

The Far East

COLUMBAN MISSION MAGAZINE

November/December 2015

Reflection - The light of hope
Advent and Christmastide.

Now we know St Columban
Travelling in St Columban's footsteps.

Columbans in partnership 2015
Extraordinary work in 2015.



ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY

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The Far East

November/December 2015

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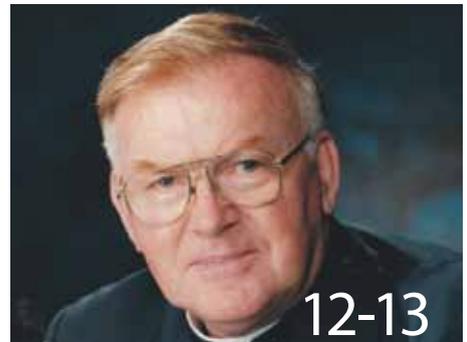
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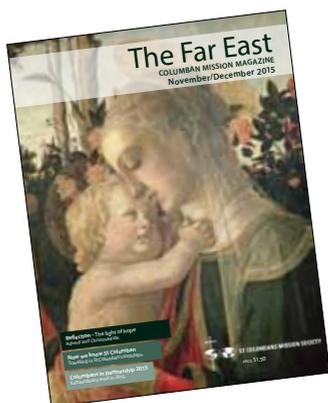


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*Madonna and Child with St. John the Baptist, detail of the Madonna and Child (oil on panel) (detail from 93886), Botticelli, Sandro (Alessandro di Mariano di Vanni Filipepi) (1444/5-1510); © Louvre, Paris, France / Peter Willi / The Bridgeman Art Library
(See Dan McAloon review pages 14-15).*

To order your 2016 Columban Art Calendar:
Return flyer included or visit www.columban.org.au



From the Editor

Advent and Christmas Blessings

The November/December issue of *The Far East* magazine covers several important themes that relate to the work of Columban missionaries at this time of the year.

This issue covers the Advent and Christmas season, offering reflections and photos from around the world. During Advent we recognize the coming of the light of Christ into our world, covered in the darkness of sin, especially as inequality and exploitation. Columban missionaries live and work with people immersed in the darkness of poverty. They seek to share the light of Christ with such families, as our Advent reflection from Chile shows.

Fr Donald Kill writes about the joyous way Christmas is celebrated in the Philippines both in family and in the Church's liturgies. The Philippines is a land of very rich Christmas traditions.

Four Columban missionaries from Australia and New Zealand celebrate their 60th Anniversary of ordination to the Priesthood during December. Fr Bernard Cleary worked in the Philippines and later returned to

Australia, becoming Regional Director. He was then elected as Superior General of the Missionary Society of St Columban. When his term finished, he returned to the Philippines and several years later returned to work in Australia. Frs Jim Duggan and Frank Ferrie worked most of their lives as priests in Korea, with Fr Jim now retired in Sydney and Fr Frank still active in Korea. Fr Barry Cairns has spent most of his life as a priest in Japan and is still active there.

Recently Fr Gary Walker, Columban Regional Director, participated in a pilgrimage to mark the 1400th Anniversary of the death of St Columban. This issue covers testimonies from that pilgrimage. Likewise, Saint Columban's College, Caboolture, Queensland, also undertook a similar pilgrimage to Bobbio, in northern Italy, where St Columban died.

Columbans work with various parishes and schools to encourage partnership projects with areas of greater need. We present several of these partnerships. We also present the work of Columbans in Sydney to build

up friendship and solidarity amongst young people from different faith backgrounds.

One of the ways that Columban missionaries are known throughout Australia and New Zealand is through the Columban Art Calendar. As we head into the Advent and Christmas season, we encourage all of our readers to buy a Columban Art Calendar, not only as a way to support Columban Mission, but also as a way to enrich and deepen one's faith through the beautiful art it contains.

From all the staff at *The Far East*, we ask that the Christ Child, as He comes into our world this Christmas, will bless all of our readers and their families. We thank you for your ongoing support.

Fr Daniel Harding
Fr Daniel Harding
TFE@columban.org.au

The Christmas season is upon us once again!

FR DONALD KILL

Columban Fr Donald Kill writes about the celebration of the Christmas season at the "Balay San Columbano" home in the Philippines. This home was founded by Fr Donald to give the children of alcoholics and drug addicts better opportunities in life.

