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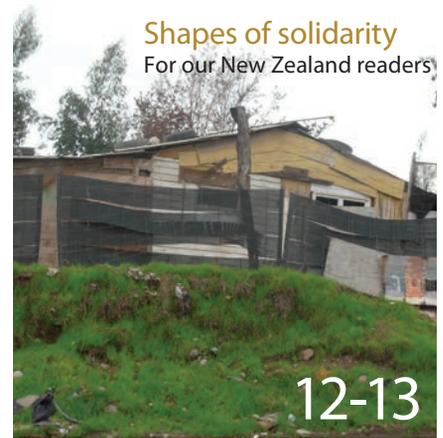
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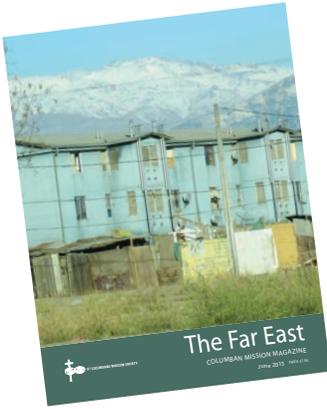
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Run down housing commission units in Santiago, Chile with the snow-capped Andes in the background (see pages 14-15).

Photo: Fr Dan Harding



From the Editor

Journeys that impact

*O*ur journeys can impact upon us. They can cause us to see the world from a different perspective and to make important changes to our lives.

Towards the middle of July 2013, 150 young Australians and New Zealanders from some 12 dioceses, along with several bishops and priests will travel to Brazil for the World Youth Day experience in Rio de Janeiro.

After leaving Australia and New Zealand, they will make their first stop in Santiago, Chile, where they will participate in a Mission Experience in one of four Columban parishes for the week prior to World Youth Day, Brazil.

If the young pilgrims are open to the voice of the Spirit during their time in Chile and in Brazil, this certainly will be a journey that will make a great impact on their lives.

In this issue of *The Far East*, we have several stories of journeys that truly impacted upon the lives of those who made these journeys. Chris Hochstetler works for the Columbans

in the United States at their headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska. Recently he travelled to the Columban parish in Ciudad Juárez in Mexico on the border with the United States. Nothing, however, had prepared him for the extreme poverty he would meet there and its impact upon him.

Whatever journey we may find ourselves on, let us be open to the voice of the Spirit guiding us and illuminating us on the deeper significance of that journey.

Irish Columban Sr Mary Fintan had arrived in Hong Kong en-route to Burma (Myanmar) in 1963. Due to changes in the political situation, she remained in Hong Kong for the next 50 years working in the hospital ministry.

When Korean lay woman, Gemma Kim Myeong Seon, met Columban Fr Noel O'Neill who works with intellectually disabled people in 1978, she says that she was not just looking for a job but

for a way of life. This had been her journey.

On a holiday trip back home to Ireland, Columban Sr Mary Dillon read about the escalating costs of funerals. This caused her to reflect on the stark funerals of the poor in Myanmar where she works.

All of us undertake different journeys throughout life - some physical journeys, some psychological journeys and some spiritual journeys, or a combination of all three.

Whatever journey we may find ourselves on, let us be open to the voice of the Spirit guiding us and illuminating us on the deeper significance of that journey.

Dan Harding

Fr Dan Harding
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Lessons from Mexico

CHRIS HOCHSTETLER

Fr Bill Morton (right, green jacket) outside a school in Anapra.

Nothing had prepared Chris Hochstetler, who works for the Columbans in the US for the extreme poverty, violence and tragedy he met on a trip to the Columban parish in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico.

A peculiar thing happened to me on my trip to our Columban parish in Rancho Anapra, Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, this past holiday season; I suppose one might describe it as an epiphany or awakening. I had no expectations for my trip to Rancho Anapra beyond the notions I held that were fueled and formed by news from the border I had heard over the past few years.

I was not ready for the extreme poverty in Rancho Anapra. I have been to some very poor places in the world, including the Middle and the Far East, but the poverty in Anapra is both profound and abject.

Thousands live in the shantytown, most in one room homes thrown together from junk wood, tarpaulins, bits of metal and the more fortunate with concrete blocks.

The streets are almost all dirt and those that have power get it through lines lying on the ground held

together with common electrical tape. Thousands of hungry, mangy and diseased dogs wander the streets in search of food. The desert climate is cruel with oppressive summer heat and cold winter nights.

Many of the families in Anapra are destitute migrant workers who come to the city looking for work in the foreign-owned factories known as "maquiladora." They work for as little as \$10 per day and try to support their families.

School is a luxury

The ticket out of poverty for the people of Anapra is education, but it's a ticket that often seems out of reach. School for the children is a luxury for these hard working people and often an afterthought to basic necessities.

Thankfully the Columban Fathers fund and operate a school in Anapra which is managed by a wonderful volunteer, Cristina Estrada.

What started out as reading lessons in Cristina's backyard has evolved into an actual building where reading, math, science and history are taught and, more importantly, learned.

I visited the school several times during my trip. On the first day, I waited outside the school before the start of class with Cristina and Columban Fr Bill Morton. I watched the groups of children ranging from three years old to pre-teens walk up the hill to the school through the sandy streets of Rancho Anapra.

The children were all smiling and for a moment I thought that they must be smiling just for the chance to go and play somewhere safe. However, when the learning started, I realized the smiles were for a genuine God given love of learning that is gracing Rancho Anapra's children.

The school is the most well-disciplined learning environment that I have ever seen. The students

I always thought that I knew what St Thomas Aquinas meant when he said "I would rather feel compassion than know the meaning of it. I would hope to act with compassion without thinking of personal gain." I am forever grateful to the people of Anapra, Ciudad Juárez, for revealing to me what St Thomas Aquinas truly meant.

were quickly divided into age and ability groups and Cristina and her volunteers took the children through their paces with a diligent, patient, but no-nonsense approach.

At the end of the day, the students line up at Cristina's door and in a polite and formal way they address Cristina and ask her for items that they need to continue their homework.

