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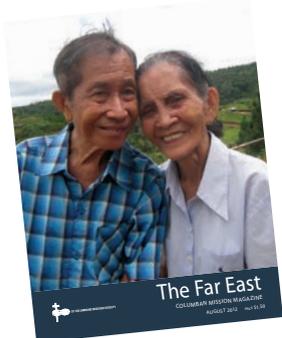
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Cover: Parents of Columban lay missionary Aurora Luceño (see pages 6-7).

Photo: Aurora Luceño

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Contents



- 3** From the Director
To break trust is a serious issue.
- 4-5** Bishop Galvin's letter to his mother
A difficult decision to go to China instead of going home to Ireland.
- 6-7** What about the parents?
A Columban lay missionary's parents tell their story.
- 8** Obituary - Kindness was his second name
Fr Malcolm Sherrard RIP.
- 9** Reflection - The path is made by walking
- 10** Vocation Ad
Columban's are open for business.
- 11** Priest and foreign missionary
Fr William Lee from Fiji tells us about his mission in Chile.
- 12-13** The road to God
Six Korean sisters share their vocational stories.
- 14-15** Fr Joe's puddle
Fr Joe edges his way around a stinking puddle.
- 16-17** Mission World & From the Editor
- 18-19** Doing Christianity
Campaigning for housing rights in Seoul, Korea.
- 20-21** I never thought of being a priest
Fr Enrique Escobar's vocation story from Peru.
- 22** Everything is recycled
Shopping in Beijing with Fr Teddy Collins.
- 23** Support Columban Mission



From the Director



To break trust is a serious issue

When the Victorian government announced in April 2012 a public inquiry into the processes for handling alleged criminal abuse by members of the Catholic Church and other organisations, it was only a matter of time before people and organisations began to campaign for the privileged seal of confession to be overturned. This has been tried before, for example, when the IRA were bombing pubs in England. People were saying that if a bomber confessed to an act of violence to a priest that the priest must, by law, give this evidence to the police. Similarly today people say any confessed act of abuse must be reported to the police.

To break trust is a serious issue in the life of the Church and the mistrust that follows takes time and effort to counter; we are experiencing this in the life of the Church at present.

People have always been intrigued by the seal of confession; it is generally accepted, certainly among Catholics that a priest will never 'tell' what he has heard in confession even if he has to suffer or even die to maintain the integrity of the seal of confession. Sixty nine years ago last month a young New Zealand Columban priest, Fr Francis Vernon Douglas, was caught up in events that cost him his life. The Second World War was raging in the Philippines and Fr Douglas was declared a neutral party which meant that as a missionary priest he could devote himself to the spiritual needs of the Filipino people in his parish but not take sides.

Unfortunately his neutrality was comprised when he received a sick call to a guerrilla camp in the mountains which turned out, not to be a sick call, but a request from three young Americans soldiers with the guerrillas for some company. Fr Douglas was furious. This had nothing to do with confession and spies were everywhere, Fr Douglas was arrested, tortured for three days and then executed. Unfortunately his body has never been recovered.

He could have spoken about the clandestine journey to the Japanese military police but chose not to. The seal of confession did not require him to be silent about those matters but he was. Other reports say that members of the guerrilla forces would sneak down from the mountains and go to confession to him. That information was a different matter and he could not reveal it. His decision to remain silent covered all the bases. Patricia Brooks has written a short history of his life - *With No Regrets* - which gives us an insight into the harrowing days of Japanese occupation in the Philippines and his death amidst the deaths of thousands of people. He was faithful to what he believed and received from the Church. Patricia Brooks' book and an article based upon it were published in the July issue of *The Far East* (pgs 6-7).

The seal of confession is an important part of our Catholic tradition and even though many people do not frequent confession (reconciliation) these days they know the sacrament guarantees confidentiality. A priest who deliberately breaks the confidentiality of the sacrament of penance is automatically excommunicated and has to apply to the Holy See for re-instatement.

To break trust is a serious issue in the life of the Church and the mistrust that follows takes time and effort to counter; we are experiencing this in the life of the Church at present. It is a singularly humbling experience to be a confessor; I try not to take for granted the extraordinary trust that people put in me, not personally but as a priest. Sometimes we need the martyrs who stand for what is precious and non-negotiable, actions always speak louder than words.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Walker".

Fr Gary Walker
director@columban.org.au



Photo: Columban Archives



Bishop Galvin's letter to his mother

Bishop Edward Galvin is one of the co-founders of the St Columban's Mission Society. The other co-founder was Fr John Blowick. This is the story of Edward Galvin's decision not to return to Ireland from New York where he was working as a priest and instead go to China as a missionary.

Edward Galvin was born in 1882 on November 23rd, the feast of St Columban, in a small village near Cork, Ireland. As a young boy, he dreamt of becoming a missionary priest. In the end, however, he decided to stay at home as a diocesan priest for his home diocese of Cork.

When he was ordained in 1909, there were no vacancies available for newly ordained priests in the parishes of Cork. He therefore volunteered along with others to work in Brooklyn in the United States until vacancies occurred

for priests at home. He was assigned to Holy Rosary parish, Brooklyn, New York. While he was there, Fr Edward Galvin volunteered to become a missionary firstly in Africa then Arizona. None of these dreams eventuated. Eventually he turned his attention to China. He read all he could about China.

One day, a few weeks before he was due to return home to his family and a position in the Cork Diocese, a Canadian missionary, Fr Fraser came to visit Holy Rosary parish. He was one

of only three English speaking priests working as a missionary in all of China. After speaking with Fr Fraser he made up his mind there and then to go to China with him. "I may never get another chance," he thought to himself. He told Fr Fraser, "I will go to China with you, if you will have me." The offer was immediately accepted. Fr Fraser was leaving for China three weeks later.

