

The Far East

COLUMBAN MISSION MAGAZINE

September 2016



Thief! There's a thief in the church
Thief pleads for mercy.

Being a priest is a grace...
Two new Columbans ordained in Chile.

Fasting and feasting
A positive experience during Ramadan.



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Newly ordained Columban priests from Chile, Frs Rafael Ramírez (left) and Gonzalo Bórquez (right) with Columban Regional Director in Chile Fr Álvaro Martínez (centre). (See story pages 08-09)

Photo: Fr Álvaro Martínez SSC



From the Editor

Going off to build God's Kingdom in other lands

On Saturday June 25, 2016, Rafael Ramírez and Gonzalo Bórquez were ordained Columban missionary priests in St Columban's Parish, in Santiago, Chile.

"Being ordained to the priesthood is not about joining the bourgeoisie. It is not about feeling you are more special than everyone else. The priesthood is a grace, not a privilege." said the Auxiliary Bishop of Santiago, Pedro Ossandón, to Rafael and Gonzalo during the ordination. In fact, Rafael and Gonzalo will not be joining the middle class and having a comfortable life but rather going off to build God's Kingdom in other lands, Rafael in Myanmar and Gonzalo in Korea.

The September issue offers many stories of Columban missionaries who seek to build God's Kingdom in other lands or among different communities and minority groups within one's own land.

"I was really touched by the goodness, friendliness, generosity and hospitality of Muslims during the month of Ramadan," writes Columban Fr Patrick McInerney, the Director of the Columban Mission Institute in Sydney. He shares with us his personal

testimony of the goodness and decency of the vast bulk of Muslim people. This is an important testimony in the current climate of bigotry and Islamophobia.

Rugby trained Columban Fr William Lee from Fiji writes of tackling a thief in his parish church in Chile and holding him down for 30 minutes waiting for the police to arrive. Last year a 300km pilgrimage was organized for 28 pilgrims including Columban Fr Rex Rocamora to visit the early Columban sites in central China. Fr Rex shares his experience.

Providing access to good education is one way to break the bond of poverty in Lima, Peru, as Columban Sr Young Mi Choi explains. In the Philippines another way is helping tricycle drivers receive ownership of their tricycles.

Building God's Kingdom as a Columban missionary in Japan for many years has greatly enriched the life of Columban Fr Seamus Cullen.

In Pakistan, young people are inspired to a deeper conversion as Columban Fr Liam O'Callaghan helps them reflect on Pope Francis' Encyclical '*Laudato Si'*'.

St Elizabeth Hospital in Pakistan reaches out to the poor of all religions. Columban Fr Robert McCulloch relates how the Hospital recently received support from the Australian High Commission there. He also writes about the recent course he taught in Rome titled, '*2000 Years of Christianity*'.

Newly ordained Frs Rafael and Gonzalo would not be able to go to build God's Kingdom in Myanmar and Korea respectively without the support of Columban benefactors. Frank Joyce in Glasgow, Scotland, was one such benefactor. Columban Fr Bernard McDermott tells his story.

The stories in this September issue help remind us of the work of Columbans around the world, of how diverse this work is and also how much it depends on the support of generous benefactors. May our readers enjoy these stories from Columbans and be inspired and encouraged in their own lives.

Fr Daniel Harding
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Thief! There's a thief in the church

FR WILLIAM (WILLIE) LEE

*I*t was about 3:00pm on a Tuesday. I was seated at my desk in the parish office chatting with a young couple who had come to ask for baptism for their newborn baby. As parish priest of the 90,000 parishioners of *San Matias* parish on the southern periphery of Santiago, Chile, a large part of my day was spent listening to the concerns of those who came to see me.

All of a sudden, I heard the parish secretary shouting, *"Thief! There's a thief in the church. He is still in there."* I jumped up, ran out of the office and into the church. And there he was, trying to help himself to anything of monetary value.

The parish of *San Matias* comprises the main church where the parish office is located and nine smaller churches spread out across the area. This is a poor area with high incidences of unemployment, drug trafficking, domestic violence, suicide, despair, imprisonment, environmental degradation and family breakdown.

There are problems of undernourishment of children and the aged, a high dropout rate from school and little access to health services. Many people have no computer access to be able to prepare a job resume or fill out online forms needed to apply for services. The majority of our parishioners live in overcrowded conditions in government-built apartments and houses, the average size of which is a mere 36 square metres.

We have only one police station in an area where an estimated 200,000 people live. Of course, police coverage in our area differs significantly from that of middle class areas in the same city.

Seeing the thief I ran into the church and headed towards him. He tried to escape through the hole in the wall that he had made in order to enter. But just before he made his escape I tackled him around the legs. He fell to the ground with me on top of him. Being a Fijian who has grown up playing rugby certainly was a big advantage in this situation. I think the thief was surprised that the parish priest had tackled him so quickly and effectively.

From the floor of the church, I called out to the parish secretary to call the police, while I continued to hold the thief down. He was about 30 years old and I sensed that he was a drug addict. As I continued to pin him to the ground, while waiting for the police to arrive, he kept repeating to me, ***"Father, have mercy on me. Have mercy on me, please Father."***

Being in a poor area with a high crime rate, all 10 churches of the parish, every evangelical church, every school in the area, every neighbourhood centre, every hall, every sports club, every small shop and business, every health centre and everyone's home, are all subject to ongoing robbery from drug addicts looking for quick cash to buy drugs.

