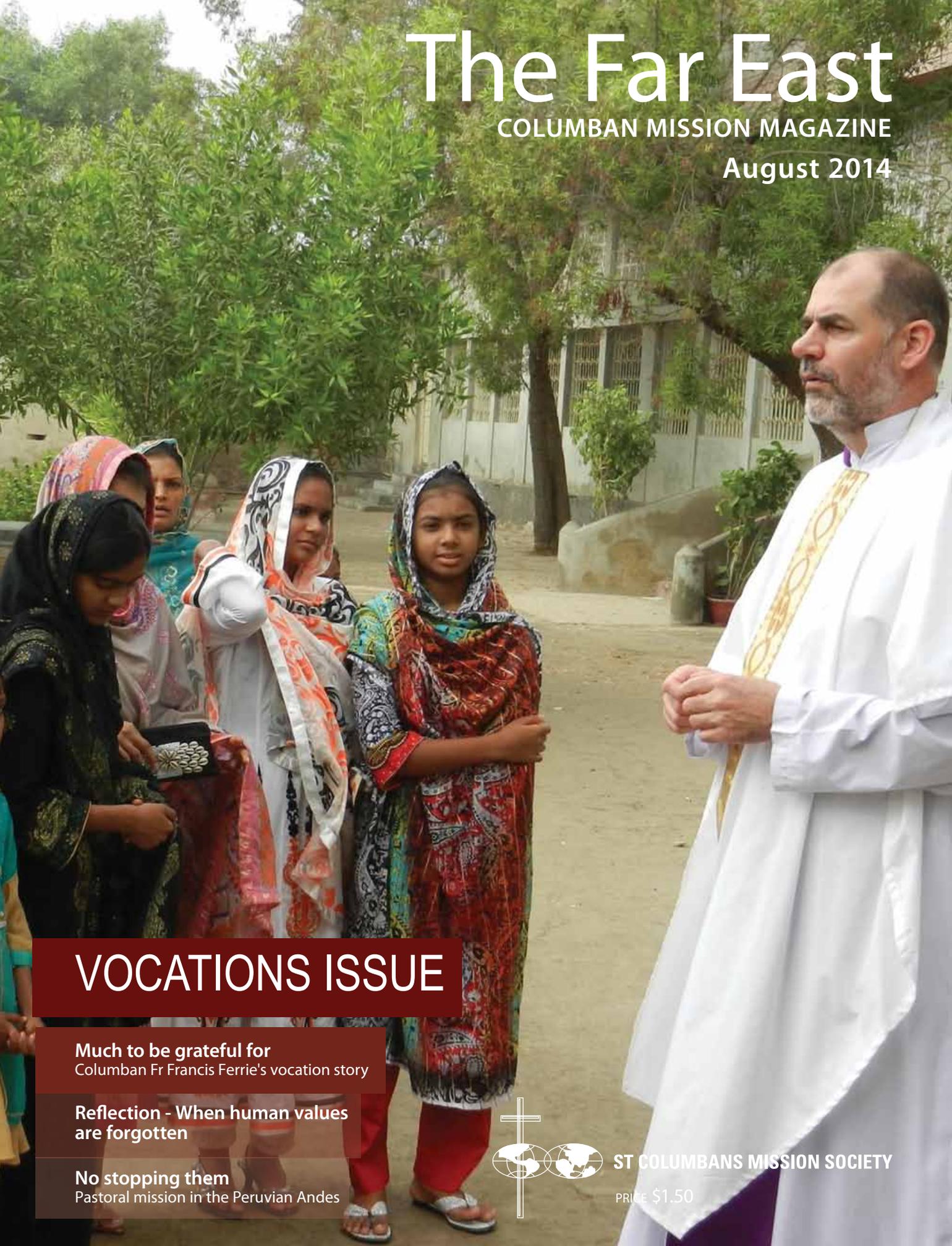


# The Far East

COLUMBAN MISSION MAGAZINE

August 2014



## VOCATIONS ISSUE

**Much to be grateful for**  
Columban Fr Francis Ferrie's vocation story

**Reflection - When human values  
are forgotten**

**No stopping them**  
Pastoral mission in the Peruvian Andes



ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY

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# The Far East

August 2014  
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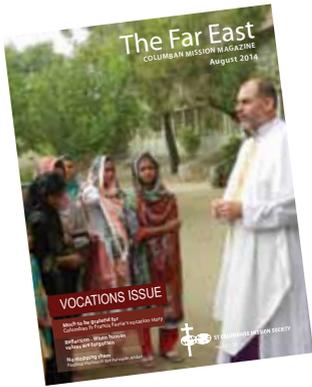
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VOCATIONS ISSUE

Columban Fr Tomás King speaks with parishioners in Pakistan.

Photo: Peter Woodruff



# From the Editor

## Priests matter

*"The priest is the poorest of men unless Jesus enriches him by his poverty, the most useless of servants unless Jesus call him his friend, the most ignorant of men unless Jesus patiently teaches him as he did Peter, the frailest of Christians unless the Good Shepherd strengthens him in the midst of the flock. Pope Francis told us in his Chrism Mass Homily this year. "No one is more "little" than a priest left to his own devices..."*

The August issue of *The Far East* is dedicated to vocations to the priesthood particularly as Columban missionaries. Pope Francis said that the joy of being a priest is to have been anointed by the Lord in Christ with the oil of gladness. *"Priestly joy is a priceless treasure, not only for the priest himself but for the entire faithful people of God: that faithful people from which he is called to be anointed and which he, in turn, is sent to anoint."*

According to Pope Francis, priestly joy is a missionary joy. *"...Priestly joy is deeply bound up with God's holy and faithful people, for it is an eminently missionary joy. Our anointing is meant for anointing God's holy and faithful people: for baptizing and confirming them, healing and sanctifying them, blessing, comforting and evangelizing them."*

Columban Missionary Priests now share their priestly and missionary joy in 16 different countries. Wherever we serve, we serve alongside others such as Columban Lay Missionaries, Columban Sisters, Co-workers and parishioners who likewise are living out their baptismal call to a missionary vocation in whatever form it may take.

