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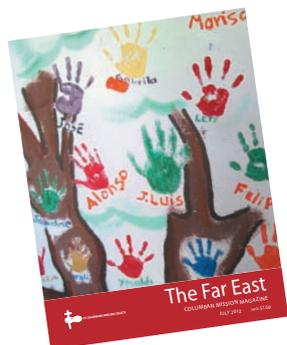
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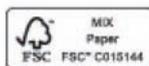


Cover: Children from the study centre in Juárez, Mexico leave their mark on a wall outside the centre (see pages 10-11).

Photo: Fr Robert Mosher

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From the Director

Our human face



In 1990 the late Pope John Paul II issued a new encyclical entitled '*Redemptoris Missio*' subtitled '*On the permanent validity of the Church's mission mandate*.' The reason for the encyclical was to counter confusion which had developed in the Church about the essential missionary role of the Church. Was mission over? The question was of serious concern for missionary societies like our own because the reason for our existence was and is to be missionary.

New insights had dealt body blows as to how we understood mission then. For example, we were encouraged to dialogue with other religions. In some people's minds this innovative approach implied that we were not to try to convert members of other religions but to make them 'better' Muslims or 'super' Buddhists. Proselytising suddenly became politically incorrect.

One of the important tasks of The Far East magazine has always been to publish stories about people in cultures other than our own and to put a human face on them even as missionary attitudes changed through the years.

The other new perspective that shook people was that God was already present in other religions and people could be saved through them. The obvious implication was: why worry? Stay home and leave the people of the world alone because they don't need missionaries. Until these new insights had been integrated, the impetus for missionary activity was lessened.

Responses were forthcoming: it is true that salvation is possible through other religions but the fact is that we believe that Jesus is God and Man and therefore relationship with Him and fullness of redemption in Him is worth proclaiming.

Another insight is that God is present not only in other religions but also in peoples' cultures, therefore we ought to 'take off our shoes' (a sign of respect) as we approached

another culture with our missionary presence. It was a sign of a new attitude and approach towards missionary work and the beginning of the end of models of mission that were paternalistic and civilising, the end of comments like the following, 'We must convert the savages to Christianity!'

One of the important tasks of *The Far East* magazine has always been to publish stories about people in cultures other than our own and to put a human face on them even as missionary attitudes changed through the years. But our readers did learn about the human face of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans and Burmese from the pages of *The Far East*.

The atrocities committed by the Japanese Military Police in the story Fr Francis Vernon Douglas (*see pages 6-7*) have to be balanced by the heartbreaking story, *Born to be Loved* (*see pages 18-19*) of parents in Japan who have a child who dies and whose Catholic faith is a bulwark against despair. Contrasting this couple's familial love with the brutality of the Japanese military police who executed Fr Francis Douglas, is to compare normal human responses with inhuman effects of war on soldiers. Who is typically Japanese, the parents or police?

We must not lose sight of the basic humanity of all people in all cultures. Missionary perspectives have changed along with our understanding of other cultures and peoples. But one constant still remains: we demonise people who are unacceptable to us for whatever reasons. Asylum seekers are in this predicament. Notice that we do not see photographs of their ordinary human faces up close expressing emotions? They are usually out of range in detention camps. In denying them their humanity we start to lose our own.

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

Fr Gary Walker
director@columban.org.au

We think our health system is tough

DAN O'MALLEY

Fr Dan O'Malley is the parish priest of Malate, the Philippines. There are 25,000 parishioners in the parish who have little access to health care. This is his report:

Access to good medical care can easily be taken for granted by those who have it. Yet most of the world's population does not have it. The Archdiocese of Manila is aware of this and therefore decided on a special project to set up health clinics for the poor in each of their parish groupings called Vicariates. These Clinics are supplied with medicines and some money for laboratory needs.

In our Vicariate, our Columban parish at Malate was chosen for the health clinic. Our parish is named "Nuestra Señora de los Remedios," which means "Our Lady of Remedies or Good Remedy" and has been a place associated with praying for intercession for the healing and good health of the sick for centuries.

Right from the beginning, the parish decided the project was worthy of support and constructed a custom-built clinic at a cost of P2,300,000.00. This is the equivalent of AUD\$54,285 or NZD\$66,520. For the clinic to successfully function, it relies on 12 active volunteer health workers and one paid staff member. Those who are in genuine need of health care and do not have access to it, irrespective of their religion are given a "red book" status.

These people include a number of Muslims and members of other Christian denominations. Those who come to the clinic and do not have a "red book" status are treated if there is

The entrance to Malate Clinic, Philippines.

We are thankful for your generous donations. We will continue our present practice and with the new funding we will be able to expand our support of the laboratory, X-Ray and medicine expenses as well as buying some much needed new equipment.

extra medicine or funds at the end of the month. We also have some access to other funding for emergencies.

When we initially received the offer of some funding from Columban benefactors, we thought of three initiatives: opening a dental clinic; installing an X-ray machine; and maintaining a laboratory to do basic tests. However, after much debate and deliberation, we decided against these initiatives. Why was this? The key factor in making the decision was trying to achieve long term sustainability through our dependence on volunteer service.

Apart from the one staff member's salary paid for by the parish, the clinic in its present form is based almost 100% on the service of volunteers. This is a tremendous advantage. It means that the clinic is ultimately sustainable with few overheads and provides a great service to the people. On the other hand, the downside of this decision is that it limits the type of services that we can provide.

For example, if we were to have an X-ray machine, we would need to hire a radiographer to take care of the operation or volunteer staff would need to be trained appropriately. If we were to set up a laboratory, we would need to hire a medical technician to oversee the facility and the volunteer staff would have to have professional training and they might not qualify.

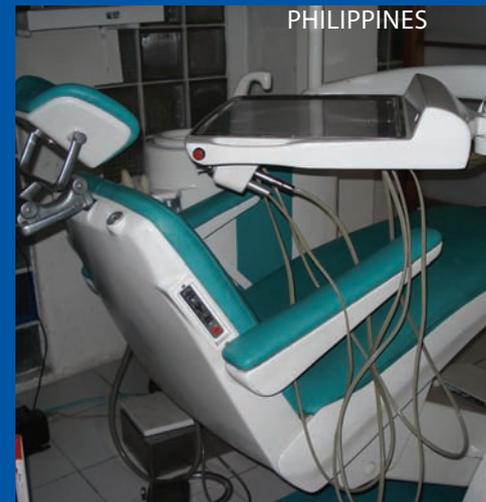
In respect to opening a dental clinic, it would require buying and maintaining a lot of materials. In all probability, we would not get sufficient numbers of dentists on

board and there would be the danger of under qualified students involved in complicated procedures. The same challenges would be there for the volunteer staff. To avoid unsustainable overheads and the responsibility for specialised procedures what became clear was that we were only capable of running an extraction clinic and not a dental clinic, at this stage. It's a sad situation. The urban poor have a culture of very deficient oral hygiene practice and do not have the resources to save their teeth.