We have had many break-ins in our churches. Hardly a month goes by without one or two break-ins. Chalices,



Photo: Fr William (Willie) Lee with the red stole leads a procession, through the streets of his parish.



patens and metal crucifixes have been stolen. Tabernacles have been smashed and the Blessed Sacrament thrown on the ground. We have had lectionaries, missals and hymnals stolen. Liturgical vestments such as chasubles, stoles, albs, cinctures and the acolytes' albs have also been stolen. Sound systems, microphones and speakers are especially sought after. Most of these items are now kept in private homes for security reasons and brought out for Sunday worship.

I continued to pin down the thief waiting for the police to arrive while all the time he continued to plead for mercy. After waiting for around 30 minutes I decided I had no option but to release him. He thanked me, got up and ran out. I watched him climb over the fence and was then surprised to see a rather flash car appear out of nowhere to collect him and drive off.

In discussion with people in the area who know 'things', and putting two and two together, it seems that our thief would also have been a victim in another sort of way. He most likely would have been a school drop-out, uneducated and unemployable. In desperation he would have turned to drugs and soon become addicted. He probably owed money to these unforgiving drug dealers. They must have offered him a solution to pay back his drug debt by driving him around to different locations where he could break-in and steal items and so pay back his drug debt. If he was caught by the police it did not matter too much because as a human being he was expendable and there are plenty of others in the same desperate situation.

The police arrived about 30 minutes later. I expressed my frustration and annoyance to them, but I know that they are overworked and undermanned.

This incident helped me reflect on the importance of our parish reaching out to those in need. It helped me realize the importance of our pastoral work in the prevention of substance abuse and offering the addicts opportunities for rehabilitation and the hope for a new life. Our parish needs to continue to help those in crime and addiction to turn their lives around.

Columban Fr William Lee comes from Fiji. He has spent the last nine years as Parish Priest in Chile and now has returned to Fiji to work in seminary formation for Columban students.

The hole in the wall where the thief entered.



A tricycle driver's life

VIRGENIA O. VIDAL

In 2005 Columban Fr Oliver McCrossan founded the 'Pedalling to Live' programme in the southern Filipino city of Ozamis. Since then over 100 tricycle drivers have become the proud owners of their own tricycles by paying off an interest free loan approximately \$700.00 AUD/NZD to buy the tricycle. Being the owner of a tricycle eliminates money lost through having to rent a tricycle from a middleman. Transporting passengers from their homes to markets, schools, church and offices is the principle source of income for tricycle drivers and their families.

The Coordinator of this programme, Virgenia O. Vidal, shares with us the story of Brian Buhawi, a tricycle driver from Ozamis City.

*B*rian Buhawi is a young married man with two children. He was born in 1984. When Brian was nine years old, his mother died and he was forced to go to work in the construction industry in a different city. Brian's childhood was very difficult for him. At an early age, it meant living in a different city away from relatives and doing dangerous work on construction sites for large buildings.

At the age of 27 Brian was assigned by the construction company to Ozamis City, where he earned an average of \$7.00 per day. Brian was now married and had two children to support. It was dangerous work so Brian took another job in a hardware store where he only earned an average of \$4.00 per day.

On \$4.00 per day, Brian had to pay rent for the small room his family rented in an overcrowded slum area

on the edge of the city as well as for food, schooling, health care, clothing and other necessary items. Rent alone cost the family \$25.00 monthly. To cover the minimal costs of the family, Brian needed to earn at least \$6 per day.

The slum areas where a poor family like Brian's rents accommodation are prone to sudden fires that can start from open cooking fires or poorly installed electricity. These fires can



sweep through the whole slum area in minutes wiping out families and their few possessions. During the annual typhoon season, the precarious nature of the buildings also makes them particularly vulnerable to the strong winds, rain and flooding.

These slum areas also have a high incidence of drug trafficking, being a great concern to parents raising children there. Snatching incidents are also an increasingly serious problem, as valuables such as bags, purses, wallets, watches, food and clothing items can be snatched from one's hands by passers-by or persons on motor bikes. In seconds, they disappear out of sight.

In order to help make ends meet, Brian applied to become a tricycle driver in 2012, renting a tricycle from a middle man. Now Brian could earn up to \$10.00 per day, working from early in the morning until around 8:00pm in the evening. A high proportion of this amount, however, had to go to pay for the rent of the tricycle.

It was only in March 2016, after four years driving a rented tricycle that Brian applied to the *Pedalling to Live* Programme and was accepted. A tricycle cost \$700.00 to buy. Brian is now paying \$1.70 per day towards owning his own tricycle. He also pays 60 cents daily into a saving account in a local cooperative.

Once Brian has paid off his loan, he will be eligible to become the beneficiary of one of the new 'green' homes, which the *Pedalling to Live* programme also offers. These low cost ecological homes are built out of local materials such as clay, rice straw and husks. They are built in safe areas away from drug and crime ridden areas. They are surrounded by small parcels of land on which the families can grow some of their own food.

Brian says of his life as a tricycle driver.

"My life being a tricycle driver is not easy but it is much better than being so desperate that I would have had to become a 'snatcher' or else beg for food. I now feed my family from my own

sweat. Starting early in the morning, I wake up and go to pick up some regular passengers and bring them to their destinations.