Fr Francis Ferrie who has spent many years in Korea as a Columban Missionary Priest shares with us his priestly and missionary vocational story. Fr Ray Scanlon writes about Asian Youth Day in Korea and the recent ordinations of young Columbans there. Columban Sister Eileen Rabbittie writes movingly of her return to Ireland after 40 years of living out her missionary vocation in Peru.

Following the example of the Good Shepherd to protect the flock and denounce injustices, Columban Fr Maurice Foley writes from Peru about the government programme which led to the forced sterilization of hundreds of thousands of mainly poor illiterate indigenous women from 1995 to 2000.

This issue also offers three stories of different members of the laity who

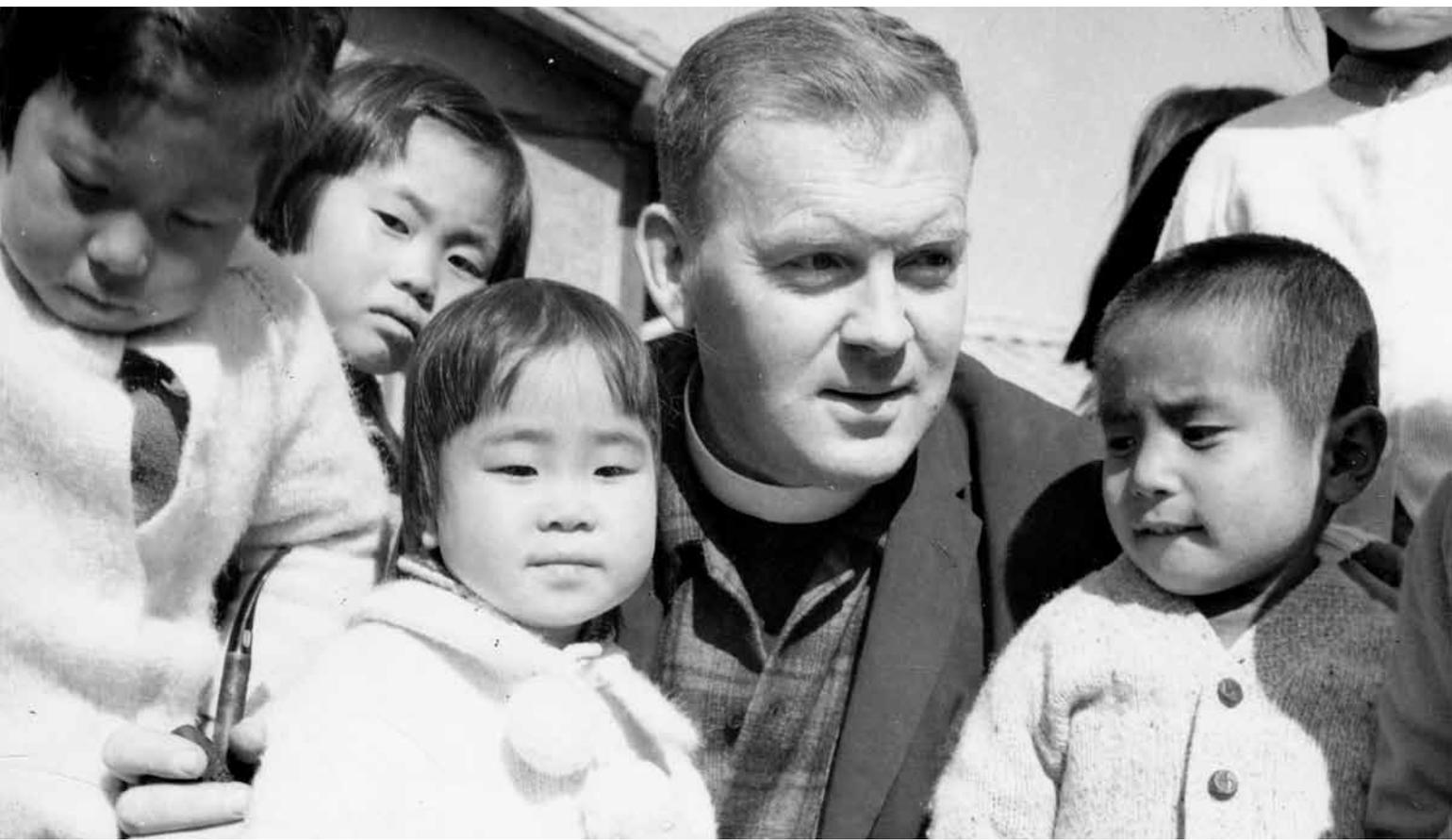
live out their missionary vocation alongside Columban priests. From the Philippines, Mercy Gawason and her Subanen weavers work alongside Columban Fr Vincent Busch. They visit CELL - *"The Centre for Ecozoic Living and Learning"*, founded by Columban Frs Frank Carey and Dom Nolan.

Fr Don Hornsey writes to us about Columban lay co-workers Benigna Alvarez and Jaime Quispe who live out their missionary vocation alongside Columban priests in the Andes Mountains of Peru. Panchita Llanccamil from Chile has also worked alongside Columban priests for many years fulfilling her missionary vocation in various ways.

Pope Francis warned priests in his Chrism Mass Homily this year that they will not find their priestly identity by soul-searching and introspection but rather with *"...an active and unwavering sense of belonging to God's faithful people"*. The stories in this issue of *The Far East* reveal this to be true. These stories reveal that priests are important, priests matter.

