



MISSION NEWS & VIEWS



A SUCCESS STORY

In the October 2007 issue of our mission magazine, *The Far East*, we featured the beautiful hand-made Creation Christmas Cards produced by the Subaanen Craft Project of Mindanao in the Philippines. The Subaanen are an indigenous tribal people who have been displaced by migration, logging and mining.

Columban Fr Vincent Busch established an income generation project for the younger Subaanen women in 2004. They are highly skilled weavers and artisans who create beautifully hand-crafted Mandalas celebrating creation, Earth-stone jewellery and delicate hand-made greeting cards. Their goods are now sold through several countries where Columbans work.

The response of our readership to the Creation Christmas Cards has been overwhelming – so much so that we are awaiting new deliveries from the Philippines! The income generated through these sales is returned directly to the weavers themselves.

Many have used their income to return to education; for some this means finishing primary education and progressing to high school. For one young woman, Marcelita, married at 14 and now a mother of three, it meant roofing her simple house in the mountains. As she saved enough, she would buy one sheet of corrugated iron and carry it on her head up to her remote home. Her pride on completion of the job was enormous.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, the lives of these young women have been transformed.

For more details on the items produced by the Subaanen weavers and for an order form contact Kathryn Boyle (03) 9375 9475 or www.columban.org.au



The Columban Partnership Programme 2007



Another year. Another time to pause and wonder. Two reports, one from The World Bank and one from the International Food Policy Research Institute, paint a dim picture of the UN millennium goal on poverty. (For a good summary of both

reports see “World is failing on poverty” in *New Scientist* magazine of October 22, 2007). In different parts of the world we have variously slipped backwards, made progress but fallen behind target.

Overall we are well and truly behind target. But perhaps there are lessons to be learned by looking at what has happened or not happened in some countries. They haven’t been at war, civil or uncivil, and their governments at least rank in the middle order of Transparency International’s corruption chart. But Dom Helda Camara springs to mind, of course: **“If you want peace, fight for justice.”**

I hope we can claim, in the Partnership Programme, to have contributed something to the fight for justice in the year past. The Australian communities engaged in the programme have contributed greatly to justice programmes of one kind or another in Fiji and the Philippines. In return they have been greatly inspired by the spirit, generosity and capacity for happiness of their partners. We are all looking forward to continuing the effort in 2008.





COLUMBANS TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

Every six years the Columban Mission Society holds a General Assembly to pray together, reflect on its mission, assess our work and refocus for the immediate future.

It is our opportunity to 'read the signs of the times' and to discern how we may be able to bring the Gospel message to the trends of the contemporary world.

The 2006 General Assembly was held at Navan in Ireland, home of the Columbans for most of its 90 year history. The delegates at this Assembly identified Climate Change as one of the most urgent challenges facing the world today. The science is now irrefutable.

In order to take this focus to a practical level for the work we do, 25 people from the fourteen nations where Columbans work, met recently in the Philippines for a week long Conference. The framework for the discussion was theological reflection on our task as stewards of God's creation and Pope John Paul II's call for 'ecological conversion' as a moral duty of all Christians.

Each of the nations where Columbans mission to God's people presented what the potential impact of Climate Change will be on their country or region. The picture was more than worrying. For example, glacial melt in the Himalayas will

have a devastating effect on the major river systems of Asia and leave huge populations and major cities with chronic water shortages. Similar effects will be felt in Peru and Chile from glacial melt in the Andes. Lima is almost totally dependant for its water on the glaciers which feed its major river. Here in Australia we are already feeling the effects of the worst drought in history.

What has this to do with Mission? For the best part of a century, Columbans have sought to bring the fullness of life promised by Jesus (*Jn 10:10*). Any circumstance which inhibits the possibility of each human person achieving their potential for fullness of life is a circumstance which must be met through the eyes of the Gospel. We are stewards of God's creation. Part of the work of mission is to restore the balance between God, humans and our Earth. When this is out of balance, missionaries must raise their voice and do what they can on behalf of those who have no voice. We must be 'good news for the poor'.

At the Conference in the Philippines, we began the process of discerning how Columbans can respond to this new challenge. It is the poor of the world who will suffer most from the effects of Climate Change. They are suffering already! Each one of us must undergo the 'ecological conversion' necessary to safe-guard Earth for future generations.

What can you do?

- **Reduce your use of energy** – turn off appliances at the wall, replace energy hungry light globes, replace older, inefficient appliances, turn off the lights, turn down the heating and cooling. Australia is the highest greenhouse gas emitter per capita in the world.
- **Reduce your use of water** – replace old shower heads, put a bucket in the shower, re-think the garden and lawn, re-use washing machine water, turn off the tap, install a rainwater tank. Every drop is precious.
- **Reduce your lifestyle** – consumerism is driving the escalating use of greenhouse gas producing energy. Do we really need to own so much?
- **Become better informed** about the causes, effects and consequences of Climate Change. Educate others. Be a voice that challenges; be a prophetic voice.

COLUMBAN MISSION INSTITUTE & WORLD YOUTH DAY

As the focus of our work is evangelization there are three key areas of involvement in World Youth Day:

- Witnessing Christ in the World through The Lantern Series - a series of 12 leaflets on various aspects of evangelization.
- "Youth Theatre of the Oppressed" with young dancers and actors from the Philippines, Brazil and possibly Fiji in partnership with students from St Peter's Catholic College, Tuggerah.

