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AUSTRALIA

St Columban's Mission Society
69 Woodland Street
Essendon Vic 3040
Postal address:
PO Box 752, Niddrie Vic 3042
Tel: (03) 9375 9475
TFE@columban.org.au
www.columban.org.au

NEW ZEALAND

St Columban's Mission Society
P.O. Box 30-017
Lower Hutt 5040
Tel: (04) 567 7216
columban@iconz.co.nz
www.columban.org.au

Publisher:

Fr Gary Walker
director@columban.org.au

Editor:

Fr Dan Harding
TFE@columban.org.au

Editorial Assistant & Designer:

Assunta Scarpino
TFE@columban.org.au

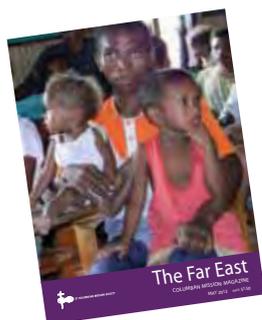
Programs Director:

Mrs Janette Mentha

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Cover: An indigenous Filipino tribe, the Aeta suffer severe malnutrition.
Photo: Fr Shay Cullen

From the Director

God makes 'the new' possible



At Pentecost we celebrate God's initiative in leading us to new horizons and acknowledge that we are not God's People by our own efforts.

In the opening sentences of the book of Genesis a divine wind is sweeping over the waters (Gen1:1-2) and God brought forth creation. The same divine wind, a violent wind swept over the disciples on Pentecost Sunday changing timid hearts to courageous, even bold hearts, and creating the Church, the Christian community. Fifty years ago the Second Vatican Council was regarded as a Spirit-filled event/meeting when the Church changed direction from standing as a fortress defending itself in the world to becoming a voice preaching the 'Good News' in the market place.

It was a time of optimism - the Church was acting in a new way in a changing world. Only 50 years later, the Catholic Church is being pulled and pushed from within and treated with disdain from without.

If we read the Acts of the Apostles, in the early chapters we get a glimpse of the Christian community in its earliest days. *Acts 2:42-47* features an idyllic Church, like the garden of Eden, the way everything ought to be.

It was not long before difficulties arose in the Christian community. St Paul called by God on the road to Damascus to become a disciple through another extraordinary initiative opposed Peter to his face. Questions were being raised about food... what could they eat and what could they not? What was at stake was their religious identity. What did they retain from their Jewish faith and customs, what did they let go of? How was their Christian faith going to change them? Such profound questions.

Factions broke out in the Church in Corinth; St Paul mentions them in *Cor 1-12* 'I belong to Paul', 'I belong to Apollos', 'I belong to Cephas', 'I belong to Christ' depending on who baptised them. St Paul chastised them. We forget the profound issues with which they wrestled in the early Church simply because of the newness of living this faith.

Is it possible that we have expectations of the Church that are too simplistic? For example, some commentators on the Vatican Council II said that the changes instigated in the Church by the Council were the most significant in 1,000 years. It is quite a statement. Presuming it is true, why have we expected the Church to settle down in just 50 or 60 years?

It was a time of optimism - the Church was acting in a new way in a changing world. Only 50 years later, the Catholic Church is being pulled and pushed from within and treated with disdain from without.

At the same time our own knowledge and experience is shaped by an accelerating rate of change in our world especially through its extraordinary and wonderful technology; this is giving us a 'new' world in which time is becoming instant. Everything has to be done 'now'. Some problems do not yield to the 'now' imperative. No wonder our expectations exceed our ability to get the Church in good shape.

Who knows where we are headed in our Church or in our world? We place our confidence in the Spirit of God who has always been with us: at creation, at Pentecost, at the Second Vatican Council. The Sacred Scriptures show that initiatives for change or 'breakthrough' come from God. God makes 'the new' possible. We ought not confuse trust in God and the Church with a simple, clear and uncomplicated life in relationship with God and the Church.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Walker". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Fr Gary Walker
director@columban.org.au



Photos: F. Thomas King

Driving towards ethnic harmony

TOMÁS KING

*O*n a recent very hot Sunday afternoon, I was sitting in a bus at the bus stand of Mirpurkhas City, in the interior of Sindh province, Pakistan. A vendor boarded the bus, carrying a jug and two glasses, hoping to sell a cold drink to passengers. From his appearance, I surmised that he was a Sindhi Muslim who was working hard to eke out a subsistence living.

In the seat just in front of me sat a Parkari Kholi father and his daughter of about six years. Parkari Kholi are tribal people and therefore considered to have no caste, which socially places them with a status well below those who belong to the accepted caste system. The little girl and her father wanted a cold drink. Instead of pouring the drinks into his two glasses, the vendor put them aside and instead served the drinks one after the other in a special aluminum tumbler that he had taken out of his pocket. Why the tumbler and not the glasses? The aluminum tumbler designated the low status of the father and his daughter in

society. The vendor considered himself of superior status to the family.

This story demonstrated that while the language of caste may not be used much nowadays in Pakistan, the prejudice and discrimination it embodies are still very much part of people's daily reality.

Like the father and daughter, the Christian community is an "outsider" because of its religious status, caste status and socio-economic status. The marginalization Christians experience because of their low status is accepted within the wider society and in some cases is enshrined in the law of the land. Even though Pakistan is predominately Muslim, the caste mentality and the practices that stem from it continue to persist.

Origins of the caste system

The caste system developed out of early Indian civilization. It was legitimized and perpetuated by the Hindu religion.

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Later religions in the Indian Sub-continent such as Buddhism, Islam and Christianity all found it difficult to unravel the tentacles of the caste mentality, which is a deeply internalized phenomenon among their followers. "If you are human, you have caste. If you don't have caste, you are not human," describes this internalized world view. It means that the father and the daughter and others outside the caste system are not fully human or at least an inferior human being. This is central to understanding why those in positions of power and leadership are not motivated to help the poor and marginalized in their midst. Below the surface of present day Pakistani society lies centuries of internalization of caste sensibilities deriving from the Hindu caste system.

