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 فادر تھوماس (آئر لینڈ)  
 Date of Birth 17-10-1945 تاریخ پیدائش  
 Date of Ordination 21-12-1969 کامیٹنڈ تقرر  
 Date of Death 06-06-2010 تاریخ وفات  
 Columban Missionary in the Philippines, Ireland and Pakistan  
 بلور کولمبن مشنری خدمات فلپائن، آئر لینڈ اور پاکستان  
 The Lord asks only this: act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God  
 MICAH 6:8  
 خداوند تجھ سے کیا طلب کرتا ہے۔ یعنی یہ کہ عدل کو عمل میں لائے اور  
 نرم دلی ہو اور اپنے خدا کے حضور فروتنی سے پہلے جائے گا۔

  
**Rev: Patrick J. McCaffrey S.S.C.**  
 فادر پیٹرک (آئر لینڈ)  
 Date of Birth 18-03-1944 تاریخ پیدائش  
 Date of Ordination 28-12-1967 کامیٹنڈ تقرر  
 Date of Death 18-05-2010 تاریخ وفات  
 Columban Missionary in Fiji, Britain and Pakistan  
 بلور کولمبن مشنری خدمات فیجی، برطانیہ اور پاکستان  
 By this everyone will know that you are my  
 disciple if you have love for one another  
 JOHN 13:35  
 اگر تم ایک دوسرے کو محبت کرنا کہو گے تو  
 سب جانیں گے کہ تم میرے شاگرد ہو۔



ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY

# The Far East

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# The Far East

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**Cover:** Fr Liam O'Callaghan at the graves of fellow Columban's, Fr Thomas O'Hanlon and Fr Patrick McCaffrey, who have been buried with their people in Pakistan.

Photo: Siobhan McCaffrey

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# From the Director

## *Ash Wednesday and Catholic identity*



By the time you receive this issue of *The Far East*, Ash Wednesday will be a past memory for 2012. Many readers will have attended Church and received 'the ashes'. The priest or lay minister made a sign of the cross on your forehead with the ashes of the palms used at last year's Palm Sunday celebration.

Quite a few Catholics and other Christians will have worked, walked and talked through their day with a blob of 'dirt' on their foreheads which is highly unusual when you think of it from a secular point of view. For many Catholics the 'dirty forehead' would trigger a reminder that it must be Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. For people not familiar with Christian liturgy it must just seem odd. But an action like this shapes our identity as Catholic people. Ash Wednesday proclaims to our society that we are preparing for Easter, that it is a special time of prayer, penance and almsgiving, a time to renew our faith. The 40 days of Lent culminates with Easter, when we proclaim that the Lord has risen.

*As missionaries we become conscious of identity being lived out through culture and ritual. We live our faith in a human concrete way; celebrating Lent as we do helps us with our identity as Catholics.*

In a similar way, later in the year Muslims will undertake the month-long fast of Ramadan when they do not drink or eat between sunrise or sunset. This fasting is a part of their identity as Muslims, they do this for God, to honour God just as we honour God during Lent. It shapes their identity both internally and externally as it does ours.

Our Catholic Identity is very important to us, it makes us feel 'at home' in the Church. Since the Vatican II reforms, quite a few people have not felt 'at home' in the Church. I still hear people say that when the Mass was in Latin, you could go to Mass anywhere in the world and feel 'at home'. On the other hand most people feel that they are more 'at home' with Mass in English. At present the Latin Mass is having a

resurgence; I hope that it allows people to be at peace and 'at home' in the Church, but I would not expect the majority of Catholics to embrace it.

As missionaries we become conscious of identity being lived out through culture and ritual. We live our faith in a human concrete way; celebrating Lent as we do helps us with our identity as Catholics.

An example of changing Catholic identity is religious garb. After the Vatican Council many religious sisters changed from their 'uniforms' or habits and adopted secular dress, proclaiming their religious identity with an insignia that was the symbol of their congregation. Some priests put their tonsured shirt or Roman collar in the cupboard and wore a cross on their shirt collar or shirt to show they were 'clergy'.

For some people it was a wonderful breakthrough removing a barrier between the laity and the consecrated or ordained. For others it was not nearly enough religious identification; they wanted or perhaps needed religious and priests to be set apart by the clothes they wore, they needed or wanted a stronger identification. This debate is still continuing.

Our Catholic identity is deepened by the practice of our Catholic faith. The identity of being Catholic is handed on by the rituals that we perform. A mother or grandmother takes her children to Our Lady's chapel after Mass to light a candle and say a prayer; the children imitate her. There is power in these actions. We need to continue to build and protect our Catholic identity so we can feel at home in the Church.

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

Fr Gary Walker  
director@columban.org.au



Photos: Siobhan McCaffrey

*Siobhan McCaffrey (left) and her brother Niall (right) dress in traditional Pakistan attire.*

# Following in Fr Pat's footsteps

SIOBHAN McCAFFREY

*M*y uncle, Columban missionary Fr Patrick (Pat) McCaffrey, died in Pakistan on May 18, 2010. His sudden and untimely death meant that no family members from home in Ireland were able to attend his funeral. My brother Niall and I therefore decided to make a pilgrimage to Pakistan over Christmas 2010 to follow in our uncle Pat's footsteps.