Accepting that we do not have the capacity to address this situation at a deeper level, we decided to build up the extraction clinic by investing in specific equipment such as an autoclave, a suction machine and sets of forceps. We are also going to take some small steps to address the general situation of oral hygiene by launching a pilot project (Zero Cavity Campaign) with our prep school students. If there is some success here we can expand it.

As well as the extraction clinic, we continue to provide free medical consultation for the poor at the clinic for those with a "red book" status. We also offer free consultation for paediatrics, general medicine, orthopaedics, minor surgery, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynaecology. We will need to focus on long term sustainability. The clinic allows medical people to help the poor without the burden of management.

Fr Dan O'Malley is the Parish Priest of Nuestra Señora de los Remedios, Malate, Philippines.



Other social services:

As well as the health clinic, the parish of Nuestra Señora de los Remedios in Malate offers a wide range of social services. It runs a "Parish Educational Assistance Programme," which helps families with educational costs such as school uniforms and equipment. It also runs a "Pre-School/ Nursery School." It has a "Programmes for Street Children and for Street Families" which includes a pre-school, a scout movement, a feeding programme, arts and reading workshops and special Mayflower activities for Our Lady's month of May.

The parish also a "Prison Visitation Programme," a "Community-based Rehabilitation Programme for Persons with Disabilities," "An Elderly Programme," "Assistance to Walk-In-clients Centre" offering counselling and a "Legal Aid Centre."

Fr Francis' dilemma

DAN HARDING

This is a reflection on the heroic Christian witness of a young Columban, Fr Francis Vernon Douglas during the final weeks of his life. His cruel suffering and death at the age of 33 almost 70 years ago, continues to move and inspire us today. It is based on the book by Patricia Brooks, "With No Regrets - The Story of Francis Vernon Douglas." While his second name "Vernon" is used in this book, he is referred to by his first name, "Francis", in this reflection.

Fr Francis Vernon Douglas arrived in the Philippines around the beginning of August 1938. He had been a diocesan priest of the Archdiocese of Wellington, New Zealand, who had joined the Society of St Columban the previous year. A few months after his arrival, he was appointed parish priest of the fishing town of Piliilla, located on the shore of the large freshwater lake Laguna de Bay. He was 28-years-old.

Five years later, in July 1943, Francis received a visit from a young Filipino asking him to make a sick call to the guerrilla camp in the nearby Sierra Madre mountains. This request must have caused him quite a bit of anxiety. It placed him in a difficult dilemma. If he answered the sick call, he would be risking his life as he might be seen by a spy and reported to the Japanese military. These had begun their invasion of the country only 10 hours after the attack on Pearl Harbour, on December 7, 1941. On the other hand,

as a priest, he had a duty to attend to the dying and offer the sacraments.

Even though Francis was known for his strong and determined personality, this request must have worried him considerably. He had grown up one of eight children in a working class family in Johnsonville near Wellington. Both at school and in the New Zealand national seminary in Mosgiel, he had been captain of the first XV rugby team and the cricket X1. After ordination in 1934, he served as a curate in New Plymouth where he was sorely missed when he left to join the Columbans in 1937 due to his outgoing nature, priestly dedication and love of all sports.

Francis was now caught on the horns of a horrible dilemma. Filipino guerrillas and American servicemen had formed an effective guerrilla army in the mountains. As well as collecting intelligence information, they made raids on the Japanese military. To visit one of the guerrilla camps would be

seen as actively supporting them.

Columban priests had been allowed to continue to minister in their parishes by the Japanese military, on condition that they remained neutral. With New Zealand and its allies being at war with Japan, naturally Francis would have wanted to support the guerrillas and see the Japanese military defeated. At the same time, if caught visiting one of their camps even on a sick call, it would have meant certain torture and death for him. Other lives could also be endangered through information extracted through torture. This was the dilemma he now faced.

What made matters worse was the fact that the Japanese military were by now beginning to lose the war. Throughout 1942, with the battles of the Coral Sea, Midway and Guadalcanal, the tide of war had begun to turn. Consequently the "Kempeitai," the feared Japanese Military Police had become



Fr Francis Douglas.



Fr Francis Douglas and his mother Catherine.



The Invitation to the Ordination (top) and Souvenir (left)



The Douglas Family - 1912. Francis Douglas.

Francis made his decision. He decided that as a priest he had no option but to risk his life and visit the dying in the guerrilla camp.

increasingly brutal in their reprisals against those who supported the guerrillas. Foreigners like Francis, who belonging to enemy nations were the obvious targets of their suspicion.

Australian Columban Fr Gordon Jackson from a nearby parish stated after the war that the only help we Columbans could give the guerrillas was spiritual, such as hearing their confessions. After Francis would return from one of his trips to Manila, he often met up with José Flora, a secret member of the guerrillas.

Francis made his decision. He decided that as a priest he had no option but to risk his life and visit the dying in the guerrilla camp. What a shock he received when he discovered that no one there was dying! Three American servicemen in hiding had sent for him because they wanted some European company.

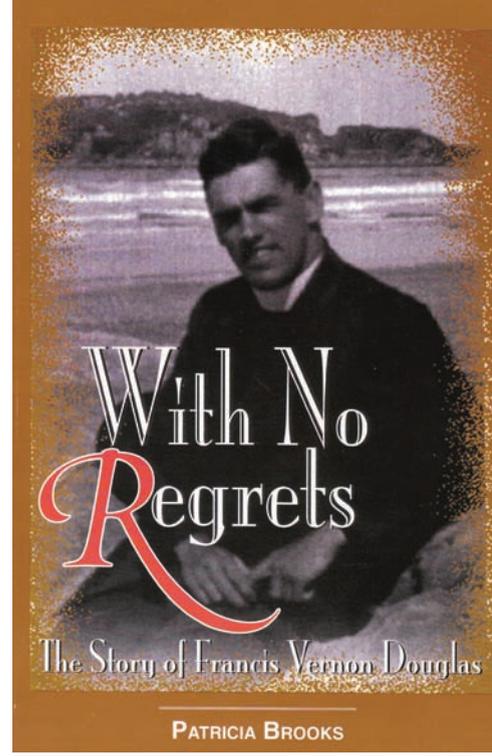
This left Francis very angry, upset and worried. He seemed to sense that someone had been watching him and would now have evidence against him. Three days later he visited his fellow Columbans in Manila and told them how angry he was about the fake sick call. On the bus trip home, he told Fr Gordon Jackson that he wished

he could be interned by the Japanese as his situation was getting just too dangerous.