Classical Hinduism is divided into four racially-based castes in descending order-Brahmins, Kshatriya, Viasya and Sudra. To belong to one of these groups gives a person caste. A person has the same caste as his or her parents and observes certain rules of purity.

Beneath the four castes are a fifth group of people who are the "Untouchables" and who are outside the caste system. These are considered so low that "Untouchables" are forbidden to touch anyone who belongs to one of the other four castes. If a Brahmin priest touches an untouchable, he must go through a ritual cleansing. Untouchables do all the most unpleasant work in south Asia, like clearing up human waste. They are forced to live on the outskirts of towns and villages. The story of the father and his daughter illustrates that the caste system still impacts greatly on those who are considered "untouchable."

Columbans work with the "Untouchables."

It is among these "untouchable" people that Columbans live and work, primarily because this is the background of the vast majority of Christians in Pakistan. The largest of these ethnic peoples are Punjabi, and they make up 98% of the Christian community in Pakistan. They are traditionally the people who swept the streets and cleaned the sewers. Their ancestors began what became known as a mass movement into Christianity beginning in the 1870's at the height of colonialism and which continued into the 20th century. The main reason for doing so was a search for a new identity and a place where they would be accepted.

It was not until the 1940's that the first Parkari Kholi and other tribal groups became Christian. The Parkari Kholis are

one of several Hindu tribal peoples, mostly living in Sindh, who work mainly as bonded labourers for feudal landlords. Traditionally they have also been considered "Untouchable". Again, a large part of their motivation was a search for an identity and a sense of belonging and acceptance.

Even amongst the untouchable castes and ethnic peoples themselves, there is very little social interaction as well as an hierarchical order of superiority. For example, the Parkari Kholis, who are mainly landless peasants working as indentured labourers consider themselves superior to Punjabi Christians who have been traditionally street and sewer sweepers even though they may be economically better off.

The contribution of the Gospel

The preaching of the Gospel has made a major contribution to bringing together diverse caste and ethnic groups. It has not always been easy. In many parishes, including Columban parishes, three separate ethnic groups worship together every Sunday. In the Columban parish of Badin, Parkari Kholis, Sindhi Bheels and Punjabis sing each other's hymns. The Urdu language is used for all liturgies and meetings. This encourages communication among the various ethnic groups. They even eat and socialize together and live in the same colony. This was not always the case. It has taken a lot of hard work and patience as well as looking for opportunities to make this happen.

While there is still a long way to go, these developments show that people can change their internalized attitudes and discover our common humanity.



Fr Tomás King has been a missionary in Pakistan since 1992.

Mission in action

SHAY CULLEN

Photo: iStock.com

Columban Fr Shay Cullen is the founder of PREDA (People's Recovery Empowerment and Development Assistance Foundation) which protects young people in the Philippines from sexual exploitation. This is a story about the PREDA Fair Trade Development Foundation which helps poor communities like those of the Aeta, an indigenous tribe living in the Zambales mountains, escape from poverty, malnutrition and disease.

As I walked the last few meters with a medical team organized by the PREDA Fair Trade Development Foundation to the hillside village high in the Zambales mountains I was not greeted with the usual rush of excited smiling children curious at the arrival of visitors from the lowland. The PREDA team entered the Aeta village and were greeted by the village chieftain and the elders who smiled a greeting as best they could. It was a village gripped by sadness at the death of several children caused by malnutrition. When they sent us a message asking for help we responded.

The medical team set up their portable clinic in a grass roofed hut and began to meet the villagers and weigh the children, take sputum and blood pressure tests and check the vital signs. I met a mother holding Epang, a small child seemingly five years old but in fact was 10. Her physical growth and brain development were severely impaired by that hidden killer, malnutrition.

As many as 7.6 million children die needlessly every year as a result of the lack of nutritious food and access to clean drinking water. There has been progress in the past 10 years, it was as

high as 12 million child deaths each year. But it is still a terrible problem. Every hour of every day 300 children die because they are not getting enough nutritious food.

In developing countries like the Philippines malnutrition is the must secret of their crises. There is an abundance of food available but the poor and isolated communities are too poor to buy it or do not have the fertile land or fertilizer to produce enough.

In the Philippines a survey showed that one in every four people say they experienced hunger, that is 4.5 million

The Preda team entered a village of Indigenous people, known as the Aeta and we were greeted by the village chieftain and the elders who smiled a greeting as best they could. It was a village gripped by sadness at the death of several children caused by malnutrition. When they sent us a message asking for help we responded.

people going hungry during the last quarter of 2011. This is the result of twenty years of corruption and neglect of the poor.

The new Aquino Government is boosting the economy by its anti-corruption campaign and is reducing hunger in areas of greatest poverty through the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT). Small monthly payments are given to mothers provided their children go to school, get vaccinated and health checks and the money is used for nutritional food.

It is not a tax on the rich given to the poor. It is the poor and middle class who pay through a 12% Value Added Tax(VAT) levied on every product and service. The middle class pay the most income tax .

The prices of basic food commodities, like corn are rising on the world market. Since the production of ethanol from corn on a huge scale, this has led to a shortage of corn for food and price increases. Rising oil prices and typhoons and climate change are contributing to famines and rising prices.

There has been progress in the past ten years, it was as high as 12 million child deaths each year. But it is still a terrible problem. Every hour of every day 300 children die because they are not getting enough nutritious food.

The corrupt global financial industry and the over spending and borrowing non-stop by many developed nations has caused a world-wide recession. Most people have little money to buy

imported products from developing countries. Economic stagnation and unemployment is the result and malnutrition the immediate outcome for millions of children. As I said 300 children die every hour every day.

What is needed is for a more just society and implementation of just laws that give the poor opportunities for fair wages and good working conditions and quality education that leads directly to employment.

In the Aeta village the PREDA medical team quickly discovered that the malnutrition was causing Tuberculosis, a painful killer. A treatment plan will now be implemented, medicines provided.

The hillside land needed to be fertilized and planted with nutritious vegetables and root crops, they needed goats and chickens to increase the intake of protein. Plans were made to do it.