We arrived at Karachi airport in the early hours of December 19, 2011 and were met by Columban, Fr Tomás King. He was to be our host, chauffeur, guide and interpreter, along with Annette Menzes, a good friend of Fr Pat's. We then travelled to the parish of Matli in the Sindh Province where Fr Pat had ministered from 1984 to 1994. It was here that he had

initiated a housing scheme for parishioners from outlying areas to build their homes on church land in the town. We visited many of these homes that ranged from sturdy brick constructions to basic one-room mud huts.

Many of the people we met remembered Fr Pat with great affection and gratitude, as they had him to thank for their home. They were no longer bonded to a land owner. Many of the people disappeared into their houses only to reappear with the memorial picture of Fr Pat. His great legacy is in Matli. "He should have been buried here", said one lady.

Another lady we met was Sr Annalisa Samuel. She had worked with Fr Pat in Matli during his 10 years there. She



*As his family, we were aware of his wishes to 'die with his boots on' and to be buried among the people to whom he had dedicated his life.*

told us many stories about his selflessness and how he was "always ready to be with the people", bringing them closer to God, taking the sick to hospital, educating poor children and making provision for their needs. She also commented how "he never cared for his health."

When Fr Pat returned to Pakistan in 2009, he was appointed to Greentown Parish in Lahore. From Matli we travelled to Lahore on Christmas Eve and attended Midnight Mass there. Fr Pat had celebrated Midnight Mass here just one year previously. There, we met Fr Pat's colleague, Fr Liam O'Callaghan, who is parish priest in Greentown.

*We thanked the street-sweeper for trying to help our uncle. He apologised for not being able to save him and explained that it was his moral duty to try, but that God had decided to take him and there was nothing he could do.*

After Midnight Mass we were overwhelmed by the welcome we received. Everyone spoke so highly of Fr Pat and also of how deeply they missed him. On Christmas morning, we visited his grave, a beautiful spot under a large tree behind the Church compound in Greentown. Alongside our uncle's grave was that of his colleague, Fr Tommy O'Hanlon, from Co Kerry, Ireland, who had died in Lahore 19 days after Fr Pat. It's very poignant to see the two graves and it was also a very emotional experience for both of us, being the first family members to visit since his death.

We followed the lovely Pakistani practice of lighting candles and incense sticks and arranged them on both graves. For us, Fr Pat's faraway family, it is such a comfort that the graves are so lovingly kept by the parishioners. As his family, we were aware of his wishes to 'die with his boots on' and to be buried among the people to whom he had dedicated his life.

We visited his grave for the final time on our last day in Lahore, just as the sun was beginning to set. It was hard to walk away. What made it easier, for me at least, was that when we had arrived at the grave that evening, there was already a candle burning on Fr Pat's grave. He will not be forgotten in Greentown.

On our last day, we travelled to the town of Murree, a seven hour drive from Lahore, situated on the side of a steep hill, in the foothills of the Himalayan mountains. Murree was

where Fr Pat died. He had been visiting lay missionaries there. He had left the convent around 6:00am to catch a bus to Rawalpindi. He was rushing to catch the bus when he died. The only person around was a street-sweeper, considered the lowest of the low in Pakistan's caste system.

This man had seen Fr Pat holding on to the rails outside the compound and then fall back onto the road. He went to his aid but was unable to help. He raised the alarm at the convent and the nuns came.

We thanked the street-sweeper for trying to help our uncle. He apologised for not being able to save him and explained that it was his moral duty to try, but that God had decided to take him and there was nothing he could do.

Our 'pilgrimage' to Pakistan has been an amazing, unforgettable experience. We have many, many memories to treasure; of a beautiful country, its resilient people and of the warm welcome we received. We have also come away with a deeper understanding of our uncle's calling and what it was that drew him back to Pakistan (he requested this, his final posting).

A final word of thanks to all the Columbans in Pakistan who made us so welcome and went out of their way to ensure we truly were able to follow in Fr Pat's footsteps.







# Remote education

EAMON SHERIDAN

*Fr Eamon Sheridan reports on the "Remote Education Plan" in Myanmar.*



*These improvements have only been possible thanks to the support of Columban benefactors.*

From 1936 until 1979 Columban missionaries ministered in the Diocese of Myitkyina, Myanmar. During those years they worked hard to develop and strengthen the local Myanmar church but they were forced to leave in 1979.

Since leaving the country, the Columbans have tried to continue to support the Diocese. The Columbans always placed great emphasis on education and during one period, they opened 47 primary schools, six middle schools and four high schools.

One important part of the educational legacy that the Columbans left behind was a series of "Boarding Houses". These Boarding Houses were developed as a concrete response to the situation of children in remote areas. Due to the large distances involved, children in these areas had no way of getting to school.

The Boarding Houses offered these children food and lodging and the opportunity of attending a school in the neighbourhood. The families of the children helped maintain the Boarding Houses through offerings of rice and vegetables.

In 1965 the Burmese Government nationalized all Catholic Schools. The Boarding Houses were maintained however as a part of the mission of local diocese.

With the departure of the Columban missionaries, responsibility for the Boarding Houses passed to the Myitkyina diocese, who over time

found it very difficult to find the resources to maintain the Boarding Houses.