Fr Edward Galvin knew he had only three weeks to get permission from the Bishop of Cork to be able to go to



Bishop Galvin in Chinese costume.

China. He knew that he could change his mind if he was left behind and did not go with Fr Fraser.

In any case, permission came promptly allowing him to follow his dream. Now at the age of 29, he would be ready to face the rigors of the China missions.

A better understanding of what Fr Galvin's decision to go to China as a missionary instead of returning home, meant to him and to his family, is given in the following account by Bishop Patrick Cleary, the future Columban Bishop of Nancheng, China. He wrote:

"It is no easy matter to part from home and friends under any circumstances: it was particularly trying in Father Galvin's case. He was facing an unknown world; trials and hardship were before him – but these he regarded as nothing. The thought that almost unnerved him was the fact that never again, perhaps, would he see one of those faces he held so dear, never again get a glimpse of the land he loved. Was it any wonder then that as the train sped across the continent to Vancouver he flung himself into the corner of a carriage and wept like a child?"

As the train sped across Canada on its way to China, Fr Galvin's thoughts turned to his mother. He had to write



to her, but it was a letter he did not want to write. Mary Galvin was 3,000 miles away across the Atlantic. She was looking forward to his next letter, which should have news of the date of his return to Cork.

When he arrived in Toronto, he stayed up all that night to write the letter to his mother that broke his heart to write. He did not have the heart to mail it until much later, when they arrived in Honolulu. It was a letter that Mary Galvin would treasure until the day she died.

'My dear Mother,

'I am sorry, dear Mother, to have to write this letter, but God's will be done. Everything is in His hands. Mother, don't grieve, don't cry. It is God's will. God has called and I had to obey.

'I am not going back to Ireland. I am going as a missionary to China. May God's will be done. God knows my heart is broken, not for myself but for you whom I love above all the world.

'Mother, you know how this has always been on my mind. But I thought it was a foolish thought – a boyish thought; that it would pass away as I grew older. But it never passed, never, never, never.

'Why should God ask me to do this thing that is breaking my heart to do? I don't know. God knows best. May His will be done. "If any man will come after me let him take up his cross and follow me."

Oh yes, but oh my God I never thought that it was so hard to follow. I have tried to

follow when you called. I ask you in return to console my poor mother, to comfort her, to help her to make the Sacrifice I am making and spare her until we meet again.

I am leaving this morning for China. Mother, bear up. God will look after you all. He will do it. I don't know how, but He will do it.

Goodbye, Mother, I will write very soon again.

Your loving son, Ed.

It was a clear morning when Mary Galvin received her son's long overdue letter. Edwards sister Kate brought in the mail for her mother. After she read it, she told Kate that the Blessed Mother is above her, consoling her. Mary Galvin then went out into the orchard and walked around in a daze obviously worried about what would happen to her son in China."

Postscript

In his letter to his mother, Bishop Galvin stated that he believed that he was doing God's will by going to China as a missionary instead of returning home to Ireland. When he was eventually made Bishop of Hanyang, China in 1927, he chose for his motto "Fiat Voluntas Tua" (Thy will be done). He explained why: "I hope that it might constantly remind us here in China that we are not here to convert China but to do God's will.

We don't know 24 hours ahead what that is: Japanese armies occupied most of the diocese from October 1938 until October 1945 paralysing missionary work. The communist took over the area in May 1949, expelling Bishop Galvin in September 1952. Fr Galvin died of leukaemia in February 1956.

Article compiled by Columban Fr Pat Sayles.



Photos: Aurora Luceño

Aurora Luceño's parents Estefanio and Teresita.

What about the parents?

ESTEFANIO ARGALL

Many of us have read vocation stories about missionaries and have been inspired by them. We don't often hear from the parents of missionaries and what having a son or daughter a missionary means for them. This is an article by the late father of Filipina Columban lay missionary Aurora Luceño.

To be the father of a Columban Lay Missionary is indeed a rare privilege. I consider it a precious gift from God. My daughter, Aurora C. Luceño, a civil engineer by profession was enjoying a well-paid job and a promising career in the Department of Interior and Local Government here in the Philippines.

When she first broached the idea and sought our permission to become a Columban lay missionary, we had no objection except that my wife Teresita and I would have preferred that she

work as a missionary here in the Philippines in a Muslim or Subanaen tribal area rather than in a foreign land.

Since childhood she had been nurturing the idea of serving God as a missionary. After the nine-month preparation programme to become a Columban lay missionary, she was assigned to Pakistan.

With this assignment, we again reminded her that we would prefer her to work in the Philippines. However, she reasoned that

the Christian population in our country constitutes a large majority compared to believers in Islam, whereas Christians in Pakistan make up less than one percent of an overwhelmingly Islamic country. We saw her point and so finally consented.

My wife and I have also led our lives committed to mission. As leaders in the "Couples for Christ" movement, we were commissioned to evangelise in Zamboanga City in the south of the Philippines where we conducted

Nevertheless, Aurora assured us of her safety, as she is well loved by the people in the community where she lived and worked.

a "Christian Life Programme" in coordination with the Claretian Order of priests. In fact, we have been involved in church activities such as the "Family Life Apostolate" throughout the Philippines and associated with missionaries for a long time.

Worried parents

Judith Madeleine OCD, our oldest daughter and a Carmelite nun, likewise worked among our Muslim brothers and sisters in Marawi City in the south of the Philippines. This is the place where nine other Carmelite nuns were kidnapped by bandits in 1986. Hence, we felt apprehensive about the safety of Aurora and other missionaries exposed to the perils of war, particularly at the height of the war on terror waged by the United States in Afghanistan, Pakistan's neighbour.