*Dan Harding*

Fr Dan Harding  
TFE@columban.org.au





# Much to be grateful for

FR FRANCIS FERRIE

*Columban Fr Francis Ferrie (Frank) shares his vocation story with us.*

When I was a child my family lived in Essendon very near to the house that was, and still is, the headquarters of the Missionary Society of St Columban in Australia and New Zealand. Sometimes our family attended Mass at the Columban house and we came to know the Columban Fathers well. Some of them helped out in our parish and among them was Fr Jim McGlynn who was the Columban Superior at that time. When my grandfather was dying Fr McGlynn came to anoint him in the evening and stayed with us until my grandfather died at four in the morning. I remember his presence with us at that time very vividly and the strength and comfort he gave us. Later at the time of World War II some Australian and New Zealand Columban missionaries in Korea who had been detained by the Japanese army were released in exchange for Japanese prisoners of war. Fr Philip Crosbie was one of those Columbans who were exchanged. He could not return to Korea until the end of the war and so for a few years became our parish priest. I was then a secondary school student and heard from Fr Crosbie many stories of life in Korea and the Diocese of Chuncheon. It was then that I felt the call to become a priest and to become a Columban Missionary like Fr Crosbie.

In the first year in the seminary in 1949 Fr Austin Sweeney, who had been on mission in Jeju in Korea since 1936, came to our seminary when on his first holiday home. He spoke to us about Korea with many stories about the island of Jeju. By that time I was very interested in Korea and was always thrilled to hear more

stories about it. I also had a cousin who served in the Australian Army in Korea during the Korean War. So now when I look back on it I realise that there were many signposts pointing me towards mission in Korea. So my appointment to Korea after ordination in 1955 was to my liking.

One of my interests from the time of my youth in Australia was the labour apostolate and for a time I was involved as a member of the Young Christian Workers (YCW) Movement. When I arrived in Korea the YCW was just beginning to become active in the Church there. When I had the opportunity in the parish of Sokcho on the east coast of Korea I gathered the young workers in the parish and set up a YCW group. My hope and motivation was that those young people would develop their leadership skills and reflect a Christian attitude in their places of work and in society.

I believed that this was a very important ministry for the future of the church in Korea. Every summer over a period of six years national training camps for YCW members gave me the opportunity to meet other YCW chaplains and members and to learn from them about the problems of workers and the development of the labour apostolate in Korea.

My YCW involvement also gave a lot of meaning to my work as a missionary priest. It is always a special joy for me these days when I occasionally meet people again who were young YCW members that I knew back then.

Early in 1980 I was appointed to the staff of the Columban seminary in Sydney and that gave me the opportunity to engage in part-time

chaplaincy work with the Catholic Korean migrant community there. Returning to Korea again in 1985 I found that in the meantime a good number of young Korean priests had been ordained for my former diocese of Chuncheon.

As I looked further afield and after a short stint at the Caritas House Apostolate in a very poor area of Seoul I was offered a parish in the Diocese of Jeju, the island which I had heard so much about from Fr Austin Sweeney many years before. Thus began a long and enjoyable period of ministry among the people of Jeju in a number of different parishes.

While I was there my mother died and I invited my father to come and stay with me in Korea for a holiday. He came and liked Korea so much he came back many times and was 88 years of age at the time of his last visit.

Now it is five years since I officially retired from parish ministry. But not totally retired either. For some time now there has been a sizeable community of Filipino, Sri Lankan and Vietnamese migrant workers and migrants living and working in Jeju and I now have the privilege of supplying Mass and the sacraments for them. It seems that God the Creator and Father of all keeps finding opportunities for us to cross boundaries of race, nationality, language, culture and economic status to share the good news of his love and life for all.

The journey I began as a child attending Mass at the Columban chapel so long ago continues on and truly gives me much to be grateful for.

---

*Columban Fr Francis Ferrie has been a missionary in Korea since 1956.*



*Ordinations of Columbans Fr Carlo Eukyn Jung and Deacon Augustine Lee, May 2014.*

# Asian Youth, Wake Up

FR RAY SCANLON



KOREA

*Asian Youth, Wake Up! The Glory of the Martyrs Shines on You.*

*Vocation Issue* 

This is the theme of the \*Sixth Asian Youth Day which will take place in the Diocese of Daejeon, South Korea, in August, 2014. None other than Pope Francis himself will join the youth of Asia gathering for the occasion in this region of Korea that was the home of many of the Korean martyrs and the first two Korean priests. During his visit Pope Francis will beatify 124 Korean martyrs.

His predecessor, Pope John Paul II, canonized 103 Korean martyrs in Seoul in 1984. It is said that the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians and one cannot help thinking that the history of martyrdom in the Catholic Church in Korea has had a lot to do with the growth of the Church there. Over the past 10 years the number of Catholics has grown by 70% and they now number 5.4 million in a total population of 51.2 million.

Of course, numbers alone are not important, but the dynamism of the Korean church and the vibrant involvement and commitment of the laity is also often recognised and acknowledged.

*Perhaps the combination of Asian youth and Pope Francis and the glory of the Korean martyrs that shines on them may make this long-held dream become a reality.*

The Missionary Society of St Columban has been privileged to have been part of this history of growth and development for 80 years. The 80th anniversary of the arrival in Korea in 1933 of the first band of Columban priests was recently commemorated with Masses in all the Korean dioceses in which Columban missionaries have served over those years.

Celebrations continued this year with the ordination of two Korean Columbans to the priesthood and one to the diaconate. Stephen Seo was ordained a priest in March in Daejeon, where the youth will gather with the Pope in August, and Carlo Jung was ordained priest and Augustin Lee ordained deacon in the city of Incheon in May. This has brought the number of ordained Korean Columbans to 12.

A good number of Korean diocesan priests are also on mission with Columbans in the Americas and the Philippines. Korean Sisters and Lay Missionaries also continue to grow in numbers and serve on mission in various countries around the world.



*The parents of Fr Stephen Kyunghee Seo vest him as a priest at his ordination ceremony.*

Cardinal Andrew Yeom, the Archbishop of Seoul, has expressed the hope that the visit of Pope Francis to Korea may produce a "miracle" for the Korean peninsula, helping North and South to enter into a new dialogue on the road to unification.

Perhaps the combination of Asian youth and Pope Francis and the glory of the Korean martyrs that shines on them may make this long-held dream become a reality.