The diocese has the responsibility for employing staff who live with and supervise the students in the Boarding Houses. These people also offer extra tuition to the students in the evenings, especially for those preparing for the final high school examination.

In 2007 I made my first visit to Myitkyina and I was immediately struck by the run down nature of the Boarding Houses. The ones I visited were in an appalling state with the children living in terrible conditions. Many of them were only getting one meal a day. The boarding staff were often only a little older than the children themselves and could offer them very little help with tuition.

At the same time, these Boarding Houses continued to play an important role in giving a place for poor students from remote areas a place to stay so they could attend school.

After a conversation with fellow Columban Fr Eamonn O'Brien, who acts as a consultant to the Diocese of Myitkyina, three things struck me as necessary if we are to make a real difference in the lives of these children.

Firstly, we needed to renovate the buildings of the Boarding Houses which had greatly deteriorated over time. Secondly, we needed to

employ boarding staff who were more qualified and could offer better tuition to the children. Thirdly, it was necessary in some Boarding Houses to supplement the diet with meat.

In consultation with the local bishops, priests, lay people and Fr O'Brien, we developed a "Remote Education Plan" to accommodate these three aims.

We implemented this "Remote Education Plan" over the last three years and we have seen a great improvement in the renovation of the Boarding Houses. Many of the previous Boarding staff have now received professional training while new ones with better qualifications have also been hired. In the places where the food supplement was needed, there has been a dramatic fall in illness among the students.

These improvements have only been possible thanks to the support of Columban benefactors.

As the civil war continues, some of the Boarding Houses have been closed. However, better quality education remains the key for these children to have a brighter future. It's a joy to see the thirst for learning that these young people have. In a small way we are offering them an opportunity that they would not otherwise have.

We thank our benefactors for their continued support.

---

*Fr Eamon Sheridan is currently on the Columban General Council in Hong Kong.*



*Fr Eamon Sheridan in a classroom with some of the children.*





Photo: iShockphoto.com

# Courage to live a Lent

WARREN KINNE

*B*efore the great Feast of Easter when we celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Church goes through a period of preparation by prayer and fasting. We call this Lent. In the northern hemisphere, where Christianity started, it was celebrated in Spring and slowly, throughout that time, the dead of winter burst forth into the luxuriance of new growth, signifying life and the resurrection.

Xiao Ai is a young friend of mine. She was left at the steps of a convent about seven years ago in a remote

village of Shan Xi Province. She was born with clubbed feet and abandoned. Xiao was brought to Shanghai where a group of foreigners provided money and logistical support for multiple operations.

During that period she was taken in by a family who took great care of her and eventually wanted to adopt her as their own. However there were many hurdles to be overcome. Xiao Ai did not have any identification as the convent was not a registered orphanage and so the convent was not in a position to register her.

Indeed people could only guess at her actual birth date. She was really a “non-person”.

After years of effort Xiao Ai has had all her paperwork completed and she now has a Chinese passport that will allow her to travel with her adopted family to Singapore. What happiness followed the long and anxious wait where a wonderful outcome was hoped for rather than to be expected.

Xiao’s struggle to me is a Lenten story that has become an Easter story; a fast that turned into a feast; a long



journey in a desert that ended in freedom; a near death that heralded a resurrection, a new life.

Shanghai is a city of tinsel and glitter. Most people recognize the image of its iconic buildings and towering structures along the Huang Pu River. There are myriad neon signs and a yuppie lifestyle for many ex-pats who ride the wave of economic frenzy. But it has its under-belly.

The construction of this city has been done on the backs of migrant workers - currently seven million - who have travelled to the city to find work. They left their villages and often their families in order to make a little money on construction sites and in restaurants and factories.

These people do not have residency permits in Shanghai and so they cannot settle down where they work. Often they leave their children back in the village in the care of grandparents

and may only get home once a year – during the Chinese New Year – to see how the family is going.

*Xiao's struggle to me is a Lenten story that has become an Easter story; a fast that turned into a feast; a long journey in a desert that ended in freedom; a near death that heralded a resurrection, a new life.*

Children can resent their absence and may not appreciate the sacrifice of the parent or parents in order to better the whole family economically.

In the cities where they work they do not have equal access to medical and educational opportunities that are open to the local population.

Their sacrifice is a sort of "lent" lived in the hope of a better future for their family. Like Xiao Ai's adopting parents

or the migrant parents, they in fact live the admonition of God in *Isaiah* 58: 6-7.

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him."

God brought the slaves out of the land of Egypt where they had made bricks for the ostentatious buildings of the Pharaohs. This same God made a covenant with them and subsequently with us that we treat each other differently because in one way or another we have all been freed. The worship of the market and the God of money has caused many to suffer. May we all have the courage to live a Lent that will usher in true life for the world.

---

Warren Kinne now works at You Dao Foundation.