Some need a pencil, some need a couple of pieces of paper, some need a crayon; all must ask her in the same fashion. "Miss Cristina, may I please have two pieces of paper to practice my math?" After Cristina quizzes them on their plans, the item is delivered and the deal is sealed with the student's "Gracias, Miss Cristina." For the children of Anapra, school is quite obviously a blessing and the students treat it as such.

A woman of faith

On another afternoon Fr Bill and I were walking down a dirt street when a woman approached us. She had a brief conversation with Fr Bill and I was able to catch only bits and pieces as my Spanish is rudimentary at best. I did hear her repeat the name Jessica several times.

At one point, towards the end of the conversation, her eyes teared, but she quickly chased them away with a deep breath and a smile. She clasped our hands and left us. As she walked away, Fr Bill asked me "Chris did you catch what she said?" I replied, "No I did not."

The woman, Maria, had stopped Fr Bill to inquire if he had seen her daughter,

Jessica. Jessica would be 16-years-old this year, the same age as my own daughter, but she was either killed in the drug violence or abducted and sold into sexual slavery a year ago.

Maria asked Fr Bill if, by chance, he had seen or heard any news of her daughter's whereabouts.

When Fr Bill told her that he was sorry he had not, her tears came. Her parting comments to us were that she knew her daughter was O.K. because she has strong faith and believes that wherever Jessica is, God is with her. We all could learn from Maria's faith.

A community that gives thanks

On Sunday morning, Columban Fr Kevin Mullins celebrated Mass at the Columban Corpus Christi Parish. I anticipated a solemn ceremony full of prayers to end the violence, break the binds of poverty and for ultimate relief.

Once again, the people of Anapra took me to school. The Mass to be standing room only. People embraced one another and shared in the Eucharist with passion and joy. The music and voices that were lifted in praise to our Lord and Savior touched my very being.

These weren't people praying for something. These were people praying true thanks and giving praise for all that they had been given, true faith, true comfort in knowing that Christ is at life's helm.

I left wishing that Sunday Mass at my own church was as well attended, meaningful and full of joy.



Photos: Chris Hochstetler

A volunteer assists the children with their work.

Lessons learnt

I have considered myself a learned man, well educated, philosophical and spiritual. I visited Anapra hoping that I could bring some of who I thought I was and some of the lessons that I thought I had to bear, on the people's struggle.

Instead, the people of Anapra were the teachers, they taught me with the open, honest, and true earnestness of faith and understanding. They also filled me with the hope that comes with Christ's love for all of us.

I always thought that I knew what St Thomas Aquinas meant when he said "I would rather feel compassion than know the meaning of it. I would hope to act with compassion without thinking of personal gain."

I am forever grateful to the people of Anapra, Ciudad Juárez, for revealing to me what St Thomas Aquinas truly meant.

Chris Hochstetler is the Director of Fund Development for the Society of St Columban in Nebraska, USA.

Not just a job

After a 50-year span of missionary service spent happily in Hong Kong, first as a nurse and then as a pastoral care provider, Columban Sr Mary Fintan is retiring to her homeland in Ireland. This interview was originally conducted in Chinese by Ada Chau (A.C.) for the Kung Kao Po (Chinese version of RC Diocese of Hong Kong Diocesan newspaper, Sunday Examiner).

Photos: Sr Mary Fintan

Sr Mary Fintan says farewell to Hong Kong at her farewell dinner.

A.C.: When did you first come to Hong Kong? And, how did you travel?

Sr Fintan: I arrived in Hong Kong on February 7, 1963 having left Ireland in early December 1962. My companions and I travelled by boat, a journey of almost three months. I was initially assigned to our mission in Burma, but had to wait in Hong Kong for my visa. Meanwhile things changed for the worst in Burma and so I was then assigned to Hong Kong.

My first ministry was that of nurse in Ruttonjee Hospital. At that time many Chinese refugees were arriving daily, many of whom had TB. The death rate was high. It was always very hard for patients to accept the fact that they had been infected, and one had to take time to listen patiently to their concerns.

A.C.: How did you and the rest of the Sisters deal with such a difficult situation?

Sr Fintan: We were blessed early on to have two of our

own highly trained Sister-doctors who, with other medical personnel, worked tirelessly to find a cure for TB. Treatment was given free and patients' fears were lessened when they realized that TB was no longer a non-curable disease.

A.C.: You would have had many memorable experiences during these years but some must stand out for you as special?

Sr Fintan: Yes, indeed. I recall a particular child who had many serious illnesses during his five-year life span. He could not walk, could not eat, and had to rely on the oxygen to breathe; nevertheless, he lived happier than everyone around him. I never saw him cry. Though his life was short, it touched everybody in the hospital, including the doctors and nurses.

A.C.: Recently you contributed to a book on Pastoral Care published by the Diocesan Commission for Hospital Pastoral Care? What aspect of the work did you focus on?

Sr Fintan: I shared my experience of visiting children in the

When I first came to Hong Kong and started nursing in Ruttonjee I could not speak Cantonese at all. Our approach was that we would not evangelise while taking care of the patients. We would just let them know we were with them and we were there for them.

Cancer Centre and childrens' wards, something that has always been special for me. It was the courage, faithfulness and faith of the parents that inspired me as they watched their loved ones go through long periods of treatment. I will never forget how painful it was for parents watching their little darlings take their last breath. Words are inadequate at a time like this.

A.C.: Obviously, Sister Fintan, your nursing career had two very distinct phases.

Sr Fintan: Yes, indeed. I had been a nurse for 30 years before starting pastoral care work in the hospital. When I first came to Hong Kong and started nursing in Ruttonjee I could not speak Cantonese at all. Our approach was that we would not evangelise while taking care of the patients. We would just let them know we were with them and we were there for them.

I remember one elderly patient who had TB, he looked at me and asked, "Why did you leave your hometown and come such a long way to serve us?" I answered simply that it was because of Jesus. He then asked me to tell him more about Jesus and the Gospel and after some time he asked to be baptized.

