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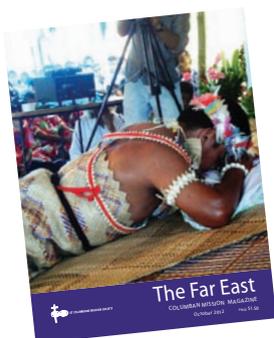
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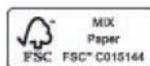


Cover: Taaremon Matauea prostrates himself on a mat during the singing of the *Litany of the Saints* at his ordination ceremony. (see pages 18-19).

Photo: Fr Francis Hoare

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From the Director

It is God's plan

Last month the Columban Mission Society held what we call a General Assembly. It occurs once every six years and as our Columban Constitutions say, *'it is a special moment in the life of the Society'*. Columban delegates came from around the world.

It was a time to evaluate the state of the Society. One revelation was that Columban missionaries are getting older in age, decreasing in number but becoming more diversified by nationality. A young Korean Columban delegate present was going to work in China after the meeting; a young Fijian Columban delegate was returning to Chile where he is parish priest of a vast parish; a young Filipino Columban who has an important role in seminary formation in the Philippines was returning to continue that work. So the former missionary countries are producing the next generation of leaders for the Society.

Celebrating the Eucharist together, praying together, supporting each other, a sense of communion with each other was pronounced as the Columban way to live into the future.

Three women were present at our meeting. They are the leadership team of the Columban Lay Missionaries and are our partners on mission. These women were from the Philippines, Korea and Fiji. Some theologians commented that the Church in the 21st century belongs to the laity. We have been working together for over two decades with our lay missionaries and it is our preferred way of doing mission.

It was also a time to plan for the future, to decide where our resources should be placed because we cannot continue to do everything that we have done in the past. On the other hand, we do not need to continue as before. One of our purposes as missionaries was to help Churches overseas mature until they were able to evangelize their own and other peoples. That goal has been achieved in the Philippines and Korea. It is a source of pride for priests that spent years, in some cases their lives, to know that that work is done.



There is a Latin phrase *'Missio Dei'* which means the 'Mission of God'. We are a part of God's mission for the world; the Church itself is in the service of God's plan. What is the Holy Spirit calling the Columban Society to do through the Church and the changed circumstances of our world? These are not easy questions to answer.

Columbans have been involved in ecology with a natural offshoot in global warming for many years; millions of poor people are at risk from this new phenomenon. Politically the issue is impossible but scientifically the evidence continues to accumulate. It is not only a political or economic issue but also an ethical and religious.

Migration is an experience we share with others; we are involved with workers in places like Taiwan where we have opened Hope Centres to assist migrants who are abused or need expert advice. The work of inter-faith dialogue especially with Muslims has been an important work for us also. We have a lot of experience in these areas and we are involved because the Gospel of Jesus Christ impels us to make a response to the struggles of his people, especially those who are poor and on the margins of society.

Celebrating the Eucharist together, praying together, supporting each other, a sense of communion with each other was pronounced as the Columban way to live into the future.

As we go to press:

It has been announced that Fr Kevin O'Neill from Geelong, Australia, has been elected as the new Superior General of the Missionary Society of St Columban. The Vicar General is Fr Arturo Aguilar from America and the Councillors are Fr Patrick Colgan from Ireland and Fr Darwin Bayaca from the Philippines.

Congratulations to Fr Kevin and his new team.

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

Fr Gary Walker
director@columban.org.au

Doing a 180° turn

FR DAN HARDING

This Mission Month edition of The Far East seeks to raise awareness that all Christians are called to be involved in the mission of Christ to the world.



Greeting local people in China.

All Christians must be missionaries

"I have been sitting here for hours worried that I might miss out on your visit. Thank God you've come. Come inside." This is a typical response from people in rural areas in Chile when mission teams from urban parishes visit these areas.

In Latin America the Continental Mission is taking place at the moment. Parishes are asked to do a 180° turn around in their attitudes and practices. They are asked to turn from a purely inward looking maintenance model of parish life to an outward looking missionary model.

A missionary parish seeks to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who hunger and thirst for God. It looks outwards towards the streets, the social, racial and economic divides, the injustices, environmental problems, the poor and marginalized.

For God's reign to break through into our world and our lives, the missionary parish must get out there, be seen, occupy spaces, become known and get involved.

Pope Benedict XVI's "World Mission Day Message" 2012

World Mission Day occurs this year on Sunday, October 21. In Pope

Benedict XVI's Message, he reminds us that all our dioceses, parishes and communities must become more missionary. *"We need to recover the same apostolic zeal as that of the early Christian communities, which though small and defenceless, were able, through their proclamation and witness, to spread the Gospel throughout the known world."*

Missionary activity grows out of a living dynamic experience of Jesus Christ. Out of this grows the desire to share the joy of this encounter with others. The Pope states it this way, *"The encounter with Christ as a living Person, who satisfies the thirst of the heart, cannot but lead to the desire to share with others the joy of this presence and to make him known, so that all may experience this joy."*

In proclaiming the Gospel, the Pope says that missionary action can take the form of *"an intervention on behalf of one's neighbour, justice for the poorest, the possibility of education in the most remote villages, medical aid in isolated places, emancipation from poverty, the rehabilitation of the marginalized, support for the development of peoples, overcoming ethnic divisions and respect for life in all its stages."*

Columban Missionaries

Mission Month is important for Columban Missionaries who today work in 14 countries. The Missionary Society of St Columban was founded as a foreign mission society, whereby missionaries went from their own country to another country. We take part in *ad gentes* mission, which means mission to the nations of the

earth. This involved moving across borders and boundaries of race, language, religion and social class to proclaim and witness to the Gospel.

In today's globalized world, the frontiers to be crossed by *ad gentes* missionaries such as the Columbans may be within one's own country or even city.