Christmas begins any time after September

Here in the Philippines the Christmas season begins anytime after September. One store followed by another will begin to display Christmas decorations. I saw one house already displaying their Christmas lights in late September. In the prison where I work with those suffering from alcohol or drug addiction, the prisoners are busy making lanterns and stars. They will sell these to earn a meagre income for themselves and their families during the Christmas Season. The radio stations begin to play a few Christmas songs every day. The yearning for the Christmas celebration builds day by day.

All Saints on November 1: Gathering at the graves

You might ask, "Why start so early?" Here, Christmas is more than just the celebration of the birth of Christ on December 25. It is a celebration of family, of life, even new life after death. The celebration begins in earnest on the Feast of All Saints on November 1. Families travel from afar to visit the graves of their loved ones. They travel by air, land and sea to join as family and remember those who went before them. The families probably will not be able to join together again for Christmas Day and so they celebrate Christmas together as they remember their loved ones.

December 16: The Christmas Novena begins

Here in the Philippines, the real heart of the Christmas Season begins on December 16 with the early dawn Christmas Novena for the nine days leading up to Christmas. Each morning we get up at about 3:30am to prepare for the Mass and walk over to the chapel which is about a half a mile away. It is our custom in our village that I awaken the faithful with appropriate Christmas music from 3:30 until 3:45. This allows those who do not join in the celebration of the Mass to go back to sleep before getting up to go to work.

Each morning the Church is overflowing with the faithful, many of whom must go to work at 7:30 or 8:00am. On Saturdays and Sundays there are at least twice as many worshipers in attendance as our Chapel can hold. Each morning I invite the little children to come up and sit around the altar not only to make more room for adults to sit in the pews and chairs, but also so that they will feel that they are an important part of the Spiritual Celebration of Christmas.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Christmas Eve finds us in the Chapel. Each year a group presents a Christmas pageant. It is not a long, drawn out presentation but something to clearly remind everyone why we are together and why we celebrate. Also before the Mass, Christmas Carols are sung and usually led by the kids from my house. They have had plenty of practice going around the village and the city carolling to collect funds to help with expenses.

After the Pageant, the Mass, and Carols all go home to celebrate "Noche Buena" or "Blessed Night" dinner. For most folks here this is a rather simple meal. For others, their homes and



tables are open to all who come to share in the joy and bounty of the Blessed Night. Many of the families of the students who lived at Balay San Columbano before, come to join us for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. It is always a wonder that we find enough room for everyone to sleep.



The yearning for the Christmas celebration builds day by day.

Christmas morning we celebrate again the birth of Our Saviour with Mass. After the Mass I distribute small gifts to the children who have faithfully attended the Novena of Masses before Christmas. The smiles on the faces of the young children are worth more to me than any Christmas present.

Our Christmas Season does not end on Christmas Day. The Sunday after Christmas is the Feast of the Holy Family. Most parishes also celebrate with an invitation to the “parish family” to gather at the Church to celebrate being one family in Jesus.

The arrival of the New Year is celebrated, once again, with a Mass that is usually held right after the dinner hour. This allows for the Mass to be completed before the fireworks begin to explode all around. Even after living here for 42 years, I am not yet sure what the fireworks are all about. I don’t know whether they are to chase away the devils of the past years difficulties and problems, or whether they are meant to celebrate the blessing of another year of life that is filled with promise and hope. One thing I know for sure, God has sustained us through the old year; it will carry us through the new.

Feast of the Holy Child: Santo Niño

The Christmas Season closes with the Celebration of the Feast of the Holy Child, “Santo Niño”. This feast is a major feast down here in the southern Philippines and celebrated with great devotion. It was first celebrated in Cebu during the time of the Spanish reign over the people. There was a plague that was killing people and spreading all over. While digging in the rubble of an older section of the town, workers discovered an image of the Child Jesus. It was carried around the town and people were cured of their illness. We could use some of that healing in our troubled world today.

Let us join in praying that Our Saviour’s Peace will come to all parts of our world. The children from the Balay San Columbano home and I pray especially that your lives will be filled with Peace and Love and that God may answer your prayers in a way that will help you most. Have a blessed Christmas and a Joyous New Year.

Columban Fr Donald Kill has been a missionary in the Philippines since 1972.