On Saturday July 24, 1943 at 6:00pm, the "Kempeitai" arrived and arrested Francis. As evidence against him, they confiscated a world map, a broken radio, insignia for the parish boy scouts and the flags of the Philippines and the United States. A parish employee heard him saying that he could not tell them what they wanted because it went against his conscience.

Francis was taken away by truck to the church of St James the Apostle in the nearby town of Paete. In the baptistery, he was badly beaten and tortured. It seems the "Kempeitai" wanted Francis to admit his contact with the guerrillas and possibly provide information he had received in the confessional. Over 250 local men were also being beaten and held prisoner in the church at that time.

Later that evening, Francis was tied to a post in the nave of the church near the front door. He remained there for three days and nights without being able to lie down and with no food or water. He was periodically beaten. At one stage, his confession was heard



"With No Regrets" by Patricia Brooks is a story based on the life of an idealistic, fun loving New Zealander; Francis Vernon Douglas.

Copies of the book are available at www.columban.org.au. Price \$5 (inc postage)

by the parish priest. During the whole ordeal, Francis remained silent and never disclosed any information that would incriminate or betray others. He refused to speak.

On the evening of Tuesday July 27th, 1943, Francis, weak but still alive, was placed in a truck surrounded by Japanese soldiers, then driven away. Fr Francis Vernon Douglas was never seen again. His body was never found.



s (front row, left, held by father).



Fr Francis Douglas with parish altar boys.



"Out the corner of my eye"

PATRICK O'SHEA

Occasionally we come across a phrase or image that sticks in the mind. The reason we hold on to it (or maybe it holds on to us) is because there is something evocative in it, something of promise. It sets off resonances that invite us to pay attention. If we are fortunate it waits around until we can bring it to the forefront of the mind and discover the treasure hidden there.

One such phrase that grabbed my attention recently was used by theologian Elizabeth Johnson when she was exploring the way new insights about God are emerging in our world. She suggests they have come not when people were thinking directly about God but when, in the thick of their worldly engagement, they glimpse "out of the corner of their eye", so to speak, a truth about the living God that surprises and sustains them.

So I have been wondering about these things that are glimpsed "out of the corner of the eye". The first thing that strikes me is that many of these may be lost to awareness precisely because we can think of them as peripheral and

therefore not really important or worthy of attention. We can be so focused on what is at the centre of our awareness that we ignore or devalue what is at the margins.

They can appear as distractions which we need to block out in order to get on with what is important. One effect of the phrase was to invite me to start paying greater attention to what is glimpsed at the edge of awareness.

This little phrase also points to the value to be found in indirection. We are used to tackling problems head on, to dealing with issues directly. But we sense too that there is wisdom in the old adage "to sleep on it". We can focus our attention directly on some problem or question for a long time without seeming to make progress or get any positive result.

But when we leave it aside overnight while we sleep the work we had been doing continues in a way that is not consciously directed but is nevertheless fruitful. Perhaps our dreams are a kind of "corner of the eye" experience where things that have been on the edge of awareness

There are indeed many truths that can surprise and sustain us that are glimpsed initially out of the corner of the eye.

all day but have been ignored have an opportunity to be noticed and attended to.

It is said that happiness is like a butterfly that always seems to elude us when we chase after it directly but when we are getting on with life it may come and alight on our shoulder. Perhaps some things can only be glimpsed indirectly and we need to value what is revealed when we are not in control; those things that come as gift or grace rather than as the fruits of the work we have done.

We also know that there are understandings and experiences of life that have been consigned to the margins of history. They are no longer or in some cases have never been part of the main text by which we live our lives. But in the uncertainty and insecurity of recent times we have glimpsed "out of the corner of our eye" that there may be a truth here that we need if we are going to survive.

For example, we are increasingly looking to those cultures and peoples who have never lost sight of the sacredness of

the earth and who have a more holistic and integrated way of relating to nature for hints about what we need to do to save the planet and ourselves. What was first glimpsed at the edge has moved more and more into the mainstream of political and religious life.

In this context it is interesting to note that Jesus did not appear at the centre of the Roman Empire but in a small town in a remote and unimportant province. In recent times we have come to an awareness that our beautiful, fragile earth is but a tiny speck at the edge of one small galaxy.

Perhaps it is true in many areas of life that what can bring about the most significant changes at the centre emerges first at the edge. There are indeed many truths that can surprise and sustain us that are glimpsed initially out of the corner of the eye.

Fr Patrick O'Shea lives at St Columbans Lower Hutt, New Zealand.

50 years of missionary commitment



Patrick (Pat) John Baker was born on March 26, 1938 in Camperdown, Victoria, Australia. He was the youngest of eight, five boys and three girls.

Patrick began his primary education in 1944 at Cobden State Grammar School before starting secondary school at Camperdown High School in 1950. He completed his secondary education at St Patrick's Christian Brothers College, Ballarat, Victoria.

During his time there, he heard the call to be a priest and decided to join the Columbans. He trained for the priesthood between 1956 and 1962. He was ordained on July 21, 1962 at St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne by Archbishop Simmonds. Fr Pat was appointed to the Philippines in 1972 where he worked in Ozamis City, Pagadian, Cebu, Ipel and Catadman. In the early 1980s, he studied Clinical Pastoral Education in Melbourne and Theology at Maryknoll in the United States.

This later led to Fr Pat working in the formation of Columban seminarians in the Philippines including as the Director of the Programme. He is currently working and living in Ozamis City. He has spent most of the last 40 years in the Philippines.

Fr Pat's two brothers, Leo and Chris are also Columbans. The three Baker brothers have a long history of missionary commitment between Japan, Peru and the Philippines. We congratulate Fr Patrick Baker on 50 years of ordination.



Photos: Fr Robert Mosher

Education amidst violence

ROBERT MOSHER

I recently met the energetic Cristina Estrada, who manages a library and study centre for the Columbans for 385 school-aged children in Rancho Anapra, the residential area covered by our Columban parish of Corpus Christi, on the outskirts of Juárez, Mexico.