I have been held up by drug addicts and my entire daily income has been taken by these boys. I gave them all my money otherwise they would have killed me. And I went home without a single cent for my family. Despite that set back, I will not stop driving because I have dreams for my children and I am working so hard to become the owner of my own tricycle. In this way, I will be able to provide a lot better for my family and also be eligible for a new low cost 'green' house."

The Pedalling to Live programme has made an enormous difference to my life and that of my family".

Virgenia O. Vidal is the coordinator of the 'Pedalling to Live' programme.





Being a priest is a grace, not a privilege

CHILEAN REGION

Two new Columbans ordained priests in Chile: Rafael Ramírez and Gonzalo Bórquez

"The priesthood is a grace. It is not a privilege. It is not a means to get something better for oneself. It is an undeserved gift, where Jesus Christ, the one Eternal High Priest allows us to participate in his ministry. You have been called to announce the Good News of the Gospel. To this, you have been called".

With these words, Bishop Pedro Ossandón, Auxiliary Bishop of Santiago, Chile, began his homily at the ordination to priesthood of two new Columbans: Rafael Ramírez and Gonzalo Bórquez. The ordinations took place in St Columban's Parish in the southern suburbs of Santiago, on Saturday June 25, 2016.

The church was full with family members, Columban priests, parishioners from all Columbans parishes, friends and representatives from the local Mapuche community, Chile's indigenous community. The offertory gifts of bread and wine were taken up by Gonzalo's sister, Catalina, and by Rafael's sister, Raquel. Each one also carried a flag of

the country where their respective brothers have been assigned, Gonzalo to Korea and Rafael to Myanmar.

Bishop Pedro exhorted the two new priests not to settle down and get comfortable in the priesthood. He said,

"Being ordained to priesthood is not about joining the middle class, not about becoming a member of the bourgeoisie. It is not about believing that because you are a priest, you are something really special. If that happens, remember John the Baptist, who was poor and humble and never rested for a minute in giving of himself for others."

He went on to say,

"As priests, never allow yourselves to become lazy, never be self-serving and think that you are so important now that you are a minister of the Lord. I know that you are not like that. However I want to counsel you, be very careful not to become vain. There is a virus that can take over priests whereby they can believe they are more important than everyone else and never have to be accountable for their mistakes and faults."

This is the culmination of a long journey that our brother has made. He has taken the option to be a missionary priest...

Bishop Ossandón concluded by saying he would like to thank the Columbans for continuing to demonstrate to the local Chilean Church that the Church is truly universal, that it belongs to all nations and that we are responsible to bring the Gospel to all nations. He thanked the Columbans for making the Chilean Church more missionary now that Gonzalo will go to Korea and Rafael to Myanmar.

After communion, the family members of the two new priests were given an opportunity to speak. Catalina spoke on behalf of Gonzalo's family saying,

"We as a family have a lot of mixed emotions. We have a little sadness because we would have loved that our father had been alive for this ordination, but we know that from above he is very proud of our brother. It has been a very long road to ordination and our family has tried to support Gonzalo from day one. From the moment Gonzalo told us that he wanted to take the road to priesthood we have been happy about that. What really makes us happy is to know that Gonzalo is happy. Also to see this church so full of so many friends and supporters, gives us great happiness. All of us here today are united in happiness".



Fr Gonzalo Bórquez celebrates his first Mass with Fr Rafael Ramírez.

Raquel spoke on behalf of Rafael's family.

"This is the culmination of a long journey that our brother has made. He has taken the option to be a missionary priest. Today is a dream come true for him. It is a great blessing for all our family as we have accompanied him in his journey. During all these years we have seen how the people really appreciate him

and have a lot of affection for him. The fact that this Church is so full of people today indicates this.

Ever since the beginning of Rafael's preparation for missionary priesthood, we as a family have continued to grow in our acceptance and understanding of this vocation. We understand that his missionary road will lead him to other places, other cultures, other countries where the Lord calls him. And we are very happy about that."



Bishop Pedro Ossandón anoints the hands of Fr Rafael Ramírez, during the ordination liturgy.

Towards the end of the Eucharist, the Mapuche elders present offered a special prayer ritual of song and dance called Ayuwen in their language to bless the two new priests and offer their support to them. Mapuche elder Amelia Millahueque said on behalf of the Mapuche community.

"This day is very important for us Mapuches. It is especially important because Rafael comes from Chile's ninth Region, the original home of our Mapuche people. Even though he is not a Mapuche, we love him just like a son. We sing of our great happiness for him and for Gonzalo."

At the end of the Ordination Eucharist, the Columban Regional Director in Chile, Fr Álvaro Martínez congratulated Frs Rafael and Gonzalo on their ordination to missionary priesthood as Columbans. He expressed the happiness of all Columbans who now welcome two new brothers into their family.

Breaking the bonds of poverty

SR YOUNG MI CHOI

*M*y name is Sister Young Mi Choi and I live and work in the parish of *Cristo Liberador*, (Christ the Liberator), one of 12 parishes which comprise the district of *San Juan de Lurigancho* in the eastern part of Lima, in the foothills of the Andes. It is one of the most densely populated districts in all Latin America, with a population of over one million people. Most of the people who live here have come as migrants seeking a better life from rural and mountainous areas over the last 25 to 30 years.