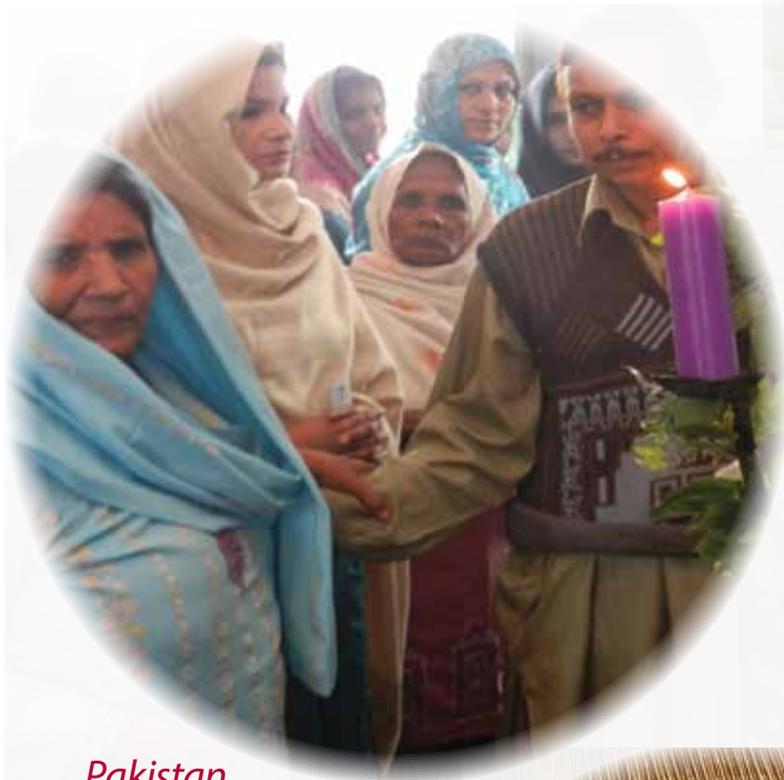
Christmas around the world

With your support Columbans are working in 16 countries this Christmas.



Taiwan

Photo: greta6/Bigstock.com



Pakistan

Photo: Fr Peter Woodruff SSC



Myanmar

Photo: greta6/Bigstock.com



Japan

Photo: Fr Barry Cairns SSC

JESUS is the light



Dear Far East subscriber,

"Jesus is the light who brightens the darkness" Pope Francis

In his homily at the Christmas Night Mass last year, Pope Francis said *"this night, the spirit of darkness enfolds the world."*

This Christmas, the darkness will be brightened for Naajia, shown in the image above. She will be living in a new home lit by a small solar panel in the southern part of Sindh province, Pakistan. Naajia has never experienced light in the dark.

I would like to thank you for helping to improve and enrich the lives of many people like Naajia. You have helped to brighten the darkness for those who have little cause for joy at Christmas.

Because of your support and encouragement, Columban Fr Shay Cullen continues to advocate for human rights, to save children from sexual abuse and to give them a new life of dignity and self-esteem. In Peru, Columbans continue working to strengthen the social skills of working mothers so that they can better protect their children. You have assisted us in planning for the future, as we witness an increase in vocations to the priesthood in China and Korea.

I ask you to support the Christmas Appeal to ensure that Christ's message of light in the darkness will become a reality for those who are hungry, poverty stricken and lonely. To make a donation to the Christmas appeal, please return the attached coupon in the enclosed Reply Paid envelope.

May God's blessing be upon you and your family this Christmas.

With every blessing



Fr Gary Walker
Regional Director
Australia/New Zealand Region

 **DONATE ONLINE - www.columban.org.au/donations** 

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The light of hope

A celebration of Advent and Christmastide

When I was growing up, our family would always gather on Christmas Eve at 6:00pm on the stroke of the Angelus bell that tolled out from our nearby parish church. We would gather as a family around the crib and the youngest of the family would light the Christmas Candle to celebrate the Light of Christ coming into the heart of our family on Christmas morning.

Ever since then the lighted candle has become for me synonymous with Advent and Christmas. It became for me a sign of great hope for a “*people who walked in darkness*”.