While the majority of Columban missionaries today work overseas, there are Columban missionaries in Australia and New Zealand crossing new frontiers and building bridges through interreligious dialogue, justice, peace and ecology work, ecumenism, raising awareness about world poverty and support for migrants and asylum seekers.



Helping to build homes in the Philippines.

SPECIAL EVENTS CONNECTED WITH MISSION MONTH 2012

There are several special events occurring during Mission Month that relate closely to mission.



The Second Vatican Council

October 11 marks the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. In the words of the Pope's *World Mission Day Message*, the Council "reaffirmed the need and urgency of the evangelization 'ad gentes' and placed it at the centre of the Church's identity."

The Year of Faith - October 11, 2012 - November 24, 2013

The Year of Faith opens on the 50th Anniversary of the commencement of the Second Vatican Council and the 20th Anniversary of the promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

During this year, Catholics are encouraged to walk through "the doors of faith" into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. *The Year of Faith* is a time of conversion, renewal, rediscovery and reconnection with the core of our identity and faith, Jesus Christ.

The Synod of Bishops on the theme "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith" - October 7-28, 2012.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is timeless but it must be transmitted in new forms of expression and with new methods. This transmission is particularly urgent today not only in far away countries but in countries formerly Christian but where now large numbers do not know the Gospel. It is time for a new evangelization. This is the theme that bishops from all over the world will be discussing at the October Synod in Rome.



Photos: Fr Peter Woodruff

Columban Fr Kevin Mullins and parishioners in Juarez, Mexico.

Parish life in the world's most dangerous city

Mexico - Corpus Christi Parish, City of Juárez.

Columbans are responsible for the parish of Corpus Christi, in the Diocese of the City of Juárez in Mexico. Being located on the border with the United States, Juárez is important in the lucrative drug trafficking business. Open warfare between different Mexican drug cartels and the Mexican Government has given Juárez the reputation of being the world's most dangerous city outside a declared war zone.

In the last few years, the number of executions of mainly young people by rival drug cartels runs into the thousands each year.

Columban Fr Kevin Mullins from Australia is the parish priest of Corpus Christi Parish and has lived in Juárez for over 11 years. He is accompanied by fellow Columban Fr Michael Donnelly from Ireland, a Korean Priest Associate, Fr Augustine Han and two Columban lay missionaries from Fiji,

Sainiana Tamatawale and Monika Lewatikana.

Corpus Christi Parish is located in Rancho Anapra, one of the poorest neighbourhoods of Juárez. Apart from the usual parish liturgical celebrations and catechetical formation programmes, the parish strives to improve the lives of its people through a wide range of educational and social programmes.

At the same time, however, the violence is never far away. Many drug related executions take place within the parish area. Earlier this year, Fr Kevin celebrated the funeral of 15-year-old Ivan, who had his right eye torn out, his throat slit and had been shot with three bullets in the head. He was one of three teenagers from the parish executed by rival gangs. Then just after Easter, he was called to pray over the bodies of two policemen friends who had just been

Three Colum

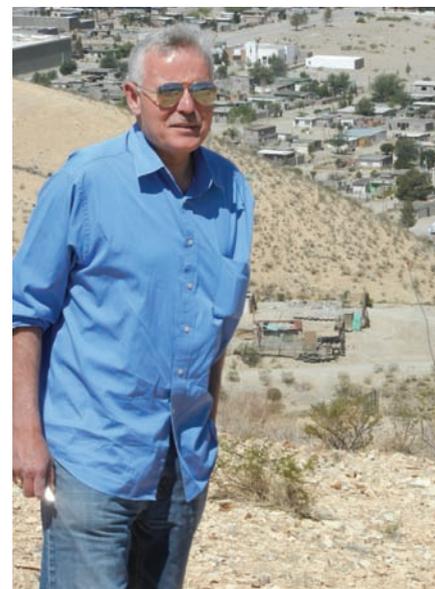
gunned down after Mass. In June, an ex-policeman was executed by rifle in front of his family outside their home.

A few years ago, 21-year-old Mario, a former member of the parish confirmation team and two other parishioners were brutally tortured, then stoned to death in the early hours of the morning in a gully near the church. The following day Fr Kevin was called to visit and pray at the execution site.

Around the same time 20 young men from the neighbouring parish of Santa Cecilia were also executed. Fr Kevin was called upon to help with all these funerals.

As a response to all the violence, the Corpus Christi Parish Mission Group with 80 members, has been organizing Masses for peace in the plazas and on a traffic roundabout nearby. These Masses are followed by processions through the streets to highlight the need and desire of the people for peace in the City of Juárez.

Edited material supplied by Fr Kevin Mullins.



Columban endeavours



Columban Fr Pat Cunningham at Mass flanked by priests and police.



The community of Chilean Wine Palms are protected by the local people.

Columbans in solidarity

Jeju Island, South Korea

Jeju Island off the southern coast of South Korea has been described as one of the natural wonders of the world. This UNESCO World Heritage listed site has a spectacular coast line, mountain scenery and a large tourist industry.

The South Korean government has decided however to build a naval base there. This means the destruction of much of its marine environment including some endangered species. Local spectacular rock formations that serve as tourist attractions will also be destroyed. The vast majority of Jeju islanders oppose the construction of the naval base.

Recently Columban Fr Pat Cunningham from Ireland and fellow Columban Fr Thomas Nam from Korea joined in a special Mass in support of the local villagers in their protest against the naval base. Bishop Ok of Kwangju and 50 priests concelebrated the Mass, surrounded by police, at the naval base construction site. Bishop Ok said that by building the naval base the government was using excessive force against the wishes of the local people.

They had not been consulted about the effect on their lives and had been excluded from the decision-making process. Protestant and Buddhist groups also hold religious ceremonies to protest the construction of the naval base.