A.C.: Sister, tell me a little about your family background.

Sr Fintan: I was born into an Irish Catholic family and we prayed the Rosary every night. I was educated in Catholic schools from the age of four and the calling to spread the gospel to others came when I was studying in high school. After finishing my high school studies, I told my family that I wanted very much to go as a missionary to China. So, I entered the Columban Sisters' Novitiate. After First Profession of Vows I did a four-year nursing course including qualifying as a midwife.

A.C.: And your 'second career', the Ministry of Pastoral Care? When did you move into that field?

Sr Fintan: Around the time of the redevelopment of Ruttonjee Hospital where I had been nursing for 30 years, many of us were becoming more aware of the importance of the mental health of the patients and their family members. So in 1991 I went back to Ireland and underwent further training, taking the Clinical Pastoral Education Program. The following year, upon my return to Hong

Kong, I started my pastoral care work in Prince of Wales Hospital. At that time the Pastoral Care organisation was still being done on a small scale here. But now, thankfully, its expansion has been very fast with many wonderful teams of pastoral care workers and volunteers attached to different hospitals across the territory.

A.C.: How did you find the transition from nursing to pastoral care ministry?

Sr Fintan: I believe that my path to pastoral care was a calling from God and I advise those who want to take part in this field that they must have commitment. Patients know whether you are sincere with them or not, during care.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks for the patients I have met. They taught me a lot and were a source of blessings for me. To me, what I have been doing these many years in Hong Kong was not a job. I enjoyed every minute of it.



Sr Mary Fintan cuts her farewell cake.

Listen to: Reflection: Each age has its tools for evangelisation

Each age has its tools for evangelisation

AMY WOOLAM ECHEVERRIA

Old school teachings now overtaken by modern technology. Social media for today's young people is the only means of communication.



Photo: iStockphoto.com

Modern technology is the new way of communication.

I'm old-school when it comes to technology. In primary school my teacher would send me to the office to make copies on the mimeograph (stencil duplicator) machine. In high school I learned how to type on a typewriter. In college I used the card catalogue to find books, and I did my research on microfilm machines. I used to carry change so that I could make a phone call from a phone booth if needed.

I can remember the time and place when I first heard about email and internet. The idea of sending a letter electronically and without a stamp was absolutely foreign to me.

In contrast, the students I work with in our Columban Centre for Advocacy Internship program here in the US cannot remember life without internet, Facebook, Smart Phones or iPods. They Google, Like, and Tweet their way through learning, relationships and life. There is a new language which like any other language must be studied, learned, and practiced if one hopes to have any fluency.

In the 10 years I've been in the US Columban Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) ministry much has changed about how we mobilize our grassroots base, share information

with our colleagues around the world and engage policy makers on the issues. For example, with technological capabilities like e-blasts (electronic mailing, sent all at once to a large mailing list) with the click of the mouse we can send letters to the entire US Congress sharing our Columban story and urging for an action.

Similarly, by posting a story on Facebook, which is linked to our website, we have the potential to reach thousands of supporters in a call to action. It brings new meaning to, Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation (*Mk 16:15*).



Photo: bigstockphoto.com

But why should we and the Church make the effort to learn and use this language? The same reason that Jesus told parables and that St Paul wrote letters, because each age has its tools for evangelization. The message is meaningless unless it can be spoken and delivered in a way that the audience can meaningfully hear it.

From story-telling and the written word, to radio, television, and now the internet and social media, the Church is challenged to both speak the language of its day, without losing its core message of justice, love, peace, and right relationships.

But why should we and the Church make the effort to learn and use this language? The same reason that Jesus told parables and that St Paul wrote letters, because each age has its tools for evangelization. The message is meaningless unless it can be spoken and delivered in a way that the audience can meaningfully hear it.

Jesus was a master story-teller. As Fr James Martin S.J., explains, "Jesus spoke in a language that people understood and used media that people found accessible. Using a mode of communication specifically designed to reach his audience, Jesus' parables were vivid stories that drew from everyday life.

Jesus spoke the language of the people of His time, used examples from their daily lives and offered it all in a mode they appreciated. And if he did not consider speaking in familiar styles as undignified, then why should we?"¹ -

(Martin, James, S.J., "Status Update: How well is the Church reaching out to people in the digital age?" *America Magazine*, July 2011).

This oral tradition is one that has kept the Church alive throughout history especially in times of persecution.

Considered the first missionary, I would add that St Paul could also be named the first blogger of the Church. Surely he would have Facebook and Twitter accounts! Through extensive letter writing and preaching, St Paul tirelessly spread the Good News.

Similar to today's world of "latest-news" communication, there was always a sense of urgency and timeliness in his message. Paul's love of Christ compelled him to the ends of the earth when he exclaimed, "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16)

Just as Paul's mission was to bring social change to his time through the spreading of the Gospel, today the Church's message is meant to bring transformation and healing to our world. Using social media like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are some of the ways we can challenge structures and change lives in ways that reflect our missionary calling to be cross-cultural.

As one social media activist writes, "The key work of (social) change continues to operate on a person-to-person level because relationships are how people make real change. Today, social media tools can disseminate messages quickly on platforms that cross boundaries of age, gender, race and economic status, making online organizing an effective method for gathering, inspiring and translating

collective power into common solutions."² (Choi, Jeannie, "A Web of Power". *Sojourners*. July 2011, p.20)

For missionaries, anything that can help break down barriers and bring people together is something that should be taken seriously.

Ultimately, social media is a tool for evangelization, an e-vite to bringing the Gospel to our world. As missionaries, we understand the importance of meeting people where they are and using the language that speaks to their hearts.

What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 Jn 1:3)

Nothing can replace a flesh and bone human encounter, but through modern technology, we can build communities that bring us into relationship, move us to action, and sustain us in our faith.

Congratulations Amy
As we go to press we have received the news of Amy Woolam Echeverria's new position as Central JPIC Coordinator, she will be based in Washington, D.C.