In our parish we have a population of about 130,000 people. Those who live in the valleys have basic services and conditions have improved greatly over the years. However, there are still thousands of people, living in precarious dwellings on the hills who do not yet have running water or basic services.

We have started a number of projects to help educate the migrant population in this area. One is a small pre-school for three to five year-olds, with a room for children with

special needs. Many are children of very young single mothers who have very little education themselves.

We saw this project as a way of giving basic formation to these children, so that they could have more options for life and a better future. We also wanted to have something for special children because there are no services for them in our area.

My own background is in Montessori and special education. We have about 80 children in the school. Each morning they arrive around 8:30am and are with us until 3:30pm. This gives the mothers the opportunity to work, as many do, in the local market and other areas. We provide breakfast, dinner and a snack for the children before they leave in the afternoon.

Three years ago, a little girl named Sandra came to our school. Her mother, a widow with three children, sold pieces of charcoal in the market. She asked me with tears

Some of the children from the pre-school founded by Sr Young Mi Choi, in Lima, Peru.





Sandra and Sr Young Mi Choi at the pre-school, Lima, Peru.

in her eyes if I could take Sandra because she had a hearing problem. Sandra had almost caused a serious car accident that day because she could not communicate with anyone.

Sandra stayed with us for three years. We worked with her on her own and at other times she joined the other children for classes. From being uncontrollable and without even minimal education she has become a caring, confident and beautiful child and an example to the other children in her class.

The director of the local elementary school says, ***“When I see Sandra blossoming in our school and playing with normal children I see the value of inclusive education.”***

Our task is to maintain the quality of our educational programme, to prepare our teachers and to provide education for the parents. We get no government assistance whatever for running this school.

Our second project is in the Cristo Rey area at one end of our parish where the people live on a series of high hills in extremely poor living conditions with huge social problems of alcohol abuse and family violence. The alcohol abuse and domestic violence coupled with a lack of education - very few adults have completed high school - means that education is not a priority for their children. For example

Susana, aged 11, is still struggling to read and write because her parents had asked her to mind her four younger siblings at home instead of going to school. She asked me to convince her parents to allow her to come to our educational programme.

Last year we began an educational programme in this deprived area as an outreach from our school. The general idea was to build up the community there beginning with the women and children.

With our teachers and others volunteering, we began workshops in the afternoons with children of different age-levels, helping them with their reading and writing skills. On Saturdays we have handicraft and drama workshops for the children and a programme for women with a psychologist and social worker.

This year we hope to have a three-pronged educational programme for adult development of practical life skills, human development and leadership in the community and chapel, so that they can take responsibility for their lives. We will also continue the work with the children.

Korean Columban Sr Young Mi Choi lives and works in the Cristo Liberador parish in the poverty stricken outskirts of Lima, Peru.

Fasting and feasting

FR PATRICK MCINERNEY

Columban Fr Patrick McInerney is the Director of the Columban Mission Institute in Sydney. Having spent many years in Pakistan as a missionary, Fr Patrick has first-hand experience both in Pakistan and in Australia in building understanding and friendship between people from different religious backgrounds.

When submitting these reflections to "The Far East" magazine, he wrote, "This article is about my very positive experience during Ramadan. I was really touched by the goodness, friendliness, generosity and hospitality of Muslims during this time. In the current climate of the bigoted, racist and Islamophobic attitudes that surfaced in the recent federal election, a personal testimony such as mine to the goodness and decency of the vast bulk of Muslims is all the more important. Hence I spent over four hours writing and re-writing this article as a strong witness statement that expresses a Christian approach to Islam and Muslims."

*I*t was a wonderful month. I thoroughly enjoyed it. I was out most nights. I met lots of old friends. I made new friends. We shared meals. We had a great time. But we didn't drink any wine!

What am I talking about? Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting, prayer and almsgiving. Muslims fast from dawn to dusk – no food, no drink, no arguing, no swearing, no sexual activity. As the sun sets in the evening, they gather with family and friends for the *iftar* meal (literally, "breaking" the fast). I am a Catholic priest. I am not a Muslim. What has Ramadan to do with me? And why did I enjoy it so much?

I first hosted an *iftar* meal at the Columban house in Lahore, Pakistan in the nineties. I invited our Muslim neighbours. The old man from the house across the road came in his dressing gown. It was a wonderful sign of his feeling 'at home' with us. He told us it was his birthday, so we sang "Happy Birthday!" to him. We shared fruit. We chatted.

They told us that they should have invited us: "*We are Muslims; you are Christians; it is our duty to invite you*" ... and the next week they did, first this house, then that, down the street. It was the first time we had been inside each other's houses. We became neighbours, in the proper sense of the

word, not just living in geographical proximity, but being neighbourly towards each other, becoming friends.

I am delighted that Ramadan has become a major interfaith occasion around the world. It is certainly true where I now live in Sydney. Beside the family and neighbourhood gatherings, Muslim community organizations host *iftar* meals. Mosques host *iftar* meals. Corporate bodies host *iftar* meals. The NSW Parliament hosts an *iftar* meal. The Premier hosts an *iftar* meal. This year, for the first time, the Prime Minister hosted an *iftar* meal! The Catholic Archbishop hosts an *iftar* meal. Other churches host *iftar* meals. Often believers from other faiths are invited.