Edited material supplied by Fr Pat Cunningham and Thomas Nam.

Learning to live together

Columban Ecological Centre, Valparaiso, Chile

The UNESCO World Heritage listed Chilean port city of Valparaiso has been called, "The Pearl of the Pacific" for its great beauty and charm. The hilltops and valleys that overlook the city and out to the Pacific Ocean are areas of rapid urban expansion, particularly for the city's poor. Twelve years ago the Columbans took pastoral responsibility for one of these hilltop areas.

This area contains an ancient community of around 250 Chilean Wine Palm trees. This is the last such remaining original community in the Valparaiso area. The individual trees can live for over 1000 years.

The pastoral task that Columban missionaries faced was how to create, in the local population, an awareness of caring for these slow growing and endangered local palm trees. These are important parts of God's creation. This awareness had to be connected to the usual liturgical, catechetical and human development tasks of a Chilean parish in a poor area.

The development of the Columban Ecological Centre within the parish provided a way to connect these areas. Where previously rubbish had been dumped, illegal drugs bought and the palm trees vandalized, the local people now seek to protect and value their ancient and venerable neighbour, the community of Chilean Wine Palms.

Edited material supplied by Fr Dan Harding

Priest of two continents

OBITUARY



Mons. Leo Grant was well respected in both Bathurst and Peru.

Hearing of the death of Mons. Leo Grant on Sunday August 5, the people of the Diocese of Bathurst and those of his former parish in Lima, Peru, must have felt a great sadness and loss. For in both places, he was well liked and respected. He was a priest of two continents.

Leo Grant was born in 1917 at Canowindra. He was 95-years-old when he died, having been a priest for 69 years. During that time, he had served God and God's people in Australia and Peru with great energy, commitment and talent.

After ordination in 1943, he worked in a variety of positions within the Diocese of Bathurst. He is especially well remembered for his work with parish youth. He organized monthly dances, picnics, football teams, special youth Masses and a club newspaper.

In 1964, Fr Leo was appointed Assistant Director of Catholic Mission in Australia. This enabled him to travel widely overseas, awakening a missionary calling within him. The

Second Vatican Council had called for the sharing of human and financial resources with the struggling Church in Latin America. Mons. Leo therefore decided, that despite his age, he would join the Columban Priest Associate Programme. This offers diocesan clergy the opportunity of working overseas alongside Columbans for a set period of time.

He was granted permission in 1968 by his bishop to go to Peru for three years. He ended up staying for almost 25 years.

According to a former colleague of Mons. Leo in Peru, Columban Fr Leo Donnelly, *"Mons. Leo was in his early 50s when he came to Lima as a Priest Associate. He did extraordinarily well for a man of his age in picking up Spanish."*

"The rest of us stood in awe of the man as a parish priest. Despite having learnt Spanish later in life, he nurtured a youth Mass on a Sunday evening into a football crowd of some 600 young adults..."

After four months of Spanish language school in Bolivia, Mons. Leo was appointed parish priest of Good Shepherd parish in Lima. He would remain there until his retirement at the age of 75 when he returned to Bathurst.

He began by founding a parish school which could also be used for Sunday Masses. As in Bathurst, he did great work with the youth.

"The rest of us stood in awe of the man as a parish priest. Despite having learnt Spanish later in life, he nurtured a youth Mass on a Sunday evening into a football crowd of some 600 young adults. Walking back to their homes after Mass they would cause traffic jams," explains Fr Leo Donnelly.

Over the years the population of the area of Mons. Leo's parish grew to 500,000 people. Today it is a separate diocese. The parish school that Mons. Leo founded is now a secondary school with over 1000 students and is a feeder college for a new university.

Mons. Leo is fondly remembered by his former Columban colleagues in Lima. Often tension would develop in the group over the best pastoral response to poverty and injustices. Fr Leo Donnelly says that here lies Mons. Leo's great contribution to the Columban group. Being well respected by all, he helped to mediate between the different points of view, so that all could be heard and respected.

May he rest in peace.

Edited material supplied by Fr Leo Donnelly.



Making mission month count

Columban Fr Oli McCrossan at the blessing of the foundation of a housing project in the Philippines.

REFLECTION

FR DAN HARDING

Mission Month is a time to raise awareness of the role of mission in our lives, in our schools and in our parishes. Here are some suggestions that may assist you during Mission Month.

FORM a small group to discuss the theme of mission. Reflect on Pope Benedict XVI's "World Mission Day Message" for 2012 and on the theme of mission in Sacred Scripture and in Church Documents.

INVITE a missionary to the parish or school as a guest speaker to share their personal testimony and experience of mission.

PLAN a vibrant liturgical celebration for *World Mission Sunday*, October 21, 2012. Invite a missionary to speak.

INCLUDE mission intentions in the Prayers of the Faithful on all the Sundays during October.

FIND out more about the Missionary Society of St Columban and how you can support their work as they proclaim the Gospel and seek to witness to it.

MAKE a contribution to the work of the Missionary Society of St Columban.

READ Columban articles at www.columban.org.au

CHOOSE one or more of the countries where Columbans work. Find out how missionaries seek to respond to the spiritual, social, economic, educational and health needs of the population. How do they promote the care of God's creation? How is the Kingdom of God becoming present in this country and what are the forces that oppose it?

INVESTIGATE some of the new missionary frontiers that Columbans and all disciples of Jesus Christ must encounter in today's world. Find out more about the following: the care of God's creation; dialogue with people of other religions; promoting justice and peace; the promotion of the family; respect for human life in all its stages; dialogue with the scientific community; support for migrants and refugees; opposition to the trafficking of people; overcoming poverty and opposing discrimination.

PRAY for missionary vocations before all parish meetings or classes.

