



## MEET THE NEW TEAM!



### Rev Dr Patrick McInerney

Fr Patrick is a Columban Missionary Priest. After ordination in 1978 he was assigned to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for over twenty years. In the mid-eighties he did Arabic and Islamic studies in Rome, and then resumed working in parishes, involved in the fledgling dialogue groups, administration and leadership.

He returned to Australia in 2000 and after sabbatical studies was assigned to the Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations. He attends interfaith and multi-faith events, giving talks to a variety of audiences, and teaches tertiary level courses on Islam and interreligious dialogue. In 2009 he was awarded a PhD for his thesis on Christian Responsibility in Interreligious Dialogue.

### Mrs Amal Dardass

Amal is the Research and Development Officer at the Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations. She commenced working at the Centre at the end of 2009.

Amal has been an active member of Australian Christian Muslim Association and ran several projects including the "Interfaith Youth Exchange Program". She has also been an active member of the Melkite Eparchy Council and chaired the Interfaith Committee for a number of years.

Amal has worked previously in the corporate world for the last eight years as a project Manager and a Business Analyst. She has also worked as a Research Assistant at the Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Sydney.



### Father Brian Vale

Father Brian is a Columban missionary priest from New Plymouth, New Zealand. Ordained in 1975, he worked in Japan from 1976 - 1985 and from 1992 - 2003. He was involved in parish work, social justice education, with the Young Christian Workers movement and in Columban Society leadership. His interest in cross cultural studies led to an M.A. in Comparative Culture from Sophia University, Tokyo.

He worked in Columban Society formation work as a Spiritual Director from 1986-1991 at St. Columbans College, North Turramurra, NSW, and from 2003-2009 was working at Lower Hutt, New Zealand in Columban Society leadership.



On 30 November 2009 the Columban Mission Institute farewelled Sr Pauline Rae smsm. She had been a staff member of the Institute for much of the past thirty years. The staff and the current and previous Directors of the Institute, and in particular of the Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations, paid tributes to her for her enormous contributions in a variety of fields. Below is the testimony of Fr Patrick McInerney, who succeeds Sr Pauline as Deputy Director of the Columban Mission Institute and Coordinator of the Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations.

On my first missionary journey to Pakistan in early 1979 I passed through the *Pacific Mission Institute* when Sr Pauline Rae was first appointed there. I visited regularly during subsequent home holidays, including the talk given by Cardinal Francis Arinze on 26 July 1997, when I gave a brief address on my experiences in Pakistan to Catholic religious who had also worked in Muslim-majority countries.

I took up my appointment to the *Columban Mission Institute* and the *Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations* in late 2002. Kathleen Collins SSpS introduced me to the internal workings of the Centre, and Pauline introduced me to the wider Christian-Muslim scene in Sydney.

When the Centre first started in 1997, Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations were not on the radar of Catholic interests. Pauline was a pioneer, reaching out in true missionary fashion, into an unknown world. Over the following years she came to know many Muslim people, and to be known by them, as well as people of other faiths. When Islam burst into public consciousness with the terrible events in the USA in September 2001, and people were clamouring for information, Pauline and Kathleen were very well positioned to respond to those appeals, to provide resources, and especially to provide Muslim speakers.

During my time at the Centre, Pauline has been an invaluable source of information and insights into local people, personalities, and organizations. Her contacts included the former students of PMI and CMI over the many years of her involvement, so her reach extended far beyond Sydney to the leaders of Catholic institutes and organizations in other states and in other countries.

Pauline and I had to learn to dialogue not only with Muslims, but also with each other. As a result, we forged a team to which we each brought different gifts, to the enhancement of the Christian-Muslim apostolate. To her local knowledge of Muslims in Sydney I brought my long overseas experience with Muslims in Pakistan; to her practical grass-

roots involvement in Sydney I brought my academic studies of Islam in Rome; to her long involvement with Muslim women, and especially the *Womens' Interfaith Network*, I brought the experience of my preliminary involvement with Muslim men and organizations.