Gemma's story

GEMMA KIM MYEONG SEON

Gemma Kim tells her story of working with the intellectually disabled in Korea and helping them live with dignity.



Disabled people make a future for themselves.



I had recently completed a degree in sociology at Gwangju University. I was looking not just for a job but for my way in life. I had participated in the student protests in 1980, as had many of my companions in the faculty of sociology. I had witnessed the slaughter of hundreds of fellow students by government forces. Seeing my companions mowed down by guns held by other young Koreans, my own people, left me feeling shattered and struggling to make sense of life.

I got a job with a welfare agency run by a religious organization but did not like it as I felt pressured to embrace their religion. After a month or so I left that job and my sister, who had gone to Ecuador as a lay missionary in 1978, introduced me to Columban Fr Noel O'Neill. Fr Noel had just begun work with the intellectually disabled. At that stage he had no funds to pay staff, so we worked as volunteers.

At that time, Korean society didn't recognize nor address the issue of the well-being of the intellectually disabled. Fr Noel first began work with those who had been institutionalized by the state and lived like wild animals. We knew others lived with their families who were ashamed to admit they had disabled members and hid them.

With a simple survey form we went about the locality looking for these hidden people. One of the questions on the survey was, "If you knew your baby would be handicapped would you terminate the pregnancy?" Most, including Catholics and Protestants, said that they would, but Buddhists tended to say that they would not, as they have much respect for all forms of life.

I had already been quite disturbed by seeing our military and police shoot my fellow students as if their lives had no worth. It did not take me long to grow into the conviction that it would be worthwhile spending my life at the service of people whose lives were accorded little or no value by society. Stark experience challenged me and led me to the conviction that life is both precious and sacred, regardless of whether or not it is productive.

In about 1985 I joined a lay association called, "Apostolic Auxiliaries," which works in coordination with the local bishop. We commit to a celibate life, but each member finds his or her own way in life. We do not live in community, but we meet regularly for prayer and study and an annual retreat. At some stage of our lives we spend two years at our

international formation centre in Lourdes, France, to focus on deepening our relationship with Christ.

This lay association continues to sustain me in my work with the mentally disabled. It has helped me discover and live by the values that matter to me. I feel that I have grown as a human being by focusing my energies on the wellbeing and growth of some of the weakest and seemingly insignificant members of society.

If asked now what advice I might offer a young person embarking on life's journey, I would say something like, "Do not simply take on board what society may be pushing. Be wary of building your life around the quest for money, fame or power. Do not allow personal, physical beauty to become an obsession. Rather, discover your true values and through them find your own way to be fully human."

"If you knew your baby would be handicapped would you terminate the pregnancy?" Most, including Catholics and Protestants, said that they would, but Buddhists tended to say that they would not, as they have much respect for all forms of life.

In the course of the past 30 years I have done many jobs with the mentally disabled. I also did further studies and completed a Master's degree in social welfare in a university in Seoul as the course I wanted was not available in Gwangju. I have also lectured part time in a number of universities on work with the mentally disabled.

At present I am director of the Emmaus Workplace which provides a variety of jobs for the intellectually disabled. Our basic goal is to do what we can to enable them to feel that they are part of society. We help the disabled integrate in society as best they can. Most, if not all, have been treated as rejects, and we want to welcome them as members of society.

In the area of work, we have jobs for three categories and do all possible to help them move into the first category, which means they are able to do full time work and receive the legal minimum wage. In this centre there are eleven men and women in this category at present; there are 15 people in the second category, which means they can work for six hours a day and receive one third to one sixth of the



Columban Fr Noel O'Neill chats with Gemma.



Making curd at the Emmaus Centre.

legal minimum wage; in the third category there are 10 people in programs for about six hours each day, which are designed to help them cope with the basics of life and work a little. They receive pocket money.

What we do may be like the grain of sand on the seashore, but it's the grain of sand that we offer.

Gemma Kim Myeong Seon works with Columban Fr Noel O'Neill in South Korea.

Mid-Year Appeal 2013

In this issue of The Far East we are publishing the material for our Mid-Year Appeal. This appeal is inspired by the words of Pope Francis, "Serve the poorest, the weakest, the least important."



Prayer For Mission

Let us pray for Pope Francis as he begins this difficult task of leading our Church.

May the signs of hope shown by his example of simple living and concern for the marginalised, renew compassion and love in all people.

Let us pray that we respond to his message to "Serve the poorest, the weakest, and the least important."

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord.

Amen



**"Serve the poorest, the weakest,
the least important"
Pope Francis**

 Dear Far East Subscriber,



“Serve the poorest, the weakest, the least important”

With these words, from Pope Francis, I am reminded of how blessed we are to have people like you as partners in mission. You have shown compassion and charity to the poorest, the weakest and the least important.

Your donations provide for the spiritual and material needs of some of the most marginalised people in Asia, Latin America and the Pacific.

Your ongoing support as a *Far East* Subscriber keeps our missionaries on the ground and working to bring peace and hope to the people who need it most. Through them you enrich and improve the lives of victims of natural disaster, social and political oppression, and poverty.

Your donation to the Mid-Year Appeal will allow Columbans to extend their reach and tackle complex problems which others deem too difficult to address. Problems like the one identified by Columban Fr Warren Kinne...

When he came to China, Fr Kinne was shocked by the daily sight of men, women and children sleeping rough on the streets of Shanghai. Many of them were “internal migrants” who had come from regional China in search of a better life, only to be faced with prejudice, poverty and injustice.

Thanks to the support of generous benefactors, Fr Kinne formed the ‘You Dao Foundation’ and is now working to raise awareness about the plight of migrant workers, while supporting their health, education and wellbeing. While it is just a small step in the face of a massive challenge, Fr Kinne borrows from a Chinese proverb to say.....

“It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness”

Our Columban Friends are essential to our most important work and I ask for your support as we seek to raise much needed funds through our Mid-Year Appeal.

To make a donation to the *Mid-Year Appeal*, please return the coupon below in the supplied return envelope. Your donation will be put to work by Columbans reaching out to those in need.