Some are huge public events catering to hundreds. Others are for selected civic, religious and interfaith leaders. Some are in private homes. Some provide meals for refugees, detainees, the homeless and the needy. Ramadan is a wave of Muslim generosity reaching out to the wider society.

I have been invited to these *iftar* meals for many years. I am no longer a stranger to my hosts, nor they to me. Now we are meeting as friends, so Ramadan has become a wonderful social time. I am touched by the warmth and friendliness of my Muslim hosts. When I thanked them



they insisted that it was they who should be thanking me for honouring them with my visit. I am astonished by their hospitality and generosity – literally thousands of guests are being fed every night.

At one such event over 700 people were treated to a three course meal. But when I looked around the room I noted that I was the only Christian clergyman present. This saddened me as it indicated that the local Christian and Muslim communities were not in touch with each other. Priests and Imams who are busy meeting the needs of their own communities also need to reach out to each other. Hosting and being invited for an *iftar* meal are great ways to build those local community relations. Being invited into a home to share an *iftar* meal with a family is a special privilege.

Ramadan is not just about fasting and feasting. It is also a time of spiritual devotion, of extra time spent in prayer and reading scripture. My daily intercession in the Eucharist was, *“Let us pray for our Muslim sisters and brothers, that by the physical discipline of their fasting, the spiritual devotion of their hearts, and the generosity of their alms-giving, they may find grace and favour in God’s eyes”.*

The extraordinary generosity and hospitality of Muslims during Ramadan is all the more astonishing given the constant barrage of negative media reporting they suffer. To counter this negative media stereotype, I wish that more and more people could experience the goodness, warmth, friendliness, generosity and welcome of Muslim hosts that has been my privilege in the past month.

.... and yes, I too fasted during the 30 days of Ramadan, as a gesture of Christian solidarity with Muslims, so that for me the evening meal was truly an iftar – a breaking of my fast! And now I am also truly joining in the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, the feast which marks the end of the month of fasting! Eid Mubarak! A blessed feast to all!!

Columban Fr Patrick McInerney SSC is the Director of the Columban Mission Institute in Sydney and the Coordinator of its Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations.



Columban staff member Steff Fenton (left) with Nev Akyil (centre), Auburn Mosque Office Manager and Jasbinder Singh (right), Sikh representative in Youth PoWR.



Photo: Allies Interactive/Shutterstock.com



The iftar meal jointly hosted by Youth PoWR and Auburn Gallipoli Mosque, July 3rd, 2016.



What being a missionary in Japan has done for me

FR SEAMUS CULLEN

Columban Fr Seamus Cullen has spent more than 40 years as a missionary in Japan. He shares with us how working in Japan has enriched him personally and also how Japanese culture can contribute to the wider Church.

The majority of the small group of us Columbans now left in Japan have been appointed to other regions for a period, and have then been re-appointed to Japan. We were happy to return to Japan but maybe we have never spelled out for ourselves why we wanted to continue to be there. I would like to put words now on what being on mission in Japan has done for me.

It is no exaggeration to say that with people in Japan I experienced an

incarnation of God that resonates with God in me. It resonates with me in many different ways, from the ease with which the Japanese people relate to the contemplative dimension of spirituality, to the ordinary commonplace culture of bowing to each other that is the usual form of greeting.

That the Japanese have successfully resisted the advent of Christianity is significant. Certainly no effort has been spared to establish the

Catholic Church in Japan and the basic church structure has long been in place. But, the prospect of that church's burgeoning is rather bleak. I am now inclined to make the following analogy when I think of the commonly held attitude to missionary work in Japan.

For centuries God had prepared and nurtured the soil of Japan, through the various religions (Buddhism, Shintoism and Confucianism). Then the Christian missionaries came



Japan has the capacity to be one of the main sources of guidance for the contemplative church that the world needs so badly.

along and, figuratively, spread a slab of concrete over this rich soil and sowed the seeds of Christianity on this concrete. Our own contact with Buddhism and Shintoism was inescapable and inevitable, but generally it was not a very positive thing. I recall Columban John Crowe's lamenting, just before he died, how he had been forbidden to attend the funeral of a Buddhist friend.

In Japan the Church is seen as a teaching organisation. I think it is this basic thinking that needs to change. The Church needs to facilitate the experience of God, instead of teaching about God. This is essentially what Zen meditation is about. It is contained in the phrase from Isaiah which says, "Be still and know that I am God". 'Knowing' in the Bible means 'Becoming one with'. It is Japan which has taught me that the Gospel incarnate in me is what resonates with other people, and enables them to discover God incarnate in them, and that they are made in the image and likeness of God.

Japan, like China, is an ancient culture. Japan is our closest contact with our original mission field in China. We have been enriched enormously by our contact with Japan. In the West, we used to have a tradition of contemplation. This died and was effectively replaced with an exclusively rational perspective on reality. This resulted in a culture which saw the human being's capacity to rationalise and analyse as his/ her only way of knowing. The ability to know through contemplation was no longer recognised, and spiritual realities were

dismissed as things that belonged in a world that did not exist.