When CMI formally revived missiology by offering courses at the *Catholic Institute of Sydney* in 2004, Pauline was a very astute adviser on course content and outlines, on presentation, and on assessment tasks and marking, as well as a presenter for particular topics within her field of expertise.



The Centre's flagship publication has always been the newsletter *Bridges*. Pauline worked assiduously on this over the years, both in terms of content as editor, and in terms of promoting it widely to the public. Its reputation is due in large part to her efforts. In recent years we have added official publications from Vatican II, from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and from *The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought*, thus strengthening the Centre's identity as a resource for interreligious relations.

During my recent doctoral studies, Pauline carried on the work at the Centre largely on her own, making only occasional demands on my time and attention. I am grateful for her support and her consideration.

That Muslim-Christian Relations are now firmly fixed on the radar of Catholic interest in Sydney, and that hardly a week goes by in which there is not one or more interreligious activities, can be traced in part to Pauline's pioneering work in this field. May the seeds she has sown continue to bear fruit. I will miss her practical advice and wisdom as we take the apostolate forwards in the coming years, hoping to plough deeper furrows over the terrain which she traversed, and I wish her every blessing in the years ahead.

*Patrick J. McInerney*

Welcome to this first issue of *Bridges* for 2010.

The “big news” from the Centre is the retirement of **Sr Pauline Rae** at the end of last year. The staff of the *Columban Mission Institute* fare-welled her at a dinner in November 2009. On the facing page I share the tribute that I paid to her on that occasion.

The other “big news” from the Centre is that we have two new staff members, **Amal Dardass** and **Father Brian Vale**. They are introduced on the cover page. Although a staff member of the Centre since 2002, I have been appointed the new Coordinator. So the three of us are in effect a new team. We look forward to the challenges ahead.

We will build on the foundations that have been laid over the past thirteen years. Accordingly, in the current issue of *Bridges*, you will find the usual sections. In **News from the Centre**, the staff are reaching out to meet our various partners in dialogue and getting to know the local situation. In **Items of Interest** we give some brief reports from around the world. And we report on **Coming Events**. All these sections are very brief to give space for the longer reports and the other major articles in this particular issue of *Bridges*.

There are two **Feature Articles**. The first is the Media Statement of **Anwar Ibrahim**, the Leader of the Opposition, who addresses the recent outbreak of communal violence in Malaysia. The second is a summary of a very important address on Christian-Muslim Relations by **Cardinal Tauran**, the President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

However, as Sr Pauline indicated in her last editorial, the Christian-Muslim situation has changed dramatically over the past few years—to give but one example, when the Centre first started in 1997 there were very few agents of dialogue; now there are many from every church, and from every religion. As a new team, we are seeking new ways of responding to this changed situation.

Accordingly, the key item in this issue of *Bridges* is a **Reader’s Survey**. The *Centre* published the first issue of *Bridges* in October 1998. The current issue is no 46. As mentioned above, the Christian-Muslim scene has changed dramatically in the last eleven years, and *Bridges* needs to change to respond to this new situation. We ask you, the readers of *Bridges*, to help us respond better to your needs by giving your considered answers to the questions in the survey. Your responses will help us shape *Bridges* to be a more effective instrument for building better relations between Christians and Muslims now and into the future. Thank you in anticipation for your cooperation.

*Patrick J McInerney*  
Editor

## Parliament of the Worlds Religions

**Fr Patrick McInerney** was one of 6,000 delegates to attend the *Parliament of the Worlds Religions* in Melbourne from 3-9 December 2009. It is the world’s largest global interreligious event.