Cristina is very proud of the students who have used the centre over the years. Every year, a few of the students graduate from high school, most of whom go on to higher education. The study centre consists of several large rooms attached to Cristina's house and an outdoor patio for younger children to learn and play in. She carefully points out the laptop computer and the photocopier in a corner of one office-like space, fruits of donations, and tells me that seven more laptops have been donated for the use of the older students. In spite of her hard-headed approach to the challenges of running the afterschool programme, Monday through Friday, throughout the academic year, in one of the poorest places in Mexico, she remains enthusiastic.

One of the challenges is convincing parents to send their children to the study centre. So many parents see prolonged education as a luxury they can ill afford, preferring to send their children to work and bring income to the family as early as possible. Cristina tries to show them how education is an inheritance for their children, something won for them by years of struggle, so that they needn't face the hopelessness of temporary, dead-end jobs

that the adults now have to put up with. It's not easy to convince parents of the connection between an education and a better future for their children.

Registration with the local public schools at the beginning of each school year, for each child, costs MXN\$600 - about (AUD\$45, NZD\$56)- for kindergarten, (AUD\$97, NZD\$122) for primary school. Thanks to the support of Columban donors, the study centre can partially pay for the school registrations of children of the poorest families in the area. On top of that, the centre also helps with school uniforms and supplies also required for each child, as well as contributing the writing and artwork supplies.

The Mexican public education system is usually divided into three periods: Primary School (primaria), grades 1-6; Junior High School (secundaria), grades 7-9; and High School (preparatoria), grades 10-12. The first two periods are compulsory for Mexican citizens, although the third is not. In 2001, kindergarten, or a preschool year, (preescolar) also became compulsory. Escuelas (schools) is a term generally reserved for public schools, while colegios (similar to "colleges") refers to private schools, which usually charge higher tuition fees. Public schools serve 87% of all students in Mexico.

Public school teachers are often saturated by the sheer numbers of students in their classes, Cristina told me, and thus the study centre fulfils an important role in their

The reality of Juárez is that many young women have disappeared, and sometimes turned up in mass graves, over the past few decades, and the problem continues today.

education, an auxiliary role that focuses on reinforcing the lessons of the day. When Cristina and her team of volunteer helpers treat each child with attention to their educational needs and challenges, they also help to overcome the problems faced by children at home, where poverty often forms the chaotic background to alcoholism, drug addiction and domestic violence.

Since the drug cartel wars began in Juárez in 2008, the wave of violence, has become alarmingly close to Rancho Anapra. Just a few days before my visit, a young man was gunned down in cold blood in the middle of the day by a group of armed men, right in front of the main gate to the local primary school! Parents from all over the neighbourhood descended on the school to whisk their children away, and chaos reigned for nearly an hour.

Blood stained the sidewalk in front of the school for several hours after the young man's body was taken away while the police arrived to photograph the crime scene and keep the area clear. Cristina tries to keep the violence out of children's conversation, so as not to let fear dominate their lives. The growing presence of such illicit groups also makes the drug trade tempting for poor young people, who sooner or later weigh the choice between easy money and struggling to find meaningful work.

"They taught me to read in the study centre library!" a child will occasionally boast to his or her parents, which fills Cristina with pride. Her own education trained her in social work, with a specialty in economic law. "My children," Cristina declares in a proprietary manner, meaning all the children in the programme, "they come here clean, with decent clothing." "I make sure they don't lack shoes or uniforms," she adds. Cristina is very happy with what she regards as an "opportunity" with which God has entrusted her. She raises the spirits and motivates children who may have lost a parent to violence, which is not unusual in the area, and treats them with special attention.

"I'm strict, too," she tells me, with a sharp look, somewhat softened by the friendly sparkle in her eye. "I don't allow makeup on the older girls. Hair and dress are to be appropriate for their age!" She also insists that parents need not be ashamed to ask for help. "There's no shame in asking for help for one's children," she insists.

Moral behaviour is also strongly encouraged for both parents and children as the young girls and boys approach



Cristina Estrada is a key member of the local community.

sexual maturity, and Cristina usually warns parents to pay more attention to their kids. "If you don't want your daughter to end up pregnant, keep her from going to all those parties at night! You must put some restrictions on your children, although they complain about it!"

The reality of Juárez is that many young women have disappeared, and sometimes turned up in mass graves, over the past few decades, and the problem continues today. Cristina tries to head such crimes off early in a young person's education but knows several cases of missing young women from the area. She always fears for the worst.

She also tries to be fair, selecting only the most deserving families for financial and educational help for their children. "Not everyone is happy with me," she admits. "I think that those families who have salaries coming in should leave their space to other families." But with faith in God, she can make the hard decisions, whatever the personal consequences to her or her husband, who often helps maintain the facility. "You have to have faith in God," she insists.

Fr Robert Mosher is currently the Director of the Columban Mission Centre in El Paso, Texas.





Photo: Far East Archives, Ireland

Fr Tom Ellis.

A second spring

HUGH MACMAHON

More than 60 years after the sacrifices of the early Columbans like Fr Tom Ellis in Nancheng and others in Hanyang, China. Fr Hugh MacMahon believes that a second Columban spring has already begun.

Five years ago, I stood on the porch of the hundred-year-old Gothic church in Nancheng, waiting for a tropical downpour to pass. With me in this central China city were a fellow Columban priest and Fr Thomas Yu, pastor of the church and of the area that was once the Columbans second diocese in China.

Soon, an elderly lady and her grandchild joined us. She was studying us as she chatted in the local dialect with Fr Yu and, in response to us Columbans enquiring looks, he explained that she wanted to know if we belonged to the same group as Zhang Shen-fu - Columban Fr Tom Ellis. When he replied that we were, she told him that it was thanks to Fr Ellis that she and her family had survived the devastation and famine after the Japanese levelled Nancheng in 1942. Fr Ellis had opened the church - the only building left standing in the town - to the homeless residents.

Over the following months, Fr Ellis sheltered and fed thousands of people, thanks to the resources hastily gathered by the local bishop, Patrick Cleary. Tragically, Fr Ellis died in 1945 from neglecting his own health.

The lady we met that day, nearly

60 years later, had never forgotten Zhang Shen-fu. Although she was not a Catholic, she called him a saint. Many of the surviving Catholics in Nancheng also referred to him in those terms. I was moved that even 50 years after missionaries had been expelled from China, there were still people in Nancheng who remembered them with appreciation.

These two programmes develop important contacts with young clergy and lay people as well as university students. These contacts offer a hope for a Columban presence in China into the future.