With the blessing of strong faith and trust in God's protection we managed

to overcome our fears. The conflict between Pakistan and India over Kashmir was another worry for us. Nevertheless, Aurora assured us of her safety, as she was well loved by the people in the community where she lived and worked. Besides, there was the bigger Columban family to which we feel we belong that has unfailingly supported her missionary journey.

We watched her grow

I learned from Aurora, that while missionary life can be difficult, it can also be enjoyable, rewarding and full of challenges. I am a witness to the tremendous change in Aurora's way of life as a missionary and the growth that has made her a stronger and more mature woman. I feel I'm greatly blessed as I see the commitment and passion of another of my children to serve humanity and become a living witness to God's great love.

I am happy that in our small and humble way, our family has helped



Columban lay missionary Aurora Luceño.

in spreading the Gospel here and in faraway places for the greater glory of God and the coming of his kingdom upon people of diverse races.

This article was written by Aurora's father, Mr Estefanio Argall. He died on Holy Saturday this year, April 7, 2012 and was buried a week later on Easter Saturday. After working for many years in Pakistan, Aurora now continues her missionary work as a Columban lay missionary in her home country, the Philippines.

Aurora (second from right) with Columban lay missionaries and staff.



Kindness was his second name

OBITUARY

FR MICHAEL GORMLY

In this obituary we read of Columban Fr Malcolm Sherrard's response to God's call to become a missionary priest and how it was lived out both in the Philippines and back home in New Zealand. As this issue of The Far East is dedicated to the promotion of religious vocations, the life of Fr Malcolm Sherrard offers us an inspiring example of one such vocation.

*F*r Malcolm Sherrard died in Wellington, New Zealand, on 30 June 2012, aged 86 years.

When he was admitted to hospital during his final illness, the medical staff quickly found out that he was a priest, so on the chart they wrote Fthr. This caused a little confusion with the next shift. I heard a nurse ask, what do I call you? He whispered back, "call me Malcolm". His life-long mission was about being at ease, helping others to be at home, comfortable in every situation.

Malcolm, the older son of Samuel and Margaret Sherrard, was born in Whanganui in 1925. He received his primary schooling in Feilding from the Sisters of St Joseph, and secondary education at St Patrick's College, Silverstream. He prepared for seminary formation with evening study of Latin while working on the family sheep farm in the Manawatu.

Answering God's call to become a Columban missionary priest, he began his preparation at St Columban's, Lower Hutt, New Zealand in 1948, and later moved to North Essendon, Melbourne, Australia. His studies were completed at Dalgan Park, Ireland. From the early 1950s he carried a lasting sense of achievement from long holiday cycle tours across Europe. After ordination in 1954 he was assigned to the Philippines as a missionary priest.

Although the tropics were demanding, Malcolm found stamina to maintain a rugged pace for many years. Blessed with a calm and assured manner, his ministry was in rural areas. Mission was the straight-forward task of keeping a parish functioning, and reaching out to meet basic social needs in the scattered communities.

His principal missionary experience in the Philippines was in the Diocese of Iba in the Province of Zambales, first in Botolan, and later in the remote town of Poonbato. A Columban movie from that time, "*Never to be Lonely*", presents him as a tall, confident, active fellow, totally at home in the local situation. He operated with steely



Fr Malcolm Sherrard RIP.

determination, some would say a stubborn streak.

Over the years he supervised the building of churches, set up medical clinics, organised emergency relief in times of natural disasters, and was the director of a number of schools. Civil authorities acknowledged his deep concern for the welfare of people in the district. His one aim was to see that the projects touched and enriched the lives of the poor.

Malcolm later spent a number of years on the road in New Zealand, visiting parishes and schools with movies and slides to illustrate his mission message. For the most part, he remained a true product of the pre-Vatican church, shaped by practices and devotions from earlier years. Colleagues reckon we are not to see the like of him again.

Celebrations with his brother Graeme, sister-in-law Jean and family were times of pride and delight for Malcolm. Likewise, the support and encouragement of the Wellington Filipino Community were a blessing to him. Every visitor to the Columban Mission at Boulcott will fondly remember his gentle manner in hospitality. Kindness was his second name. A genuine concern for others and a selfless readiness to meet needs were at the heart of his missionary priesthood.

He was buried from the Columban Mission in Wellington on 4 July, and buried at Taita. May he rest in peace.

Fr Michael Gormly is the Mission Coordinator in Lower Hutt, New Zealand.



Photo: Bigstockphoto.com

The path is made by walking

FR JOHN BURGER

From the time a child begins to ask “why” about everything they see, life is an endless series of questions.

Some questions have little impact, as in, “Do you want chips with that?”

Other questions are more serious: “What can we do to keep kids off drugs?” or “What is your opinion about the treatment of migrant workers?”

Still other questions and their answers are life changing: “Will you marry me?” or “Is it cancer? Are you sure?”

In the Gospel of St Mark, Jesus poses a life altering question to Simon Peter and the disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” Simon’s inspired response identified Jesus as who He truly is.

“You are the Christ!” he said, “Son of the Living God.”

That affirmed that Simon was a believer and a willing disciple.

His desire to follow Jesus would be sorely tested.

He had strong impulses and, saint though he was, he had his failures. But he walked his path steadfastly and became a ‘rock of faith.’

There is a saying, “The path is made by walking.”

Each day, life silently poses questions to us about our path: “Who are you exactly?” “What is important to you?” “Who is most dear to you?”

“What do you believe in?”

Our responses will vary, but each answer will constitute another step on our own journey.

Our actions and attitudes say with precision who we are, what we think is truly important.

Daily choices take us each further toward the destination where our questions will meet their answer.

Fr John Burger is a Councillor on the Columban General Council in Hong Kong.

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Fr William Lee on his ordination day.