They also had many mango trees that were never harvested since the price was so low and they had to carry them 10 kilometers. The PREDA Fair Trade team responded and promised to buy and transport the harvest of mangos at a Fair Trade price and turn them into dried mangos for export to Fair Trade shops in Europe. That would be a big income for the village. This village is being saved by medicines and mangos but there are many more villages needing help. We all need to help by buying PREDA dried mangos we will be doing our share to end malnutrition.

Fr Shay Cullen has been a missionary in the Philippines since 1969.

PREDA Medical team at work in the Aeta village.



Photos: Fr Shay Cullen



The moment we have been waiting for...

DAN HARDING

Receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost

*O*n June 4th 1770, Captain Cook sailed into a passage through the Great Barrier Reef that was surrounded by beautiful continental islands. He was on his historic voyage of discovery up the east coast of Australia. These islands and the sea passage were named the Whitsunday Islands and Passage after the liturgical celebration of the day, Whitsunday. Actually Cook had miscalculated his date and it was really the following day, Whit-Monday.

What is this liturgical celebration called Whitsunday? It is another name for the second most important day after Easter in the Church's liturgical calendar - the great Solemnity of Pentecost. The name Whitsunday comes from White Sunday when in Medieval times, those who had been baptized seven weeks earlier at Easter donned again their white baptismal

robes. Some baptisms also took place at this time.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples and Mary the Mother of Jesus who were waiting in prayer in the Cenacle, the Upper Room, for the arrival of the Holy Spirit. It was here in this upper room that the Last Supper had taken place and the Risen Lord had also appeared to his disciples. At one of his appearances, he told them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait there for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

To understand what waiting for the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is all about, I feel it is really important for us to try to get a sense of what it was like to be in the Cenacle with Mary and with the disciples waiting in prayer for the arrival of the Holy Spirit. What was it like waiting with such anticipation, with bated breath?

Were their feelings of excitement, of joyful expectation, of patience and faith mixed perhaps with some doubt, some fear, or feelings of personal inadequacy and unworthiness? Now that the Risen Lord had ascended into heaven, how were they, the disciples to go on. Yet, in a very real sense, they had been waiting for that Pentecostal moment all their lives. Waiting to receive the Spirit of the Risen Lord and be transformed and empowered. Something big was about to happen, something very big. Could they sense Him coming? Could they feel it in the air?

Something of this tremendous sense of excitement, of anticipation and of prayerful waiting is captured in the celebrations of Pentecost Vigils on the night before Pentecost Sunday. In Chile where I served many years as a Columban Missionary Priest,

almost all parishes organize annual Pentecost Vigils for the youth and other interested parishioners. These Vigils begin after the Saturday night Vigil Eucharist in the parish church and usually continue all night until the Sunday Eucharist of Pentecost the following day.

The areas where our Columban parishes are located in Chile are areas with a high rate of crime, gangs and substance abuse. This is why it is often necessary to hire off-duty policemen to stand guard during these night vigils. Once the vigils start, the gates of the parish are locked for security reasons and no one is allowed to leave or enter the premises until dawn.

That is no-one except the Holy Spirit is allowed to enter into the parish premises. The Holy Spirit is allowed to enter into the church building and into the hearts and the lives of each vigil participant. During the long and usually cold night hours of the Pentecost Vigil, the participants are invited into a deeper conversion and renewal of their lives through opening their lives, their personal and social reality to the Holy Spirit. This is a moment they have been waiting for.

During the Pentecost Vigil, all are invited to repent of sin and to be forgiven and healed through the Sacrament of Reconciliation which is made available to them. They are invited to a personal encounter with the Risen Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit. The participants sing, pray, dance, move about, hold hands, share their ideas together, pour out

their hearts to the Lord and to one another, hug each other, meditate on the Word of God, reflect on the Church's mission to the world and act out dramatically the events of Pentecost according to the Acts of the Apostles.

During these long night hours of the vigil, the participants also prepare the parish church with decorations for the celebration of the Eucharist on the following morning, Pentecost Sunday. These decorations include banners and posters with different images of the Holy Spirit and the Pentecost event such as the dove, tongues of fire, water associated with the action of the Holy Spirit at baptism, laying on of hand and anointing with holy oils at confirmation and in other sacraments, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and the 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit. As the Church was born at Pentecost, images of the Church are also prepared. These include: a sheep fold; an ark; the Body of Christ; the Heavenly Jerusalem; the New Israel; the People of God; the Spouse of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples and Mary the mother of Jesus gathered in vigil, awaiting His arrival. They first heard the sound of a mighty wind that filled the entire building and then they saw tongues of fire settle upon each person. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different languages.

I have seen with my own eyes moments during the Pentecost Vigils

when the Holy Spirit arrives in the lives of the participants and touches, heals and empowers them. Something is awoken in them to empower and transform them and connect them better to the Body of the Risen Lord, the Church and her mission to build up God's Kingdom. The Pentecost Vigil awakens in the participants a sense of the mission of the Church to "renew the face of the Earth" by bringing the Kingdom of God to the broken, the dispossessed, the poor, the exploited and the excluded. Pentecost is about receiving and being filled, then stepping up and out, going out, diving in, being stretched, taking risks and moving out of one's comfort zone. It is about fire, about life in the Spirit. Isn't this what we have always been waiting for all our lives?

Christ has ascended into heaven yet His Risen presence continues here on Earth through the power of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of the Church, in her sacramental life, in the Word of God and in her Mission to the world. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in my life? Can I with bated breath and great excitement invite the Holy Spirit to be awakened within me this Pentecost, like at baptism and confirmation? Can I open my life to the power of the Holy Spirit, inviting repentance and healing, transformation and empowerment? This is the moment I have been waiting for all my life.

"Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful and kindle in them the fire of Thy love".

Fr Dan Harding is the Editor of The Far East and worked in Chile for 20 years.