Fr Yu is an important link to the early days. He had been imprisoned with other Columban priests in the early 1950s while he was still a seminarian. Today, he looks back on those days almost with nostalgia.

His respect and affection for the priests is obvious since they were his model during those difficult years. He spent 30 years either in jail or labour camps, and little news of him reached the Columbans until shortly before his release in 1988.

At that time, Fr Yu was allowed to return to Nancheng as pastor and has renewed his contact with the Columbans. One of the highlights of his later life was the opportunity to visit the graves of Columban missionaries he had known in China and to meet the Holy Father in Rome.

At the Golden Jubilee celebrations for the Columban Society in 1968, Bishop Cleary was asked whether the sacrifices and efforts made by the Columbans in China had been a waste, considering their hardships and limited success.

He replied, "The harvest garnered there was immense. The good seed remains in the ground for a second spring." During that visit to Nancheng five years ago, I felt that the second spring had already begun.

Since the Columbans were expelled from China in 1952 by its Communist government, the Columbans themselves have changed, along with the worldwide attitude to the Catholic Church, religion and mission. Our expulsion from China allowed us to expand our mission to other countries after planting the seeds of faith in China.

Fr Yu is an important link to the early days. He had been imprisoned with other Columban priests in the early 1950s while he was still a seminarian. Today, he looks back on those days almost with nostalgia.



Fr Ellis gives directions to a homeless resident outside the church - the only building left standing in the town.

Reading the memoirs of early Columban missionaries made me aware of how much China has been transformed. An account of the Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve 1922 in Hanyang, just one year after the Columbans arrived in China, describes a procession from their house outside the walls, led by students carrying lanterns, in through the city gates that had been specially opened for them by the night guard, thanks to the co-operation of a local mandarin.

Today, there are no city walls in Hanyang or Nancheng, no local mandarins and no public processions through the streets. We are now in the China of the 21st century with its modern buildings, highways and industrial achievements. Its young people are bright and curious, eager to make a contribution to family and country and to learn from the Western world.

Religion is tolerated in modern China, but only as a private matter, not to be witnessed to or shared in public. The range of activities in which missionaries can be engaged is limited.

The Columbans are an older society too, and the Society has taken on

obligations in other parts of the world. However, these challenges have made the Society reconsider what mission should mean today and what Christianity has to offer modern China.

One of Bishop Cleary's pastoral priorities had been the training of a young Chinese clergy to take over from the Columbans. Today's Columbans are following that tradition by helping Chinese priests, sisters and lay people study abroad and widen their experience.

The Columban Society is also renewing contacts with young clergy and lay people in the areas in which we worked, especially Hanyang and Nancheng to help provide services to those in need, just as they did in previous times during famines, floods and wars. We also offer Columban seminarians from other countries opportunities for missionary training in China and also foreign volunteers to teach English to Chinese students.

These two programmes develop important contacts with young clergy and lay people as well as university students. These contacts offer a hope for a Columban presence in China into the future.

Columban Bishop Cleary of Nancheng and Bishop Galvin of Hanyang would be happy today to see the good seeds they planted over 90 years ago coming to life and a new second spring beginning.

Columban Fr Hugh MacMahon is the Education Coordinator for the Columbans in China.

Fr Thomas Yu is an important link to the early days in China.



Scandal at school

PATRICK COLGAN

This story from Columban Fr Patrick Colgan in Fiji illustrates how all peoples and their cultures are enriched by Gospel values such as forgiveness, love of neighbour, repentance, support and empowerment for the underdog and for human development.

Photo: Fr Patrick Colgan



Sugarcane fields in Fiji.

*D*ur Sami was an Indo-Fijian sugarcane farmer. He had three sons and three daughters. His eldest daughter, Premila, was attending the local secondary school. The 15-year-old girl attracted the attention of a male classmate. Following the custom of those pre-mobile phone days, the love sick youth committed his passion to writing and got a mutual friend to pass the love note to Premila. She in turn responded in writing. Further notes were exchanged but the dangers of this form of courtship were exposed when a teacher confiscated the note as it was being passed over in class. He called Dur Sami to the school and handed over Premila's love note to him.

Dur Sami returned home in a blazing temper. This news would spread throughout the village. People would say that his daughter had loose morals and that he had no control over his family. His good name would be spoiled. This incident could be thrown against him when he came to make a match for his daughter. The shame of it! After all he had done to give his daughter a good education. This is her thanks!

Hot and bothered when he arrived home, Dur Sami had little interest in the cup of tea his wife offered him. He ranted bitterly against Premila. He blamed his wife too for not bringing her up to value the good name of the family. She protested loudly. She had constantly warned Premila to concentrate on her studies and avoid any dealings with boys. They both gave voice to their anguish and pain. Into this electric atmosphere arrived a very hesitant Premila.

Crisis at home

Dur Sami, already red in the face from arguing with his wife, now attacked his frightened daughter. "What kind of a trollop are you," he shouted. "Is this the thanks I get for giving you a good education?" "You won't be going back to school any more! I'll teach you to destroy the good name of this family!" Dur Sami grabbed Premila by the wrist and began to wallop her with his leather belt. Premila, already in tears from the verbal abuse, twisted and tugged until she broke free. She rushed into the nearby cane field. It was easy for her to hide among the tall, thick cane as night fell. Her parents searched by torch and a kerosene lamp, calling in vain for Premila to return home. They eventually gave up.

Now Dur Sami began to worry that Premila might commit suicide. All sorts of grim possibilities flashed before his eyes – drowning, hanging, poison. A suicide would finally ruin his good name in the village. He could never hold his head high again. No more speeches at social functions. No longer to be consulted by others. He would have to resign as overseer of the cane harvesting gang and from the school committee. Oh, the shame of it! Sleep was slow in coming, and fitful and shallow when it did.

Early in the morning a cold, exhausted and scared Premila crept back home. Her mother gruffly told her to go to bed quickly before her father woke and gave her another hiding. Later, as Dur Sami sipped his cup of sweet tea he heard with relief of his daughter's return. He pulled on his boots and

took the bull out to graze. One terror had passed, at least for the moment. But if, true to his promise, he refused to let Premila return to school wild rumours would spread that his daughter had had an affair. What could he do now?

Calling in the missionaries

After brooding over the situation all day Dur Sami walked the dusty road that evening to the village church. The young missionary priest was there. Dur Sami explained that he had come to ask advice about a very serious personal matter. Could they include the two missionary Sisters in the consultation too?

It was easy for her to hide among the tall, thick cane as night fell. Her parents searched with torch and kerosene lamp, calling in vain for Premila to return home. They eventually gave up.