Years later, working as a missionary priest in Chile, Advent took on a new and more radical meaning for me. I experienced a people who walked in darkness seeking and searching for some light of hope in their lives. Torn down by poverty, be it because of unemployment, inadequate housing, lack of educational opportunities, little access to health care or simply paralysed by the curse of alcoholism

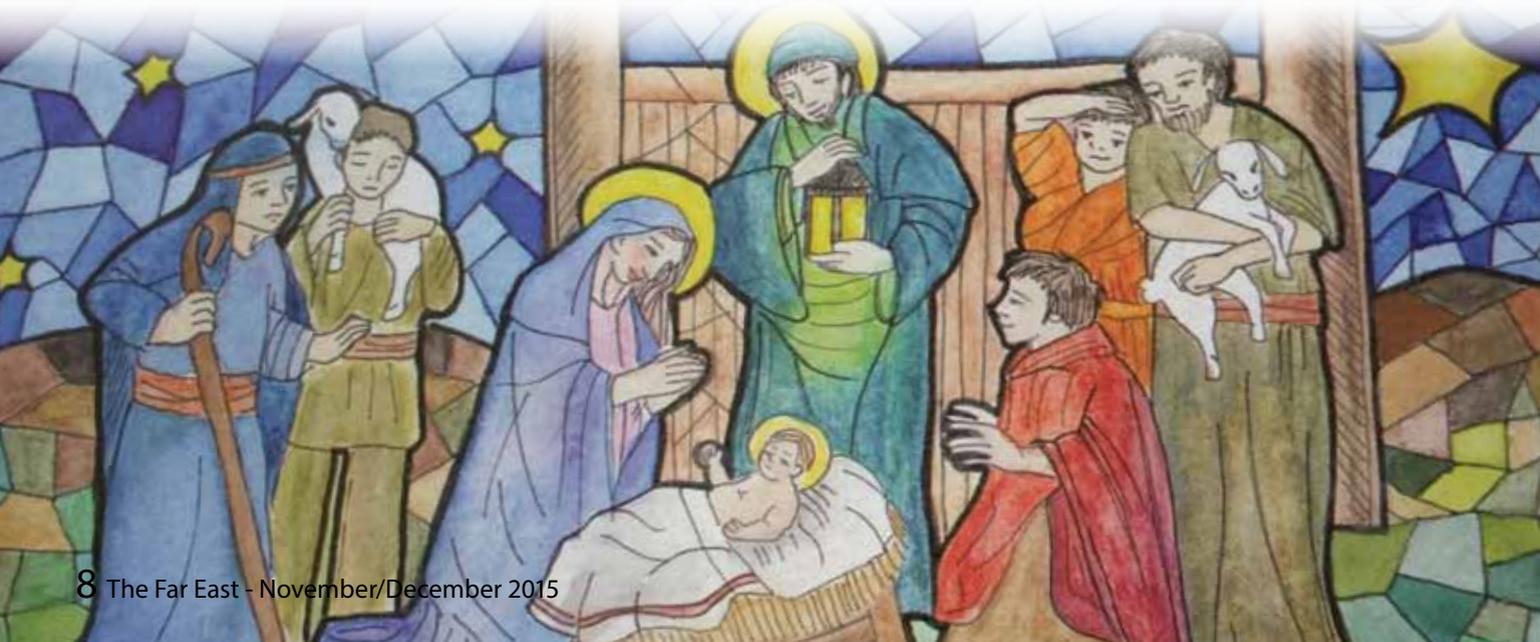
or drug addiction, they were longing for a breakthrough for a better life.