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Priest and foreign missionary

FR WILLIAM LEE

I am the fourth child of a Fijian family of nine children. During my childhood I came to know many Columban priests who served in my home parish of the Holy Family in Labasa, Fiji. They frequently visited my home and several became close family friends. Their enthusiasm, simplicity of life and genuine care for the Fijian people inspired me to become a Columban missionary priest. I met many Columbans who were far from their home countries. They related closely to the people and worked hard to serve and help them encounter Christ in their lives. From an early age, I always wanted to do the same. I also wondered about living most of my life outside of Fiji, far away from family and friends, learning a new language and adapting to different ways of living. I realised that if God truly wanted me to become a Columban missionary priest, then I had to follow my heart's desire and trust in His goodness and help.

It fills me with great joy to realise that I have become what I so much admired as a child growing up in Fiji, a missionary priest from a foreign country serving the people of another country and helping them encounter Christ in their lives.

I was ordained a Columban priest on August 2, 2008 in my home parish. It was a wonderful joyous occasion for me, my family, my parish, the Columbans and the Fijian Church. I was then assigned as a foreign missionary to Chile, arriving in February 2009. I already spoke three languages, Fijian, English and Hindi which are important in Fiji. Now I had to learn my fourth, Spanish, something totally different.

Being a young and energetic missionary priest, it was not long before I was appointed parish priest of the parish of San Matias on the southern outskirts of Santiago. Over 90,000 people live within the parish and are served by the main church and eight smaller churches serving their local Christian communities. Since becoming parish priest, it has been a wonderful time of learning for me, of experiencing and growing in the missionary and priestly life. It's an exciting time as I am formed by my missionary experience in another culture and language in a foreign country.

Like all Columban parishes in Chile, the parish of San Matias is economically poor and most of the people live in the overcrowded conditions of poverty. There is an overall lack of employment, healthcare and educational opportunities. This can lead to illegal drugs, alcoholism, gangs, violence, suicide, teenage pregnancies, depression and mental

illnesses and other social ills. We have to respond to these realities in whatever way we can.

One such response is to work with the young people of the parish. This is really important as so many of them are lost to the streets, drugs, gangs and crime. Our youth programme includes pastoral programmes that are run by youth. For example, we have youth who are preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation. Their catechists are the youth who have already received this sacrament and have the catechetical formation for it. It's youth catechizing youth. They also prepare the younger children for their First Holy Communion. The participation of these youth in these programmes helps them grow in their own faith identity and commitment to the church. Our helping the youth become involved, responsible and committed to pastoral activity gives them a sense of identity as they realise their importance in their church, families and communities.

There are many needs within the parish. Serving 90,000 people of whom the majority are Catholic is quite a task. Luckily I have the help of three other Columban priests who work in the parish. There are also religious sisters, including a Columban Sister and Columban lay missionaries to help me minister to the people of the parish.

Just as my parents, Joe and Unaisi, and my family were always active members in my home parish in Fiji, there are many active members in San Matias parish. Each of the nine churches in the parish has an active group of lay people who serve as liturgical ministers and catechists in a wide range of programmes coordinated by the Pastoral Council of their local church. The Parish Pastoral Council representing all nine churches meets monthly to make decisions to help implement the parish pastoral plan and to assist me as parish priest and the other pastoral associates.

I became a Columban missionary priest because I valued the Columban commitment to cross frontiers of country, of language and of culture in the name of the missionary service. Now, I am privileged to offer my life as a Columban missionary priest in continuing the mission of God amongst the people of San Matias parish in Chile.

It fills me with great joy to realise that I have become what I so much admired as a child growing up in Fiji, a missionary priest from a foreign country serving the people of another country and helping them encounter Christ in their lives.

Fr William Lee is the parish priest of San Matias parish, Santiago, Chile.

"I grew up in a Buddhist family and visited the temple often looking for meaning in life. I often felt as if I had a hole in my heart and a cold wind blowing through it."

So I sought out a life of deep silence in an intimate relationship with God and others in a contemplative monastery.



The road to God

Listen to: The road to God

FR SEAN CONNEELY

Columban Fr Sean Conneely shares the vocational stories of six Korean Sisters and their road to God as members of a contemplative monastery or an active religious order.

*S*ister Joseph begins by saying, "I grew up in a Buddhist family and visited the temple often looking for meaning in life. I often felt as if I had a hole in my heart and a cold wind blowing through it." After her father's untimely death, while she was in university she felt a deep gloom come over her and felt life had no meaning for her. She studied Catholic doctrine and was baptized, the only Christian in her family. She described her next journey in very symbolic fashion. After graduation she got a job in a good company.

But as she said, "After baptism I felt my head full of knowledge but my hands and legs had no desire to do anything spiritual." So she went to China to study and work for a company and continued studying Chinese language and culture. But she said, "Study,

school, company work left me so empty, at times I thought of dying and taking my own life." To find meaning in life she decided to return to her Buddhist roots by visiting a Tibetan Buddhist monastery and spending time there.

She enjoyed her Buddhist prayer, meditation, and life in the monastery but something unexpected happened. "I was so impressed by the life style and worship of the monks that it became a "light" for me to join a contemplative religious order. So I packed my bags, and came home to Korea and joined a Catholic monastery. My conversion experience in Tibet and my love of Christ in my bones is so deep I could never see myself waver in my vocation. Of course I still feel a lot of my faith is intellectual and rational knowledge but my daily task is to get more into the heart and mind of Christ."

Sister Anna's family sent her to the United States for higher studies after graduation in Korea. After completing two M.A. degrees and half way through her doctorate on business administration, she felt it all so meaningless. She felt empty inside and lost in life. Following someone's advice, she did a pilgrimage to Medjugorje. While there she felt a deep inflow of the love of God in her life.