Standing with the victims

BETH SABADO



One of the principle goals of Columban Mission in Taiwan is advocacy for migrant workers. Along with the local Taiwanese diocese, Columbans help to run Migrant Workers Centres. Filipina Columban Lay Missionary Beth Sabado is assigned to this work.

A-Hang (a pseudo name for the purposes of this article), a 29 year old Vietnamese care-giver, arrived at our shelter as a victim of rape. She was working as a caregiver for an elderly man whose son had raped her repeatedly. She arrived in the shelter in August 2005. I had worked as a nurse for nine years in a hospital in the Philippines (Pagadian, Mindanao) and was head nurse when I resigned to join the Columban Lay Mission Programs. However, I had no experience with trauma counselling so did not know how to deal with A-Hang's case.

I would see her looking out the window with a vacant look on her face. I knew she was so lonely and probably depressed, but I felt that I could do little more than be silently present to her. My Chinese language was quite limited at that time even though I had done one year of fulltime language study. I soon realized that by being present to her I was comforting her. One day she said to me, "You are very good."

After about four months A-Hang started talking to me about how she had been raped. She cried and let me see her feelings. I knew that was good, that she was beginning the road back to recovery. She also started

participating in activities and talking with others at the shelter.

When the time came for her court hearings, I helped her prepare herself for the ordeal. We looked at a movie about a court case dealing with rape and that made her hesitate. She told me she was afraid to re-live the feeling of being raped. I told her that if she showed such feeling it would help her case. I advised her to be focused, not to worry whether or not she cried or felt bad, and to consult the translator if necessary.

I admired her sense of confidence, her strength and courage. She would say, "I am doing this because I am fighting for my rights. This is my time to speak the truth."

A-Hang won her case. Her criminal employer was sentenced to time in jail and was obliged by the court to pay her compensation. She was also the first migrant worker to win the right to a cross-sector (care giver to factory worker) transfer.

Like so many others A-Hang had arrived at our shelter weary of life, depressed and seemingly broken. She found the inner strength to gradually come back to life. We at the shelter were privileged to accompany her along the road of that difficult year long journey. Her facial expression told me that she was moving on. In fact, she was the first of many I have seen make a similar comeback after being abused or exploited in some devastating way.

A-Hang's case confirmed for me in a striking way that I had made the correct decision when I applied to join the Columban Lay Mission Programs. When I was a young nurse I had the timeline of my life worked out – profession, good job, better job,

migrate to U.S., marry, have a family and a nice home. A Chilean couple, both of whom were Columbans Lay Missionaries with the Columbans, began to help me see radically different, undreamt of possibilities.

I had the idea that only Sisters and priests could be missionaries. The Chilean couple showed me that was not so. They had a baby and lived in the small town of Midsalip (Philippines). Life was not easy there. I noticed that they also spoke our language (Cebuano) among themselves. I knew Columban priests who came to the hospital at times, Frs. Larry Ryan and Mick Sinnott, so I asked them about the Columban Lay Mission Programs.

When the time came for her court hearings, I helped her prepare herself for the ordeal. We looked at a movie about a court case dealing with rape and that made her hesitate. She told me she was afraid to re-live the feeling of being raped. I told her that if she showed such feeling it would help her case.

I applied to join the Program, was accepted, did the initial orientation course and was assigned to Taiwan. Following Chinese language study I expressed my preference for work in the mountains with the indigenous with whom I thought I'd have a good chance of improving my Chinese. I ended up with the migrant workers who generally speak Chinese poorly. The story of A-Hang and so many others has ensured that I never regretted the path I have walked.

I visited my sister in the U.S. to see what life was like there. I still

wondered whether I might like to work and live there. I soon realized that it was not for me – working for long hours to pay bills and have lots of nice things. Here I am empowering women who have been abused and exploited. This makes so much more sense to me. I also learn a lot from the different cultures of the women who come to our shelter.

At times, it may be tiring, frustrating and disappointing here because many women feel hopeless and give up when they are only part of the way into their court cases. Still, the A-Hangs of this world assure me that this work is very worthwhile. In August 2010, A-Hang came to say, "Goodbye" to me. She told me, "I've earned enough money for my daughter's education. I'm going home now." I asked her how she was, whether the troubles of the past still affected her. She laughed and said, "The past is over; I just want to move on with my life." A-Hang is a practicing Buddhist, and I know that she finds a steady strength in her religious faith.

Columban Lay Missionary Beth Sabado lives and works in Taiwan.



Photo: Beth Sabado



Highest civilian honour

Fr Robert McCulloch honoured by Pakistan

ELLEN TEAGUE

A civic reception was held at St. Elizabeth Hospital, Hyderabad, on 26 March, 2012 to honour Fr Robert McCulloch an Australian Columban priest who received the *Sitara-e-Quaid-Azam* from the Governor of Sindh three days earlier for his services to Pakistan. This is Pakistan's highest civilian award.

Fr McCulloch has worked in Pakistan since 1978 in the fields of education, health and inter-faith relations. He recently moved to Rome where he now runs the Columban House there.

Amongst the civic, political and religious leaders who attended the Hyderabad reception were Bishop Max Rodrigues of the Catholic Diocese of Hyderabad and Sr. Catherine Abdullah, principal of St. Mary's Girls High School. Fr McCulloch was praised for the work of St. Elizabeth Hospital under his leadership. The hospital was described as an outstanding beacon of compassion in Hyderabad especially through its medical outreach programmes, 'Palliative Care' for the terminally ill and flood relief activities. St. Elizabeth Hospital was held up as an example to other institutions in Hyderabad and Pakistan of how people of different faiths, cultures and languages can work together for the betterment and progress of Pakistan and its people.

Columban Fr McCulloch said that he was honoured in being awarded the *Sitara-e-Quaid-Azam* by the President and receiving it from the Governor of Sindh, Dr. Ishrat ul Ibad on 23 March. He said the award also showed that the government of Pakistan recognized the presence and work of the Catholic Church throughout Pakistan and in interior Sindh. Fr McCulloch said he was proud to receive an award which carried the name of the Quaid-e-Azam, who founded Pakistan to be a nation based upon principles of unity, equality and religious harmony.