PROMOTE subscriptions amongst your family and friends to a mission magazine such as *The Far East* and the *Columban eNews* to help spread awareness of the importance of mission.

JOIN the Columban Partnership Programme that seeks to establish a partnership of cooperation between parish and school groups at home and those of other countries where Columbans work.

BECOME familiar with the great missionary women and men of Church History.

PRAYERFULLY discern the pastoral and missionary needs of your parish or school. In what concrete ways can you respond to these needs?



Columban Fr Bernard Lane (back, centre with hat) with Columban Missionary Companions on mission.

Visiting neglected areas

Columban Missionary Companions (CMCs) in Peru.

Peru is a vast country of coastal deserts, the high valleys and plateau of the central Andes Mountain Range and the rainforests of the Amazon basin. Because of this great diversity, many Peruvian dioceses are unable to minister to their people in isolated rural areas or even in the shantytowns on the outskirts of Lima.

For the last 13 years however, Columbans in Peru have worked with a movement of committed lay people from their parishes who go on mission to some of the neglected areas of the country. This movement is the Columban Missionary Companions (CMCs).

How did the CMCs develop?

This year marks the 60th anniversary of Columban missionary service to the people of Peru. During those 60 years, the Columbans have set up and developed many parishes in poor areas on the outskirts of Lima. Not only have these parishes offered their people the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacraments, but also good solid formation in catechesis, liturgy, scripture, lay leadership, social justice, human rights and human development.

Over time a large number of youth and adult leaders emerged in Columban parishes. By the mid-1990s, the Columbans realised that these leaders could become missionaries in areas with little church presence.

The beginning

On December 13, 1998, lay pastoral leaders from Columban parishes were invited to a meeting out of which the Columban Missionary Companion (CMC) movement was born. In January 1999, the first group of lay pastoral agents began meeting for prayer and missionary training and planning.

In February 1999, the first CMC group spent three weeks with New Zealand Columban Fr Paul Prendergast among the Quechua-speaking people in his parish of Yanaoca, about 700kms south east of Lima. Fr Paul's parish is located high up in the Andes mountains with heights between 3500-4500 metres above sea level.

This was a breakthrough because committed lay leaders were now participating in important mission work in neglected and isolated areas. Until then, formal mission work had been the domain of missionary professionals such as priests and sisters.

The mission today

The 1999 mission set the pattern for the future development of the Columban Missionary Companions. The Summer School of Missionary Formation is held during the month of January to prepare for the February mission.

This was a breakthrough because committed lay leaders were now participating in important mission work in neglected and isolated areas.

The February mission focuses on neglected and isolated rural areas, small towns or the shantytowns on the periphery of Lima. It involves door to door house visitations, praying with and listening to the cares and concerns of the inhabitants and organizing workshops. These include Biblical studies, catechesis, social justice, leadership training, social and personal development. The mission also organizes different activities for children, youth and adults as well as a livelier and more welcoming Sunday liturgy.

Many Columban priests have accompanied the CMCs over the last 13 years of their existence. The present Programme Director is Australian Columban Fr Bernard Lane. He says that one of the important objectives for the CMCs at the present time is the importance of consolidating their identity as a Christian community.

Fr Bernard says, *"This year, one of our priorities has been to encourage our lay missionaries to feel that we are all members of a community in which we care for each other, get to know each other, reflect and pray together and also celebrate together. We want the community in which the members are seen to love each other to be our prime witness of our faith in Jesus Christ."*

He also says that the 2012 Summer School looked for qualified Peruvian laity to lecture and run workshops, thereby giving less prominence to priests and religious. This is to enhance the lay character of the CMCs. The 50th Anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council was also highlighted. The place of the Church in the world and the role of the laity were specially emphasized.

The February mission this year was to three parishes in the Diocese of Chimbote 370kms along the coast north of Lima. Columban seminarians from Chile and Peru joined the CMCs in this mission. Many of themes from the January Summer School were used in workshops with the local people. Fr Bernard particularly enjoyed his time with the people in one of these parishes up in the Andes mountains.

Today there are 50 active members of the CMCs, drawn from eight Lima parishes. About 75% of the CMCs are women. Because of the many pastoral needs across Peru, the CMC members will have a lot of work to do for many years to come.

Edited material supplied by Fr Bernard Lane.



Columban Fr Bernard Lane talks to Columban Missionary Companions.

A shantytown where members of the CMCs go on mission.





Photos: Fr DanHarding

Francisco and Catalina door-knocking homes in the parish.

Getting out there

FR DAN HARDING

Columban Missionary Youth Community in Chile.

"Since I was a little girl, I always dreamt of becoming a missionary and now I am one," says Catalina, an 18-year-old member of the Columban Missionary Youth Community in Chile. *"I just love belonging to a missionary community. I love the experience of getting out where the action is and where the needs are, to visit people door to door in their homes, to organize activities for them and to help the local parish come alive."*

The Columban Missionary Youth Community was founded in Santiago in 2009 so that committed young lay people could live out Columban mission spirituality and prepare for the Continental Mission. At their conference in Aparecida, Brazil in 2007, the Latin American Bishops asked for the organisation of a mission to cover the entire continent. Columban Fr Chris Saenz is the present Columban chaplain and Adriana Curaqueo is the Coordinator.

Catalina was one of the first to join. She comes from the Columban parish of San Matias, a poor area of mainly public housing on the southern outskirts of Santiago. Francisco who is 19 years old also joined at the beginning. He comes from an inner city diocesan parish. Catalina is finishing

high school this year and Francisco works in a small sound reproduction company.

Even though Catalina and Francisco were members of their local parish youth groups, they were both looking to belong to a missionary community that would actually go out on mission to neglected areas. When they heard that the Columban Missionary Youth Community was being set up, they were eager to join.