Thank you once again for your generosity and role in our quest to bring the Good News of the Gospel to the poorest, the weakest and the least important.

With every blessing,

Fr Gary Walker
Regional Director
Australia/New Zealand Region

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Photo: Fr Dan Harding

Shapes of solidarity

FR PETER WOODRUFF

Fr Peter Woodruff (P.W.) interviews Fr Pat Egan (P.E.), who has worked in Latin America for the past 50 years, most of them in Chile.

P.W.: What were your early impressions of the Chilean Church?

P.E.: The Chilean Church was much more visionary than the English-speaking local Churches from which we Columbans had come. So we arrived to work with a local Church which had ideas, questions, ferment and a passion for change. We tuned in as best we could and, with the help of the local vision, began our work among the poor and marginalised.

P.W.: How would you describe the Columban contribution in Chile?

P.E.: Our main contribution was setting up the Church in poor and marginalised areas of Santiago, Iquique and Valparaiso. We would

move into an area in its early stages of settlement. We looked for suitable sites to establish community centres and promote the formation of Christian communities. We would do this in coordination with the residents of the area as we were always intent on promoting the leadership potential of the laity.

We helped people organise in order to meet basic needs in a communal way.

P.W.: How did you live?

P.E.: We lived in simple houses and shared our lives with our neighbours. We did not set ourselves apart. Eventually with the people we built chapels and encouraged the development of communities based

on the chapels. We also built bigger central churches which were more open to all and helped draw the chapels out of any inward-looking isolation. For our buildings we had local and foreign financial support.

P.W.: How practical were your programmes?

P.E.: In bad times, we helped organise soup kitchens. We introduced the idea of parish centres for the third age; these have now become a standard part of parish life in the archdiocese. Many of us helped tackle the endemic problem of alcoholism, especially among the men. In the early years, before all had a chance to go to school, we helped organise literacy classes.

In many of our parishes we ran short courses in basic skills, such as plumbing, carpentry and electricity, for which many men were most grateful. In fact, I saw some at class on evenings when everyone else in Chile was glued to a television screen watching some important international soccer match in which Chile were playing; for a Chilean, that really does point to serious commitment.

We would move into a developing area and work there until we had a viable parish up and running. We would then ask the Archdiocese to take direct responsibility for it and negotiate a new commitment for ourselves. We have done this in 28 parishes of the Archdiocese of Santiago and also in parishes in Iquique and Valparaiso.

Many of the social and educational activities also helped build community, as the residents of these new communities, who had flooded to the cities from the rural areas, hardly knew each other, and had no experience of each other's customs or history.

P.W.: How did you involve the laity?

P.E.: Parish development required setting up sacramental programmes run by local laity. We never brought in better-educated people from other parts of town, unless it was to help the locals equip themselves better to do whatever needed to be done. Such programmes were part of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan with which we always collaborated. We did not see ourselves as being here to do

our own thing, but rather to work with the local Chilean Church.

We would move into a developing area and work there until we had a viable parish up and running. We would then ask the Archdiocese to take direct responsibility for it and negotiate a new commitment for ourselves. We have done this in 28 parishes of the Archdiocese of Santiago and also in parishes in Iquique and Valparaiso. I myself have worked in eight different parishes over the years.

P.W.: You struggled for human rights?

P.E.: During the period of the military dictatorship (1973-1990), the Pinochet Government closed down all forms of popular participation, forbade meetings of more than three people and rode roughshod over the human rights of thousands of individuals and families. The Chilean Church took a strong united stand in favour of human rights, and Columbans working in Chile wholeheartedly backed our Church leadership.

When the Pinochet Government demanded that the parishes hand over a list of places where our communities met, naming those attending the meetings and the topics being discussed, Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez of Santiago ordered us to refuse such a demand. He insisted that acquiescence to such an intrusive Government directive would be the end of us. He also set up the special Solidarity Vicariate which, with its team of lawyers and researchers, was on the front line in the defence of human rights.

Some of our priests were expelled and all of us were deeply affected, especially when special Government



Columban Fr Pat Egan.

police raided our central house and shot dead Maria Reyes, a Columban employee, as they stormed the house. They took Dr Sheila Cassidy prisoner and tortured her.

In 1973 the Church was very well organised, which stood us in good stead and we were used to working in its established structures. Even today two of the Episcopal Vicars in the Archdiocese of Santiago are Columbans.

P.W.: What of your hopes for the future?

P.E.: We are a missionary society and we believe that the Church of its nature is called to be missionary, so we want to find ways of effectively inviting the Chilean Church to become more missionary. The relative geographic isolation of Chile, and the fact that the Chilean Church is still far from self-sufficient in priests, make our task more difficult.

Despite all the difficulties that slow our progress towards defining and implementing strategies to achieve our goals, I am hopeful.

Fr Pat Egan was ordained in 1960, has spent most of the past 50 years in Chile.



Fr Dan's report from Chile

FR DAN HARDING

Columban Fr Dan Harding reported on his recent visit to Chile where he was he was Co-ordinating World Youth Day (WYD) arrangements with parishes for the Australian and New Zealand pilgrims in July.

"I leave Chile with a good positive feeling about the up-coming Mission Experience. There is great enthusiasm and excitement in all the parishes about the coming of the pilgrims. The people are disappointed that so few pilgrims are coming and would have liked to have had a lot more.

Some people are fixing up their homes, painting rooms as preparations to receive the pilgrims, particularly the Kiwis in the parish of San Columbano where they will be billeted.

The Columbans have been very welcoming and have done everything possible to make the trip a success. The local Diocesan Authorities such as Bishop Pedro Ossandon are also excited about the visit and can see the value and importance of the visit.

All four Columban parishes that are receiving pilgrims have an Organising Committee in place with the rough drafts of the visit all finished.

Personally I have felt very moved and touched by the support and enthusiasm of the Chilean people, the parishioners and the Columbans during my time in Chile. At the same time, looking at the parishes where the pilgrims are going, the poverty seems worse than I remembered it to be, more rundown, depressing and shabby.