After returning to the U.S, she quit her studies, much to the disgust of her family, came home, discerned her call in life and joined the monastery.

Sister Mary had also been sent to the United States to do a PhD study in philosophy. During one summer vacation, while enjoying her studies and life, Sr Mary took a trip to Gethsemani Trappist monastery



in Kentucky to visit the grave of the famous spiritual writer, Thomas Merton who had been a monk there. Once there, she prayed the daily office with the monks. Sr Mary continues, *"While there something changed inside of me, I felt a strong pull towards the monastic life."* After finishing her studies she came home and announced to her family her decision to join a monastic order of sisters.

Although Catholic they put up a lot of resistance. She looked after her ill mother for two and half years and prayed and discerned her call. She says, *"No matter what the opposition was, what happened in Gethsemane was so deep in my heart I could see no other path in life."* After her mother's death, she joined the monastery.

Sister Joan comes from a different background and grew up in a troubled family. Sr Joan felt rejected and wounded by her mother. While working for a company, she took time off to study theology. While studying, a friend brought her to a healing service on a regular basis. While attending those prayers and healing sessions, she felt a load lifted from her heart, and the healing power of the

Spirit like a balm soothing her deep set wounds.

In order to share her spiritual and healing experience with others, she felt her life as a religious sister was the best way to share her grateful gifts.

Sister Paschal grew up in a Catholic family in Nagasaki, Japan. When the atomic bomb was dropped on the city all her family but herself and her older sister and father survived. She explains, *"There are no words to describe the atmosphere of the place after the explosion. The destruction of the whole place in a minute. The death, burning, suffering and pain of so many people."*

Daily life was changed. A deep silence spread over the whole city - awe, horror, more than fear and anger. It was a strange, inhuman feeling of helplessness, crying or moaning even didn't have meaning.

As I grew older, I felt the silence within my soul was my call and answer to man's inhumanity to man. So I sought out a life of deep silence in an intimate relationship with God and others in a contemplative monastery. I hope and believe it is a witness to God's presence and a condemnation of the horrors

of war and a caring silent presence to those who suffer."

Sister Marie grew up in a Catholic family, except for her father who had "no religion." After graduating from nursing school, her mother who was a devout Catholic had many choices of men lined up for her to marry. She obediently met them all in the Korean custom of formal meeting, "Sun-Boda." But her mind was set on a Franciscan Order who cared for the sick.

To the day she left home to join the convent, her mother was vehemently against her. Her father a non-Christian never said yes or but as Sr Marie put it, the day she left for the convent while her mother was objecting to her decision, *"He blessed my path ahead by silently polishing my shoes. And he never before or after polished his own shoes or anyone else's."*

A great gift, a great fatherly blessing to help me step on my way to a new life. It was like him walking and carrying me in my own shoes."

Fr Sean Conneely had been a missionary in Korea since 1969.



Fr Joe's puddle

FR JOSEPH JOYCE

The notorious puddle named after Fr Joe.

Each Monday in Lahore, Pakistan, I teach a group of seminarians about prayer life. I enjoy the classes very much, but getting to the seminary is never easy. When I began there, I had to negotiate the unpredictable, chaotic traffic on the main road. Then I had to pass along narrow side streets where pedestrians, donkey carts, rickshaws, motorcycles, and even buses, trucks and tractors vied with me and each other for the little available space.

I was coming to terms with all of this when, about six months ago, an added difficulty arose. At the back gate of the seminary a large pool of dark green and black sewage water gradually began to cover the street. Initially, I had to edge my way through this stinking expanse, trying not to inhale too much of the stench rising from the disturbed liquid, and worrying about the corrosive effect on my clean, white car.

After a couple of months, one day I arrived at the pool, and found it impassable, and so to get to the seminary I had to try to find another route. To my dismay, I discovered that the drains in other streets were also blocked, and that the leakage was gradually spreading around the whole sector. Worse still, manholes had been left uncovered, and were undetectable under the sludge. As I turned into a side street, the front wheel of the car slid into one of these manholes, and luckily, some local men were on hand to

help me out. Shaken and angry, I was able to continue along the street until I eventually reached the front gate of the seminary - half an hour late for class.

Later that day, after I got home, I began chatting with a fellow Columban who was visiting us from Australia - Fr Peter Woodruff - and told him of my ordeal. He listened for a while, and then, with a grin, informed me that he had recently visited the area and taken some photographs of the notorious pool. "Joe's puddle," he called it, and instantly I took ownership of the name.

As we chatted, I found myself making connections between my "puddle" and the situation Pakistan has been passing through for several years. Like being in a stagnant, malodorous pool, the nation has been mired in all kinds of corruption, negligence, death-dealing violence, economic woes, shortages of electricity and gas, constantly rising prices, and political opportunism. This 'cesspool' has been sitting for a long time, and gradually spreading, but so far, nobody seems capable of doing anything about cleaning it up. The country continues to suffer from the effects of the ooze caused by the underlying, unattended blockages.

For the vast majority of the people, the contamination continues to get worse, especially for those of lowest income. And there seems to be little immediate hope of improvement in the situation.



Photos: Fr Peter Woodruff

A street scene around the corner from the puddle.

Within this predicament, the Christian community - a tiny minority in the country - is deeply affected. Most Christians already have a strong sense of marginalization, very often confirmed by lived experience. Historically, they have been expected to do the dirty work of cleaning up the drains, toilets and streets. But now most of them have moved beyond that role, and do not ever want to go back to it again. It may be that their fear of being identified as “sweepers” causes them to neglect the maintenance of their own areas, and to leave the responsibility for cleaning to urban council services that are often equally negligent.

I have often had to pray for strength and courage not to give up and walk away. Such prayer, when I applied it to my “puddle,” has proved rewarding.