---

*Columban Fr Raymond Scanlon worked in Korea for many years and attended the ordinations in May this year.*

\*



*Sixth Asian Youth Day*

*Asian Youth, Wake Up! The Glory of the Martyrs Shines on You.*

# When human values are forgotten



Photo: iStockphoto.com

After World War II the world was shocked when the news of the Nazi eugenics programme in Germany became known, with the forced sterilization of over 400,000 people suffering from various physical and mental disabilities, with another 275,000 murdered in the euthanasia programme.

Awareness of this terrible crime did not seem to make much difference in Peru under the government of President Alberto Fujimori whose

*"Public Health Plan"* between 1995 and 2000 set out to forcefully sterilize mostly illiterate indigenous women living in poverty in the Andes Mountain Region.

As most of these women did not speak Spanish but only Quechua or Aymara, they had little chance to fully understand what was happening to them. The majority did not sign or understand consent forms and were subject to coercion, deception, bribes of food, force and threats of being sent to jail.

After attending the United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995, Fujimori set out to limit population growth. He aimed to diminish the number of births to indigenous women living in poor areas.

His plan was called *"The Green Plan"* and its objective was to stop as soon as possible demographic growth among those considered culturally backward. Areas such as Apurimac were targeted in a process

known as "Voluntary Contraceptive Surgery". Quotas were established for the respective health centres and prizes were awarded to the medical professionals who exceeded their quotas. Pressure was placed on doctors to meet their monthly quotas and health officials were specially trained to capture as many women for sterilization as possible.

Each month Fujimori was informed of the number of forced sterilizations taking place. For example, in the year 1997, the Minister of Health reported to Fujimori that for the first seven months of that year, 64,831 sterilizations had been accomplished which was 43% of the quota of 150,000 for that year. Near the end of his term, Fujimori bragged that he had cut Peru's birth rate from 3.7 children per woman to 2.7 children a decade later.

When the human person is taken as just another commodity, human values are forgotten, power takes over and the law is compromised. This in terms of a civilized society is hard to understand. Yet the intimate details of how a modern human being is subjected to a betrayal of her human dignity can only be explained in terms of what happened.

Michaela Flores, one of the victims, received three calls from the local health centre in Curabamba, in the province of Cusco. On the third call she answered and with her husband went to what they were led to believe was a health campaign. On arrival there were about 50 women waiting in the reception area. They were told to board an ambulance which brought them to a medical centre. She was then made to lie down on a stretcher and was promptly tied hand and feet. While she was pleading to be let go, someone applied an injection which put her to sleep.

Later, she woke up with a distinct sensation of being drugged and a burning pain in her lower abdomen. As she looked around she discovered she was not alone. There were several women groaning and calling for their husbands. In the midst of this suffering, the voice of a doctor told the women "You have to thank President Fujimori now because you will never have any more children."

*It took time to begin to organize the victims to demand justice as most of them are engaged in a daily combat with poverty.*

From that time Michaela complained that she had a tumour, pains in her legs and continuous pain elsewhere. She cannot work in the fields anymore and neither can her friends and neighbours who have been through the same ordeal. For some of her friends and neighbours the result has been a break-up of their families. The intimate details of their operations caused shame, so they remained silent for years. But now that the full story of what happened is out, they are glad to speak out and demand justice.

After the fall of Fujimori, a Peruvian Government Report in 2002 stated that 331,000 women and 25,000 men had been forcibly sterilized during his government. Fujimori has been accused of genocide and crimes against humanity.

It took time to organize the victims to demand justice as most of them are engaged in a daily combat with poverty. In time, "A Woman's Association of all those Affected by Forced Sterilizations" was organized. A legal case to prosecute those involved lasted from 2003 until 2009 when the Public Prosecutor closed

the case, stating that the statute of limitations on cases of serious bodily injury and manslaughter had run out. In 2011 the case was reopened after an appeal to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. It was closed again in January 2014 when the Public Prosecutor decided that no crimes against humanity had been committed by Fujimori and 26 high ranking former health department officials. The defence team has tried to place the blame on excesses by provincial officials.

The Women's Association for the victims has decided to appeal the decision and referred specifically to the case of 33-year-old mother of seven Mamerita Meztanza. She died in 1996 after being pressured into surgery by being told that women who gave birth to more than seven children would be imprisoned. Four low-ranking provincial doctors have been prosecuted for her death. There are also documented cases of another 18 women who died as a result of the sterilization surgery in unsanitary conditions.

The Women's Association will have to fight a legal battle to prove the monstrous ordeal to which they have been subjected. They are poor indigenous rural women and are taking on the smartest legal experts in the country.

However, their success goes far beyond the confines of medical practise. When power goes unchecked in the modern state the savage instinct in humanity is unleashed and civilization is reduced to a dominant social fashion and in such a situation there are no guarantees for anybody.

---

*Columban Fr Maurice Foley lived and worked in Peru for many years.*



Photos: Sr. Eileen Rabbittie

# Leaving Peru

SR EILEEN RABBITTE



*Columban Sr Eileen Rabbitte says goodbye to the people of Peru after 40 years.*

A late phone call can sometimes leave me feeling anxious but recently such a call was a very pleasant surprise.

When I heard, "It's me, Luz Marina from Ica" my heart jumped. Luz Marina is one of the very special friends I had parted from when I returned to Ireland after a long missionary journey in Peru. It was so good to hear her and to hear about life in Ica, my home for so many years.

In spite of many thoughts of home in Ireland and the plans for family reunions, the parting was painful and emotionally draining. While I had told my companions that the time had come for me to leave and that I felt at peace with my decision, I was not ready for the impact of what it meant to me and to the loving people I had encountered over my 40 plus years in Peru. "Why are you leaving us? You are still healthy. Stay with us."

So many more painful comments brought tears to my eyes from time to time. A trip up the Andes Mountains to Recuay where I had shared life with the people in the highlands of Peru in the 80s and the farewell celebrations there, prepared me for the more immediate partings awaiting me in the desert town of San Martin, Ica, in the south of Peru.