For photos see page 8. For a detailed report see <http://www.columban.org.au/e-news/e-news-vol.-3-no.-2/aborigines-to-zoroastrians/>

## Hosting Dialogue Partners

To get to know some of our dialogue partners, the Centre hosted meetings to meet and introduce ourselves, to share our hopes and plans, and to find areas of possible collaboration. **Mehmet Saral** president of *Affinity Intercultural Foundation*, visited on 10 February to share about their activities. **Mehmet Ozalp** visited on the 11 February 2010 to inform us about the newly established *Islamic Sciences & Research Academy* (ISRA). **Afroz Ali**, founding director of *al-Ghazzali Centre for Islamic Sciences and Human Development*, visited on the 23 February 2010 to share about their ongoing programmes.

## Women of Faith Dinner

**Amal Dardass** will represent the Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations on the Organizing Committee for the *Women of Faith Dinner* to be held on 14 March 2010.

## Rabbi Raymond Apple

**Fr Brian Vale** attended the first NSW Council of Christians and Jews Luncheon Club Talk of the year at the Great Synagogue Auditorium on 11 February 2010. Rabbi Raymond Apple gave an address entitled *House of Prayer for all Peoples*.

## Memoirs of Bishop Manning

Frs **Patrick McInerney** and **Brian Vale** attended an evening hosted by Affinity on 23 February 2010 at Auburn. Bishop Kevin Manning of Parramatta diocese shared personal stories of growing up in rural NSW during the Depression years, of his call to and early experiences of priesthood in country parishes, and of his developing friendships with the Muslim community. He emphasised that both Christianity and Islam value compassion, that we are all children of God, and that despite differences we can grow in trust and friendship through face to face meetings. He added that eventually we will all end up in the same heaven! The affection with which he is held in the Muslim community was evident in their questions and thanks for his dialogue with them in recent years.

## ITEMS OF INTEREST

### Safe Release of Fr Michael Sinnott

We give thanks for the safe release of elderly Irish Columban Father Michael Sinnott on the 12 November 2009. He had been abducted from his home in Mindanao on 11 October 2009 and held in captivity for 31 days. We appreciate the solidarity and prayers of Christians and Muslims in the Philippines and around the world, in particular the joint Bishops-Ulama statement appealing for his immediate release, which stressed that both the Islamic and Christian faiths have strong reverence for human life and freedom. We rejoice and give thanks to God for a happy outcome to a dangerous situation.

For details see:

<http://www.rte.ie/news/2009/1111/sinnottm.html>

### Abdul Rahman Wahid RIP

We note with sadness the death on 30 December 2009 of Abdul Rahman Wahid, President of Indonesia from 1999 to 2001 and leader of *Nahdatul Ulama*. He was a passionate advocate for Christian-Muslim dialogue and reconciliation. The world is grateful for his inspiration and contribution and is poorer by his passing.

إنا لله وإنا إليه راجعون

We belong to God, and to Him we shall return.  
(Quran, *al-Baqarah* 2:156)

### Pope's Plea to Stop Attacks

Violence is never the answer, Benedict XVI said today in a plea to stop attacks against migrants and Christians.

"We must start again from the heart of the problem," the Holy Father urged. "We must start again from the meaning of the person!"

"An immigrant is a human being, different by provenance, culture and traditions, but a person to be respected with rights and duties, especially, in the sphere of work, where the temptation of exploitation is strongest, but also in the concrete conditions of life."

"Violence must never be the way for anyone to solve problems," he said. "The difficulty is first of all a human one! I invite everyone to look into the face of the other and to see that he has a soul, a story and a life: He is a person and God loves him as he loves me."

Source: Zenit.org 10 January 2010. For full text see: [www.zenit.org/article-28005?l=english](http://www.zenit.org/article-28005?l=english)

### Swiss Bishops Protest Minaret Ban,

(Zenit.org) 1 December 2009: In a communiqué the Swiss bishops' conference stated that the people's decision to prohibit the construction of minarets in the country "represents an obstacle and a great challenge on the path of integration in dialogue and mutual respect."

For full article see <http://www.zenit.org/article-27713?l=english>

### Catholic Priest Funds Mosque

Rev Franz Meurer, a Roman Catholic priest in Cologne, led his parish to raise funds for the construction of a mosque, slated to be Germany's biggest in a city most famous for its Catholic cathedral.

