

MISSION



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NEWS AND VIEWS

AUTUMN 2009

It's OK – we have three priests



Fr John Hegerty

“There are 60,000 people in our parish.” This was a surprise to the staff at Columban Mission Centre when Fr John Hegerty spoke about his work in Peru. “It’s OK” he said “we have three priests.”

John is the Vice-Director of the Region of Peru and has worked in the spiritual formation of students in addition to his parish commitments. He has been in Lima for over 30 years and was home recently to have a holiday and to catch up with family and friends.

Fr Hegerty told the staff that one the biggest struggles in his parish role was keeping in contact with the people. As a way of managing one the busiest times of the year, John said that the parish relied heavily

on parent participation in educating the children for First Communion. This approach seems to work well and brings the families together. These are important occasions

for people, who in true Peruvian style, express their religious beliefs and joy through music and dance – a colourful event.

Health care in Peru is a serious issue and people who can't afford to purchase even the most basic items such as needles, thread and dressings prior to surgery are not entitled to any care at all.

John has returned to Peru to continue working with the people, thanks to the support and assistance of Columban benefactors. ♦

JANETTE MENTHA
Director of Mission Programs



I don't need anything

As staff began planning farewell events to mark the departure of their director, Fr Greg Bennet from the Archbishop's Office for Evangelisation in the Archdiocese of Melbourne they wanted to give him a suitable gift for all he had achieved.

Many suggestions were put forward but in the end they decided to ask him in order to mark this important moment in his life and ministry.

Fr Greg said that he didn't need anything and added nothing would be more pleasing than a gift marking the end of his time as Director to be of benefit to someone else.

Fr Greg knew and admired the work of a friend, Fr Joe Ruys (an associate with the Columban Fathers) working in a mission parish in Peru. Fr Joe was emailed with the proposal that a gift to Fr Greg would be a donation to support his work. Fr Joe sent a story about his work and some photos. These were formatted into an album that was presented to Fr Greg on the night of his official farewell.

Fr Greg was pleased that the gift he received was a gift for another. The occasion was a reminder to all present of the truth of St Francis of Assisi's words, 'for it is in giving that we receive.' ♦

CARMEL CRAWFORD
Archbishops Office for Evangelisation

See You Later

It took me a while after I arrived in Australia to realise that “See you later” has a number of meanings in the Aussie vernacular. In England “See you later” is usually interpreted as meaning that you will meet the other person(s) later that day. ‘Later’ in Aussie-speak, in terms of time, can mean anything from one hour to 20 years!

I have experienced many “See You Later” occasions in my life because of different needs within the Columban society.

I was asked to take on different appointments both at home in the UK and in other mission areas. These various appointments have involved a number of significant ‘uprootings’ which I accepted as part of the missionary life. This experience has given me a broader vision of mission as experienced in different cultures which I wouldn’t have learnt had I remained in the Philippines, my first appointment.

As a missionary the experience of ‘uprooting’ and ‘moving on’ becomes part of life’s journey.

The older I become the harder the experience as I ponder upon whether this will be the last move I will make.



Fr Bernard McDermott

I am about to experience the “See you Later” farewell from Australian friends as I return to England after four years assignment here. I leave with few regrets and as a wiser person than the one who arrived here in 2005 thanks to the many Aussies who have crossed my path.

“See you later” ♦

FR BERNARD MCDERMOTT (BERNIE)

Three years on the road

This year we will celebrate three years of the Pedaling to Live Project.

From small beginnings with five tricycles, the project has grown. We have a total of 62 tricycles in operation. Of these, 42 are now owned by the drivers themselves. They have completed their repayments. Another 19 are still in the process of being repaid. A driver pays about \$1 a day into the cooperative. When he has completed his repayments he takes ownership of his vehicle.

Many of the drivers have also been able to open a small savings account in the co-op and have availed of loans. As many as 300 have applied to join the organization.

We have 41 children in our scholarship program who are attending elementary high school



Fr Oliver McCrossan with tricycle owner and his family.

and we have four in college. This program is a great help to the families of the tricycle drivers.

The drivers have formed their own association and meet once a month. We are also continuing with health clinics for the families and family counseling assistance. Our program unlike others does not distinguish

between religious affiliations.

We give thanks to God for guiding us on the journey over the past three years and to the numerous benefactors who have funded us.

May God bless you all. ♦

FR OLIVER MCCROSSAN
Columban Fathers, Ozamiz City



Fr Shay Cullen

Humanitarian Award for Columban

Fr Shay Cullen was honoured with the Humanitarian Award at the 2009 Meteor Ireland Music Awards at RDS, Dublin, on 17th March. The award included a €100,000 (\$188,600 AUD) donation to his work.

Fr Cullen, from Dublin went to the Philippines as a missionary of the Society of St. Columban in 1969.