This was my last mission appointment in that beloved country. They would say, "Madre, we are going to miss you." Trying to keep back the tears and keep calm did not always work; how hard is the parting of friends!

A community Mass celebrated by our bishop followed by a get-together to send me off, proved almost more

than I could handle. The Spanish word, "Despedida" is a loaded one especially if you are the one to be sent off. The whole world seemed to be there and now that we are in the age of technology I was not the only one with a camera as was the case in the 70s. They all wanted a photo to remember me. My heart overflowed with love and gratitude when people like Julia Rojas who had never missed a night at the Bible meeting, approached with her beautiful family.

As we posed together I recalled the last time we had a family picture taken with her was when her new post-earthquake house was being blessed. She has never forgotten the joy and wonder of her solid brick house which was one of the many we Columban Sisters were able to provide after the 2007 earthquake thanks to the generosity of so many great benefactors overseas.

*This is another beginning but I know that, whatever the future may bring, I will always hold the Peruvian people in my heart.*

So, you see, there are many reasons to be overwhelmed with joy and gratitude and pain when a missionary comes to the moment of departure from a beloved and grateful people.

The process of leaving the familiar and facing the unfamiliar is no easy task. The unfamiliar being a completely changed culture in the Ireland I had left so many years ago.

A welcome home day for returned missionaries organized by Irish Missionary Union helped me to



*Columban Sr Eileen Rabbitte.*

realize that I am not slow, stupid or mad! Meeting 20 other returned missionaries who like me had been overseas for 40 or 50 years helped me to realize that I am just a normal returned exile needing time to adjust and fit in to a whole new and radically changed Ireland.

This is another beginning but I know that, whatever the future may bring, I will always hold the Peruvian people in my heart.

---

*Columban Sr Eileen Rabbitte spent 40 years in Peru and now lives in the Columban Sisters' Convent in Magheramore, Co. Wicklow, Ireland.*

*Vocation Issue* 

# Forest wisdom

MERCY GAWASON

*Relearning the Forest Wisdom of our Ancestors*



Photos: Mercy Gawason

*Mercy (right) with her family - (L-R) Brothers, Jomar, Arnolfo, Jeyar and her mother Lita holding Crezlen and her father Robin.*

*M*y name is Mercy Gawason. My Subanen ancestors were the first humans to occupy Zamboanga peninsula in Northwestern Mindanao, the Philippines. The island of Mindanao is the southern most of the major islands in the Philippines. We Subanens are an indigenous ethnic community native to this area. In the old days we survived by foraging in the forests and later by growing corn and root crops on small hillside plots next to the forest. Then settlers from other islands started

making farms on the Subanen land, and we retreated deeper into the forest and mountains. Finally, logging companies began full scale operations in the forest. Now only second-growth forest remains.

My parents and my siblings now survive on a small plot where we grow corn. This tiny bit of land is our last stand. We have nowhere else to go. The Columban are helping us and other Subanens keep and develop the little land we have. The Columban Sisters were the first to start a ministry specifically for the Subanen people.

Over the past three decades, their Subanen Ministry has helped the Subanens in the parish of Midsalip through programs that promote literacy, hillside agriculture and tribal land rights.

About eight years ago the Subanen ministry recommended me to another Columban ministry called Subanen Crafts. Subanen Crafts was started by Columban Fr Vincent Busch. Subanens are expert basket weavers. The Subanen Crafts Project has adapted our traditional basket-weaving skills to produce saleable crafts such

as Creation Mandalas and inlaid Christmas Cards. With income from the project I can help feed my family especially during “ting gutom” or “the hunger season.” “The hunger season” is the time after we have consumed all of our harvested crops and have to survive for many months with very little to eat until the next harvest. Poor nutrition leads to serious illnesses, and during “hunger season” many Subanen families have had to sell their land and farm animals to pay for medicine and hospital costs.

Although I can help my family during “hunger season,” other Subanen families are not so fortunate. All Subanen families need to find ways to make our land more productive without using expensive fertilizers. In the old days Subanens used what the forest offered. Our ancestors harvested abaca, fruit, nuts, fuel, edible leaves and medicinal herbs from the forest. Back then, the forest was big and bountiful. Now our forest is almost gone because of the logging and burning. As I said before the Subanens have no more forest to retreat into. The little land we have is our last stand.

To learn more about how to use our land more productively, the Subanen Crafters attended a seminar at yet another Columban Project called CELL, “The Center for Ecozoic Living and Learning”. Columban Fathers Frank Carey and Dom Nolan helped establish CELL as a Center for learning practical ways to produce more and to eliminate waste in the lives of ordinary Filipinos. We brought a camera with us so we could photograph our experience.

CELL is near Manila and so we were a little afraid since not only was CELL far away but also we had to speak in Tagalog. Tagalog is our third

language, and although we learned it in school we were not used to using it in conversation. Thank God the seminar was hands-on, and the CELL staff used simple Tagalog.

*To learn more about how to use our land more productively, the Subanen Crafters attended a seminar at yet another Columban Project called CELL, “The Center for Ecozoic Living and Learning”.*

Our experience at CELL was similar to our traditional agriculture in that we learned how to use the forest as part of our garden. In a sense we relearned the forest wisdom of our ancestors but on a smaller scale. We learned what trees provide food as well as keeping the hillside soil from eroding. We learned how to make fertile soil from compost and from worm tailings. We learned how to grow herbs and vegetables in small plots. We even learned how to make bio-gas and fertilizer from human waste. For protein we saw how we can raise chickens and rabbits by feeding them leaves from certain trees. They even had a fish pond at CELL.

All that we learned at CELL will benefit not just the Subanens. Our mountains are also the watershed

area for the rivers and streams that provide irrigation for lowland rice farmers. If we can help reforest our mountains with trees, then we can also enhance a vital watershed. This watershed is now threatened by mining operations that want to strip-mine our mountains. The Subanens and the low-land farmers oppose strip-mining, but we are up against very powerful rich people who can buy influence in high areas. Experts in sustainable economies say that our watershed is much more valuable as a long term agricultural resource than it is as a short term resource for the strip mining companies.