## Resource for Lent

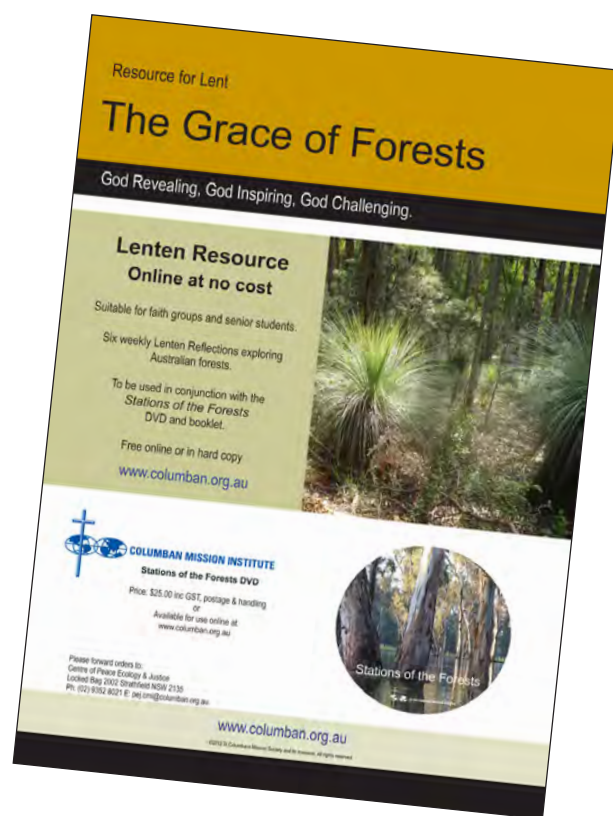
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For more information visit our website at:  
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# Don't feed your anger

NOEL CONNOLLY

*W*e are challenged to forgive those who hurt us and to forgive them 70 times seven.

I used to take this challenge in my stride. Personally I prefer to avoid trouble so forgiving people is easier than fighting with them. Then some years ago I was seriously betrayed by someone close to me. This time it wasn't easy to forgive because I was hurt in a way that could never be undone.

For a long while I fumed inwardly thinking about what I would do and say to get even. Besides pain of betrayal I felt that if I forgave the person involved I would be a fool, albeit a Christian fool. He would take advantage of me again and that somehow that would be weak when I wanted to teach him a lesson.

After some months of feeling bitter I slowly came to realise that the bitterness was hurting me more than anyone else. It certainly wasn't hurting the person I wanted to hurt. He was blithely ignorant of my rage. Then I read in the Book of

Sirach. Only the sinner holds on to anger and wrath, and the Lord heals us only when we stop nourishing anger towards another.

Later I read a parable about a Native American grandfather

*We must try not to contain our anger no matter how justified it seems. We must not feed the vengeful side of ourselves but encourage the compassionate, reasonable, respectful and open side. This is the way to happiness.*

who told his grandson how he felt about a tragedy that had befallen him. He said, "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One is the vengeful, angry, violent one. The other wolf is the loving, compassionate one." The grandson asked him, "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart, Grandad?" The grandfather answered, "the one I feed."



*"I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One is the vengeful, angry, violent one. The other wolf is the loving, compassionate one." The grandson asked him, "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart, Grandad?" The grandfather answered, "the one I feed."*

It's true there is often a fight going on inside our hearts between our vengeful, angry righteous side and our loving, forgiving side. If we keep running over the hurt in our minds and keep planning how we can get even then we will feed the vengeful side of ourselves and we will live bitter, unhappy, self-preoccupied lives.

It's this preoccupation with ourselves and what has happened to us which keeps us from seeing life from other peoples' point of view, which prevents us from forgiving and which isolates us in our misery.

But I think the Native American's words about not feeding our anger apply not only personally but socially. Our society and especially our politics are becoming increasingly angry. There is real venom in our national debates about all the major issues, the need for a carbon price, refugees and the economy. Too many of us are feeding the vengeful, righteous, angry, violent wolf.

So that constructive debate, openness and respect for the other's point of view is near impossible. This kind of anger will only polarise us more, make everyone miserable and prevent the constructive dialogue to solve our problems.

We must try not to contain our anger no matter how justified it seems. We must not feed the vengeful side of ourselves but encourage the compassionate, reasonable, respectful and open side. This is the way to happiness. There is only bitterness and a narrow world in front of the person who cannot forgive and cannot respect others.

So while politics must necessarily be competitive and our debates rigorous there is something dangerous and destructive about the present level of anger in our public life. We have to stop feeding it.

---

*Fr Noel Connolly was the Director of the Columbans in Australia and New Zealand from 2006-2011.*



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## *Remember the Missions in your WILL*

*We cannot take our earthly possessions with us, but we can so dispose of them that our good works will continue after we are gone.*

*A bequest to help missionaries being God's saving message to non-Christians is a practical way of showing our love for Christ.*

*Why not speak to your lawyer about it?*

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### **FORM OF WILL**

I give devise and bequeath to the Superior for the time being of St Columban's Mission Society (see local address) the sum of \$..... for the use of the said Society.



# Reduced to silence

PAT O'DONOGHUE

*Fr O'Donoghue gives us an update on the devastating flash floods caused by Tropical Storm Washi on the island of Mindanao on December 17, 2011.*

I arrived in Cagayan de Oro in the early afternoon of January 2, 2012. While the signs of the calamity that hit the people of Cagayan were visible from the air, the full extent of the damage hits you when you stand on the river bank or visit those places where whole neighbourhoods were simply washed away.

The human suffering also hits you as you listen to the terrible stories of what happened to the survivors. In truth, these stories reduced me to silence. Some of this trauma is being dealt with by survivors living together in "tent communities" where they can share their story and be comforted. Religious sisters and Columbans are helping in this way, using various techniques including massage to help people get rid of the bodily symptoms of stress.