When Navid Kermani received a national award for his efforts to promote inter-religious dialogue in Germany, the Muslim writer reciprocated in kind and announced he would give his share of the €45,000 (US\$67,738) award to Father Meurer.

For full details see:

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Global-News/2010/0202/Priest-bridges-religious-divide-by-funding-Germany-s-biggest-mosque>

## COMING EVENTS

### Sydney Launch of ISRA

The *Islamic Sciences & Research Academy* (ISRA) has been established to provide information and research services on Islam to social and educational institutions in Australia. It will be launched in Sydney on 23 March 2010. For details contact [info@isra.org.au](mailto:info@isra.org.au) or (02) 96499040.

### Easter Sunday

In 2010 the Orthodox and Latin liturgical calendars coincide, so in God's providence, all Christians will celebrate Easter on the same date, Sunday, 4 April 2010.

### Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation

Explore the Spirituality, Theology and Challenge of Pope Benedict XVI's *World Day of Peace Message* with Columban Father Sean McDonagh.

5.00 – 7.00 pm, Saturday, 10 April 2010  
Thomas Aquinas Centre  
Santa Sabina College  
90 The Boulevard  
Strathfield NSW 2135

For more details see flyer:

<http://www.columban.org.au/assets/files/upcoming/2010/columban%20fr%20sean%20mcdonagh%20april%20visit.pdf.pdf>

*On 31 December 2009 the Kuala Lumpur High Court overruled the three-year old ban on non-Muslims using the name “Allah” for God in their prayers and literature. Muslim groups protested that Christians and other minorities should not use “Allah” for “fear of confusing Muslims.” Unfortunately, some protests have turned violent and several churches were fire-bombed. Malaysian Bishop Paul Tan Chee Ing of the Melaka-Johor Diocese has explained that the issue is “political” rather than “religious”, as the ruling party “is afraid of losing the Malay votes, which make up about 60% of the population”. He has acknowledged that not all Malay Muslims are against non-Muslims using the word, and that such prohibition is contrary to Islamic texts and legal decisions. He has appealed that “the Church’s stand should be calm, firm in its stand for the rights of non-Muslims as enshrined in our federal constitution.” For more details see <http://www.zenit.org/article-27972?l=english>. Below is the press statement issued by Anwar Ibrahim, leader of the Opposition, on 10 January 2010.*

We are outraged by the tragic attacks on our Christian brothers and sisters and reiterate our unequivocal condemnation of the bombing of churches in Malaysia. Today’s attack on the oldest standing church in Malaysia, the All Saints Church in Taiping, is an attack on our nation’s heritage.

As a nation we struggle to uphold the spirit of unity that our founding fathers envisioned at independence. We must hold fast to Article 11 of the Federal Constitution which guarantees freedom of religion and the right of religious groups to manage their own affairs. In such times the spirit of engagement and dialogue must transcend those voices that would seek to sow discord and enmity across our land.

The people of Malaysia must unite against those who exploit race and religion to incite hatred for political gain. We must renew our commitment to religious understanding and religious freedom.

This is a time that tests the resolve of all religions for peace and mutual respect. We must remember that the God who we worship is in fact the same God, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe.

With respect to the use of the word Allah, for example, it cannot be disputed that Arabic speaking Muslims, Christians and Jews have collectively prayed to God as Allah throughout the last fourteen centuries. While sensitivities over its usage have arisen in Malaysia, the way to resolve these conflicts is not by burning churches and staging incendiary protests but by reasoned engagement and interreligious dialogue.