The outcome of this passivity is a sense of hopelessness and a defeatist attitude, which in turn produces more inaction. To break out of this vicious circle, much will have to be done. Good leadership, social education, encouragement, and practical involvement will be needed. This is part of the enormous challenge that faces the nation and the Church in Pakistan today, and I can resonate with the temptation to helplessness and hopelessness it can bring. I have often had to pray for strength and courage not to give up and walk away.

Such prayer, when I applied it to my “puddle,” has proved rewarding. For, even though six months have passed and the pool is still there, some rays of hope have begun to shine. Another way to the front gate of the seminary - once an extremely neglected, dusty, deeply potholed thoroughfare - has recently been resurfaced, and I can now get to class quite easily. Also, I’ve been told that some residents of the sewage-affected areas have approached local politicians about the drainage problem, and have even got them to visit the sites and promise remedial action. And, on the national level, elections are on the horizon, and the government has been taking some steps towards dealing with the many issues facing the country.

Experientially, I know that change for the better will come very slowly, both locally and nationally. However, I also know that the people of Pakistan have never given up in their struggle with adversity, and so I continue to nourish the hope that the clean-up of “Joe’s puddle” and of Pakistan will be realized.

In the meantime, my commitment to the Gospel, the local Church, and the welfare of the people will continue to sustain and challenge me, and, with God’s presence to guide me, I’ll be enabled to deal with this and whatever other ‘puddles’ this missionary journey brings.

Fr Joseph Joyce’s mission experience in Pakistan began in 1982.



Mission World

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

Women forced to migrate

This is a summary of the first part of the talk given by the President of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travellers, Cardinal Vegliò, at a recent conference in Rome. He describes the vulnerable position women find themselves in as a result of being forced to migrate due to wars and conflicts.
(ZENIT)

Women's hope

Despite everything that has happened to them in their lives, women who have been forced to migrate as a result of war and conflicts, respond to their situation with remarkable courage, resourcefulness and creativity. They believe wholeheartedly that the future

offers change and possibilities, and are confident to reconstruct their lives. They are convinced that their children will be educated and successful.

Women facing threats and violence

However, each of them has faced a tragic situation full of brute force, violence and traumatic experiences. Most conflicts nowadays are civil wars, in which civilians account for more than 80% of deaths. Women are increasing part of those who are forced to move. At present 43 million people have fled their homes because of war or human rights violations, of which 80% are women, children and young people.

They are facing special needs reflecting their situation.

It is common that during their flight they may have lost one or more children, who were running into the opposite direction.

Women and girls are the targets in many conflicts, leading to abduction and brutality. Their vulnerability is deliberately exploited in order to dehumanise them, to create fear in the region and to disrupt daily life. That's why they are raped, and forced into sexual slavery. Its impact is not just on the individual's physical and psychological health, but is also felt at the family and community levels. Rape has been used strategically, as a weapon of war in attempts to destroy the opposing culture, leading to 'ethnic cleansing', and to control the territory. If women do not comply with their captors, they are often killed.

Women in camps

Once escaped, the displacement is followed by a stay in camps inside or outside the country. However, even these camps do not protect them sufficiently. Women risk sexual violence when collecting firewood. In many countries they are not allowed



Photo: bigstockphoto.com

Mission Intention for August

That young people, called to follow Christ, may be willing to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

From the Editor



Religious vocations and family

to work, resulting in dependency on aid organisations. Shortages of basic items and cuts in food rations can put women and girls under pressure to sell sex for survival.

Their stay in camps can take years and years. At present the average length of time of displacement is 17 years, a lifetime for those displaced as young children or for those born in one of the camps. One could raise the question about the future these children face, who do not have any other experience other than camp life. But also how do parents cope seeing their children grow up under such circumstances?

If they settle in urban areas, they face other challenges. They are living among the local population, the urban poor, with whom they have to compete for employment, social and other infrastructural services. Many times they are living without the necessary documents, which further complicates life.

In the second part of his talk, Cardinal Veglio went on to speak of the problem of human trafficking and the commitment of the International Community and the Catholic Church to confront this serious problem.

*T*his issue of *The Far East* is dedicated to the promotion of vocations to the priesthood as Columban missionaries in foreign countries, to religious life and to lay mission. In each of these vocational stories, we can see the importance of discerning God's call in our lives and how we respond to that call. In this response, the family plays an important role.

There is the story of the co-founder of the Columban Missionaries, Bishop Galvin and his letter to his mother, telling her that he was not going back to Ireland from New York but rather had decided to become a missionary to China.

The life story of recently deceased Columban Fr Malcolm Sherrard demonstrates a response to God's call as a missionary priest in the Philippines and then back home in New Zealand.

We have the story of the parents of Columban lay missionary Aurora Luceño from the Philippines and what it means to be proud and sometimes worried parents of a missionary.

There is the vocational story of Columban priest Fr William Lee from Fiji and how his missionary vocation was nurtured in his family.

Six Korean religious sisters share their vocational stories as does Peruvian Fr Enrique Escobar.

Columban Fathers Joseph Joyce in Pakistan, Robert Brennan in Korea and Teddy Collins in China show us the everyday reality of the missionary vocation.

Let us remember the Mrs Galvins and other family members who have made so many vocations possible. It is in the family that religious vocations are born.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Harding".

Fr Dan Harding
TFE@columban.org.au

Doing Christianity

FR ROBERT BRENNAN



Campaigning for housing rights of urban poor in Seoul.

When I first arrived in Seoul three million people lived here. By 1980 there were 12 million residents. Rural families hoped to find a better future in the big city, at least for the children through education and possibly business prospects.

The rural to city migration created massive problems as regards housing, transport and employment.

I wish to describe briefly how the poorest of the rural migrants fared in the scramble for housing and the role of the local Church in seeking justice for these people.