There is a lot of pain and trauma not only for those directly affected but also for those who heard the cries of others for help and were unable to do anything. The story is more or less always the same. People awoke around midnight or shortly afterwards with water rushing into their homes and had to swim inside their homes frantically pushing out window shutters or screen doors and scrambling onto the roofs of their houses and pulling others up.

These people had the further trauma of listening to the desperate cries of those trapped in their homes and being powerless to respond as the water cascaded down sweeping away people and houses, all the while terrified that they too would be swept away.

*The full extent of the human suffering also hits you as you listen to the terrible stories of what happened to the survivors. In truth, these stories reduced me to silence.*

Those higher up on the banks of the river who woke to the commotion (as for instance the priests of the Cagayan Cathedral, whose house is on the river bank and whose ground floor was flooded) reported people clinging desperately to bits of their houses or other floating items as they were swept down the river towards the open sea.

Most heartrending of all is to listen to parents who frantically tried to gather their children to safety but were not able to hold on to all of them and then hearing their children screaming for help and simply being pulled away out of reach and safety. I'm not sure that time will heal all this, but certainly God can and the faith of many of these







## PHILIPPINES

people is both challenging and humbling. One eight year old boy who lost his mother and two of his siblings had found a photo of her and would look at it and say: "I will see you in Heaven Mommy."

*As I listened to the stories and simply held a hand or embraced the person, I was glad I was there and privileged to be with such people.*

One 16-year-old I met in Iligan stopped speaking when I asked him how he had survived – his house and all those of his neighbours were simply swept away with nothing to indicate that any house had stood there. He and his 18-year-old brother began swimming together and tried to help other members of the family. His brother is still missing; he stopped talking and just looked out towards the sea – unbearable grief and painful memories.

A father was holding four of his children until struck by the galvanized roof of a house. His legs were so severely injured that he could no longer swim. He tried to put the children onto some debris believing that was their best chance. He survived, the children did not. Another father clung tenaciously to his two children and got them to safety but both died shortly afterwards because of water inhalation. The cousin of Columban Fr Rolando Aniscal was among the victims and her two children are still missing.

There are the "happy" stories too: the child who was saved by riding on the back of a neighbour's labrador. Or my little friend Cedric, who is all of four years old, who clung to a floating refrigerator when he got separated from his parents. He was found by fishermen several miles away later that morning. He is one of seven children. One, younger than Cedric, died, decapitated by a log that hit him; the other, older than Cedric, is still missing.

A parish priest showed me photos of the party at the elementary school the day before the tragedy. There must have been a hundred photos of children having fun, making faces at the camera and performing in a show. Then he showed me a second set of photos of the aftermath of the flood with some of these children now dead or missing.


There is much more that could be added to this but I simply want to give you some "snapshots" of the situation as I experienced it. As I listened to the stories and simply held a hand or embraced the person, I was glad I was there and privileged to be with such people. May Jesus show his face to all those who are still suffering so terribly and may all of us who try to help be the face of Christ for others.

---

*Fr Pat O'Donoghue is the Regional Director in the Philippines.*







*Columban Sr Angela McKeever shares stories of the harsh reality of the prison system in Chile where a few may have a change of heart but many don't.*

*T*oday I was talking to a woman who goes twice a week to visit her son, Pedro, who is serving 10 years in prison. Listening to her I began to understand how the family suffers. Pedro is in a jail built 100 years ago for a maximum of 1,800 men. Today it holds 7,000 inmates.

Pedro's mother, like many other of the mens' relatives, began queuing at 2:00a.m to get in at 9:00a.m. In the rain, in the cold, they have no shelter. They bring clothes and food as there is never enough food provided in the jail. In spite of visitors being partly strip-searched - a degrading experience - drugs, cell phones and drink find their way inside.

#### ***A Repressive System***

The system is one of repression and punishment. Up to 30 men at a time sleep in cells that were built for eight. They pool the food and take turns to cook. When they wash their clothes and hang them up over the passage way, they have to keep watch that they are not stolen to be sold for drugs.

Close living conditions with nothing to do, abysmal toilet facilities, various mental and physical complaints create a climate of unrest, fighting, and consuming drugs. Some of the men spend their time taking irons out of the beds, walls and stairs to make weapons like spears to fight each other, which leads to many injuries. In one week 203 were murdered.

In spite of these conditions one is surprised by the depth of faith, hope and solidarity that is to be found there among those who have a change of

# Repression and punishment

SR ANGELA MCKEEVER



*One can never understand the mystery of life where there are some people who do a lot of damage and only fully realize it when they come to jail.*

mind, heart and spirit. Those who recognize they have done wrong, and they are few, want to change their way of thinking and acting; they want a new life. But sadly, for the great majority life in this prison is a brutal affair where many give up all hope of new beginnings.

### ***New Beginnings for Juan***

In another jail outside Santiago where there are 5,000 men, we said goodbye to Juan as he left for Bolivia after serving an eight years sentence. Over the last two years he worked in St Columban's workshop where he learned a lot about copper work at the arts and crafts course. He also took a course in solar panelling. He made one for me and what a treat it is to have boiling water from the sun.