After our CELL seminar we returned to our workshop in Mindanao where we crafted our Christmas Cards. This year our cards celebrate Christmas through the story of God’s Creation. Our forest and soil are God’s gifts to us and our care of His gift is our way of thanking Him. One of our Christmas Cards shows Mary placing Jesus in the manger of our blue-green planet. We believe He abides with us now in the manger of our mountain home.

---

*Mercy Gawason is a Subanen crafter with the Columban craft project in the Philippines.*



*The 2014 Subanen Christmas Cards will be on sale in the September issue of The Far East.*

# Pilgrimage 2015

# In the footsteps of St Columban



Photo: bigstockphoto.com

Roman built bridge into Bobbio, Italy, near the resting place of St Columban.

DUBLIN

LUXEUIL

BREGENZ

DISENTIS

OLIVONE

BOBBIO

ROME

## Pilgrimage 2015

**Begins:** August 17, 2015

**Ends:** September 5, 2015

A 20-day pilgrimage

**Cost:** Approx AUD\$8000

**Single Supplement:** \$1,695.00

**All inclusive:** Air fares from Australia and Auckland (NZ), accommodation, breakfast and lunch, internal flights.

**Land package only:**

AUD\$6000 includes internal flights. It does not include flights to and from Australia or New Zealand. This leaves an option for doing some travel prior to or after the pilgrimage.

### *Pilgrimage leaders and Chaplains*

**Fr Tommy Murphy** was the Superior General of the Missionary Society of St Columban from 2006-2012. He is an acclaimed scholar of the Celtic heritage of Ireland and an expert on St Columban. He is the founder of the Columban Pilgrimage Walk to Croagh Patrick, County Mayo. He has served as a Columban Missionary in Korea, Taiwan and China.

**Fr Gary Walker** is the Regional Director of the Columban Region of Australia and New Zealand. He has served as a member of the General Council of the Columbans in Ireland from 1994 to 2000. He has a great interest in St Columban and Celtic Spirituality. He served as a Columban Missionary in Fiji, Jamaica and in Australia.

**Janette Mentha** has worked at the Columban Mission Centre in Melbourne for the past seven years. She is the Head of the Programmes Department. She is responsible for the Columban programmes such as The Far East Magazine, the Columban Calendar, E-News and other activities such as the World Youth Day Chile Experience 2013.

Janette lives in Melbourne with her husband Harry. They have six children. She is a member of St Bede's parish North Balwyn. She has a great interest in learning more about St Columban.

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# Become a Columban Priest

Call...

Discern...

Need...

*Is God calling you to be a missionary priest, to follow Jesus across the boundaries of nation, culture, language, religion and race? Today Columban priests work in 16 countries around the world. Here is the story of one of them.*



Photo: Fr Peter Woodruff

*F*r Tomás King is a young Columban priest and a native of Ireland. Most mornings he rises very early to avoid the heat, which can be up to 48 degrees during the day in summer.

After morning prayers and a breakfast of some rotis and fruit, he is soon on his way, out into the desert in his four-wheel drive jeep on a visit to one of the 25 villages that make up his parish. Each of these villages have a small number of Catholics families.

The parish of Fr Tomás is located in the remote and arid Thar Parkar

Desert in south east Pakistan. His parishioners are comprised mainly of an impoverished and oppressed tribal group called the Parkari Kholis. They are classified as a non-scheduled caste, which bears the connotation of being untouchable, leading to so much discrimination and prejudice.

*"Numbers wise it is a small parish but in terms of geography it is large. I need to spend on average 10 to 12 days a month out in the desert visiting the isolated villages,"* says Fr Tomás speaking of his parish. He continues, *"Previously the visit entailed a seven day trek across*

*the desert by camel. Now the journey is reduced to 12 hours."*

When Fr Tomás arrives in a village, he meets the different families, listens to their concerns and tries to find concrete ways to support them. He also celebrates the Eucharist and the other sacraments with them and instructs them in their faith.



PAKISTAN

*Vocation Issue* 

For more information contact: Fr Dan Harding, Vocations Director, [dharding@columban.org.au](mailto:dharding@columban.org.au)

[www.columban.org.au](http://www.columban.org.au)



# Mission World

**We ask your prayers:** *The prayers of our readers are requested for the repose of the souls of friends and benefactors of the Missionary Society of St Columban who died recently and for the spiritual and the temporal welfare of all our readers, their families and friends.*

## UK faith leaders warn against legalising euthanasia



(AAP/Image/NEWZUU/Howard Jones)

The leaders of Britain's faith communities have united to warn Parliament against the 'grave error' of legalising assisted suicide, reports the Catholic News Service.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster and Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury joined 21 other of the most senior Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Zoroastrian and Jain faith leaders to protest the Assisted Dying Bill.

The legislation scheduled to be debated in the House of Lords July 18 was designed to abolish the crime of assisting a suicide by allowing doctors to supply lethal drugs to people expected to die within six months and who are mentally competent. But in a July 16 open letter, the faith leaders said the bill would allow doctors to decide if some people are

'of no further value' and that it would place vulnerable and terminally ill people at 'increased risk of distress and coercion at a time when they most require love and support.'

'This is not the way forward for a compassionate and caring society,' said the letter, signed also by Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis of the United Hebrew Congregation of the Commonwealth and Dr Shuja Shafi, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

'While we may have come to the position of opposing this bill from different religious perspectives, we are agreed that the Assisted Dying Bill invites the prospect of an erosion of carefully tuned values and practices that are essential for the future development of a society that respects and cares for all,' the letter said.

Source: Catholic News Service

## Mission Intention for August

That Christians in Oceania may joyfully announce the faith to all that people of the region



# From the Director

## *Vocation is a mystery*

*V*ocation, any kind of vocation, I think is mysterious whether it is secular or religious. A sense of vocation does not happen to everyone. Some priests and religious will say that from an early age they knew that they were meant to follow a vocation in religion. Other people will say they remember the defining moment when they knew what they wanted to do with their life. It may have led them to life as an artist, musician or doctor.