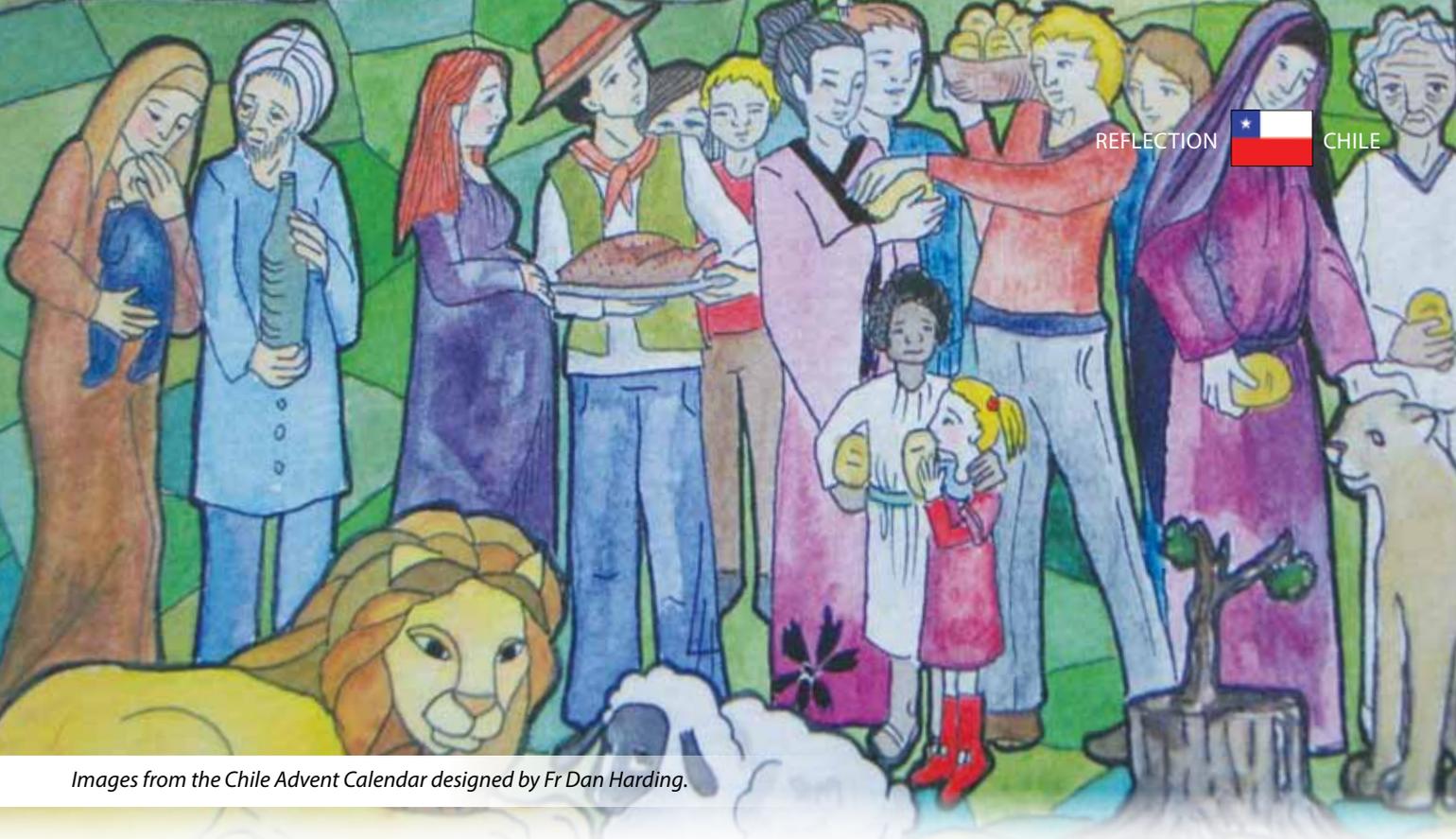
The Advent wreath became an important and a living sign of Christ’s coming and the hope He would bring. It was a tangible sign that something deeper and more profound was taking place on the lead up to Christmas apart from the shopping frenzy and seasonal propaganda. In spite of the distractions all around them, the Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) managed to keep a focus on the real message of Christmas. It wasn’t easy as the power of consumerism was rapidly trying to win over the minds and hearts of people in what was becoming a more and more globalised commercialised world where the poor are excluded. Also, as many parishes celebrated First Communions during this time of year, the focus was on family life and building up community where Christ is at the centre.

Throughout the Advent season, we invited people to come together in

their homes to reflect and talk about their reality and share their hopes. We did this through the specially designed “*Advent Calendar*”. It was introduced into the parishes and communities throughout Chile by the current Editor of *The Far East*, Fr Dan Harding. In a moment of inspiration, he developed this catechetical instrument to bring the message of Advent and Christmas into the heart of the family. Each evening during the season of Advent, family members and parish communities were invited to gather and talk about some aspect of their lives, reflect on a Scripture passage and put into practice some challenge that would bring them new hope.

For the families in the parishes where we Columbans work in Chile, Christmas is about celebrating around the family table and the parish community table. The birth of Christ is proclaimed in the reading of the Gospel story that relates to us His birth in Bethlehem and then





Images from the Chile Advent Calendar designed by Fr Dan Harding.

celebrated in the sharing of the Eucharist. The coming of the Infant Jesus into the heart of the home is looked at with amazement as the presents are opened and family members young and old gather around the dinner table and cherish the food prepared with love and devotion. Hope becomes alive and one can see the joy in the eyes of the poor who make this feast a real celebration of hope, even if it be for just for one night.