Many hills ring the city of Seoul. The City Council owned the land but no one was using it so poor families needing housing moved in, built their homes on the slopes but never acquired legal title to the land. In the late 1970s the City Council began to implement a policy of redeveloping the illegally occupied land on the sides of the hills and along some riverbanks. The injustice they planned to perpetrate was to remove thousands of poor families from their homes without due compensation.

They went about doing this in a piecemeal manner. In 1982 they arrived at the place where I was parish priest. Residents had already been violently dislodged from other slum areas and had begun to organise and protest the City Council's policy of redevelopment. Our area was next to go in preparation for the Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988.

Local leaders approached me to ask for the use of the church for meetings as there was no other place large enough. About 50 leaders representing a few thousand residents

We helped residents grow in confidence and in their ability to grip the reins of their lives and not be pushed around by bullies...

began to meet. My only role at the time was to be present and offer support.

In due course the church would also become a place of refuge for protest leaders being sought by the police who would not enter the church to arrest them but surrounded the building in order to capture them as they left. Despite protests the City Council achieved their objective and those who lost their homes received little or no compensation.

Six years later I was living and working on a hillside in another part of Seoul. Private companies engaged by the City Council to clear slums and rebuild multi-storey apartment blocks employed a variety of nasty tactics to wear down residents.

Many families left one by one for a variety of reasons, such as fear, the shame of the children who felt they could not invite their friends to their home, the accumulation of rubbish as houses were left vacant.

When it came for the moment of the definitive eviction, gangs of thugs entered the area accompanied by bulldozers. As soon as the thugs had dragged family members from their home, the bulldozers flattened the house. Over a 20 year period my home was bulldozed four times.

However, the residents' organisations gradually won the right to various kinds of compensation, but this more comprehensive approach to residents' rights was not legally finalised until the year 2000.

Some residents owned their houses but most were renting and the economic loss incurred by both groups was eventually acknowledged and compensated, at least in part.

It was a long struggle and even though the so called slum clearance has now finished, there is still much to be done in the housing apostolate. To develop this pastoral outreach in a coordinated way, in 1987, Cardinal Kim, Archbishop of Seoul, set up the City Poor Apostolate.

A North American Jesuit and university lecturer, John Daly, with a Korean layman, who was a bricklayer, initiated the work of church solidarity with slum residents seeking their rights. Subsequently, other Jesuits, Columbans, Franciscan Missionaries of Mary and lay people joined the struggle and continue to organise under the umbrella of the City Poor Apostolate.

Locally we might organise ecumenically as was the case in my second hillside parish, where I collaborated with the local Presbyterian minister and residents. The minister called a meeting in his church where we elected a coordinating committee. I was elected to do and present a monthly audit of our funds.

There were four neighbouring areas that were similarly affected by the City Council's redevelopment plans at the time, each with its own internal organisation. In two of the four areas the construction company's pressure tactics resulted in all the residents leaving before demolition of their homes.

In the other two areas we organised successfully for a compensation fund to build temporary housing further up the hill at the back of the construction site. However, in our area, by the time we were ready to relocate, only 50 out of 170 families were still living in the area zoned for redevelopment.

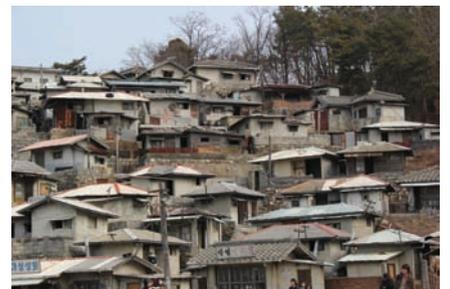
We thought we would be in temporary housing for about three years but it turned out to be five.

There the 50 families worked at community development. We developed a friendly village-like spirit among residents. We set up a credit union and ran courses on human rights. We helped residents grow in confidence and in their ability to grip the reins of their lives and not be pushed around by bullies, whether they be employees of government or big business.

After more than 20 years involvement in City Poor Apostolate one thing remains clear. For all the changes in society over these years, 'the poor we still have with us', and will have for the foreseeable future. Presently I am living and working in a small community of such people.

My involvement with these people gives me a feeling of doing what the Gospel proclaims. Together with others, what we live and do gives witness to our faith in Christ. Our involvement makes it clear to others that the Church is not simply about prayer and religious celebrations. Our neighbours and others can see that we of the Church are interested in the issues that affect their lives.

Fr Robert Brennan has been a missionary in Korea since 1965.



Listen to: I never thought of being a priest

I never thought of being a priest

Fr Enrique shares his vocation story.

FR ENRIQUE ESCOBAR



Photos: Fr George Hogarty

Fr Enrique Escobar with parishioners at a local celebration.

*I*n my youth I never thought of being a priest. In fact, even though I was from a Catholic family, I did not want to have anything to do with the Church. My brothers and sisters went to a Catholic school but I went to the local State school, where I heard lots of criticism of the Church, which I could verify by what I saw in our local parish.

I grew up near Chiclayo on the north coast of Peru completing High School in 1980. Even though my family was reasonably well off, I saw the results of poverty among my companions at school. It was a time of social ferment in Peru with social reforms favouring the poor being passed by one government and then mostly undone by the next. Many from my generation felt drawn to becoming involved in this social ferment.

I thought that a military career would allow me to do something about social justice in Peru so, on completing secondary school and turning 18 years of age, I signed up for two years military service. I told my parents after signing on. It took me just a few weeks to realise that I was not going to be able to do much good as a soldier.

I experienced so much inhuman treatment within the military and was stationed on the border between Peru and Ecuador during that absurd conflict between the two countries. However, I made the best of the situation, learned the mechanics of diesel engines, completing the two years of voluntary service with the rank of sergeant.