Members such as Catalina and Francisco are prepared for mission through various workshops on the Catholic faith, the church, relationships, leadership and social justice. Each year they have an annual retreat and the opportunity to participate in weekend missions and a longer eight day mission during the summer months.

Weekend Mission in the parish of Jesus de Nazaret

The first mission that the young missionaries took part in was a weekend mission in the Columban parish of Jesus of Nazaret, a poor area with a large shantytown on the south western outskirts of Santiago. Catalina tells us about her experience that weekend. *"We arrived around 7:00pm on*

"I just love belonging to a missionary community. I love the experience of getting out where the action is and where the needs are, to visit people door to door in their homes, to organize activities for them and to help the local parish come alive."

Friday evening and were warmly welcomed by the parishioners with a liturgy and supper. We were all billeted with parish families over the weekend.

"Saturday morning was devoted to a seminar with the parishioners on the missionary needs of the neighbourhoods of this parish. How was the parish responding to these needs? In the afternoon, we walked around the parish area to get to know the most difficult parts. We then attended Saturday evening Mass which was followed by a social evening.

"Sunday we spent door knocking in a problematic area of the parish with over 350 homes. We formed teams that went street by street. The parish had prepared a brochure about parish life and activities which we gave out to those who wanted them. Many of the people invited us in for a chat and a prayer.

"We also took down the names and addresses of people who wanted a follow up visit or wanted to know more about one of the parish groups such as the First Communion Programme, the Care and Concern group, the homework coaching group for children, a feeding programme for the aged poor and the youth group.

"The weekend Mission finished at the Sunday evening Mass. Since then we have visited the parish on a regular basis to offer ongoing support."

Mission Congress, Valparaiso

One of the great successes of the Columban Missionary Youth Community was their hosting during one week end of the First Columban Youth Mission Congress in the Columban parish in the city of Valparaiso. Eighty-five youth

from Columban parishes all over Chile took part in this congress and were billeted with local families.

The objective of the congress was to help youth from Columban parishes better understand Columban Mission spirituality and to prepare their parishes for the Continental Mission.

This is what Francisco had to say about the Mission Congress. *"The Mission Congress was an opportunity for all of us to learn how to respond to the missionary needs of our parishes. We led all the workshops and organized the event.*

"On Saturday, each parish group analysed the social, economic, ecological and religious reality of their particular parish. We also looked at the great changes taking place in society and in our world. How do these impact on us and our faith? On Saturday night we participated in the parish Mass which was followed by a special prayer liturgy.

"On Sunday, we reflected on how can we in our youth groups respond as missionary disciples of Jesus to these realities! Each participant took part in the five step workshops we had organized with these themes: a) A personal encounter with Jesus, through the sacraments, scripture, prayer, Justice, Peace and Solidarity Work and through Mary and the Saints; b) Personal and community conversion; c) Being a Disciple of Jesus; d) Living in communion with all of life; e) Becoming a Missionary.

The Mission Congress finished with Sunday Evening Mass."

Fr Dan Harding worked in Chile with the Columban Missionary Youth Community.

Catalina, Francisco and other youth missionaries visit each house.



Returning to Australia

FR GEORGE HOGARTY

Columban Priest Associate, Fr Joe Ruys completes six years of mission at the parish of "The Holy Angels of Huandoy," Lima, Peru.



Photo: Fr. George Hogarty

Columban Priest Associate Fr Joe Ruys leads a Mass in Huandoy parish, Peru.

The formation of lay pastoral leaders was a key feature of Fr Joe Ruys's six-year ministry as a Columban Priest Associate in Lima, Peru. He has now returned to the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Fr Joe began his ministry in Peru in 2006 after a mandatory five-month study of the Spanish language in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Completing his Spanish course, he was assigned to the large and sprawling parish of "The Holy Angels of Huandoy" on Lima's north side that consisted of 15 chapels and 110,000 people. He quickly inserted himself into the busy parish life.

Choosing to work in the fringe areas of the parish with the marginalized poor, he rented a small apartment in

a rapidly expanding housing project in one of these areas. Before long, however, he was appointed parish priest of Holy Angels parish.

As a result of his constant activity and quick pastoral visits to solve whatever problem or pastoral challenge that may have arisen, Fr Joe quickly became known among the people as "Padre (Father) Flash." The sight of him racing along on his trusty red motorbike at high speeds over the rough unmade roads going from one community to another is part of the folklore of the parish.

I'm sure that many a prayer would have been directed to the Holy Angels to keep him safe as he traversed the uneven gravel surfaces in his extensive parish.

Realizing the need for continuing formation in the faith for parish pastoral leaders, Fr Joe started a three week course during the summer break and also workshops on three Sundays throughout the year.

The last Sunday workshop which I attended covered such topics as 'How to manage leaderships roles in the community', 'Teaching Methodology for youth in Catechetical Programmes', 'Musical training and selection of music for Church choirs' and 'Scriptural Studies of Mark's Gospel'.

Over 450 lay people attended the formation session which began at 11:00am and finished with lunch around 3:00pm. I was able to attend two of the sessions. In the first, I noticed how parish leaders began to understand their leadership roles better. The second session offered good catechetical methods to be used in parish youth groups.

Looking back over Fr Joe's six years in Peru, one of the key aspects of his ministry was these formation programmes which helped parish lay leaders grow and mature in the knowledge and practice of their faith.

We thank Fr Joe for his six-year commitment with the Columbans in Peru. We wish him every blessing as he returns to the Melbourne Archdiocese, hopefully to a large migrant parish where he can use his many talents in developing similar formation programmes.

Fr George Hogarty works in Peru and was a missionary in Chile for many years.

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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 the Missionary Society of St Columban who died recently: also for the spiritual and the temporal welfare of all our readers, their families and friends.*

What can we do about poverty?