I blush now when I remember thinking gleefully that the Japanese people were inferior, because rational, logical thinking was beyond them. The Westerner was superior because abstract thinking was his or her forte. How wrong I was! Why didn't I see that the very use of Chinese characters, which are originally pictures or ideograms, reflects a culture which sees the whole of reality and everything in it, without interpreting it, or presuming to contain it in one way or another? The Chinese character for God is a classic example; it is a symbol of an altar and of lightning. The altar depicts the attitude of worship and adoration. The lightning icon reflects reverential fear. Both are dispositions to be found in the person who has experienced God. The character does not presume to say anything about God. It is only

the person who has not experienced God who would be so presumptuous.

When Fr William Johnston S.J. said that the time has come for the East to share its treasures with the West, it was this contemplative attitude to which he was referring. We in Japan have discovered this and would like to share it with the rest of the world. This is a distinctive gift, one not readily found in China, a gift from Japanese culture to the world that badly needs it.

When Theologian Karl Rahner wrote that the Christian of the future must needs be a contemplative, he was describing the kind of church that is trying to be born. Japan has the capacity to be one of the main sources of guidance for the contemplative church that the world needs so badly.

Columban Fr Seamus Cullen has been a missionary in Japan since 1967.





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.*

Laudato Si' is inspiring young people in Pakistan

To care for God's Creation as well as for the poor and marginalized of society was the main theme that emerged at a seminar for youth people held in April, 2016, by the Archdiocese of Lahore on Pope Francis's Encyclical on the environment and human ecology, *Laudato Si'*. It was organized by Caritas Pakistan and by Fr Jahanzeb Iqbal of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Youth Service.

Columban Fr Liam O'Callaghan led the youth and helped them reflect on how to protect our 'common house', our planet Earth. Among the practical suggestions that the youth committed themselves to, were:

- To plant trees in select areas,
- To avoid wasting water,
- To keep their local environment clean from rubbish,
- To be aware of the danger of consumerism,
- To share what we have with the poor.

Fr Liam O'Callaghan said that the Episcopal Conference of Pakistan has a project to translate *Laudato Si'* into Urdu, the principle language of the country. The Church in Pakistan wants this encyclical to become better known in all the dioceses, parishes, Catholic movements and associations in Pakistan.

Fr Liam explained that *Laudato Si'* had also been accepted in a favourable light by many Muslim groups.

"In fact the ecological issues are also deeply religious and spiritual issues and can be a common ground and a meeting point with Muslims, when discussed from an inter-religious perspective."

The seminar finished with the young people being invited to work together with everyone interested in raising awareness in society of the need to protect our common home. The young people were invited to be good examples to others on how to protect our mother earth.



A woman & her children from Jhirruk, Pakistan collecting fresh water.

Columban Fr Liam O'Callaghan, Agenzia Fides - Information Service of the Pontifical Mission Society - July 04, 2016

Mission Intention for September

That by participating in the Sacraments and meditating on Scripture, Christians may become more aware of their mission to evangelize.

Photo: Fr Robert McCulloch SSC



From the Director

Is it time for the Church to try another way?

In April, 2016, participants convened at the Vatican for the conference: 'Nonviolence and Just Peace: Contributing to the Catholic Understanding of and Commitment to Nonviolence'.

The Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Pax Christi International and other Catholic organizations from around the world sponsored the first-of-its-kind assembly.

The head of the Pontifical Council, Cardinal Peter Turkson, opened the conference with a warm message of support from Pope Francis, who said, *"Your thoughts on revitalizing the tools of nonviolence, and of active nonviolence in particular, will be a needed and positive contribution."*

The age old question, *can war ever be justified* has been debated many times and in more recent time included the invasions of Iraq and Syria.

The ambition of the 80 delegates was to begin a paradigm shift in Catholic Church teaching away from considering war as a valid response to a situation and to develop nonviolent resistance as the appropriate Church response.

The age old question, can war ever be justified has been debated many times...

The Catholic Church has never agreed that it can be morally acceptable to target civilians in a military action but left the door open with a qualifying statement: 'unless it is accidental'. However, the nature of modern warfare would seem to negate this possibility as having any relevance these days as research shows that more civilians die in wars now than soldiers.

Max Born, the 1954 Nobel Laureate in Physics pointed out that soldiers accounted for 95% of deaths in World War I but in World War II 52% of all deaths were military personnel. In the Korean War in the 1950's civilian casualties were 84%. The conference argued that civilians are now the primary targets with evidence of hundreds of thousands dead and wounded in Iraq and Syria.

Warfare has changed as we observe terrorists attacks on civilian targets in Europe. People tremble knowing that such an attack could happen anywhere at any time. Our capacity to develop increasingly lethal weapons of destruction is frightening and gives the terrorist real power. The question of can war ever be justified should include must we live in a permanent state of war? This is truly a devastating realisation.

Is it time for the Church to try another way? Change will not negate the need for military defence but the Church especially needs to explore the nonviolent resistance way.

The gathering ended three days later with a dramatic consensus process that called on the Pope to issue an encyclical - a major Catholic Church document - on active nonviolence.

Gary Walker

Fr Gary Walker
director@columban.org.au



Australian High Commission supports mission in Pakistan

FR ROBERT MCCULLOCH

St Elizabeth Hospital is at the forefront in Pakistan for the care of cancer patients

A Centre for Home Based Palliative Care has recently opened at St Elizabeth Hospital, Hyderabad, Pakistan. This Centre provides palliative care for cancer patients, with pain control therapy. This is the first such centre at a national level in Pakistan.