Sitting in the Sisters' convent Dur Sami explained his hopes for his daughter and the sacrifices he had made to educate her. Now she had let him down badly and he had told her that she would not be allowed back to school. She would just have to help her mother at home while the other children continued with their education. But before making a final decision, as a strong Catholic, he wanted the advice of his Church leaders.

Of course the young priest and the Sisters, themselves involved in education, persuaded Dur Sami that he should not keep his daughter away from school. While they recognized that she had let him down, they were sure that she would learn her lesson from this incident. Young women should be educated in the modern world. Forgiveness is a core Christian teaching. Dur Sami's mercy and compassion would be rewarded in heaven.

Dur Sami listened carefully. He said, reluctantly but humbly, that he would accept the guidance of the missionaries. He would tell Premila that only on account of the appeals of his religious leaders was she being allowed back to school. But the slightest rumour of bad conduct in the future would see her confined permanently to the house.

Fr Patrick Colgan has been a missionary in Fiji since 1994.

Postscript

A few years later Premila got married. After the wedding Dur Sami drank tea with friends and neighbours. He reviewed the marriage - the massive crowd that attended, the generous spontaneous help of neighbours and relatives and the blessing of God in the shower of rain that fell after the ceremony. "But" said Dur Sami, "What makes me most happy at this time is that my daughter never ever did even the slightest thing to dishonour her family's name."



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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.*

Mining and caring for the poor and the planet

"We can live without gold, never without water" Bishops' reflection on the exploitation of natural resources

Quito, Ecuador (FIDES) – "Let us take care of our planet" is the name of a document released in April, 2012 by the Bishops of Ecuador who were assembled at their annual Episcopal Assembly. This document appears only a few months after Ecuador began the exploitation of mineral resources on an industrial scale, something the Bishops called, "delicate, complex

and controversial." "Caring for the planet" is a major challenge both for the government and the mining and oil companies, because the extraction of resources should be accomplished "without adversely affecting human life and the environment."

In this document, the Bishops invite reflection on the care for human life and the environment. "We can live without gold, never without water," the document said. They also communicate that they will continue to accompany those who are

affected by social problems and the dangers derived from oil and mining extraction, through the formation of "environmental awareness."

The document stresses that the artisanal mining extraction has always been held near rivers and lagoons, near the homes of people with high levels of poverty and marginalization. However, "they have not always improved their living conditions. In contrast, social, moral and economic development of most of the population tends to worsen."

"Social conflicts are numerous and more serious every day," the Bishops said, and are due to organized crime, the promulgation of laws without any prior or legislative consultation, the absence of environmental protection.

"The Church before the mega mining projects" forum on an increasingly complex reality

Zamora, Ecuador (FIDES) – The forum entitled, "The Church before the mega mining projects," was recently organized in the dioceses of the south of Ecuador, which are those most involved with mega mining projects.



Puyo River flowing through the Ecuadorian jungle.

Mission Intention for July

That Christian volunteers in mission territories may witness to the love of Christ.

From the Editor



Getting involved

*"The measure you give will be the measure you get back."
(Lk 6:38)*

"I can see how my faith in God gradually weakened and slipped away over the years," someone said to me recently. She then continued, "I now feel however the desire to get involved and rediscover my faith once again, but I am not sure where to begin."

It's all about deciding to get involved and find ways to nurture and build up our faith in God and our love of neighbour. As Jesus told us, "The measure you give, will be the measure you get back."

This issue of *The Far East* offers us several stories to inspire and nurture our faith involvement. We have stories of the faith witness of past Columban missionary priests such as Francis Vernon Douglas and Thomas Ellis as well as present day Columbans such as Patrick Baker, Dan O'Malley and the Malate Clinic and pastoral ministry in Japan and Fiji. There is also the inspirational story of Mexican laywoman Cristiana Estrada who got involved in helping poor children receive better educational opportunities.

The 50th International Eucharistic Congress was held in Dublin, Ireland, last month. It was impressive the way so many people got involved. The three patrons to the Congress were: St Columban, Australian St Mary MacKillop and Dublin laywoman Blessed Margaret Ball.

Columbans got involved in the Congress in several ways. Leading up to the Congress, Columbans and many others participated in 225km "*Columban Way Walking Pilgrimage*" which began on June 2 and finished on June 14. It began in Bangor, Northern Ireland at the site of the great monastery where St Columban had lived and from where he began his missionary journey to the European continent and finished at the Congress in Dublin.

The measure we involve ourselves in the life of the Church will be the measure of faith in God we will get back. Let us all look for the many ways God is inviting us to get involved.

This forum was organized in the light of the recent Bishops' document supporting the care and preservation of the environment.

The topics related to mining activity discussed at the forum were: environmental issues; the loss of security and food sovereignty; the vulnerability of social, cultural and environmental rights and immigration and emigration.

The main speaker at the forum was Bishop of Loja, Julio Parrilla who spoke on the theme "Contributions of the Magisterium and of the Church's social doctrine." Other speakers spoke on topics such as: "The position of the state before the mining projects" and "The impact of socio-cultural and environmental pollution caused by mega mining projects."

In early June, there was a meeting regarding the responsibilities of the mining sector in Ecuador and Peru, for effective control of companies working in this field. The Ministry of the Environment will monitor the use of filters and the flushing of waste from mining into rivers.

Dan Harding

Fr Dan Harding
TFE@columban.org.au

Born to be loved

SEAMUS CULLEN

Fr Seamus Cullen tells the story of Japanese parents whose faith enabled them to deal with the suffering and death of their beloved daughter.

Of late we've all had to endure the scenes on TV of devastated people and places here in Japan. We've been uplifted by the heroism and altruism of so many people, children and old folk alike. From time to time we see people quietly weeping but always trying to hide their grief so that it will not be a burden on others. We who have lived for a long time in Japan have become used to the fact that people don't show their emotions easily.

A year ago I become parish priest of Tanabe. Living there I would go to in the church each morning. There would be a man kneeling there crying out loud while he said the Rosary. When I came in he would become much quieter. For some time I hesitated to approach him but finally I thought that maybe there was some way I could help so I asked him what was the source of his pain.

He told me that his 23-year-old daughter Sayuri was dying of cancer. He wanted her to live, so he would come to the church every morning to pray before going to work. He is captain on a ship in the Japan Coastguard fleet. For a while I would join him in the Rosary but then I had the notion that maybe I was treading



Photo: Bigstock photo.com

The sun shines over a Japanese cemetery.

on sacred ground here. I had no right to be in this man's space with God.