Throughout the last year Juan took four men each month and taught them all he had learned. With patience he even taught some of them to read and write. Juan felt happy to be going; he was one of the lucky ones who had availed of the

opportunity to learn something he could work at when he got back to his own people.

The fact that he was able to share his experience with others helped him in some small way to repair some of the damage he had done by working for 18 years in drug factories in different parts of the world. In Bolivia he will begin a new and better life.

*In another jail outside Santiago where there are 5,000 men, we said goodbye to Juan as he left for Bolivia after serving an eight years sentence. Over the last two years he worked in a workshop, St Columban's where he learned a lot about copper work at the arts and crafts course.*

### ***Realising what damage has been done***

One can never understand the mystery of life where there are some people who do a lot of damage and

only fully realize it when they come to jail. As many say to me, "I had to come here to stop doing what I was doing when I was young; the dangers I was in and put others in." Many see the hand of God in this. It's an opportunity for some to seek help to change, but others continue as they are and refuse any help that is offered.

### ***What would Jesus do***

I ask myself, 'What would Jesus do?' How would He relate to the Pedros and the Juan's in these prisons? To the innumerable men spaced out by drugs, brutalized by violence, alienated from warm human contact, sunk in despair? Every day I hear Him say, 'I was in prison and you came...'

Maybe, in the end, that is all He asks of us - to simply be there for others.

---

*Columban Sr Angela McKeever has served in Chile for almost 30 years.*



*Prisoners working in St Columban's workshop.*



# 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.*

## **Government land grabbers demolish church property in Lahore**

The Catholic Archdiocese of Lahore has condemned the unlawful demolition of its property in Lahore by Punjab Government, terming it a criminal move of land-grabbing by the government functionaries.

The Gosha-e-Aman\*, (a home for elderly people, a girls school, a convent and a Catholic church) was demolished in the early hours of January 10, 2012 by police authorized by the government of Punjab.

The property has been land-grabbed by the government of the Punjab. The ruling party in the Punjab is the Pakistan Muslim League (N) headed by Nawaz Sharif whose brother is Chief Minister of the Punjab.

Controversially, government officials have claimed that no action can be taken until the return in early February of the Chief Minister of the Punjab from a visit to Germany and other EU countries.

The District Coordinating Officer (DCO), the highest civil servant of the district, supervised the demolition. Heavy machinery was used in the demolition

with a contingent of police present.

The DCO ordered workers and their families residing there to move out of the building and started demolition. The DCO and other police officials present at the time of demolition claimed that the property had been transferred to the Punjab government. No document has been shown to support the claim. No court order was served on the legal property holders (Lahore Charitable Association).

Bishop Sebastian Shaw, Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Lahore, stated that the Church had proof of ownership of the site dating back to 1887, and condemned the provincial government of Punjab, accusing it of "carrying out a criminal act of land-grabbing".

In an interview with Aid to the Church in Need on January 10 immediately after the demolition, Bishop Sebastian said he had summoned priests of the diocese to a crisis meeting and was having a High Court writ to try and reclaim the site. He said: "What the State Government of Punjab has done is a very brutal act of injustice.

Saying that the Church had not received prior warning of the demolition, Fr Emmanuel Yousaf, chairman of the National Commission



## **Mission Intention for March**

That the Holy Spirit may grant perseverance to those who suffer discrimination, persecution or death for the name of Christ, particularly in Asia.



# Editorial



## Accepting God's call

for Justice and Peace, said: "We have the papers to show who are the rightful owners of the site. The government has deliberately falsified the case." He said that the site is still in the name of the Lahore Charitable Association, a trust made up of clergy and lay people from different Christian denominations with the Catholic Bishop of Lahore presiding as chairman.

"The site is very valuable and the provincial government is anxious to profit from it."

This act of violence carried out by the Punjab government reflects a dramatic change in policy towards Christians and religious minorities in the Punjab.

It has been one year since the assassination, on January 4, 2011, of Salman Taseer, Governor of the Punjab who was outspoken in his criticism of the oppression of Christians and minority groups.

*\*The Gosha-e-Aman, Lahore is run by a board of the Catholic Church and managed by CARITAS Pakistan.*

"How are you ever going to settle back into life and ministry in Australia?" This is what a priest friend from Melbourne asked me when he visited me in my parish in Santiago (Chile), as I was preparing to leave and take up my new appointment as the Editor of *The Far East*. I must admit that this thought had crossed my mind on numerous occasions. It's true, I was very happy and fulfilled as a Columban missionary in Chile.

"Perhaps this is the way God wants you to serve Him now," my friend went on to say. "As Editor of *The Far East*, you can help make people aware of the incredible work of Columban missionaries throughout the world in so many countries."

So, here I am now back in Australia after 21 years as a missionary in Chile with my first edition of *The Far East*. While I feel it is a very hard act to follow the previous editor, and now Director of the Columbans in Australia and New Zealand, Fr Gary Walker, I nevertheless trust that God will guide and support me in my new role. I also have the support and expertise of lay staff.

This issue allows us to see the important work Columban missionaries are doing across the globe from Mexico to Pakistan, from Chile to the Philippines and much more. This issue also coincided with the important liturgical season of Lent.