In November 2011, Fr. McCulloch was appointed to Rome (the Vatican) as Procurator General of the Columban Fathers. He returns to Pakistan several times each year.

Ellen Teague works on the JPIC team UK.

Another civilian honour

Sr Berchmans Conway



Sr Berchmans Conway after receiving her award.

Irish Sister Berchmans Conway of the Congregation of the Religious of Jesus and Mary has been awarded the *Sitara Quaid-e-Azam* for "her services towards education and promoting interfaith harmony in Pakistan." She has been teaching young girls of all faiths from different parts of Pakistan for over 59 years.

For more details see: tribune.com.pk





Four act play v

*W*hen I arrived in Lima in 1980, I knew very well that there was every reason to expect failure if success depended on “knowing the territory”. Here’s a story from my memory bank that illustrates the point. I will present it as a very short four-act play with an epilogue.

Act 1 - 5.15 pm Mass - full church.

At communion time, in a chapel in Lima, Peru, I needed assistance. When I asked for help I discovered that there were no extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist present. What to do?

Kneeling at the back of the church was a middle-aged man, a daily Mass-goer. Every afternoon he knelt throughout the Mass because the spot he invariably selected had no bench to sit on. He always received communion devoutly and remained to pray, head bowed, after the rest had left the church.

“You,” I called out pointing to him, “please help me give out communion.” He looked to see if maybe I was pointing to someone else. There was no-one behind him. He pointed to himself as if to say, ‘Are you talking to me?’. “Yes, you,” I said. He was dumb-struck and didn’t move. I repeated the invitation. He shook his head. I insisted. Eventually he approached the altar in trepidation. I put a ciborium into his hand and said, “Just stand beside me here and say, Body of Christ as you give out communion”. With trembling hands he did as told, then returned to his kneeler and remained there, head bowed, until the church was empty.

Act 2 - 9am Next morning.

There was an angry knock at the front door. I opened it. It was a pious lady of the parish with fire in her eyes. She had been in the locality for

many years and certainly ‘knew the territory’. With no time to lose, she went on to ask: “Padre, did you ask Miguel Santos to give out communion yesterday?” “I did ask a man to help me, but I didn’t know his name until you mentioned it”, I replied. “You shouldn’t have done that”, she continued. “Why not?”, I asked.

There was an angry knock at the front door. I opened it. It was a pious lady of the parish with fire in her eyes. She had been in the locality for many years and certainly ‘knew the territory’.

“Because he’s the worst drunk in the whole parish. For years he treated his poor wife, Cecilia and his children abominably. He’s the last person you should have asked to distribute communion.”

with epilogue

T.P. REYNOLDS

Photo: iStock.com

"He's certainly no drunk now, nor has he been since I came to the parish. He's at Mass every day and he's the most devout person in the congregation", I said. "Well, that's no thanks to him. His poor wife has stormed heaven for him. She's a saint", she replied.

"It would seem then that her prayers have been heard, thank God!" I concluded. The lady went away mumbling to herself.

Act 3 - Morning, two days later.

I opened it. Miguel Santos and his wife Cecilia had come to ask a favour. Cecilia did the talking. "Padre, we were wondering if you would get us enrolled in the Pastoral Agent programme of the Archdiocese", she asked. "Yes indeed. I would be delighted to get both of you enrolled."

This programme was designed to provide free education in pastoral

theology to committed lay people. Every parish was invited to send six new candidates each year, preferably married couples. Those who successfully completed the course could perform pastoral functions in the Archdiocese. Men could continue studying for a third year and become deacons.

Act 4 - Twenty years later.

Twenty years later I returned to Peru. The pastor of the parish where I used to minister invited me to say the evening Mass, a "High Mass". When I returned to the parish that evening the deacon was standing in front of the vesting bench, fully vested. When he turned round to welcome me warmly I recognised the face of Miguel Santos. He had finished his studies after all and Cardinal Landazuri had ordained him deacon. For 16 years or so he had been serving the parish faithfully.

Epilogue

In the Acts of the Apostles, we learn that the principal agent of the Church's mission is the Holy Spirit not the missionary, and St. John, in the third chapter of his gospel, adds the important particular that "the Spirit breathes where He wills." The missionary who accepts these truths can enter any culture and evangelise with confidence - even if he doesn't "know the territory".

Fr T. P. Reynolds was a missionary in Peru and has lectured in theology for many years in the USA. He is assigned at present in Los Angeles.



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.

Nobel Peace prize awarded to three activist women



Tawakkul Karman

Tawakkul Karman is one of youngest recipients of the Peace Prize. She is a human rights activist and politician in Yemen, a country currently experiencing a large-scale popular movement against the government. Both before and during the "Arab spring", she has played a leading part in the struggle for women's rights and for democracy and peace in Yemen. She organized student rallies in the capital of Sanaa, after which she was arrested. When she was released, she immediately went back to protesting.

Leymah Gbowee

Leymah Gbowee is a Liberian peace advocate. As the founder of the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, she became a non-violent force against civil war.

She mobilized and organized women across ethnic and religious dividing lines to bring an end to the long war in Liberia, and to ensure women's participation in elections. She has since worked to enhance the influence of women in West Africa during and after war.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is the sitting President of Liberia and the first and only democratically elected female head of state in Africa. Since her inauguration in 2006, she has contributed to securing peace in Liberia, to promoting economic and social development, and to strengthening the position of women. The 72-year-old's resume also includes founding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2006, drastically reducing Liberia's debt and reconciling with the Ivory Coast.

Mission Intention for May

That Mary, Queen of the World and Star of Evangelization, may accompany all missionaries in proclaiming Her, Son Jesus.

Editorial



Knocking down our towers of Babel

The Nobel Peace Prize for 2011 was awarded to three women from Africa and the Arab world in acknowledgment of their nonviolent role in promoting peace, democracy and gender equality.

“It is the Norwegian Nobel Committee’s hope that the prize to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman will help to bring an end to the suppression of women that still occurs in many countries, and to realise the great potential for democracy and peace that women can represent.”

