

# MISSION



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## NEWS AND VIEWS

SUMMER 2009

# Columban kidnapped

*Columban, Fr Michael Sinnott was kidnapped on 11th October and had not been released at time of publication.*

Since arriving in the Philippines in 1957 Fr Michael Sinnott has been involved in grassroots pastoral work with the poor and needy. In 1998 he founded the Hangop Kabataan, Community-Based, Rehabilitation Programme for Children with Disabilities.



“Hangop Kabataan” means “reaching out to children” and the programme was a response to the lack of educational and rehabilitation facilities for children with disabilities in the Pagadian area.

The centre caters for around sixty children who attend daily. About one third of these have been diagnosed as autistic, while the rest have other mental and physical disabilities.

Fr Michael wrote of the struggle of the parents of these children: “They did not know what to do with their children, most were confined to their homes and, from some false sense of guilt, they (the parents) were over compensating – feeding, washing and helping them with their toilet needs”.

The underlying philosophy of the school has been that of empowerment. Mick commented: “For me the biggest improvement in the children was the development of their confidence. The atmosphere of support, love and concern in the centre has also given them a greater sense of their own dignity as persons.”

Since his kidnapping, messages of solidarity have been coming in from around the world. The secretary of the Department of Labour (DOLE) of the Philippine national government, Marianito Roque, said that the abduction sets back programmes for people with special needs: “On behalf of people with disabilities, especially the wards of the Hanghop Kabataan Foundation, we in DOLE appeal to the abductors of Father Sinnott to free and spare him from further inconveniences of captivity that can lead to a deterioration in his health, putting his life at great risk”. ♦

FR PETER WOODRUFF

### PRAYER

Loving God, keep Fr Mick safe from harm. Guide him and support him in difficult times.

May he always have a sense of your consoling presence, of the threads of your glory that have shaped his life. May he know your love in his heart.

May his captors respond to your universal love. May they realise the error of their action. Instil compassion in their hearts, so they might release Father Mick. Amen.

## An uneven development

Fr Dan Harding was on holidays in Melbourne in September to visit family and catch up with priests and staff in Melbourne. He has worked in Chile for 18 years.

Dan said that there was uneven development in modern technology and transport and the lack of resources for the poor.

“In Chile, Columbans help to develop parishes that are caring and dynamic, that are liturgically vibrant and alive and that listen to the aspirations of the people. We want our parishes to promote justice, liberation and reconciliation, to promote healthy self-esteem among the people, and to be involved in the personal, social and spiritual development of the people.”

Dan recently set up a Mission Centre in Santiago where young people are involved in media. Their aim is to produce videos on Justice and Peace, Vocations, Mission and Spirituality. Dan said that they are becoming ‘youtube people’ as young people are bored with text and hardly ever read anything.

He said that one of the great blessings of his priestly ministry is the privilege of participating with people in their everyday lives, in their struggles and difficulties and in their achievements and happier moments. ♦

JANETTE MENTHA

# The need for solidarity

Recently, two important Church documents have been published, which refer to the need for our solidarity with all people. In “Caritas in Veritate” (Love in Truth), Pope Benedict XVI points out: “The risk for our time is that the de facto interdependence of people and nations is not matched by ethical interaction of consciences and minds that would give rise to truly human development.” # 9

In the 2009 Social Justice Sunday Statement, “And you will be my witnesses: Young People and Justice,” the Australian bishops express the wish to promote and support the commitment of young people to social justice for, “to love God and love our neighbour is central to our faith”. We have to be reminded who our neighbours are.