Based in the Parish of St. Josephs Olongapo City, he witnessed the adverse social and human problems created by the immense United States Naval Base. The most affected were the youth who were increasingly alienated by the massive sex industry that exploited women and children and spread dangerous drugs among the Filipinos and damaged family life. He saw the number of youth trapped in drug addiction and little or nothing being done about them. Children were being imprisoned for the pettiest of crimes.

He set about founding a program to treat the addicts. In time this program expanded to deal with the vast number of homeless children and young girls caught up in the sex industry. Since then, at great personal risk, he has dedicated his life to helping the country's most vulnerable of people.

Fr Shay says, "Silence is assent to abuse, everyone has a big challenge here to do their piece and stand up for what is right and true." ♦

"We are going to be there"

This was just one of the messages from participants of the Partnership Project gathering at Columban Mission Centre in Essendon recently.

The Partnership Program engages people in social justice issues by visiting Columban-based missions in the Philippines and Fiji. It also encourages developing long term partnerships.

Parishioners from St John the Baptist's Parish, Ferntree Gully recalled their trips to the Philippines and their continued support of a

Community Based Rehabilitation Foundation in the province of Zambales. For the past three years they have mobilized others to raise funds to employ a physiotherapist and resource some general medical supplies for disabled

people who have no-one else to treat or support them.

Others from the Elwood/St Kilda West Parish and the Cluster of Parishes in Geelong shared their good news of continuing to raise significant funds for the KAZAMA Grameen Bank in Olongapo. Through the micro-credit organization, people (usually women) with no hope of accessing loans from commercial banks, get funds for small projects. These projects are often the only means of livelihood for them and frequently ensure that their children can attend school.

Participants involved in the partnerships, shared how being in solidarity with resourceful

Filipinos has opened their eyes to life for millions of people in our world. For some, the story is more about growing to appreciate that "being there" through their projects offers a chance for those of us who live comfortably "to learn from the wisdom of the poor."

There was also good news shared by parishioners from the Grovedale Parish which includes communities in Torquay and Angelsea who are nurturing connections with the Ba Christ the King Parish and St Teresa's



Parishioners visit the Philippines to form partnerships.

School, in Fiji. They are looking at ways of resourcing the school library and providing laptops for parish and school use. There are plans to bring four teachers from Ba to Torquay later this year.

Many people in parishes seek ways of engaging in social justice issues. These stories of generosity, awareness raising and solidarity give hope and reassurance that there are many ways of taking up this mission and being there for others. ♦

CLAIRE GRIFFIN

*Co-ordinator of the
Columban Partnership Program*

Phone: (03) 9375 9475

E-mail: cgriffin@columban.org.au

Columban News



PETER O'NEILL

Peter and his brother Kevin were home in March to celebrate their parent's 50th Wedding Anniversary. Peter continues his work in Taiwan as the diocesan Chaplain for migrant workers and new immigrants after 12 years with the Columban Hope Workers' Centre.

KEVIN O'NEILL

Kevin has returned to China where he was recently appointed as the Co-ordinator of Vocations with the China Mission Unit. He is currently visiting dioceses throughout China and renewing contacts with church personnel.

TOMMY MURPHY

Fr Tommy Murphy is the Columban Superior General and was in Australia in March to visit Columban priests both employed and retired. Fr Tommy has a goal during his appointment to meet all Columban employees personally to learn first hand about the work of Columban Centres.

KELVIN BARRETT

Kelvin returned from Korea and was in Australia for family celebrations.

ROBERT McCULLOCH

Fr McCulloch was in Melbourne recently from Pakistan and spoke at various venues including Chelsea parish and in the Sale diocese. He spoke about his work with St Elizabeth's hospital and education projects in Hyderabad, Pakistan, which are sponsored by St Vincent de Paul, including a nurses training school for girls and a Centre of Academic Excellence for boys. Robert is returning to Melbourne in July and will work at the Columban Mission Centre for three months.

PETER WOODRUFF

Fr Woodruff is back in Melbourne from Peru and will take up a writing assignment with The Far East and the Columban E-news later in the year.

SEAN McNULTY

Sean McNulty spent his holidays in Australia. He visited Fr Cyril Hally at St Columbans Essendon. Both lectured together at the Pacific Mission Institute at North Turrumurra NSW. Sean lives and works in Kunming in South West China.

RAY SCANLON

Ray Scanlon was in Australia from Korea on a short visit for family celebrations.



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[tfe@columban.org.au](mailto:info@columban.org.au)
www.columban.org.au

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ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY

COLUMBAN MISSION CENTRE

PO Box 752 Niddrie Victoria Australia 3042
Email: info@columban.org.au
Tel: 03 9375 9475 Fax: 03 9379 6040
Web: www.columban.org.au

St Columban became 'A Wanderer for Christ'. One of his greatest sayings summarises his life and his work, *'Let us be of Christ not of ourselves'*.