Environmental award

A Filipino priest, Fr Edwin Gariguez has been named as one of six winners of the 2012 Goldman Environmental Prize. The prize honours grassroots environmental heroes from the global south, who work protecting the environment on the Philippine island of Mindoro. Fr Gariguez is a good friend and partner of the Columbans.

Pentecost has some wonderful themes to motivate and excite us. At Pentecost (*Acts 2*), the disciples received the Holy Spirit, the Church was born and its Mission to the ends of the Earth began. At Pentecost, when the disciples preached in different languages to the people gathered in Jerusalem from all over the known world in their own languages, the negative effects of division, prejudice, hatred and confusion in the world exemplified in the story of the Tower of Babel (*Exodus 19*) began to be reversed.

We human beings love to build Towers of Babel that lead to division, confusion, exclusion and prejudice. It is us versus them. In the stories in this edition of *The Far East*, we can read about the different Towers of Babel that Columban missionaries encounter throughout the world. Columbans attempt to overcome hatred, division and confusion and create unity, reconciliation, dialogue and peace.

In Taiwan, migrant workers are often left unprotected and easily exploited. Women are particularly vulnerable in this situation. In Pakistan, we can read about caste and other ethnic and class divisions create veritable Towers of Babel to divide and confuse. In Peru, there are walls created by selfishness and prejudice. There is the story of breaking down personal divisions in China. In the Philippines, an unjust society and unjust laws create divisive Towers of Babel that leads to extreme poverty, ethnic division, hunger and malnutrition. The Preda Fair Trade Development Foundation helps to knock down this towering monster.

Lets us pray this Pentecost as we begin "The year of Grace" that the Holy Spirit will knock down any Towers of Babel that may be in our hearts and that we may see all of humankind as sisters and brothers and feel connected to all of creation.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dan Harding". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and email address.

Fr Dan Harding
TFE@columban.org.au



Photo: iStock.com

The selfish giant

SR ERISA

The city of Ayacucho is on the outer edge of the Andes mountain range. Like many other areas of Peru, the people of Ayacucho suffered violence, cruelty and terror during the 20 years insurrection by the Maoist Shining Path guerrillas against the government. They also suffer from ongoing poverty and exclusion. Here there is a great need for healing and reconciliation.

To respond to this need, Columban Sisters began work in Ayacucho in 2003. I was appointed here in 2010 after completing my five month basic level Spanish language course. I am from South Korea.

When I arrived in Ayacucho, I realized that I wanted to work with the local youth. Even though at this stage I had to smile a lot and use a lot of body language to communicate due to my basic level of the Spanish language, I began to move out and meet the youth. I first began by becoming friendly with the children by forming a youth choir and also by organizing a weekly football match every Sunday morning.

After a month or two, I began attending a family therapy course at the National University of San Cristobal of Huamanga. Through discussion with the youth about Ayacucho's history and present situation, I started to get

a better picture of their lives, of how they felt, what was lacking and what services were needed.

Working with the youth of Ayacucho makes me remember the story of *"The Selfish Giant"* by Oscar Wilde which I liked reading when I was younger. In this story, the selfish giant owned a large house and beautiful garden. Since the garden was full of blossoming flowers, local children were attracted and would come to the garden to play their ball games. This led to some flowers being trampled and windows broken. The giant therefore built a wall around the garden to keep the children out. The garden began to die and flowers stopped blooming. The giant saw this and was filled with regret. It had been the children's laughter and warmth that had made the flowers bloom and had attracted the birds to the garden.

Then one day, some of the children crept back into the garden through a hole in the wall. Flowers once again began to blossom and birds once more arrived in the garden. The giant repented of his selfishness and once more allowed the children into his garden. He broke down the wall separating himself and his garden from the children who brought such life to his garden and himself. Spring arrived in the giant's garden and in his life.

It had been the children's laughter and warmth that had made the flowers bloom and had attracted the birds to the garden.

I began to see my work in Ayacucho with the youth in terms of helping to break down the wall of selfishness that society and the church can build to exclude youth from their full participation. Together with the students from the Department of Social Welfare from the university, I began a survey of the needs of University students. Despite my broken Spanish, I was moved and very impressed by the openness and warmth of the students and their cooperative spirit. I was beginning to feel that I had arrived and was begin to bloom. Spring was arriving in my life and ministry amongst the youth of Ayacucho.

As well as my work with university students, what remained very important to me was my work with the youth who were involved with the local parish. These were the youth I met at church and sang with in the choir. I listened attentively to their hopes and dreams. I soon realized that although these youth always participated in the parish and parish activities, there were no programmes for their on going faith formation nor programmes in human development and maturity. The youth also wanted to learn more about the Word of God and to grow spiritually through retreats.

Because of this lack of response to their genuine needs by the local parish, some of these youth had left the church. They felt abandoned and not welcomed by the church. Some of the youth were criticised by others for their absence from Mass. These youth had lost their joy, their vigour, their enthusiasm for parish involvement. They were no longer blooming and it left a feeling of winter in their hearts. Whenever I saw these youth, I remembered the story of the selfish giant and the wall he had built to keep the children out. For the parish to blossom and bloom and attract the birds, it needed the presence of these youth.

I decided to act. I invited the youth to a recollection day. Here we read the Bible together, painted, practiced liturgical dance, had a Taize prayer session and began to dramatise scenes from the Bible. The youth were touched and began to feel the beauty of the Lord's presence. I remember that St Columban had written, "Let Christ paint his portrait in you.". The Lord was expressing His Beauty in their hearts. Now the recollection day takes place once a month and the youth are asking for more.

Over time, I began to feel that we need our own space. With the help of my congregation, the Columban Sisters, we have

now opened the St Columban's Youth Centre. From here we run several programmes. With the help of youth from the Centre, I run self esteem programmes in the High Schools. I supervise a family therapy programme helped by interns from the university. I also have run various workshops for both the parish youth and the university students. I am developing a special programme for first year students.