Muslims must recall the memory of our own tradition’s remarkable commitment to understanding and coexistence with the People of the Book. Islam clearly grants respect to Christians and Jews. In the Quran’s second chapter, God says:

**Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to a common word between us and you: that we shall worship none but God (Aal-Imran, 3:64)**

And in the 29<sup>th</sup> Chapter He says:

**And dispute not with the People of the Book but say “We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and that which came down to you...our God [Allah] and your God [Allah] is One, and it is to Him we bow (al-Ankabut, 29:46)**

Jesus is himself revered as one of the greatest prophets whose noble example should be followed. The Caliph Umar, who visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 638 AD, was careful to ensure that the Muslims respect the sanctity of Christian places of worship. What then of our own Police’s hesitation to offer an assurance of safety and security for Malaysian churches?

Much of the blame for the recent attacks can be placed at the doorstep of the UMNO-led BN ruling party. Its incessant racist propaganda over the Allah issue and the inflammatory rhetoric issued by government controlled mainstream media especially, *Utusan Malaysia*, are reprehensible. Such wanton acts of provocation are indeed criminal and demonstrate the duplicity of the 1Malaysia campaign.

I am encouraged by the swift condemnation of the attacks issued by Muslim organizations and leaders. I likewise applaud our Christian leaders for their strong statements calling for calm and forgiveness and resisting revenge and retaliation.

The need for interfaith dialogue in Malaysia is an idea whose time is long overdue. We must now advance the spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood which is inherent in our religions and enshrined in our Constitution. Pakatan Rakyat will collectively take steps to ensure that the necessary dialogue and discussion take place throughout the country. Our fellow Christians must feel safe and secure in this country knowing that their freedom to worship is protected.

ANWAR IBRAHIM

Opposition Leader

<http://www.anwaribrahim.com/press.asp?artid=122>

*Summary of the opening address by Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, at a congress titled “Christianity, Islam and Modernity” on 10 February 2010 in Granada.*

The president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue is affirming that Catholics should not fear Islam, but rather welcome the chance for deepening their faith through interchange with Muslims.

Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran affirmed this in Granada during his Feb. 10 opening address for a two-day congress sponsored by the Faculty of Theology of Granada. The congress was titled "Christianity, Islam and Modernity."

"We must not fear Islam," the prelate affirmed, "but I would say more: Christians and Muslims, when they profess their own faith with integrity and credibility, when they dialogue and make an effort to serve society, constitute a richness for the latter."

He pointed out that "in these five years, the climate of dialogue with Muslims has improved, although contrasting elements still remain." Islam is the religion with which the council maintains the most structured relations.

Among these differences, the cardinal mentioned discrimination of women and freedom of worship, which is absolutely denied in Saudi Arabia.

Cardinal Tauran said that each one of us must address a "triple challenge: that of identity - to have a clear idea of the content of our faith; that of difference - knowing that the other is not necessarily an enemy; and that of pluralism - acknowledging that God is working mysteriously in each one of his creatures."<sup>1</sup>

### **Community**

He affirmed that "for a Westerner, Islam is difficult to understand."

"It is at the same time a religion, a society and a state," the prelate explained, "which brings together 1.2 billion people in one great worldwide entity, the 'ummah'."

"The members of this community practice the same rites, have the same vision of the world and adopt the same conduct," he noted. "Moreover, they do not distinguish between the private and public sphere."

"This religious visibility disturbs secularized societies," the cardinal added.

"However," he said, "the new fact is that in the Western world, Muslims and non-Muslims are obliged to live together."

"In Europe, for example, we live with third-generation Muslims," Cardinal Tauran pointed out.

He observed that "we find Muslims in everyday life," which "does not impede Christians and Muslims many times being victims of prejudice, (usually as) a consequence of ignorance."

"It often happens that a Christian has never spoken with a Muslim, and vice versa," he added.

### **Overcoming fear**

The council president affirmed that "dialogue alone allows us to overcome fear, because it allows each one to experience the discovery of the other and to bring about a meeting, and this meeting is precisely what the interreligious dialogue is about in reality."

This happens "because it is not two religions that meet, but rather men and women that the vicissitudes of life, the circumstances, favorable or unfavorable, have made companions in humanity," he added.