Advent and Christmas present us with a tremendous missionary challenge to bring hope to the lives of many people. It is a time of sharing the light. Let's be missionary this coming Advent and Christmas and share this wonderful light of Christ with others. Here are a just few things you might like to do that can make the difference to people you love and care about.

- **Map** out the nine days leading up to Christmas and each day spend a moment in silent prayer calling to mind the many

situations in family, community, country and globally where you hope the Light of Christ will shine.

- **Take time** to handwrite Christmas cards with personal messages to some people you have not been in contact for some time or with whom you would like to renew your friendship. A few words can go along way to open up avenues of hope and love and leave the Light of Christ shine in the hearts of others.
- **Give a gift** of a candle to someone who is going through a difficult time and tell them that this light is filled with hope.
- **On Christmas Day,** place a lighted candle on the dinner table and invite all to a moment of prayer to give thanks for the family we are, the hope we share and the faith we hold.

- **During the festive season,** do as the shepherds in Bethlehem did on that Holy Night: go and visit your neighbourhood.

During Advent and Christmas, I am always reminded of that wonderful prayer of St. Columban, but more especially this year when we celebrate his 1400th anniversary.

*As I look at the lighted Christmas candle, I pray:
 Lord, kindle our lamps, Saviour most dear to us,
 that we may always shine in your presence
 and always receive light from you,
 the Light Perpetual,
 so that our own personal darkness may be overcome,
 and the world's darkness driven from us.
 Amen.*

Author anonymous.



Now we know St Columban

JANETTE MENTHA

Pilgrims from Australia and New Zealand travelled 'In the footsteps of St Columban' to commemorate the 1400th anniversary of his death in 615 AD.

When you receive feedback like the following you know that something special happened on the pilgrimage "In the footsteps of St Columban" in August - September this year.

"I think my soul grew a little. I learnt so much from my fellow pilgrims, who were a great bunch of people. My faith developed a little more as well as my knowledge of Christianity and St Columban through the ages. Columban Fr Tommy Murphy's knowledge and passion for his subject and his energy and enthusiasm to share with us were just amazing. And he still had time to spare and attend to each pilgrim. He's definitely a good bloke".

The 21-day pilgrimage to celebrate the 1400th anniversary of the death of St Columban led 38 pilgrims through five European countries where St Columban founded monasteries, evangelized and set up Christian education centres.

The pilgrimage was led by Fr Tommy Murphy, a former Superior General and now based in China. Pilgrims ranging in age from 60 to 86 years were undaunted by the busy itinerary that led us through Ireland, France, Austria, Switzerland, northern Italy and on to Rome. On that journey we were introduced to the tough, determined and extraordinary person that was St Columban.

We began each morning with a short prayer, attended Mass on most days, found time for a group reflection and managed to write up our journals. We all looked forward to these aspects of the pilgrimage and as one of the pilgrims said "I was heartened to see the love and spirit of St Columban

and the Holy Spirit at work. I saw devoted people which has enlightened me and given me hope for our faith". Beautifully articulated and summed up how many of the pilgrims felt.

Some highlights and there were many.....

In Ireland, we visited the Columban Sisters mother house in Magheramore, where we attended an inspiring Mass. After I had sat down in the pew I turned to introduce myself to the Sister sitting next to me. What a surprise to see it was Columban Sr Mary Dillon, home on leave from Myanmar. Sr Mary cares for people with HIV/AIDS and established a respite house, Home of Hope, to enable those from distant places to access medical care. I have been a great admirer of Sr Mary's work for many years. What a woman. Like many of the extraordinary women doing extraordinary work.

The visit to Dalgan Park, the home of active and retired Columban Fathers was an opportunity to meet those whom we knew only by name from articles in *The Far East*. After Mass and a fabulous lunch we visited the Columban cemetery where our founders Bishop Edward Galvin and Fr John Blowick are buried. Standing by their graves was a memorable experience and a reminder of their faith and vision.

On our second day in France we set off for Sainte-Marie-en-Chanois, which is the site of the cave where St Columban went to pray when he needed time to be alone with God. We were welcomed by the President of the local "Friends of St Columban" group. He gave a brief history of the area after which we spent 15 minutes meditating and thinking about how to find time for God in our own lives.