I then began waiting outside and praying as I sat on his motorbike until he came out. He would give me a brief report on his daughter's condition before going to work. I learnt that he had promised to donate blood to the blood bank 100 times. He showed me his donor's card and had donated blood 87 times. He is now donating bone marrow. A match was found for his type, so he is wanting to help someone with his daughter's condition. All of this by way of a little bribe to God.

One day I decided to visit his daughter in hospital. It is a long way to Kyoto but I felt that she would not be around much longer. I went there and met her mother and older sister. She wasn't able to talk nor could she see anymore. But I did hear her voice. Her mother and daughter used to help her to practise saying "Arigatoh" (thank you). This was the only word I heard from Sayuri. She had just been

brought back from her bath, she could no longer move so she was wheeled onto her bed. I couldn't do anything for her but wanted to be there.

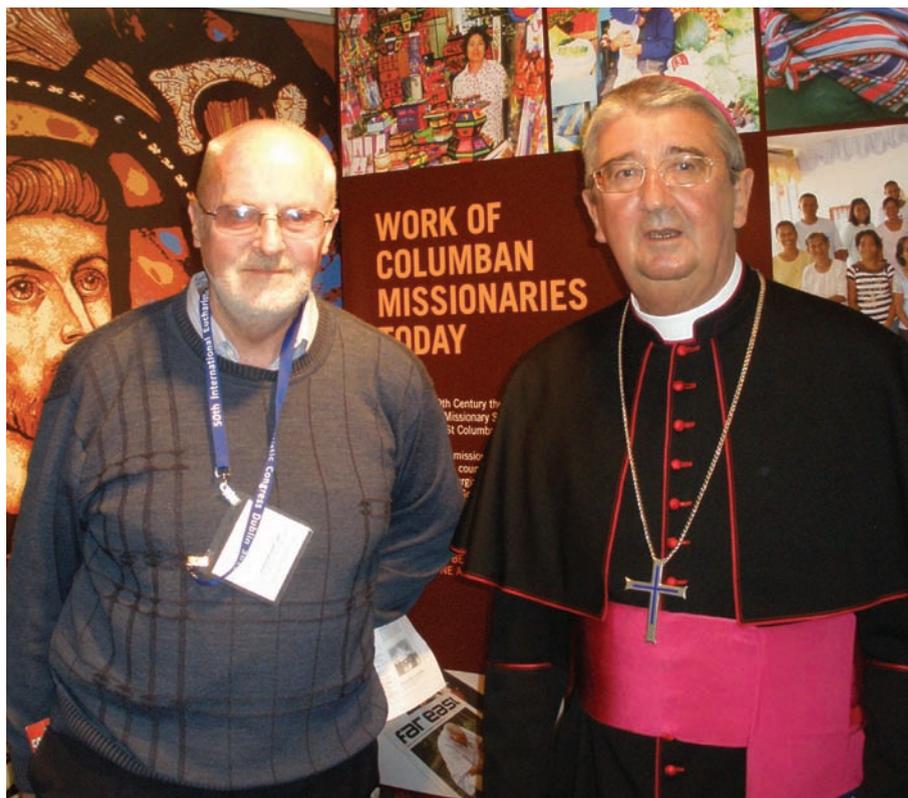
I think I had a little insight into the meaning of "God with us" as that God is with us because He wants to be. I realised with great clarity that I couldn't absorb this. I also realised that there is a tendency in me, maybe in others too, to somehow contain the situation by putting words on it, to control the reality by describing it in some way or other. But this time all I could do was be aware, to a limited extent, no doubt, of the mystery of this scene before me.

To hear a mother and father tell their daughter, while their own hearts were breaking, that it was alright for her to go to heaven, that is something that words cannot express. She died shortly after. He father spoke about her. He told me that Sayuri was a gifted girl. Her sickness had taught him how gifted he is and how unaware he had been of his own

Ringling the bell for the renewal of the Church

DAN HARDING

"The 50th International Eucharistic Congress" took place in Dublin, Ireland from June 10-17, 2012.



Columban Fr Patrick Raleigh with the Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin in front of the Columban stand at the Eucharistic Congress.

As St Patrick in the fifth century travelled across Ireland on his missionary journeys, he is said to have used a bell to call the people to gather to hear the Good News about Jesus Christ.

Recently a new bell was heard ringing joyfully in the parishes and dioceses of Ireland to gather the people of Ireland and over 12,000 international visitors to the 50th International Eucharistic Congress which was held in Dublin from the Feast of Corpus Christi, on Sunday June 10 until June 17. The Congress Bell rang out across Ireland for the renewal of Christian life

and the renewal of the Church.

The Congress bell called the people to assemble to hear the Word of God and discern God's plan for the world, the Church and for each one of them. The Eucharistic Congress also celebrated the 50th anniversary of the inauguration of the Second Vatican Council, which was a time of discernment where the church grew in her understanding of herself as the Body of Christ and the People of God. International Eucharistic Congresses are held every four years. The 1932 International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin made a powerful impact on

the nation at that time. International Eucharistic Congresses took place in Australia in Sydney in 1928 and in Melbourne in 1973. National Eucharistic Congresses took place in Australia and New Zealand in Melbourne in 1934, Newcastle in 1938, Wellington in 1940 and Sydney in 1953.

Bishop Edward Galvin of Hanyang, China, the co-founder of the Columbans, attended the Melbourne National Congress in 1934 representing China. These Eucharistic Congresses had a profound impact on the renewal of faith of the Catholic peoples of Australia and New Zealand as well as developing an awareness of the missionary dimension of faith.

The aim of Eucharistic Congresses is to promote an awareness of the central place of the Eucharist in the life and mission of the Catholic Church, to improve its celebration and draw attention to its social dimension. The theme for this year's Congress in Dublin was, *"The Eucharist: Communion with Christ and with one another."*

St Columban was chosen as one of the three patron saints of the 2012 Congress. He is the patron of our St Columban's Mission Society, (the Columban Fathers). The other two patrons were Australian St Mary MacKillop and Dublin laywomen Blessed Margaret Ball who died of deprivation in the dungeons of Dublin Castle in 1584 on account of her faith commitment.

The Congress was organized around the celebration of daily

In pilgrimage, the inner journey of repentance and conversion to Christ is expressed in the outward journey of a difficult, penitential walk accompanied by others.