Mission Month is a time for us to become aware of the grave injustices and poverty that many people in other countries suffer. Anti-Poverty Week is held from October 14-20. What can we do about these situations? Here are some recent reports from "Agenzia Fides," a Catholic News agency.

Mexico - Of the 3.6 million children who work, 1.1 million are between the age of 5 and 13. Mexico has one of the highest rates of physical violence, sexual abuse and murder among children under 14 years of age.

Guatemala - One child out of two suffers from malnutrition.

Bolivia - About 5000 abandoned children live in shelters in the city of Cochabamba.

Paraguay - 90% of homeless children between 12 and 16 have addiction problems. Many have left their families due to their addictions to live on the streets and clean car windows in order to survive. In recent months, there has been an even greater number of children sleeping in the streets, market places and other places around the capital city, Asuncion.

Haiti - One out of 10 children is forced to work. There are 225,000 working children, mostly girls, between the ages of 5 and 17. These are the invisible and vulnerable victims of a modern day form of slavery.

Mexico - Hundreds of young Guatemalan children wander the streets of Tapachula, southern Mexico. They work for 10 to 12 hours a day for paltry wages, selling sweets on the streets. Some are exploited by family members and strangers. All are exploited by money lenders.

Indonesia - One third of the children under five suffer malnutrition. Of those who manage to survive, many suffer alterations in brain development and delays in the ability to learn, have poor immune systems and have an increased risk of diabetes, obesity, heart disease and stroke.



Indian boy working as a labourer at a construction site.

Mission Intention for October

That the celebration of World Mission Day may result in a new renewed commitment to evangelization.

From the Editor



How beautiful are the feet...

*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.
(Rom 10:14-15).*

Africa - More than half of African children are not registered at the time of birth and are thus devoid of any rights. They are born, live, die but do not appear to have ever lived. They are non-existent citizens.



What can you do to help?

"How can people believe in him if they have never heard of him? How can they hear about him unless someone preaches about him? And how can people preach about him unless they are sent? How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Rom 10:14-15)

All who believe in Christ and his Gospel are called to have beautiful feet. We are called to go out and bring this good news to others.

This *Mission Month* edition of *The Far East* has many stories of "beautiful feet" bringing good news. There are the feet of those who walk around dangerous barrios in Mexico or visit neglected areas in Peru or walk door to door in Chile to bring good news. We have the feet of those who help local people see the need to protect God's Creation in the form of an ancient community of Chilean Wine Palm trees.

There are the feet of those who travelled to a special Mass to protest the building of a naval base in South Korea.

We have the feet of three Columban missionaries returning home to Ireland each one after 60 years of bringing good news to the people of the Philippines. The feet of a newly ordained Columban priest from Fiji will bring good news to the people of Taiwan.

There are the feet of Priest Associate Fr Joe Ruys, recently returned home after bringing good news to the people of Peru for six years. In the obituary of Mons. Leo Grant we remember his feet that brought good news to the people on two continents.

At this point in your life, where is the Lord sending your feet so you can bring good news to others?

**A Mission Month resource on
Anti-Poverty Week can be downloaded
from our website:
www.columban.org.au**

Dan Harding

Fr Dan Harding
TFE@columban.org.au



Presenting the garland to Taaremon Matauea.



Columbans (L-R) Frs Patrick Colgan, David Arms, Francis Hoare and Charles Duster were present for the ordination.

Taaremon was ordained by Archbishop Petero Mataca of Suva.



Mission begins

FR FRANCIS HOARE

Fr Hoare tells us about the ordination of Taaremon Matauea.

*A*pplication

"Does that mean that I won't be accepted?" the young man asked anxiously. "I don't know. It's up to the Admissions Board," I replied. "But just in case they don't accept you, I want to assure you that it won't be because you are not a good person. It is just that your education has been disrupted and the seminary course is long and difficult."

I had given feedback after psychological tests to Taaremon Matauea, a shy young man from Rabi Island, Fiji, who had applied to become a Columban missionary priest. During his secondary school days the only school bus on his small island stopped running because someone on the Rabi Council had absconded with the money.

Taaremon now had to walk for over an hour to school. The lure of fishing and swimming with friends often seemed more attractive. As a result he had to repeat his final year to pass the Certificate exam and his oral and written English were poor.

*F*ormation

The Admissions Board accepted Taaremon but asked him to do an English course before beginning studies at the seminary. Taaremon applied himself well and got good results. Then after two years studying among Pacific Islanders at the seminary in Suva he was sent for one year to Manila, in the Philippines, to learn about the Columban Constitutions, to deepen his prayer and to do a 30-day retreat.

Arriving in a city of 10 million people was a big culture shock for a young man whose home island has just 4,000 people. But he survived. Pastoral work with hundreds of destitute people rummaging in the Manila rubbish dump, Smokey Mountain, helped him understand why justice for the poor is at the heart of missionary work.

Taaremon's next big test was to study theology at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. He had never seen snow but now had to adjust to the harsh mid-West winters. In Fiji he was used to studying with the support and companionship of many friends who would joke and tease each other. Columbans students in Chicago were few and all had different class schedules. Taaremon felt alone, overwhelmed and homesick. But faced with a crucial decision about his future he dug deep and he adjusted to this more individualistic style of living. He reflected later

that, difficult as this was, it helped him to mature – to stand on his own feet and to be responsible for his life.

Mission

Then came another test. Taaremon was appointed to his first mission experience (as a seminarian) for two years to Taiwan. *“The Chinese language will kill the poor fellow,”* I groaned to myself when I heard of the appointment. Indeed, he almost did give up. But his teacher seeing him sing and play the guitar at a concert said to him, *“I will teach you Chinese through music.”* Her new method suited Taaremon and he was able to learn the basics of Chinese.

In his second year in Taiwan he helped migrant workers who had been unjustly treated by employers. As a young person far away from his own family and culture he could easily identify with their sorrow and troubles.