The cardinal stressed the need to "make an effort, on both sides, to know the religious traditions of the other, to acknowledge what separates us and what brings us close and to collaborate for the common good," which "is no easy task."

It calls for "interior liberty that gives place to an attitude full of respect for the other: to be able to be silent so as to listen to the other, to give him the opportunity to express himself with all freedom, and not hide or sweeten one's own spiritual identity," he said.

The prelate continued, "Once trust is established, both sides will be able to examine freely what separates us and what unites us."

In regard to the differences between Christians and Muslims, the cardinal explained that we are separated by "our relation with the sacred books, the concept of revelation -- Christianity is not a 'religion of the book' -- the identity of Jesus and of Mohammed, the Trinity, the use of reason, the conception of prayer."

On the other hand, he affirmed that the two religions hold several things in common: "the oneness of God, the sacredness of life, the conviction that we must transmit moral values to young people, the value of the family for the emotional and moral growth of children and the importance of religion in education."

Cardinal Tauran affirmed that "we, Catholics, are guided and animated by the luminous teaching of Benedict XVI, who has made interreligious dialogue one of the priorities of his pontificate." He referred, for example, to the Holy Father's interventions in Cologne, Germany, the United States, France and the Holy Land.

### Ignorance

Cardinal Tauran pointed out that pastors of the Catholic Church and professors of Catholic schools and universities still rarely take into account this new context of religious pluralism.

He also lamented that "European Catholics have a very weak knowledge of their faith."

"Genuine interreligious dialogue cannot be established in ambiguity or when the interlocutors do not have a defined spiritual profile," the prelate asserted. "Thus relativism and syncretism are born."

He noted that "thanks to Islam, or better said, to Muslims who live with us, we are called to deepen our faith and to renew our catechesis."

The cardinal explained that "to engage in interreligious dialogue is not to put our own faith in brackets but, on the contrary, to proclaim it with words and behavior."

"We proclaim that Jesus is the Light that illumines all men who live in this world," he continued. "Hence, all the positive aspects that exist in religions are not darkness, but participate in this great Light which shines above all lights."

In the Church, Cardinal Tauran stated, "we do not say that all religions have the same value, but that all those that seek God have the same dignity."

### Challenge

He quoted John Paul II, recalling that the former Pontiff affirmed that "other religions constitute a positive challenge for the Church of today."

"In fact, they lead her to discover and recognize the signs of the presence of Christ and of the action of the Holy Spirit, and also to deepen her identity and to witness the integrity of revelation, of which she is trustee for the good of all," the prelate affirmed.

He said that "'Dominus Iesus' reminds us that we must keep two truths together: the possibility, for all men, to be saved by Christ, and the necessity of the Church for salvation."

"For those who do not belong to the Church, Christ is accessible in virtue of a grace that illumines them mysteriously and that comes from Christ," the cardinal said.

He pointed out that "Lumen Gentium" affirms that "those who without fault are ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and his Church but yet seek God sincerely and, with the help of grace, make an effort with their works to fulfill his will, known through the dictate of conscience, can obtain eternal salvation."

The cardinal affirmed that truth is proposed and not imposed, and "interreligious dialogue and the proclamation of Christ are not interchangeable."

Excerpt from Zenit.org, 1 December 2009. For full article see <http://www.zenit.org/article-28394?l=english>

<sup>1</sup> Editor's Endnote: Cardinal Tauran had referred to these three challenges facing Muslims and Christians at a conference in France on 17 November 2009 as "the challenge of identity" (to know and accept what we ourselves are); the "challenge of otherness" (taking our differences as a source of enrichment); and "the challenge of sincerity" (being firm in proposing one's own faith, but within the limits of respect for the dignity of every human being). See <http://www.zenit.org/article-28394?l=english>

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SEEN AT THE PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLDS RELIGIONS



Please help *Bridges* serve you and your needs better by giving your considered responses to this survey. Please post/fax the completed survey to the *Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations* at your earliest convenience using the contact details provided at the end of the next page. Thank you.

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