Eucharist with opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration, processions and benediction. During the week, there were also 18 Keynote addresses by International speakers, films, music, concerts, theatre, choirs, 150 workshops, 100 exhibition stands (including a Columban stand on mission) and events for young people and children. Leading up to the congress, different programmes of catechesis and evangelization took place all over Ireland such as the *Run4Unity Celebration*, a 5km fun run for children and teenagers to promote unity which was held in Belfast in May.

The aim of Eucharistic Congresses is to promote an awareness of the central place of the Eucharist in the life and mission of the Catholic Church, to improve its celebration and draw attention to its social dimension.

Each day of the Congress was devoted to communion around separate themes: common baptism amongst Christians; marriage and family; priesthood and ministry; reconciliation; suffering and healing and the Word through Mary. Parishes were invited to reflect on how they can become places of communion, by becoming much more welcoming and inclusive of all.

Participants in the ecumenical theme of our common baptism included Archbishop Michael Jackson, the Anglican Archbishop of Dublin and Glendalough, the Reverend Kenneth Lindsay, the president of the Methodist Church and Fr George Zavershinsk of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ireland.

A special Healing Stone was unveiled at the opening Eucharist of the Congress on Sunday June 10. This is a large, shaped piece of Wicklow granite which is engraved with a prayer composed by a survivor of clerical abuse.

The Papal delegate to the Congress, Cardinal Marc Ouellet, Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops, participated on Tuesday in a penitential pilgrimage of prayer and fasting to St Patrick's Purgatory, Lough Derg, County Donegal. This was at the express wish of the pope to pray for forgiveness, reconciliation and healing in the wake of the sex abuse scandal in Ireland. He met men and women who were victims of clerical and institutional abuse. At the Eucharist, he apologised to the victims in the name of the Church. This was also an important theme during the Thursday Liturgy of Reconciliation.

Pilgrimage which has a long history in Irish spirituality, was another important element at the Eucharistic Congress. In pilgrimage, the inner journey of repentance and conversion to Christ is expressed in the outward journey of a difficult, penitential walk accompanied by others.

Seven churches in Dublin were designated pilgrim sites. A special Pilgrim Walk passport would be stamped as the pilgrims visited each of the seven churches for prayer and pilgrim Eucharists.

Columban missionaries along with many other people also took part in "Columban Way Walking Pilgrimage" began on June 2 in Bangor Abbey, Northern Ireland and concluded on June 14 at the Congress. Bangor Abbey was the site of the large

monastery where St Columban lived and from where he set out on his missionary journey to France, Switzerland, Austria, Germany and Italy in the sixth century. The aim of this pilgrimage of 225km was to promote awareness of our patron, St Columban and also the work of Columban missionaries throughout the world.

In summary, the 50th International Eucharistic Congress was a wonderful event in the lives of all those who participated. Let us pray that the International Eucharistic Congress will lead to a new growth and renewal in the Church in Ireland. May the sound of the ringing of the Congress bell continue to be heard in the years of renewal ahead.

For further information, see: www.iec2012.ie



Pilgrims with the St Columban Banner on the "Columban Way Walking Pilgrimage," heading for Dublin.

Photos: Michael O'Sullivan

“Family in the three Abrahamic Faiths”

BRIAN VALE

Judaism, Christianity and Islam all recognize the figure of Abraham and the spiritual traditions coming from him.

Every year the *Abraham Conference* is held in Sydney with representatives from the three monotheistic faiths - *Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, who are connected to each other through the figure of Abraham. The aim of the conference is to facilitate interfaith dialogue and harmony between people of the three faiths. A different theme is reflected on each year at each conference.

The theme for the *10th Abraham Conference* which was held in Sydney on June 3, 2012 was “*Family in the three Abrahamic Faiths.*” It was organised by the representatives of these three faiths, including myself from the Columban Mission Institute’s *Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations.*

The keynote speaker this year was Ms Maha Abdo, a highly respected Muslim female activist and Executive Officer of the United Muslim Women’s Association. A mother and grandmother, Ms Abdo looked at the pressures families face in the 21st century and examined the sacredness of the family unit, the importance of family as a building block for a progressive and harmonious society and the challenges facing faith traditions and values across generations. She acknowledged that a normal healthy life will not be trouble-free and looked at the responsibilities within family to protect themselves from disunity. In Islam the family is the corner stone of society.

Ms Abdo emphasised that a Muslim family, which seeks stability and continuity, builds its life on firm principles, the most important of which are: the raising of children, mutual respect of each other’s rights, courteousness in dealing with one another and widening one’s family’s and one’s own horizons.

The guest moderator for the Conference was Ms Angela Shannahan, a Canberra-based journalist for *The Australian* newspaper. Responding to Ms Abdo’s presentation from a Christian point of view was Ms Claerwen Little, the Acting Director of Uniting Care Children, Young People and Families. Clinical psychologist, Associate Professor Amanda Gordon responded from the Jewish point of view. It is also interesting to note that the four women on stage were able to speak as mothers and grandmothers and their discussions were animated and based on their varied experiences and work situations.

Ms Little spoke about the recent appearance of family stickers on the rear window of cars as possibly indicative of a new emphasis on family identity. She stressed the impact of kind actions and often quoted from Catholic papal documents on the importance of witness, compassion and justice and not simply ‘charity’. She stressed how we need to focus on the needs of children and to reclaim the truth that

society exists for the family and not the opposite.

Ms Gordon emphasised the importance of gratitude in her Jewish tradition and how family milestones need to be celebrated, especially with focus on prayer. She commented that discipline and responsibilities need to be named, for example: formal seating arrangements at the table are important in Jewish tradition and can lead to discussions about what is good and evil which helps a child to become a moral adult. Young children want containment and security and some limits will develop their moral thinking. She also emphasised the need for family discussions and communication especially when one’s role or authority is being renegotiated.

Dialogue, from different faith perspectives, and discussions about the notion of family in the Abrahamic traditions continued throughout the rest of the afternoon amongst both, speakers and participants - which highlighted how our different traditions all have a common interest in the importance of family and that there is much wisdom which needs to be shared among the Abrahamic faiths and with society.

Fr Brian Vale works at the Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations at the Columban Mission Institute in Sydney, NSW, Australia.



The keynote speaker was Ms Maha Abdo.

Health care for all

Access to good medical care can easily be taken for granted by those who have it. Yet most of the world's population does not have it. The Malate Clinic is run by the Columbans and the Archdiocese of Manila, Philippines, and offers a wide range of health services through volunteer medical staff to those most in need.

With the continual help of generous benefactors, the Malate Clinic can continue to provide services for those who have no access to health care.



Photo: Janette Mentha

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