All of the parishes have meals cooked by parish volunteers each day for poor families, especially children and elderly people. The contrast between Chile with Australia and New Zealand for the pilgrims will be HUGE!

I leave Chile knowing that the preparations are well on the way and

that they are in the good hands of Amelia Cordero, WYD Co-ordinator Chile. She has done an excellent job basically keeping on the back of the parishes to make sure they were organizing well and preparing to receive the visitors. She will continue to visit the parishes and attend their meetings.

The people of Chile have great faith and courage and are ready to give a wonderful welcome to the Australian and New Zealand pilgrims. "

The things I saw in Chile

Another version of the Good Samaritan

I was walking with a friend of mine, Pedro near his house and we were about to cross a very busy street. Standing there on the footpath was a stray three legged dog, two legs on the back and one on the front. At



Housing commission units in San Mattias parish, Santiago, where Australian pilgrims will be visiting.

that spot we ran into one of Pedro's brothers, so the whole time we were talking with him we noticed that the dog wanted to cross the street but couldn't because traffic kept coming.

So Pedro picked up the dog, and it is a big dog, in his arms, and carried the dog across the street where it hopped away once placed down. Maybe it waits there every day waiting for someone to carry it backwards and forwards across the street.

The funeral

One night I was at a friend's house because it was his mother's 72nd birthday. People came to the door looking for some family members to go and say prayers at a wake for a man who had died the previous day after being prostrated in bed for three years. They were quite poor.

They could not find a priest from the local parish as it was Monday night (the night off) and no one from the local church could come. I ended up going with the family and doing a

funeral service in the house with the coffin and glass lid as is the custom. The relatives were very grateful.

Everyone, no matter who they are and how poor they are, deserve a good funeral send off from this life. It also gives the grieving relatives a lot of consolation to know that the deceased had been prayed for.

Life here is so exciting and different and full of all kinds of possibilities and unusual occurrences that one does not know what will happen next. One has to be ready for anything!

Columban Fr Dan Harding is currently the Editor of The Far East in Australia and New Zealand.



Columban Fr Dan Harding meets with the WYD organising committee in Valparaiso.



The three legged dog.

Columban Fr Willie Lee (left) is the parish priest of San Mattias with Fr Dan Harding.





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.*

Pope calls to end 'slave labour'

Alessandro Speciale, Vatican City

Pope Francis has called for an end to “slave labour” conditions such as the ones experienced by the workers in a Bangladeshi garment factory that collapsed in April leaving at least 400 people dead.

Celebrating his Labour Day homily in the Vatican's Santa Marta guest house where he resides, Pope Francis denounced that “today in this world there is slavery that is made with the most beautiful gift that God has given to man: the ability to create, to work, to be the makers of our own dignity.”

According to Vatican Radio, the Argentine pontiff said that “not paying a just (wage), not providing work, focusing exclusively on the balanced books, on financial statements, only looking at making personal profit... goes against God.”

Pope Francis said he had been struck by a recent headline in *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican's semi-official newspaper, on the day of the Bangladesh tragedy, “‘Living on 38 euros (AUD\$50, NZ\$59) a month’: this was the payment of these people who have died... And this is called slave labour!”

The pope touched on the same subject of slave labour later in the day, during the general audience in St Peter's Square attended by more than 70,000 people.

“How many people worldwide are victims of this type of slavery, in which the person is at the service of his or her work, while work should offer a service

to people so they may have dignity,” Francis said, speaking in Italian.

“I ask my brothers and sisters in faith and all men and women of good will for a decisive choice to combat 'slave labour'.”

- Source: UCA News



Bangladeshi's mourn the death of their father after an industrial accident.

Mission Intention for June

That where secularisation is strongest, Christian communities may effectively promote a new evangelisation.

From the Director

The wisdom of the grave digger



Recently I read an article of a conversation with an elderly grave digger who reflected on what digging graves meant to him.

For him, digging a grave was a final act of respect for the person who had died. His respect for the deceased person changed me in some way; it had never occurred to me to think of death and burial in the way he presented it. I will remember him when I officiate at funerals in the future.

We can learn from the grave digger's respect for others and if we become like him, we will negotiate small transformation in our relationships with people whom offend us or appear to be ungrateful. The best insight and challenge of this aspect of human nature comes from Frederic Ozanam, the founder of the St Vincent de Paul Society, when he said, "It is only if we love the poor that they will forgive us for our gifts." I did learn this truth in Jamaica when I worked there as a Columban missionary.

Thinking about the grave digger's article, brought back many memories of feeling empty after 'doing good.' I had to learn to let go of my ego; I learned to ask permission to be of help. I started to learn what true respect was; helping people was more complex than I ever imagined. I think the grave digger had true respect in his being.

This is how it happened. I had never met really poor people before I went to Jamaica. I realised quickly that parishioners did not appear grateful for what we were able to do for them in the parish. I never heard the word 'thank you' and I was surprised and angry by this ingratitude. We were only trying to help them. I spoke to the parishioners about it looking for answers since it was a constant in the culture.

Some of the parish leaders, parishioners, wiser than myself, who understood from their own experience how easily

people fall in and out of poverty and how people support each other in poverty, explained the dynamic to me.

- Receiving assistance can humiliate people because it reinforces their own knowledge that they are poor. They are at the bottom of society's ladder, where respect is generally given to people who are doing well.
- Poor people don't receive much respect. They notice the disdainful look.
- Then they are expected to say 'thank you' but do not.

What was happening? I became aware of my mixed motives; I wanted to help people but I wanted them to thank me! They never did but I was learning to give freely and learning to understand people who received little respect. They had the power not to say, 'thank you', perhaps the only power they had.

Thinking about the grave digger's article, brought back many memories of feeling empty after 'doing good.' I had to learn to let go of my ego; I learned to ask permission to be of help. I started to learn what true respect was; helping people was more complex than I ever imagined. I think the grave digger had true respect in his being.