Lent is about actively preparing ourselves to draw closer to God as we prepare for the Holy Week celebrations of Christ's Paschal Mystery and the Easter Season. Lent means trying to be less selfish. It involves actively trying to diminish the power of our individual and social egoism so that God and neighbour can become the centre of our lives. This can happen when we turn from our self-centeredness and try to live in solidarity with people such as those in the different articles of this issue victims, prisoners, the poor and the excluded.

*Dan Harding*

Fr Dan Harding  
TFE@columban.org.au



Photos: Fr Noel O'Neill

# City stops for exam day

NOEL O'NEILL

*Today the South Korean educational results are the envy of the world. In fact, an incredible 63% of South Koreans aged between 23 and 34 are university graduates.*

*The streets are cleared so students make their exams on time.*

South Koreans pride themselves on a competitive spirit. This has contributed to the vast number of Koreans attending elite American universities and to the country's consistently strong performance in economics and sports such as women's golf.

The Koreans have a hunger for education, especially higher education. South Korea is a part of the Confucian cultural sphere of East Asia where for centuries education was the surest route to social success.

On November 19, I made my way from home to work at the Emmaus Centre (a centre for intellectually challenged people). It was 7:00am and the street lights were beginning to dim. On the railings of the pathway I noticed big signs that read - *Please, no noise-Exam Day.*

Yes it was the day for taking the College Scholastic Aptitude Test (CSAT), the state administered university entrance exam which was being conducted all over the country with as many as a half a million high school students taking part.

Unlike other countries where such an exam is extended over a period of a week or two, here in South Korea it's confined to one day. Perhaps that is the reason why it

is considered such a unique day and why such unusual and somewhat bizarre regulations are put in force or recommended.

*The Koreans have a hunger for education, especially higher education. South Korea is a part of the Confucian cultural sphere of East Asia where for centuries education was the surest route to social success.*

All military aircraft are banned from taking off or landing during the period the students are taking listening tests in languages. Starting hours for public servants and big company's workers are pushed to 10:00am to lessen traffic congestion that would make students late for their exams.

Drivers of vehicles are expected to refrain from honking their horns when passing schools. Policemen with motorcycles and ambulance drivers are on standby to assist any exam taker who may be in difficulty getting to the exam venue in time.

As I neared the Emmaus Centre, I was greeted with cheering voices, accompanied by the beating of drums and clanging



*I reflected that although the people from the Emmaus Centre were not sitting an exam today, their extraordinary transition into society could never be measured by an exam.*

of symbols. It was coming from the entrance of the high school across from the Emmaus Centre. About 100 students, boys and girls, queued outside the front gate greeting with a roar of welcome each exam taker as they appeared on the scene.

The latter were mostly accompanied by their parents and you could see the anxious mothers pass on a sweet into the hands of their son or daughter to wish them well. Many parents, mostly mothers remained outside after their children entered the test venue, some clinging tightly to their Buddhist beads or the Catholic rosary beads. Others had opted to attend their local temple or church to spend the day praying for their exam taking child.

A special institute bus arrived and out steps the grim-faced teacher to be followed by a string of students who were all geared up for this competitive big game. Those students probably for the past year spent their whole nights at this special institute, after spending their day at their local school from 7:00am-4:00pm. Some of the supporting students standing outside held banners or placards

that read: "Just do it", Seoul University, others shouted "Sooneung Daebak," which means "hit the jackpot on the CSAT".

As I left the educational scene and began to stroll over to Emmaus Centre, my thoughts went back to those early years when I first began to offer assistance to the intellectually challenged in South Korea. The parents were so burdened with shame, that they came late at night to Emmaus Centre to seek assistance so that they would not be seen by anyone.

We do not offer academic subjects to the people at the Emmaus Centre, but rather the life skills to enable them to live independently in the community. Our emphasis is to let them know that they are loved and worthwhile.

I reflected that although the people from the Emmaus Centre were not sitting an exam today, their extraordinary transition into society could never be measured by an exam.

---

*Fr Noel O'Neill has been a missionary in Korea since 1957.*



*A Korean student is dropped off and is set for her exams.*



*Military guards are a common site in one of the most dangerous cities in the world.*

# Executions - a common event

KEVIN MULLINS

*A day in the life of Fr Kevin Mullins who works in one of the most dangerous cities in the world.*

*O*n the morning of November 27 2011, Leo, the full-time parish worker and I were crossing Juárez City, Mexico to meet with Manny Vargas, the editor of the Spanish version of the *Columban Mission Magazine*.

After a short stop at the bank, we continued on only to be passed by speeding police cars and military convoys with sirens blaring.

Soon enough, we passed by a tragic and frequently common-place scene; the recently executed body of a

47-year-old father of four who was stretched out on the street corner.

Hurriedly, we decided to at least attempt a prayer or a blessing for the victim concerned, not wanting to repeat the example of the priest in the parable of the Good Samaritan who passed by the injured man on the side of the road to Jericho. Although it is notoriously difficult to do so under the current security circumstances.

I parked our ute just in front of the recently shot-up funeral home which

belongs to the Mayor of Ciudad Juárez's family. We then attempted to pass the police line with its respectful and yet unhelpful automatic weapon-toting agents.