After ordination as a deacon Rev. Taaremon returned to Fiji and ministered in Ba parish. In January and March this year the Ba area suffered massive floods which destroyed food crops and houses. So Taaremon ministered not only to the spiritual needs of the people of Ba but ferried food rations to villages and settlements around the town.

Ordination

Finally one journey ended and another began when on August 11, 2012 Taaremon was ordained a priest by Archbishop Petero Mataca of Suva on the grounds of Fatima Church in his home place of Rabi Island. Between 2000-3000 people attended from all over Fiji. Taaremon’s elderly parents had a place of honour. The choir sang hymns in six

languages. The young people of Rabi, in traditional dress, participated in the Gospel and offertory processions.

Taaremon promised obedience to the bishop, prostrated himself for the Litany of the Saints, received the laying of hands by the Archbishop and priests, and had his hands anointed during the ordination ceremony. He then changed from his traditional dress and was helped to don the Mass vestments to concelebrate the Mass.

Many of the Rabi Islanders did not sleep for two days in order to prepare the food for the hundreds of guests. The ordination feast was sumptuous and well organized. This was followed by traditional dances performed beautifully by local students from a primary school and from the High School. We, the audience, were amazed at the professional choreography and the perfect timing of the dance groups.

The next day Fr Taaremon said his first Mass before a large congregation. The homilist was the only other priest from Rabi Island to have been ordained. The celebration and dancing continued until late that night.

Fr Taaremon is a kind-hearted and generous young man. He has shown great faith and perseverance in overcoming the difficulties he encountered on the journey to priesthood. Similar courage and endurance will be required when he resumes his ministry in Taiwan in February 2013. May the Lord Jesus continue to hold him in the palm of His hand.

Columban Fr Francis Hoare first went to Fiji in 1973.



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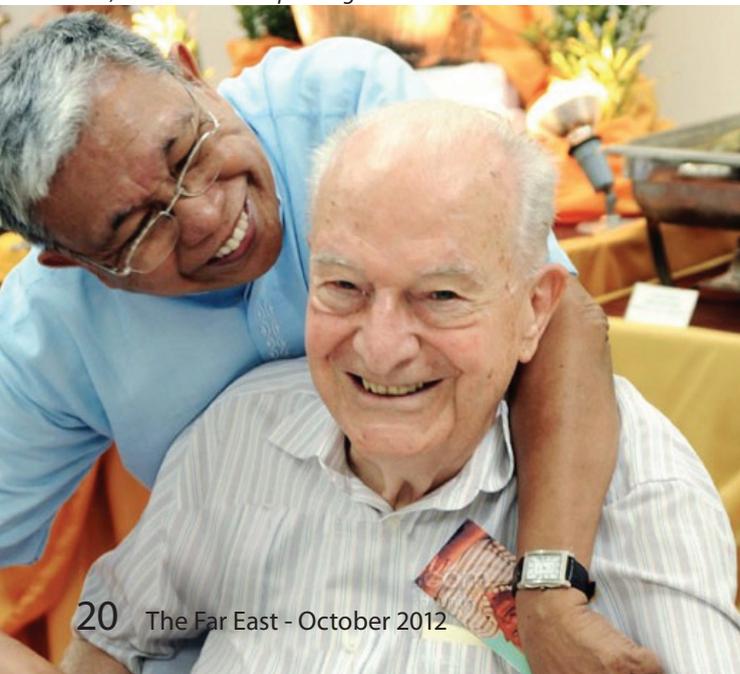


Columban Fr Donal O'Dea has spent his missionary life in the Philippines.



Columban Fr Fintan Murtagh was the parish priest of Immaculate Conception Parish at the time of his retirement.

Columban Fr Michael Sinnott and Bishop Tony Tobias of Novaliches Diocese, the former Bishop of Pagadian.



Mission completed

Three Columbans complete their mission in the Philippines.

Frs Fintan Murtagh and Donal O'Dea hand over the last Columban parish in Zambales and retire to Ireland.

The Columbans came to the Philippines in 1929 with the mission to strengthen the local Filipino Church in parts of the country where it had little presence. Once it was firmly established, the Columbans would move on to other areas needing help.

The province of Zambales is located north west of Manila, along the South China Sea. Zambales Province is one of several areas in the Philippines that were assigned to the Columbans as mission territory.

In May 1951, six young Columbans set off through flooded rivers and areas of guerrilla insurrection to reach what was to become the Columban District of Zambales. This would later grow into the present day Diocese of Iba, whose first bishop was Columban Bishop Henry Byrne.

Sixty years later in May 2011 the last remaining Columban parish of the original 14 parishes, Immaculate Conception Parish was handed over to the diocese by its parish priest, Fr Fintan Murtagh and his assistant priest Fr Donal O'Dea. In the 60 years of Columban presence in the Diocese of Iba, over 70 Columban priests have served at different periods of time. Today there are 23 parishes all staffed by Filipino diocesan clergy.

A large congregation of parishioners and friends along with the Bishop, clergy and religious attended the hand-over of the parish and the installation of the new parish priest. The Columban Regional Director in the Philippines explained to the congregation that the role of the Columbans was to come, build up the local church and then move on. He challenged all present to be missionary and to support those who like the Columbans go in their name to spread the Kingdom of God.

It is important to remember as well Columban Sisters and lay missionaries who made a distinct contribution to the mission especially in the areas of education, catechesis and social services.

Fr Fintan Murtagh as outgoing parish priest thanked the people for their support and asked forgiveness for any faults or hurts they may have caused. He warmly welcomed

"I realized that I was going home and not coming back. I will leave a big part of my heart in the Philippines and always remember the people that I met and helped me," he says.

the incoming parish priest, Fr Rodel, and asked the Blessed Mother to guide and bless him.