Because of this lack of response to their genuine needs by the local parish, some of these youth had left the church. They felt abandoned and not welcomed by the church. Some of the youth were criticised by others by their absence from Mass. These youth had lost their joy, their vigour, their enthusiasm for parish involvement.

God is constantly inviting us into His Garden: a garden that is always wide open. Through our Youth Centre, the youth have been invited back into the garden, back into local parish life. My life in Ayacucho began with fear and excitement and God has prepared works and sent people to me. These are small steps but it's not lonely or difficult for me thanks to the youth.

Sr Erisa, a Korean Columban Sister, has been in Peru since 2010.



Photo: Sr Erisa

Matthew Bennis, Dirty Money: The True cost of Australia's Mineral Boom, Heinemann book, Random House, North Sydney, 2011, pp.296.

Judging the behaviour of resource extraction companies as immoral or otherwise is a huge task. A great help comes from Matthew Bennis' book *Dirty Money: The True cost of Australia's Mineral Boom*. It pulls together material in thirteen chapters to give a clear picture of the behaviour of Australian resources companies. Besides the well-known destinations and producers, Bennis introduces us to Australian ventures from Mongolia to the western Sahara, from exploiting rare earth minerals to phosphates.

Bennis is a journalist. He opens with a story from the Congo to set the tone of the book – Australian entrepreneur, silver and copper mining company, political friends, no taxes, soldiers 'friendly' to the mine kill over 100 locals, sells for windfall profits, moves on. So What? is the owner's comment.

The human cost of exploiting resources is alarming. There is intimidation, rape and murders; the loss of livelihoods, for example, less fish for local communities in Papua New Guinea and the Philippines as rivers and reefs are polluted; disregard for the spiritual meaning of undisturbed places. Lowered health outcomes among resource workers and their families are widespread even in Australia and Bennis names particular towns. Social disruption arises from the schedules for resource workers and their transient life style, or some singles camps tagged as

places of *Booze-Blokes-Brawls*. These human costs can be hidden in a financial analysis and town leaders often play them down fearing local jobs will be threatened – keep silent, keep jobs.

Average readers of newspapers gain glimpses of resource company stories without ever knowing the whole story. As a journalist Bennis' many sources help us follow through on stories from around the world and in Australia. Importantly, these stories are often intertwined as one resource company deals with another, brokers through dubious characters, merging or selling-on when trouble arises.

Greed, Pollution and Murder are words on the front cover of Bennis' book and cites examples in the behaviour of various Australian mining/energy ventures to back up the words. Examples are not just regrettable and unforeseen outcomes but calculated and repeated in new ventures – only profit counts. Corrupt and weak governments fail to pass and enforce adequate regulations, a dirty word for companies. Short term planning and election cycles render authorities open to improper influence.

The registration of mining/energy companies in tax havens, and granting tax exemptions are two outcomes of government weakness. Companies can sell to themselves off-shore at below market price and so undervalue their taxable income. In Australia, some banks investing

in foreign mining ventures do not adhere to the Equator Principles they have signed which condemn such practices. Governments seem impotent to make laws demanding companies pay a fair share in tax or rent for exploiting Australia's natural resources. The pressure orchestrated by resource companies' media blitz sabotaged the Rudd proposals.

Bennis explores the distorting effects of super-fast resource development on a nation's economy. First it creates a money bubble in just one sector that exasperates inflation and so nobbles other sectors, especially manufacturing. This leads to a skills shortage and rampant wages in one sector contrasting with unemployment in other sectors. In spite of impressions deliberately cultivated, the resource sector provides only 4% of Australian employment.

Examples are not just regrettable and unforeseen outcomes but calculated and repeated in new ventures – only profit counts.

The public relations machine of the resource companies also act indirectly to puff up their supposed benefits to society. Bennis returns several times to the manipulative role of philanthropy. There is great fanfare when resource ventures promise local communities hospitals and schools or when a local shorts club gains sponsorship.

But the benefits are often whittled down or do not eventuate. The Australian government can hardly object to such dishonesty when Benns judges it did a \$100 billion shakedown of East Timor over oil rights.

Benns' work includes material on uranium, coal seam gas, alternative energy, Chinese deals and scattered reference to the strings attached to Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade overseas aid and the corrective role of non-government organisation. He gives examples of ecological damage caused by resource companies. They have lied about fixing the damage by the oil spills off New Orleans and Ashmore Reef but, alarmingly, have Federal government approval for a more risky venture in the Great Australian Bight drilling at 4,500mtrs. They have lied about the 60sq.klms dead zone caused by Lihir Gold mine in PNG dumping tailings in the sea and may allow similar tailings flows into the Great Barrier reef. Uncaring about either human or environmental side effects, relegated to 'externalities' in economic terms by professorial experts, governments accept that 'best business practice' can sidestep these costs.