My conclusion is that respect is to ask a person permission to give them assistance; they in turn recognise the goodness or transparency of our intention and accept it.

I believe that if Jesus and the grave digger met, they would have looked each other in the eye and known each other.

Fr Gary Walker
director@columban.org.au

Death is stark for the poor

SR MARY DILLON



Photos: Sr Mary Dillon

Sr Mary Dillon with HIV/AIDS patients in Myanmar.

When last on leave in Ireland, Columban Sr Mary Dillon read an article in the newspaper on the escalating cost of funerals today. She reflects on her experience of burials in Myanmar.

I was shocked when I read about the costs of funerals in Ireland. An exorbitant sum was quoted, several thousand euros, even for a simple, 'no frills' burial. Many people it seems spend a long time paying off the debt. Others talked of the cost of a grave, the advantages of cremation, the necessity of a wake or a meal after the burial, and so on. It was all very sobering.

What a contrast to my experience of burials in Myitkyina, Myanmar! For the past nine years here in Myanmar I have been working with the very poor of this country.

In the last year we buried approximately 48 patients from the 30 bed Home where I am. Most of these, men and women, died of AIDS. The majority had no one to mourn them, no family to grieve at their going.

Some left small children behind them with no one to care for them. All of them had sad stories, sometimes almost unbearable, as they struggled with the disease especially in their final weeks.

Six years ago we built this *Home of Hope*, with the help of many of the readers of *The Far East*. Even if I say it myself, it is a lovely place, simple but well structured, a light-filled space.

We wanted to give the best to the poor who suffer so much in their lives, struggling to eke an existence in a country that is so rich in natural resources, resources to which they have no access.

If the sick come in time, even though they have AIDS, they make a good recovery with the help of retro-viral drugs, good nourishing food and

care. Never fully healed, they are nevertheless able to go back to their families with new hope. Many of them live hundreds of miles from the *Home of Hope* so it is a great day when they set out on their journey back.

Over the years, because of the many deaths here, I have learnt a lot about the local burial customs here in Myitkyina. First of all I always have a good supply of wood at hand. When someone dies I tell our handyman, Bwak Naw; he looks at the body, and quickly fashions a simple coffin from plywood boards. The body is then brought in a three-wheeled pedicab to the temple.

After the temple prayers, the coffin is brought to the graveside, accompanied by the relatives (if any are present) and some of the patients. I always go with them. The

Over the years, because of the many deaths here, I have learnt a lot about the local burial customs here in Myitkyina. First of all I always have a good supply of wood at hand.

group are met by the graveyard master before whom the coffin is swung gently to signify submission of the dead person to him. It is then placed on bamboo poles over the grave and the graveyard master walks around it, bending to make chopping movements signifying the severance of the dead from all earthly ties.

The relatives may then sweep a towel over the corpse to gather his/her spirit to take back with them to the home place. When the body is put in the grave the mourners talk to it, telling their relative that he/she is now in a good place with lovely scenery, beautiful trees, rivers and lakes. The earth is then put in. A cross with the name and date of death is placed over every grave, regardless of the religion of the dead person.

Death is very stark for the poor here in Myitkyina. They have little time to mourn; they must return straight away to eke out a living for their family. You feel their pain, you know their grief, but you know they will get on with life, however wretched their situation.

After the burial all come back to the Home where, after washing our hands, we partake of coffee and bread. Then the relatives, if any, go back home, often a long journey.

There have been some heartbreaking cases where the only relative is a child. Before I left we had a 38-year-old mother of five children who made a nine hour train journey to reach us.

Her husband had already died from AIDS. Her eldest daughter, 13-year-old Bwak Ja, travelled with her, leaving the other children at home. Not one of them had ever been to school. The woman was seriously ill and sadly she died after surgery.

Alone now, her destitute daughter, this little girl of 13, stood in the Temple as the monks chanted. She stood at the graveside as her mother was put into the grave and wept as the final shovel of earth fell. She had no one at all, no relative, no friend at this terrible time. We took her back to the Home where she stayed for a few days and then I helped her to face her long journey home to join her four orphaned siblings. What future does this child face?

Death is very stark for the poor here in Myitkyina. They have little time to



Coffins are simply made from plywood.

mourn; they must return straight away to eke out a living for their family. You feel their pain, you know their grief, but you know they will get on with life, however wretched their situation.

Survival is the goal. How much does a funeral cost here in Myitkyina? About 100 euro. Nobody saves for their burial; somehow it all works out.

Columban Sr Mary Dillon has worked in Myanmar since 2002. She has also developed a home care health program for people with HIV/AIDS and established a respite house (Hope Centre), to enable people from distant places to avail medical care.



Patients at the Home of Hope.



Pampanga KGI branch staff rode on small boats to visit and assist affected members.

Photo: Marlou Concepcion

Micro credit takes a lashing

Columban Fr Sean Connaughton thanks benefactors and reports on recent disasters.

Unrelenting floods and typhoons in Central Luzon, Philippines during August, made 2012 one of the worst years ever for *KAZAMA Grameen Inc. (KGI).

The micro credit scheme was set up by Columban Fr Sean Connaughton in 1991 to provide credit services to low income and poor families allowing them to have credit to make a future for their families. As at December 2012 KGI had 31,000 members and 180 staff.

The extensively damaged area hit by the typhoon was also the area of KGIs operation. Staff spent many hours carrying important documents and property to higher ground.

Marlou Concepcion, CEO of KGI said that their main concern was for the

welfare of the 4,740 members who were adversely affected. Our small insurance is virtually closed down because of new Government rules.

Families reported that they could seldom go out. "Only the farmers could work some days to plant - planting only. Hence, no income."

Staff from the Pampanga KGI branch rode on small boats to visit and assist affected members.

With rivers, lakes and thousands of acres flooded, produce was ruined. The city market does not escape and nobody could buy wet rice or corn from a muddy field. This is a serious issue for both KGI and its members who have outstanding loans.