In the scheme of things in our secular world missionaries are unusual people. They come and go from their homes and deliberately opt to spend their lives in other countries and cultures as they say, *'for the sake of the Gospel'* It seems hardly to be a good reason for many people. My uncle on my father's side commented to me that there wouldn't be a lot of money in it. He was correct as I have found out.

There is also another opinion which states that missionaries are too zealous, leaning towards being fanatics, otherwise why would anyone choose to live in poor countries in dangerous circumstances in some cases, knowing they will miss so many family celebrations, not to mention the increasing need for priests and religious at home... And so much more, both from within the family, the Church and outside it.

*It seems even more strange that someone would leave their home and end up not belonging anywhere. Our country is no longer home in one sense yet we can never be 'a local' in another country no matter how hard we try. One Columban remarked that he always felt at home when he was flying between his home country and his mission.*

The missionary can live in a strange set of circumstances. Uncle Fred or Auntie Beryl come home from the Philippines and their siblings remind the children who Uncle Fred or Auntie Beryl are; the children say they speak funny, not like Mummy and Daddy. While it is good to be home, tensions can arise because Uncle Fred or Auntie Beryl have changed,

they see life quite differently because of their missionary experience. It can be a relief for all sides when Uncle Fred or Auntie Beryl return to a mission where they know how to act, where they feel they belong.

Usually fathers die before mothers and the sense of 'Home' is associated with mothers. But the day comes when she dies and the family home is sold and a fundamental change takes place. When Uncle Fred or Auntie Beryl come home, home is missing. Siblings are welcoming but they have their own lives and families. It is a hard transition.

It seems even more strange that someone would leave their home and end up not belonging anywhere. Our country is no longer home in one sense yet we can never be 'a local' in another country no matter how hard we try. One Columban remarked that he always felt at home when he was flying between his home country and his mission.

So far this is one part of the story. But it misses the riches of being with God's people in different cultures and languages and encountering profound spiritualities, both Christian and non-Christian. Pope Francis's Apostolic Letter *The Joy of the Gospel* is like music for the missionary's life. We have a marvellous God revealed in Jesus Christ. What a privilege and joy to share that Good News with others.

The missionary vocation is mysterious like all vocations; we don't have a vocation, it has us. The only other words worth writing are what so many missionaries experience: *'I received more than I gave'*.

*Gary Walker*

Fr Gary Walker  
director@columban.org.au

# Panchita's vocation

FR DAN HARDING

*In March 2014, the Señora Panchita Llanccamil retired after working for 30 years as a House Keeper, friend and collaborator with Columban Missionaries in Chile. Panchita sees her work with the Columbans as a part of her vocation in life.*



## *Here is her story.*

*F*rancisca Andrea Llanccamil (Panchita) was born around 1950 in an indigenous Mapuche community in the south of Chile. Like many Mapuche women at that time who sought to escape from poverty, discrimination and the lack of opportunities, Panchita left home to go to Santiago to work as a live-in maid for a wealthy family. It was 1965 and she was 15-years-old.

The following year at the age of 16, Panchita married Remigio, who also comes from a Mapuche community in the south. She married against her mother's and her family's wishes. After some pressure, her father gave her permission to marry at such a young age.

As the years went by, Panchita worked for several wealthy families in Santiago. She would have to be up at 5:00am every morning, even

in the sub-zero temperatures of the Santiago winter. She would have a long day ahead of her, cooking, cleaning, shopping and washing and ironing clothes. She would also have to look after the young children and the elderly members of the family.

In 1984, Panchita began working for the Columban Fathers in the parish of San Marcos. She worked for the Columbans for the next 30 years until her retirement in March

*"I am very grateful to the Columbans. They have always treated me well and fairly. They have been a part of my life and story since my early 30s, the raising of my family and my married life. I have enormous affection for them..."*

2014. In that time, she worked with many Columban priests in the Columban parishes of San Marcos, San Columbano, San Pedro Nolasco and San Matias. In recent years, Panchita has worked for Columban Frs Michael Hoban, Patrick Egan, Vincent Ratnam and the Parish Priest of San Matias, William Lee. She decided to retire in March to take care of Remigio, a diabetic who requires dialysis several times a week.

During this time, Panchita and Remigio raised five children, four sons and one daughter. Their eldest son is now 48-years-old. Every day Panchita and Remigio give thanks to God for the opportunity that God gave them of working with the Columbans and being able to provide a good education for their five children, an opportunity they never had. Among the five children of Panchita and Remigio, one is an accountant, another a teacher, another a public servant and another a house painter. They have nine grandchildren.

Panchita has always been actively involved in her own parish, *Jesus el Señor*. For many years, she has sold cakes after the Sunday Mass in order to buy 50 Columban Calendars. She then gives these calendars away to a variety of people as a way to promote the Columbans. She says that people really like the Columban Calendar.

Panchita is also a Minister of Communion, taking communion to sick members of her parish every Sunday. She is also involved in parish finances, collecting the

monthly donation to the parish from parishioners.

Panchita says that she has seen many different personalities among the Columban priests for whom she has cooked, cleaned, shopped, answered telephones, washed and ironed. "Yes, the priests have all been different, just as I also am different and have my own personality." She especially remembers the Columban and Associate priests

for whom she worked and who have now died - Frs Peter Lemass, Michael Cody and Francis O'Leary.

*"I am very grateful to the Columbans. They have always treated me well and fairly. They have been a part of my life and story since my early 30s, the raising of my family and my married life. I have enormous affection for them,"* she concludes.



Columban Frs Patrick Egan (left) Michael Hoban and Parish Priest of San Matias, William Lee (right) say goodbye to Panchita.