Established in 1958, St Elizabeth Hospital is a highly valued institution serving the city of Hyderabad and the entire Sindh province. It provides the best possible care at the lowest possible cost.

Columban Fr Robert McCulloch said of St Elizabeth Hospital,

"Thanks to its professionalism, organization and medical technology, St Elizabeth Hospital is able to assist more than 40,000 patients each year. These patients come from the Muslim, Hindu and Christian communities. Above all, St Elizabeth's takes care of poor families especially those in rural communities."

Fr Robert was the chairman of the Administration Council of St Elizabeth Hospital for many years and a proponent of a medical outreach programme. He spent over 30 years in Pakistan and is currently the Procurator General for St Columbans Mission Society and resides in Rome.

"Catholic doctors and nurses establish relations of cordiality and good will among the people. And thanks to the care and the work of the hospital, the Church of Pakistan is seen not as a foreign body in society, but as a community that helps to cure wounds. This work helps to improve relations of peace, dialogue and harmony in society", explained Fr Robert.

St Elizabeth Hospital recently received a visit from Margaret Adamson, Australian High Commissioner for Pakistan, who renewed the High Commission's support for St Elizabeth Hospital and noted the high level of medical care achieved. She confirmed that it is a place of "significant service to the common good in Pakistan".

Columban Fr Robert McCulloch, Agenzia Fides - Information Service of the Pontifical Mission Society - April 22, 2016

Photo: Fr Robert McCulloch SSC

Columban collaboration with Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue



FR ROBERT MCCULLOCH

On June 7, in collaboration with the Vatican's *Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue* (PCID), Columban Fr Robert McCulloch completed a series of lectures on '2000 years of Christianity' for a small group of non-Christian academics who have been studying in Rome since February 2016 under the *Nostra Aetate* programme of the Pontifical Council.

Through its *Nostra Aetate* programme (named after the document of Vatican II on the relation of the Catholic Church with other religions), the *Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue* each year invites a small number of scholars and representatives of other religions to undertake a semester of studies at the pontifical universities in Rome.

Those participating this year included Mandalar Lan Kara, a Buddhist monk from Myanmar, Ms. Minsu Chang of the T'ienti Teachings from Taiwan, and Dr. Sadia Omer, a Muslim

doctor from Pakistan. All attended a variety of courses at the Angelicum University which included Christian Archaeology, 14th Century English Mystics and Inter-Religious Dialogue. Before arriving in Rome, Mandalar Lan Kara had close contact with Columban Sisters in Myanmar who taught him English.

The course taught by Fr McCulloch, '2000 years of Christianity', helped provide the wider Catholic context for the participants in the Nostra Aetate programme.

Columban Fr Robert McCulloch is Procurator-General of the Missionary Society of St. Columban in Rome. He has previously lectured in Church History, Liturgy and Latin at the National Catholic Institute of Theology in Karachi Pakistan and is the author and co-translator of liturgical, church history and theology books into Urdu, the most recent being the completed Urdu translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.



Photo caption: Ms. Minsu Chang (Taiwan), Ms. Isabelle Mathian (PCID), Fr. Robert McCulloch (Columban Procurator-General), Dr. Sadia Omer (Pakistan), Mandalar Lan Kara (Myanmar).

Photo: Fr Markus Solo SVD

Pilgrimage to early Columban sites in China

FR REX ROCAMORA



In order to commemorate the 1400th anniversary of the death of St Columban, a three day pilgrimage was organized in 2015 to visit the sites where the early Columbans missionaries had worked in China in the 1920's and 1930's.

Columban Fr Rex Rocamora took part in this pilgrimage and tells us about it.

Quoting St Columban, our pilgrim's banner read, "To be a pilgrim for Christ". Our three day pilgrimage took place November 11-15, 2015, leading up to the 1400th anniversary of the death of St Columban at Bobbio in northern Italy on November 23rd, 615 AD.

During the pilgrimage we drove 300 kilometres along the Han River tracing the footsteps of the early Columban missionaries in central China. Our pilgrim group was comprised of 28 priests, deacons, sisters, seminarians and members of the laity. We visited the places where these early Columbans had worked in parishes, churches, an abandoned seminary and presbyteries. We also visited the Columbans buried there.

Columban co-founder, Fr Edward Galvin, had been appointed by Rome in 1923 to be the Apostolic Prefect for the Apostolic Prefecture of Hanyang and in 1927 the Apostolic Vicar for the Apostolic Vicariate of Hanyang. These are the normal stages for the development of a

diocese. In 1946 Fr Edward Galvin was consecrated the first Bishop of the new Diocese of Hanyang.

It was therefore fitting that our pilgrimage began in the Cathedral Church of the Diocese of Hanyang, the Cathedral of St Columban. We prayed and gave thanks for Bishop Galvin and for all the early Columban missionaries who had laboured with so many difficulties in the Hanyang vineyard for so many years.

As a pilgrim group, we realized we were very pleased to meet members of the local Catholic community and to hear their testimony regarding the work of early Columbans.

Fr Joseph Li from the Diocese of Hanyang, who helped to organize the pilgrimage, shared how our visit had helped awaken in the hearts of the clergy, religious and laity of the Diocese of Hanyang gratitude and fond memories of the pioneer work undertaken by the early Columban missionaries. He said the Diocese had a sense of communion and connectedness with the Columbans.