After consulting with the borrowers who could not pay their loans, KGI

invited family members to assist. Approval was only given if all members of the family agreed to help out.

Slowly life is resuming some normality, but it will take a long time to recover from this disaster.

Fr Sean recently wrote to thank benefactors for their continued support and to say that the KGI staff have done their best.

**Kazama is a combination of Grameen groups in Kalookan, Zambales and Manila.*

Fr Sean Connaughton has been a missionary in the Philippines since 1962.



Photo: Fr Shay Cullen

Young boys illegally detained in the Philippines.

Who will care if we don't?

Recently Fr Shay Cullen wrote to thank all those benefactors who have generously supported the efforts of *PREDA in the Philippines.

I write to thank you for your prayers and support for the efforts of *PREDA to carry out its mission to promote fairness, justice and freedom for all the oppressed and exploited people we can save.

Those who need our help the most are the children who are trapped and exploited in the sex bars and jails. They are victims of slavery at a young age. They suffer greatly and are traumatized and can be damaged for life if we don't rescue and save them. Your support assisted us with the following arrest and rescues.

Bar owners go on trial

In February, the *PREDA social workers organized a rescue of 13 young girls from the sex bars in Subic Town, 5kms from *PREDA. We got them to safety

and the bar owners were arrested and are going on trial. There were three underage children among them.

We had an Australian Film Maker and a US TV Media Crew to record the operation and it was shown on US ABC TV in June and is due to be shown on ABC TV Australia.

Caged like animals

The *PREDA social workers and myself went personally to rescue two young boys from illegal detention a few weeks ago and succeeded, but while there in the jail, I saw two small girls in a cage, like animals. They had nothing, no change of clothes, no beds, no toilet, just a bucket, no curtain, no privacy and adult men reaching through the bars from the joining cell are able to touch and hold them.

They were small 13 and 14 year-old girls accused of theft and kidnapping. This is not allowed by law even. At that young age they are not criminally liable. They had been in jail for three months and bad things may have happened to them. They were in danger. We immediately took action and got them out.

We are all one in this important work and we thank you for sharing with us for the abused children. We are trusting in the power of eternal goodness and that Jesus is with us. And you too are with us.

** People's Recovery Empowerment and Development Assistance Foundation, Inc.*

Fr Shay Cullen has been a missionary in the Philippines since 1969 and is the founder of PREDA.

Fukushima - A review

FR CYRIL LOVETT

On 11 March 2011, an earthquake registering 9 on the Richter scale, damaged Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, with its six reactors, and cut off the supply of electricity. The reactors shut down automatically. It was necessary to pump coolants around their cores so that the fuel rods would not overheat.

Unfortunately, less than one hour after the earthquake, the power plant was hit by a 50-foot-high tsunami which destroyed the fuel tanks for the auxiliary generators. Due to the resulting pressure in the reactors, three or perhaps four exploded, releasing a plume of radioactive steam into the environment, and releasing contaminated water into the Pacific Ocean.

Because Japan is plagued with earthquakes, the world presumed that they must be the experts in planning and building safe nuclear reactors. In the months following this huge disaster it became evident that

- a) the nuclear plant, its technical staff and casual workers, were in no way prepared, and were shown to be singularly incompetent;
- b) the senior management team lied to the Government and to the press regarding the extent of the damage and the amount of radiation released;
- c) there had long existed a cosy relationship between the Japanese Government, nuclear regulators and nuclear power corporations.

Columban Fr Seán McDonagh has written a compact, well-researched book which, beginning with *Fukushima*, gathers together in one place a great deal of essential information concerning nuclear

energy. He shows in detail how elements of the full truth about Fukushima have gradually filtered into the public domain in the almost two years since the disaster. The information has appeared in articles in technical journals and in the more serious newspapers.

He then proceeds to review similar nuclear disasters in the USA, in Britain, in the Soviet Union and shows conclusively that nuclear power is associated with a history of cover-ups, deception and incompetence. He gives a number of reasons for this. Nuclear power plants are enormously expensive to build and so depend heavily on Government subsidies.

These high subsidies allow the nuclear industry to exaggerate the competitiveness of nuclear-produced power in comparison to less risky alternatives. They are used to move construction costs, and liability from the operating risks, from the shoulders of investors to the taxpayer.

According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, this means that "taxpayers are burdened with an array of risks, ranging from cost overruns and defaults to accidents and nuclear waste management."

Various countries heavily dependent on energy from nuclear power have learned a lesson from Fukushima. Germany, France, and Switzerland have cancelled plans for new reactors, intend to phase out existing nuclear plants, and will in future concentrate on energy from renewable sources.

China, however, should cause us grave concern. In spite of its history of earthquakes, and widespread fraud in large building projects, it plans to build more than 50 new

FUKUSHIMA

The Death Knell for Nuclear Energy?



Sean McDonagh

nuclear power stations before 2020. Worse still, in a cost-saving measure, they plan to build their own reactors (called CPR 1000) based on the outdated technology of the early Westinghouse models.

Because of the relationship that exists between Governments, nuclear regulators and nuclear power corporations, it is not surprising that the nuclear industry worldwide is now trying to regain lost ground.

In a recent edition of a women's magazine published in Britain, a two-page ad paid for by EDF Energy entitled "Our Nuclear Future" touts nuclear energy as "supplying a source of safe, clean and affordable energy" and reminds us that "each new power plant creates thousands of jobs."

In years to come the consequences of Fukushima will be downplayed, and energy generated by nuclear power will once again be promoted as the only viable solution to our needs.

Columban Fr Cyril Lovett has been the Editor of the Far East in Ireland since 2003.

Being with the suffering

Columban Sr Mary Dillon has worked in Myanmar (Burma) for many years. Six years ago she established the Hope Centre, a respite home for people with HIV/AIDS.

Sr Mary and staff have been able to help many people improve their lives with medication, nourishing food and good care. They also look after those in their final weeks of life and assist families with funerals. Their work in giving dignity to the suffering and sick continues with the help of Columban benefactors.

Thank you.



Photo: Sr Mary Dillon

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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