in Detroit, Michigan.

The 15th Annual Reunion of Baghdad College/ Al-Hikma University BC AH Alumni was held July 5-9, 2006 in Chicago, Illinois.

Reunion 15 of Chicago was attended by:

- Over 600 people, including 250 families
- 14 Jesuits and members of the New England

Provincial staff

- At least 28 "Old Timers" (Alumni of B.C. of '56 or earlier)

As in prior reunions, the generosity of alumni/ae and their families continues to demonstrate their financial support for the Jesuits. After payment of all reunion related expenses, more than \$72,000 was made available to the Jesuit Missions for their continuing work in the Middle East.



To read more about the 15th reunion, visit: www.sjnen.org and click on JESUITS Magazine. The Baghdad Reunion story is in the autumn 2005 issue.

16th Annual Reunion of Baghdad College/ Al-Hikma University BC AH Alumni

July 16-19, 2009
Detroit, Michigan

For more information, please contact:
Ramzi Y. Hermiz at 630-620-5522 or
email: bc-ah-reunion@sbcglobal.net