The Akbay Theatre group from Olongopo in the Philippines will present a musical drama about their lives affected by sex trafficking and their subsequent rehabilitation at the Preda Foundation.

The Cena Um group from Salvador will use dance and drama to depict the institutional racism in Brazil that prevents young Afro-Brazilian people from having a decent life.

The St Peter's students will perform a local scenario.

The Centre for Peace Ecology and Justice is planning the program which we hope will build relationships of solidarity, understanding and ongoing commitment to mission.

- A two day formation program for Sydney teachers in Catholic Social Teaching and Peace, Ecology and Justice.



The 2008 Columban Calendar

\$7.50 (inc postage)

To order: contact St Columbans Mission Society (03) 9375 9475 or

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THE FAR EAST WINS AWARD

The Far East won an award at the Australasian Catholic Press Association (ACPA) Awards for the category of *Best Social Justice Coverage*. The winning article was published in the January/February 2007 issue entitled "A case for outrage" by Fr Peter O'Neill. The ACPA awards were presented on September 20 by Bishop Patrick Dunn, Bishop of Auckland. The comments from the judge about the article were: I began reading this story while just generally examining the awards to see what was entered – but I couldn't put the story down until I'd got to the end. It was captivating, well-written and an utterly compassionate account of a heart-breaking situation. The account of Sanan Tahmasee's trip to Taiwan to find work and the dreadful tragedy which unfolded there would not be out of place in any major international publication. This was by far the most outstanding work submitted in this category and immediately jumped out as the clear winner.





Conversation with Fr Kelvin Barrett

Fr Kelvin Barrett is Co-ordinator of the Columban Lay Missionary Programme in Korea. He recently spoke to The Far East magazine about his work.

TFE: What is your main work in Korea?

KB: At present I am the Co-ordinator of the Columban Lay Missionary programme. I work with a Korean lay missionary who has overseas experience.

TFE: What is your role in the programme?

KB: I am a full-time administrator; also I help to prepare lay missionaries coming to Korea as well as preparing Korean lay missionaries to go overseas.

TFE: Could you tell us a little about the programme?

KB: The programme started in Korea about 1990. I don't know the exact number, but about 60 people have trained to become lay missionaries. Their programme is nine months long and those who finish the course sign a three-year contract. There is provision to extend the contract and some lay missionaries are now what we call 'long term' lay missionaries.

TFE: What are the qualities you look for in a lay missionary?

KB: They need to have some experience of being involved in ministry. Those without it find it is difficult and can have trouble developing openness to new things. We emphasise relating to people and an ability to work together. An interest in marginalised people is important, patience is needed working with poor people.

TFE: What are the kinds of things that you cover during the nine months preparation?

KB: We start with a one-month orientation in which returned lay missionaries are involved. There is a practical component covering language, sexuality, hygiene and health; how to deal with 'culture shock' from living in another culture; personal development, theology, spiritual direction. It is an enriching course.

TFE: Do many leave during the preparation period?

KB: Probably one in five, drop off so we have a good retention rate. Good screening helps a lot. The programme has developed over the years as we learn from the experience of returned missionaries.

TFE: What do lay missionaries bring that is different to missionary work?

KB: They live in the community for a start and have a better rapport with the people. They get the opportunity to be involved culturally and in the lives of the people. They bring a different presence to missionary work.

TFE: How do they cope with homesickness and the desire to go home?

KB: They have a 'honeymoon' period when they begin living in another culture, everything is new and exciting. I find that those who had some connection with Church seem to settle more than others.

NEWS ABOUT COLUMBANS

Columbans on home leave

Fr Kevin & Peter O'Neill

Fr Kevin's term on the Columban international leadership team is finished. He and Fr Peter are finishing a sabbatical studies programme in Chicago. Fr Peter's article on the plight of migrant workers won the Best Social Justice Coverage award at the recent Catholic Press awards night.

Fr Kelvin Barrett

Fr Barrett passed through Melbourne en-route to Western Australia to visit his brother.

Fr Ray Scanlon

Fr Scanlon spent a short visit to see his family especially his elderly mother who has not been well.

Fr Peter Woodruff

We congratulate Fr Peter on receiving a PhD last year for his timely study on the changing religious patterns and values when Andean people moved to the mega-city of Lima.

Overseas Visitor

Fr Tommy Murphy, the Superior General of the Columban Fathers was in the ANZ Region for a few days on his way to Fiji. He has completed the first year of his term as leader, travelling to the different mission areas to appreciate their needs and situation.

Rest in Peace

Fr Michael Cryan

July 20, 1924 - May 28, 2007

Michael was born in Ireland and ordained in 1948. In 1951 he was appointed to Fiji with the first band of Columbans. Fr Cryan was the first principal of Xavier College, Namosau. He was chaplain at St John of God Hospital, Rivervale, WA for many years.

Fr John (Jack) Walsh

September 16, 1923 - September 7, 2007

Jack was born in Okaiawa, New Zealand and ordained in 1950 in Wellington. After spending many years in the Philippines he returned to Lower Hutt, NZ. A genial man and gentle priest.

Fr James (Jim) Norris

April 23, 1923 - October 6, 2007

Jim was another New Zealander. A native of Rotorua he was ordained in 1947 in Hamilton. Initially appointed to China, he spent 56 years as a missionary in Japan. He wrote "Words cannot convey what a man feels when he pulls up roots and leaves Japan after 56 years."

**They have toiled in the Lord's vineyard.
May their reward be great.**



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