One of the transformative experiences of my life was in



Photo: Caritas Australia

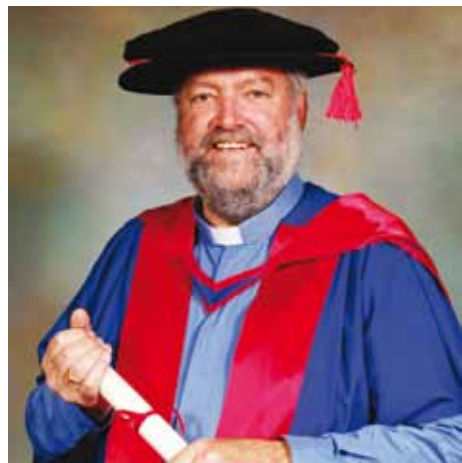
Bangladesh with other teachers on a Caritas Australia “Think Globally, Act Locally” program. I spent time with mothers who just wanted to feed their families and give them the necessities of life which structural injustice

denied them. I learnt a little of what it means to be in solidarity, because as a mother I could empathise with them. They enlightened my thinking and continue to remind me that many of the goods I consume are produced by the majority poor of the world like them.

The current industrial economic system under which the world operates is not working - for the health of the planet or the good of the majority poor. It is time for different thinking and attitudes about how we inhabit the earth. We can start by being in solidarity with those who are victims of power and greed and take positive action for change. ♦

ANNE LANYON

Co-ordinator, Columban Mission Institute  
Centre for Peace Ecology and Justice  
annelanyon@cmi.columban.org.au



## DOCTOR FOR COLUMBANS

We are delighted that Fr Patrick McInerney’s doctoral thesis entitled *Modelling the Method: A Lonergan Approach to Christian Responsibility in Interreligious Relations* was recently approved by the Australian Catholic University. He graduated on 29th September, 2009.

We congratulate him on this great achievement and look forward to his continuing contribution to the life and work of the Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations. ♦

## School gets involved

“An education for children with different talents” is written on a banner in the multi-use hall of the “Manuel Duato” Special Needs School located among the sprawling northern suburbs of Lima, Peru.

This special school is administered by Columban Mission in Peru through the “Faith and Hope Association” of which Columban Fr. Ed O’Connell is the president. The school is committed to offering an integral education to around 400 children with learning limitations and disabilities, many of whom are from impoverished families.

With limited resources and little State support, “Duato” depends on the support of Columban Friends and Benefactors from around the world.

Among these supporters is Penola Catholic College in Melbourne. For six years the students and staff of Penola have generously contributed to the “Duato School” through the yearly fund-raising activities centred



Fr Bernie Lane with Melita Azarcon who is Captain of Christian Service 2009.  
Photo: Manny De Bono

on the August celebration of Mary MacKillop Day.

The Columban connection was established through the presence of Fr. Bernie Lane as College Chaplain in 2003 and 2004. These days Bernie is serving the people and church of Peru, he shares in the “Duato” activities and assists their faith development programmes.

Many thanks to Penola College’s generosity and their commitment to Gospel values. ♦

BERNIE LANE



Frs Sean Rainey (L) and Gary Walker (R). Sean was a great support to Gary during his time in Fiji. Photo: Janette Mentha

## Building a bridge before retirement

Fr Sean Rainey visited Melbourne on his way to Fiji in July. He returned to Sydney from Fiji before leaving for Ireland where he lives in retirement at St Columban's, Dalgan Park, the headquarters of the Columban Fathers in Ireland.

Fr Rainey was ordained in 1964 and appointed to Fiji. He became involved in the apostolate to the Indo-Fijians especially on the western side of Viti Levu the main island in the Fiji group where he was based in Lautoka. Since he worked in Fiji 30 years ago he has many friends among the people who have emigrated to Australia from Fiji.

Fr Rainey accepted an appointment to Pakistan and worked there in the 1990's. A severe bout of hepatitis laid him low but after recovering in Ireland, his country of origin, he returned to Pakistan.

Because of the need for Westerners to provide a bridge between the Pakistanis who had emigrated to Bradford to work in the textile mills, Fr Rainey moved to Bradford (UK) where he was an invaluable go-between because he could speak Urdu, the language that many Pakistanis speak. Columbans were a bridge between local councils and the Pakistani people there since the two groups did not understand the culture of the other.