Whilst I was engaged in a rambling conversation with the police, Leo had fortunately gained access to a squad of soldiers who were more accommodating and who, in turn, sent us further along under and through the streams of yellow tape surrounding the scene of the



*I had already donned my Stole and philosophized about the cruelty and the violence of Juárez, surrounded as we were by troops, sobbing relatives, crackling radios and spiralling helicopters.*

execution.

Lo and behold... and Thank you God... we discovered there a younger policeman who had finished the Confirmation Course in our parish some three years ago. After the mutual greetings and the mutual... "What are you doing here?" He sent us on another 10 metres towards a group of masked investigators, who showed signs of impatience with us.

*I parked our ute just in front of the recently shot-up funeral home which belongs to the Mayor of Ciudad Juárez's family. We then attempted to pass the police line with its respectful and yet unhelpful automatic weapon-toting agents.*

Fortunately, two of the younger, female officers in charge of the crime scene took me much nearer to the body. At that moment, another officer took me back away from the body and just left me in a sort of no man's land.

I had already donned my Stole and philosophized about the cruelty and the violence of Juárez, surrounded as we were by troops, sobbing relatives, crackling radios and spiralling helicopters.

Once again the younger female officer came to the rescue and guided me through the Commandos and into the house of the recently deceased. I met with his wife who was in a terrible state. I prayed for her and her recently executed husband. She confided with me that at least she was glad that their four children were safely living in the United States.

The Press later reported that she had been wounded in the execution and that her husband had been shot as he stepped from his vehicle. All the above was untrue. She was uninjured and there was no vehicle anywhere near the crime scene.

I left the house and paused for a blessing over her husband's body. I then found the ever-resourceful Leo amidst all of the commotion and we continued on our way.



Photo: Fr Kevin Mullins

*Fr Kevin Mullins is the parish priest of Corpus Christi parish in the poor neighbourhood of Puerto de Anapra in Juárez City, Mexico. It has been classified as the most dangerous city in the world because of the on going wars between drug cartels. He has served there for 11 years.*



Photo: Bigstock.com



# Honoured by Pakistan

*Pakistan's highest civilian award given to Fr Robert McCulloch.*



Photo: Fr Robert McCulloch

*Fr Robert McCulloch will receive award at Government House in Karachi on March 16.*

## *Media Release as we go to press....*

Australian born, Columban Fr Robert McCulloch has been awarded the *Sitara-e-Quaid-e-Azam*, the highest civilian award that can be given to foreign nationals with the citation: "*For services to Health, Education, and Inter-Faith Relations.*"

Fr Robert McCulloch has been in Pakistan for over 30 years and is the Chairman of St Elizabeth Hospital's Administrative Council which provides quality medical services to the people of Hyderabad and rural parts of Sindh. He also runs a medical outreach programme in rural Sindh.

He set up the first home-based Palliative Care unit in Pakistan and initiated projects to provide educational, spiritual, moral and personal formation for 150 Catholic boys and young men in Hyderabad.

As a result, the Catholic Centre of Academic and the Catholic Youth Development Centre were set up.

His other major contribution included taking steps to preserve language of Tharparker known as Parkari Kohli.

During the floods of 2011 he arranged to provide food and medical treatment to over 1,000 families in Southern Pakistan and is building accommodation for the flood victims.

In a recent interview Fr McCulloch said:

"I have lived more than half my life happily in Pakistan. When the Governor of Sindh phoned me in Rome to give the news that I had been honoured by Pakistan with this award, I sat back and thought of all the people in different places

in Pakistan whom I have known and ministered to and worked with. And I said to myself: "Yes, we have all done good things together." Of course, I am personally honoured as a Columban priest in receiving the award but it is also a wonderful public recognition by the President and people of Pakistan of the presence and role of the Catholic Church in Pakistan.

In everything I have done, Bishop Max Rodrigues of Hyderabad has always given me support, kindness, encouragement and friendship.

I see the award as a public statement by the government of Pakistan that it rejects the current stream of anti-Christian feeling being pushed by Islamic fundamentalists and extremists in Pakistan.

I think the great challenge for Pakistani Christians is to never underestimate their goodness. Christians in Pakistan are very often labelled as a minority and told "you can't do that because you are non-Muslim". I have always encouraged them to reply "I can because I'm Catholic" and to be proud of being both Christian and Pakistani. They often have to face opposition and threats. As a priest, I am in their debt because they have inspired me to be full of faith in spite of everything that may happen. "

The ceremony will be conducted by the President of Pakistan on March 16 in Islamabad, followed by a reception at Government House in Karachi hosted by the Governor of Sindh.

---

*Fr Robert McCulloch is the Procurator General for St Columbans Mission Society in Rome.*

**Unedited version can be viewed at [www.columban.org.au](http://www.columban.org.au)**



# Remote Education

Columban Fr Eamon Sheridan visited the Diocese of Myitkyina, Myanmar in 2007 and was shocked by the run down nature of the Boarding Houses. The children lived in terrible conditions and many were only getting one meal a day.

A "Remote Education Plan" was implemented and there has been a significant improvement in the education and a dramatic fall in illness among the students. Your interest and support has given many young people an opportunity for a better life. Thank you.



Photo: Fr Eamon Sheridan

Your **kindness** and **support** make it possible for Columbans to meet and minister to many people. Your "stringless" gift helps us to respond with flexibility to the most **urgent needs** of people.



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