Both Frs Fintan Murtagh and Donal O'Dea are now retired at home in Ireland. Fr Donal spent almost 60 years in the Diocese of Iba. He remembers those years of Columban presence in this way, *"Those 60 years saw a varied and fruitful apostolate, reflecting the spirit of many Columban Priests and Sisters, some of whom had previously worked in other missions like China.*

"Many are dead. Others are in different ministries and walks of life. Each, however, gave a personal and unique contribution and are remembered to this day. For this Columban, at the hand-over Mass, I remembered other celebrations, some joyful, others sad, all involving the many Columbans, young and old, who graced this mission. They came back to life. It was a grace to be a small part of the story. This culmination made me, and I think others, feel that we were young once more."

Fr Michael Sinnott retired to Ireland.

In July 2012, Fr Michael Sinnott returned to Ireland after 58 years of missionary life, most of it spent in the Philippines. Deciding whether to retire in Ireland or in the Philippines was a very difficult decision for him to make.

"I realized that I was going home and not coming back. I will leave a big part of my heart here in the Philippines and always remember the people that I met and helped me," he says.

Fr Michael was ordained in 1954 and assigned to the southern Filipino island of Mindanao in 1957. *"I was delighted when I got my appointment to the Philippines and I've never been sorry ever since. It has been a privilege for me to serve the people of the Philippines."*

His mission however was not always an easy one. On October 11, 2009, he was kidnapped from his parish in Pagadian City by rogue elements of an Islamic militant group. They forced him to walk into the mountains of the Zamboanga peninsula despite having a serious heart condition. He was held captive and without his medication for a month. Government and Church officials refused to pay a ransom as is the policy.

Eventually through the negotiations of the rebel Moro Islamic Liberation Front he was released. He said he never felt any danger from his captors who had told him they would never kill a priest.

Upon release, Fr Michael wanted to continue his work in Pagadian particularly at the Centre he had founded 1998 for children with disabilities. However, he was assigned to Manila for the last two years. It was there that Fr Michael made his decision that his mission was now completed and it was time to retire at home in Ireland.

Edited material from various Columban reports.

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Our Christian Heritage

FR DAN HARDING

Mission Month is a time to discover more about our Christian heritage. October 28, 2012 marks the 1700th anniversary of the victory of Emperor Constantine at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. This battle set the stage for The Edict of Milan, the building of Basilicas, the Council of Nicaea, St Helena's visit to the Holy Land and by the end of the century, the selection of canonical books that would make up our Bible.

"The Catholic Church was founded by the Emperor Constantine," I was told by a young lady many years ago at the beginning of a course we were both undertaking. She belonged to a small fundamentalist Christian denomination that believed that the true apostolic faith was destroyed by Constantine and only restored when their particular denomination was founded in the nineteenth century. As the anniversary of Constantine's victory draws near, it is a good time for us to reflect on how this event led to a new stage in Church history.

On October 28, 312, Constantine defeated a rival emperor, Maxentius, at the Milvian Bridge near Rome. Before the battle, Constantine saw a cross in the sky with the words in Latin, "In this sign, you will conquer."

The "sign" most likely used by Constantine and his army on their shields and battle standards was the *Chi Rho* symbol. It is the first two letters in Greek for the word "Christ", an "X" and a "P" superimposed upon each other. The victory at the Milvian Bridge began the conversion of Constantine who was not baptised however until just before his death in 337.

Early the following year, 313, Constantine as the Emperor of the West along with Licinius as the Eastern Emperor issued the famous "Edict of Milan" legalizing Christianity within the empire. This ended two and a half centuries of intermittent persecution that Christians had suffered since the Emperor Nero blamed the Great Fire of Rome on the Christians in 64. In fact, one of the worst periods of persecution for Christians began in 303 under the rule of the Emperor Diocletian and lasted until Constantine's Edict of Milan.

The Edict of Milan granted all citizens of the Roman Empire the freedom to worship whatever God they pleased. All religions would be equally tolerated. That meant that the Church was able to recover places of worship and the property of Christians previously confiscated.

A new architectural form, unlike pagan temples and suitable for Christian worship was now needed. Constantine



and his Church builders adopted a type of Roman building called the Basilica for this purpose. Work soon began on the construction of the Basilica of St John Lateran, which would be the official seat of the Bishop of Rome. The construction of other Basilicas followed.

The Edict of Milan set the stage for one the most important Ecumenical Councils in history, the Council of Nicaea in 325. It was convened by Constantine. The original version of the Nicene Creed, used as our profession of faith at Mass, came from this Council. Also later in this century, the Bible as we know it finally came into being due to Pope Damasus and several Church Councils authorizing the list of canonically approved books that make up the Bible.

From 326 to 328, the Emperor Constantine's mother, St Helena, made an important pilgrimage to the Holy Land where she was able to help rescue many important relics. She also set about identifying and preserving the important holy sites of Our Lord's life. Constantine and his mother, St Helena, had the first Christian basilicas built in the Holy Land on the site of Our Lord's birth, burial and ascension.

Let's use this important anniversary to reflect upon Christianity's transition from being the religion of a persecuted minority within the Empire to becoming the religion of the Empire. At last Christians were free to openly build their places of worship, define their beliefs in the form of a creed, identify and preserve the holy sites related to Our Lord's life and decide upon the list of authorized books that would form the Bible.

My mission here is done

Fr Donal O'Dea returns to Ireland after 60 years in the Philippines. Columban missionaries leave their home countries and go abroad to work with people of other cultures. Frs Fintan Murtagh and Michael Sinnott have also returned home.

Without the assistance of Columban benefactors our missionary priests, sisters and lay missionaries cannot fulfil their mission in foreign lands and the mission of Jesus Christ. Thank you.



Photo: Fr Donal O'Dea

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