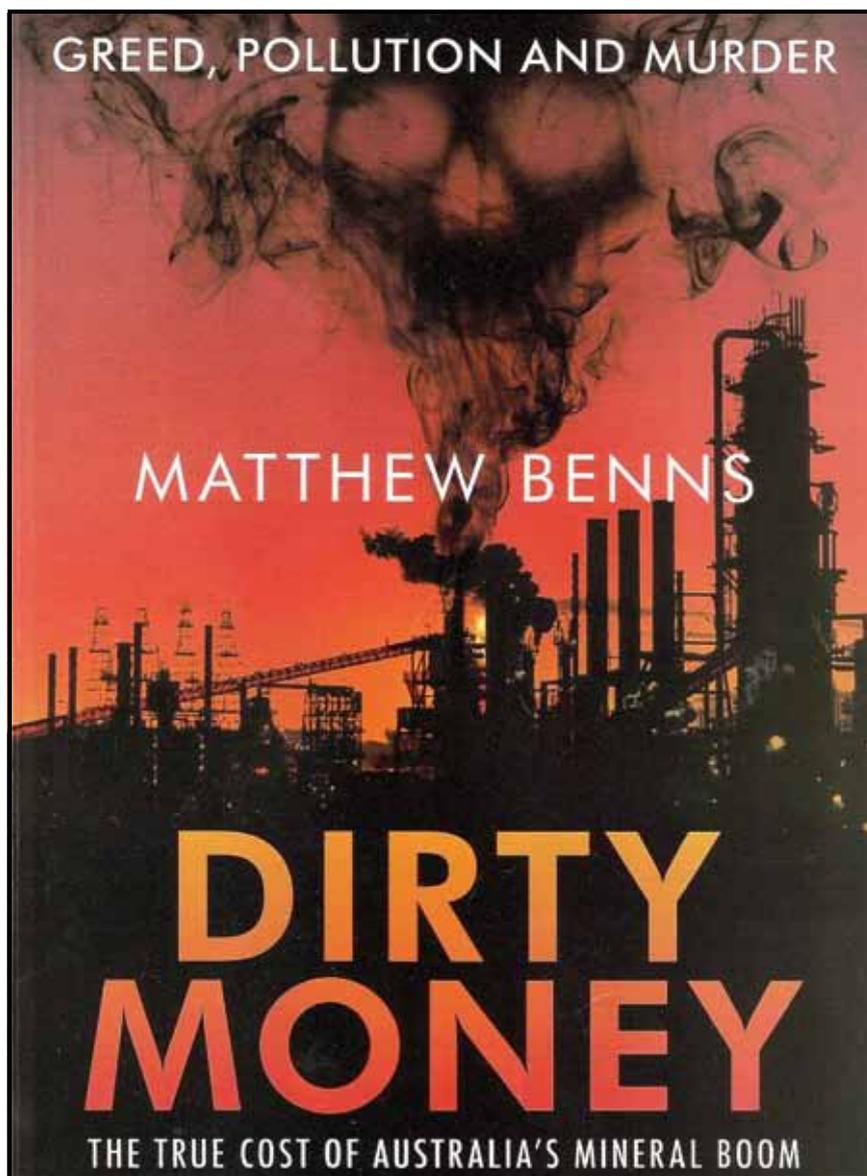
Benns concludes by referring to the 'elephant in the room' planners try to ignore - the limited supply and life span of resource extraction in Australia. In 1997 black coal reserves were calculated to last 190 years. Under pressure to mine more quickly, this has already been reduced to a 90 year assessment. Copper and silver will last even shorter times. He

pushes the question, is the nation squandering this limited bonanza on recurring spending? Or can we learn from Norway which puts resource source taxes in an off-shore sovereign fund?

Dirty Money is a book about ethics. It offers a clear help for us in exposing the malpractices of mining/energy

companies and the feeble regulation of the mineral boom by Australian governments.

Fr Charles Rue works at the Centre for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation at the Columban Mission Institute in Strathfield, NSW.



A cry for help

TEDDY COLLINS

Teddy Collins reflects on his relationships with the students and the problems that trouble them.

One evening I received a text message on my phone. I didn't recognise the number and wondered was it one of those unsolicited ad messages that are so annoying. It turned out to be from a student and read as follows, "Hi Teddy. I'm Yvonne. Do you mind my coming to see you sometime? I feel too suffering. I need your suggestion. I hope it's no offence."

I already had arranged to see a group of four students that evening so I sent a text telling her to come at 8.30pm. She duly arrived and I chatted with her about her family and general college happenings before asking her what was on her mind. She is a very timid girl from a rural province and has little or no self-confidence.

When I got the text I wondered has she just broken up with her boyfriend or perhaps she got word that one of her parents was ill. She began by saying she was due to make a class presentation that afternoon in the class of her Chinese teacher. She had prepared well and written out her words but was not permitted to use a text by the teacher. As she stood before the class her mind went blank as she suffered a panic attack. She was totally tongue tied.

The teacher saw her distress and suggested she make her presentation later. The other students performed and she was once again asked to come to the podium and give her presentation. Once again she failed and had to retire. She felt she had seriously lost face in the eyes of her teacher and classmates and was very distressed. She lives in a dormitory with three fellow students but was unable to share her suffering with them.

I listened as she elaborated on her feelings and tried to console her. I know the Chinese teacher as he was a former student in the M.A. class in Changchun University. I assured her that her teacher was very understanding and would allow her to make her presentation in the next class. She said she liked the teacher and found him to be kind but felt she had let him down and let herself down.

Eventually she calmed down and said she felt a little better as chatting had eased her anxiety. After she left I wondered how students from distant provinces (some have a 40 hour train journey to get to Beijing) can cope with the isolation of a big city. Next evening I had another group of students – all girls – and asked them who they shared their problems

with while in college. One said she talked with her mother about all her problems – including boyfriends. Another agreed that she also shared everything with her mother. A third student said she was friendly with her Chinese lady teacher and was able to talk to her. A fourth said she had an aunt in Beijing and could talk to her.

She had prepared well and written out her words but was not permitted to use a text by the teacher. As she stood before the class her mind went blank as she suffered a panic attack. She was totally tongue tied.

Yvonne had the confidence to visit me as I had given my mobile number to the students in class and said they could text me anytime if they wanted to see me to talk privately. Yvonne had been to visit with a group of her classmates earlier and so knew where I lived and how to contact me. On arrival in China I was advised by an American teacher to get the students to meet me in their free time as I would never get to know them from classroom contact alone. I have taken his advise and have found it all too true.

Fr Teddy Collins is a Columban priest teaching in China.



Photo: Bigstock.com

Standing with the victims

Columban Lay Missionary Beth Sabado works at the Hope Workers Centre. It was set up by the Columbans in 1987 to provide legal and moral support for foreign migrant workers in Taiwan, especially women who are often the most vulnerable.

One such foreign worker, "A-Hang" arrived at the shelter after being raped by the son of her employer. The efforts of the Beth Sabado and the Hope Workers Centre helped bring this man to justice and he was sentenced to a term in jail.



Photo: Bigstock.com

Your support for Columbans working in countries like Taiwan defending the human rights of workers can make an enormous difference in the lives of people such as "A-Hang".



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