I left the army while stationed in Lima where I remained and continued my

search for meaning in my life. I signed up for a course as an accountant's assistant at the night school run by the Salesians. That put me in touch with a youth group with whom I shared my concerns. We began to go to summer courses on Theology of Liberation that were run by the Catholic University, which of course introduced me to another way of understanding the Catholic faith, so different from what I had seen in my home parish.

In 1988 the late Pope John Paul II visited Peru and spoke to over a million people gathered on the sand hills to the south of Lima. He spoke of "hunger for God and hunger for bread," two basic essentials of life. In the summer courses, Theologian Gustavo Gutierrez spoke about God's preference for the poor and our

In my youth I never thought of being a priest. In fact, even though I was from a Catholic family, I did not want to have anything to do with the Church.

corresponding call to live out the same preference. This finally undid my negative image of God and undid my resistance; I surrendered and began to walk with God.

I was not sure where all this was leading me but, on the recommendation of one of the priests in Our Lady Help of Christians Parish I journeyed to Huaraz to see Bishop Gurruchaga, who was a Salesian from the Basque area of Spain. I lived in the bishop's house for a short time and what I witnessed helped me change my negative idea of the hierarchical church.

The bishop was always up and about between 4:00 and 5:00a.m. to attend the (subsistence) farmers of the area who came to see him to talk about a variety of matters. He also served them breakfast. This was so different from what I'd seen in my home parish where the priests seemed so aloof from the ordinary people.

After a few days the bishop offered to send me to a small town further into the mountains. I went there for

a year and shared the parish house with the parish priest. It was a time to discern my vocation in life. I think that if I had not discovered the God who is concerned for the suffering of the poor I probably would have joined some armed revolutionary movement. The bishop told me that I would be a good priest and he introduced me to Maryknoll priest, Fr Tom Garrity, who was trying to form a new movement of Peruvian missionaries.

After firstly working as a lay missionary in the Amazon jungle and then with Columban associates in a poor area of Lima, I was then accepted by Fr Tom Garrity to begin study for the priesthood. In 1989 at the age of 25, I began my formal studies. Fr Tom had the idea that students for the priesthood should work as well as study like other types of student do. I therefore found a job working afternoons in a service station to pay for my studies. I was ordained on December 12, 1994.

After ordination from 1995 to 2000, I

returned to work with lay missionaries in the Amazon jungle during the year and ran courses during the summer holiday months in Lima. When I heard about the Columban Associate programme for Diocesan priests, I decided to apply. After working in a Columban parish in Lima for seven months, I was then appointed in 2001 to a parish in Manila, the Philippines.

Working with the poor in Manila had a major impact on me. My time there was akin to being born again as I had to learn two new languages at the same time, English and Tagalog.

I wondered whether or not to stay with the Columbans but realised that there was something drawing me to their style of being missionaries. I feel that we from Latin America have a lot to offer the Church in other countries such as the Philippines. I am now in the process of formally joining the Columbans.

Fr Enrique Escobar is in the process of joining the Columbans in Lima, Peru.



A chapel in Fr Enrique's parish.



Photo: Bigstockphoto.com

Everything is recycled

FR TEDDY COLLINS

Fr Teddy Collins recounts his adventures shopping in Beijing and his diminishing list.

I generally headed for the supermarket on a weekly basis. There were two branches of an international supermarket chain within walking distance. There were also several Chinese supermarkets that stocked some western goods. The first item on my shopping list is *milk*. Recently it was revealed that Chinese dairy companies were adding melamine to milk to bolster the calcium content. This caused kidney stones and many children were diagnosed with this complaint. As a result I tried to buy my milk from France or Australia. It is twice as expensive but less in medical bills. Next item *butter* - to my delight I discovered that the supermarket stocked Irish products such as Kerrygold butter and Dubliner cheese. I generally have a sandwich for lunch so usually headed for the processed *meat* section. Not any more! An article in the *China Daily* reported that China's largest meat processors were using pork from pigs fed with the highly questionable chemical "clenbuterol". I think I will stick with cheese sandwiches from now on!

I thought I was safe with *rice*, but the paper reported that much of the rice is contaminated from chemicals in the soil. Maybe I'd better stick with *potatoes*, but I have yet to find one as flowery as an Irish potato. They are so watery and seem to have been grown in a rice paddy. Now for the *bread* counter. In recent times the Chinese have taken to adding bread to their diet. When I first came to China, it was almost impossible to find bread. Now for the bad news - yes, the paper reported that bakeries were adding a chemical to flour to give a whiter effect. Well, at least I can get McVitie's rich digestive biscuits straight from the UK. *Honey?* No, the paper says Chinese honey has sugar added so it runs faster than an Olympic athlete. Here's the *wine* section - another new item for Chinese shoppers. There are several big brand Chinese vineyards. I tend to avoid their labels since I read that they have two bottling sections - one for legitimate wine and the other for wine with additives. Out of loyalty, I generally try for a Chilean label, having previously been

a missionary in Chile. However, there is no guarantee the product will be authentic, as it was reported that foreign wine labels are counterfeited and Chinese wine sold with these labels added. At least I don't have to worry about the *nappy* section, but parents do! The government announced that manufacturers were using recycled material and the nappies contain a residue of hazardous chemicals. From now on, it looks as if it'll be a banana for breakfast, an apple for lunch and an orange for tea. As you can see shopping in China has it hazards so if my behaviour becomes erratic just blame my diet! On exiting the supermarket I'm generally surrounded by elderly women asking for my receipt. I asked what possible use could it be to them. I was told they sell them for a few cents to civil servants, who then use them to claim expenses. Everything is recycled in China!

Fr Teddy Collins first worked as a missionary in Chile and later spent many years in China. He is now retired in Ireland.



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