Since his retirement he lives in Ireland. ♦

GARY WALKER

## An amazing insight

The latest Social Justice Statement from the Australian Bishops reminds us that young people can teach us a lot about working for justice today.

One such young person who has opened my eyes to some of the challenges of acting justly is Helen, a young social worker whom I met in a Melbourne parish.

In spite of being blind from birth, Helen has a deep awareness of many of the injustices in our world, particularly of those which affect women and children. Helen is not only aware of these challenges but she has a strong commitment to doing something to make the world a better place, to taking some action to help bring justice to people.

In this sense, she has an amazing insight into the call of Jesus which many of us can miss - that we need to bring our gifts and experiences, our riches and energy to work for justice now and for future generations.

Some years ago Helen and a couple of her fellow parishioners began meeting as a social justice group.

In 2007, they began to seek out a way to taking some practical action for justice. They took up an invitation to join in the Columban Partnership Programme offered by the Columban Mission Centre in Essendon. Through this programme, they visited the Philippines for a week and got in touch with the poverty and oppression of the Filipino people. Their time with Columbans also gave them an opportunity to deepen their

understanding of their baptismal call to mission.

When they returned to Australia, they shared the story and photos of their experience with their friends and other parishioners. They decided to stay together as a group and began planning activities which would continue a partnership with the



Photo: iStockphoto.com

people of the Philippines. Helen's group committed to supporting a micro-lending agency started by Fr Sean Connaughton, one of the Columbans, to provide small loans to enable extremely poor people make an income and provide for their families.

Helen's group is just one of several parish groups around Melbourne which have found being part of the Columban Partnership Programme a beneficial way of engaging parishioners in taking action for justice. ♦

CLAIRE GRIFFIN

*Co-ordinator of the  
Columban Partnership Program*

*Phone: (03) 9375 9475*

*E-mail: cgriffin@columban.org.au*

# Columban News



## SEAN COYLE

Fr Sean Coyle was in Melbourne during September and October to promote The Far East in parishes in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Fresh mission stories from Sean's 40 years experience in the Philippines resulted in positive feedback from many parishioners. Staff at Columban Mission Centre benefited from his technical knowledge of web management and communication skills.

## ROBERT McCULLOCH

Fr Robert McCulloch was in Melbourne to assist with Columban Mission appeals during July and August. He also travelled to regional districts of Victoria, Ballarat, Swan Hill & Sale to give talks on his missionary work in Pakistan. He and the St Vincent De Paul Society have developed a partnership to support the St Elizabeth Hospital in Hyderabad.

## KEVIN MULLINS

Fr Kevin Mullins spent some time with the staff at Essendon while he was home visiting family. Kevin has worked in Mexico for 9 years in an area well known for its killings and drug trafficking. His parish consists of approximately 25,000 people. The people are brave and impoverished. He is currently raising funds to build a wind turbine to generate electricity as Anapra experiences winds 80% of the year.

## BRIAN VALE


Fr Brian Vale is appointed to Sydney where he will be a member of the Columban Mission Institute(CMI), Strathfield, in particular the Centre for Christian -Muslim Relations. Brian was a missionary in Japan for many years and also has a good knowledge of Buddhism which will provide significant value to the CMI in its dialogue with other faith traditions. Brian was previously a member of the staff of the Columban seminary in Sydney and worked recently in New Zealand his country of origin promoting mission.

## MICHAEL GORMLY

Fr Michael Gormly will co-ordinate mission activities in New Zealand with the appointment of Father Brian Vale to Sydney. He has had extensive missionary experience in Korea and promotes justice and peace issues in New Zealand as well as other aspects of mission. He is well regarded as a retreat master especially to the clergy and is in demand both locally and overseas.

## TONY COX

Fr Tony Cox is moving to St Columban's Lower Hutt, New Zealand to take up an appointment. He was recently parish priest of Boronia in the Archdiocese of Melbourne and involved previously in administration in the Columban Mission Centre in Melbourne. Like Brian Vale, Tony has also worked in Japan.



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**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'*.