Photos: Fr. George Hogarty

*What could be the biggest difficulty for a missionary in the Andes Mountains of Peru can turn out to be a great joy. A parish could have anything from 20 to 60 "pueblos" (villages), each with its own identity and organization. It is impossible for one priest to give each village the attention they desire, yet many have an active Christian community that meets every week. This is only possible through the dedication of catechists and missionaries like Benigna and Jaime.*

*Let me tell you about them.*

# No stopping them

FR DONALD HORNSEY

**B**enigna Alvarez has been very active in church communities since she began her First Communion preparation 20 years ago. She lives in the Salcca valley, 4km from the town of Combapata. Each morning she works with her widowed mother to prepare the hectare of land they own to plant, care for and finally harvest maize and potatoes. She also cares for the animals they have, a few sheep, a cow and numerous guinea-pigs.

But each afternoon for the last eight years, Benigna rides into Combapata on her bicycle to attend to the busy parish office from 2:00-5:00pm. She also acts as the secretary of the DEC (Department of Evangelization and Catechesis) of the Prelature of Sicuani. A prelate is a geographical jurisdiction similar to that of a diocese. One of the main jobs is to organize the five day formation courses and retreats that are held six times a year for rural Quechua-speaking catechists

from all over the Prelature. That sounds like enough work for anyone, but it is not enough for a dedicated missionary like Benigna. On Monday evenings she travels by public Combi-Van 14kms down to Culcuire at the end of the Salcca valley road. From there she walks another kilometre over an often muddy track and crosses over a bridge to the other side of the river to the village of Jayobamba. There she first spends an hour with the children singing with

them and telling them stories of the life of Jesus. Next come the adults whom Benigna leads in a reflection of the Sunday's Gospel, applying it to their lives and looking at concrete ways to improve their situation. Sometimes after the final song, the community shares bread and a drink of chocolate.

On Tuesday night Benigna follows the same pattern in the community of Ccolccatuna, closer to her home. On Fridays she heads back down the valley to the large community of Chiara to share the Word of God with the adults. She returns there on Saturdays to sing, teach and play with a group of 30 adolescents.

When she boards the Combi-Van on Mondays, she is accompanied by Jaime Quispe who remains in Culcuire to animate the community that meets in a house there. He is from Chiara and helps Benigna in the meetings there on Fridays and Saturdays.

Jaime had a serious accident when he was young and now suffers from a degenerative bone disease. He cannot walk and gets around in a wheelchair or more often on crutches. Doctors



say that nothing can be done for him and can only prescribe painkillers. But this does not stop Jaime as he continues as a missionary animating communities in their own Quechua language. He is a computer expert and sometimes gets work designing posters for the local "Municipio"- the Town Council."

He is always ready to make his expertise available to the parish preparing formation booklets, song-books, calendars and all the other material that is used in the parish.

He once asked if we could help to obtain a motorised wheelchair so that he could extend his missionary activities but so far this has not been possible so he stills gets around on his crutches.

Jaime constantly teaches me a great lesson which is that there is no handicap so great that it prevents us from being a missionary of God's Word within our own reality.

---

*Columban Fr Donald Hornsey has worked for the last 13 years in Peru. He also worked in Brazil and Chile.*



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## Remember the Missions in your WILL

*We cannot take our earthly possessions with us, but we can so dispose of them that our good works will continue after we are gone.*

*A bequest to help missionaries being God's saving message to non-Christians is a practical way of showing our love for Christ.*

*Why not speak to your lawyer about it?*



Photo: Maria Rosa Vuniivi

Maria Rosa Vuniivi (right) helps out a local Korean shopowner.



KOREA



FIJI

*I sometimes reflect on that experience of learning Korean and it has helped me in taking initiatives with confidence in my ministry since.*

# Becoming a Lay Missionary

MARIA ROSA VUNIIVI

I am the youngest child in a large family and was brought up in Sasa village, Ba, Fiji. I completed Form 6 at Xavier College in Ba and did computer studies for six months in Ba town.

I was active in Church and was elected Assistant President of the Ba Parish Youth. I joined the Columban Companions in Mission and my family used to receive the Columban mission magazines. I also helped to prepare young people for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Perhaps it was because of this involvement that Bel, a Filipina lay missionary in Ba at that time, suggested that I apply for Columban Lay Mission.

I contacted the Lay Mission Coordinator in Suva and I then attended a 'Come and See' event. I joined the Lay Mission formation group in 2008 and I was selected to go on overseas mission to Korea together with Losena Biau from Tamavua Parish, Suva.

After the mission sending Mass I spoke and thanked my relatives and friends who were present. Mr Rakata from Votua later said to me, "Maria, there is something different about you. My daughter Salome cried a lot during her mission sending Mass and farewell but you didn't. You were even able to make a thank you speech!"

Even at the airport I controlled myself though others there shed tears. However when I sat in the plane about to leave Fiji and home for the first time, I felt very alone. The realization hit me that I was leaving all that was familiar and going into the unknown. I turned to the window and cried.

We arrived in Korea on a Friday and started our orientation course on the following Monday. We had no chance to rest! One week later we began our nine months language course at Sogang University.

The big challenge for me was to adapt to the very structured lifestyle of the Koreans. I had to improve my time management.

I also felt the expectations of Columbans of us. So we were often asked, "How was class today?" or "Are you able to learn this difficult language?" I took this positively. "I can do it" was the idea I often repeated to myself.

I sometimes reflect on that experience of learning Korean and it has helped me in taking initiatives with confidence in my ministry since.

---

*Maria Rosa Vuniivi has been a Columban Lay Missionary in Korea since 2008.*

# Supporting CELL

*Columban Fr Vincent Busch works with the Subanen Crafters, in Mindanao, Philippines.*

*Each year they produce saleable crafts such as Creation Mandalas and inlaid Christmas Cards to provide some much needed income.*

*In supporting the work of the Subanen Crafters your support helps them to provide food, education, housing, and health care for their families.*

*They can only do this with the help of Columban benefactors and their support.*



Photo: Mercy Gawason

Your **kindness** and **support** make it possible for Columbans to meet and minister to many people. Your "stringless" gift helps us to respond with flexibility to the most **urgent needs** of people.



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