Sr Li, a local religious sister, shared her gratitude for the momentous work undertaken by Bishop Galvin and the Columbans in 1931 caring for the thousands of victims of the great Yangtze River flood.

Sr Zhang, a religious sister from Xiantao, quoted St Columban saying, *"I'm now ready to be a pilgrim for Christ"*. She was moved as she remembered the presence of these early Columban missionaries in rural areas, even in remote villages such as Mai Wong village. There a Eucharist was celebrated with the local Catholic community in front of an abandoned church and convent. It was the first Eucharist to be celebrated there for 60 years. It was as if God had now taken action to reclaim his church in this once predominantly Catholic village. The seeds of faith that had been buried in this land long ago by Columban missionaries were now coming back to life.

One of the early Columban missionaries was Fr Charles Cullen, a native of Ireland. He had only been in Hanyang two years when he died suddenly at the age of 27. His story moved us as we realized the great sacrifice he and the other missionaries had made. Regarding his burial Bishop Galvin had written, *"When night came, there was still no coffin to be had. In this appalling difficulty a friend turned up when one least expected it. A pagan gave the coffin which he had prepared for himself and a very fine one it was!"*

One of the local priests on the pilgrimage suggested that the exact location of Fr Charles grave be found so that it could be moved to his parish where it could be properly looked after. It was then suggested however that while most people are looking for a place to settle down, a missionary like Fr Charles is always on the road. Therefore Fr Charles remains buried where he belongs, among the people with whom he worked.

The pilgrimage finished in Bai Hu village with a special Eucharist. The concelebrating priests wore red stoles to remember the sacrifice, the sweat, the tears and sometimes blood, of the early Columbans who had selflessly given their lives passing on the Faith.

During this Eucharist Fr Joseph Li proclaimed that these early Columbans as 'exiles for Christ' had brought the Gospel to the far reaches of the world. Just as Abraham had left his land for another and as missionaries had brought the Gospel to Europe, through people like St Columban, these early Columban missionaries had left their land to bring the Gospel to the people of Hanyang in central China.

Columban Fr Rex Rocamora has worked in China since ordination in 2000. He originally comes from the Philippines.

“

Sr Zhang, a religious sister from Xiantao, quoted St Columban saying, "I'm now ready to be a pilgrim for Christ".



Mass being celebrated during the pilgrimage in an open field in one of the former Columban parishes.



A group photo of some of the pilgrims.

Listen to: "Father, have you heard this joke before?"...

"Father, have you heard this joke before?"...

FR BERNARD MCDERMOTT

I will always remember the letters from Frank Joyce a loyal supporter of the Columbans from Govan in Glasgow, because he always wrote a joke as part of his letter. He also enclosed a substantial cash donation which came out of his meagre pension.

The office staff here at Solihull thought it appropriate that the Regional Director should reply to Frank's letters which I was happy to do. Through our correspondence we became great friends over the few years I knew him. I eventually persuaded him to allow his niece to write a cheque on his behalf as sending cash through the mail was a quite a risk. I was always under pressure when I replied to include 'a joke'.

On one occasion when I was in Glasgow visiting my Columban colleagues I went to visit Frank at his home in a tenement flat in Govan. The day I called I got no reply but his neighbour informed me that Frank was quite deaf and suggested I leave a note for him to say I would call maybe the next morning.

I did this and returned the following morning to find the front door open. I called out and walked into his small living room where I met Frank. He sat in a wheelchair with a few pieces of furniture around him including a small table covered with a lovely white table cloth with cups, saucers, milk and sugar etc... all set for a party!

Frank had no legs! He told me he was in the tank regiment during World War Two and in the battle of Alamein his tank was hit by a shell and he was badly injured.



I was always under pressure when I replied to include 'a joke'.



He had adopted the Columbans as his favourite charity after a mission appeal from one of our priests some years before and had continued to support us with regular donations from his pension.

I gave Frank a special blessing before I left and felt that I had received as much from the visit, if not more, as Frank had, as he was clearly delighted to greet me ...you would thought it was the Pope that had called!!

We had a lovely visit and I felt privileged to be in the company of a very special man.

Frank died some time later and I, together with two other Columbans and the parish priest celebrated his Requiem Mass in his parish church in Govan.

Some weeks later I received a letter from the manager of Barclays Bank enclosing a cheque for £1500 for the Columban mission. It was a final gift from Frank Joyce and was the total sum left in his bank account. MAY HE REST IN PEACE.

I felt it a privilege to have known Frank Joyce and his example of generosity is typical of many of our loyal Columban supporters who are remembered daily in our Masses and prayers.

Columban Fr Bernard McDermott is assigned to Britain. He is the former Regional Director there.



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Breaking the bonds of poverty - Peru

Korean Columban Sister Young Mi Choi lives and works in the Cristo Liberador parish in the poverty stricken outskirts of Lima, Peru. This is an area with little access to education, along with high levels of unemployment, alcoholism and family violence. Sr Young Mi Choi has set up an educational programme to reach out to the deprived children of this area.

With your help, Columban Missionaries like Sr Young Mi Choi can continue to develop programmes like these in Peru (see pages 10-11).



Photo: Sr Young Mi Choi



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