The next day we attended Mass at the Basilica of St. Pierre in Luxeuil, and in the evening attended a recital of organ music and Gregorian chant. This was one of the many surprises that happened along the way.

On August 28 in Olivone, Switzerland, we had the choice of a free morning or to gather in the hotel garden to listen to Fr Tommy Murphy speak about St Columban. Almost everyone opted for listening to Fr Tommy - a testament to the interest and commitment of the pilgrims. The conversation morphed into a theological conversation about canonisation. It was a fascinating discussion from some fairly deep thinkers in the group.

On that day - I wrote in my journal - *"This is not just a pilgrimage about St Columban. For me, it's about a spiritual enrichment and a time to think about where is God in my life. It's about learning to trust in God."*

International Gathering

Upon arrival in Bobbio, Italy, we were welcomed by Fr Robert McCulloch, Columban representative from Rome who treated us to a tour of Bobbio's highlights before attending the International Mass to celebrate the 1400th anniversary of St Columban's death.

Of the International Celebration, Fr Tommy Murphy wrote, *"In the evening the Cathedral was packed for the colourful international celebration of the memory of St Columban which started at 5:00pm and which was led by the Archbishop of Milan. Over 40 Bishops and mitred Abbots along with over 100 priests concelebrated with up to 2,000 faithful present. The colour, pageantry, and vibrancy of the occasion contributed to what was a very moving experience. This was the goal and highlight of our pilgrimage as we were taken up into the enthusiasm and welcome of the people in this memorable moment."*

Pope Francis' message was read at the end of Mass. All the pilgrims were treated to a meal after the celebration and a classical concert in the Basilica rounded off the evening.

Hike to the Cave where St Columban died

September 1 - after breakfast we headed by bus to the nearby village of Coli from where we walked to the Grotto of St Michele (*cave of St Michael, Archangel*). It was a hot and hard slog, but many of us made it, including myself even though my red face matched my red shorts by the time I arrived. It was another spiritual moment and for me the highlight of the pilgrimage.



Janette Mentha meeting Columban Sr Mary Dillon SSC in Ireland. Sr Mary Dillon was visiting from Myanmar at the time.

That evening Columban Fr Peter Toohey led us in our Eucharist in the crypt of the Basilica where the remains of St Columban are laid. He suggested that now, *"We have to find our own cave"*.

The final steps

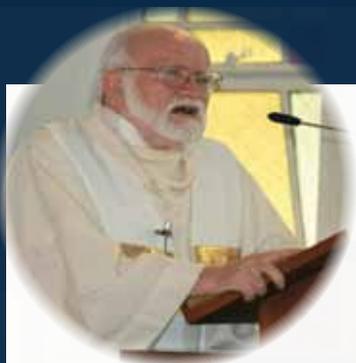
On September 3 we arrived in Rome and checked into the Irish College. Before dinner (the night of my birthday) we all gathered for a reflection session where we had an opportunity to share our impressions and highlights of the pilgrimage experience. Fr Tommy Murphy, who was taking notes said, *"I was trying to jot this down but my heart was jumping hearing the richness and inspiring reflections"*

The next day we had an early 6:30am departure for St Peter's Basilica where Columban Fr Gary Walker led the Eucharist in the crypt of St Peter. On our way to St Peters we realised that we had left behind a pilgrim who had gone back to her room for an umbrella. During Fr Gary's homily, the pilgrim, who shall remain nameless, upstaged Fr Gary by making a splendid entrance down the steps into the Crypt after catching a taxi to St Peter's. That evening we attended a farewell banquet hosted by Fr Robert McCulloch at the Columban House in Rome. The Australian Ambassador John McCarthy was present to greet us and offer his good wishes on the completion of our pilgrimage.

Reluctantly we began our farewells as the main group was heading off early the next morning. Close bonds and new friendships had developed during our 20 days together as a mobile community of pilgrims moving along in the footsteps of St Columban.

Janette Mentha is the Director of the Communications & Publications Department at the Columban Mission Centre, Essendon.

Columbans celebrate their 60th anniversary of ordination to the Priesthood



Fr Barry Cairns SSC

*F*r Barry Jude Cairns was ordained priest at the Church of Sts Peter and Paul, Lower Hutt, New Zealand, on December 18, 1955 by Archbishop Peter McKeefrey.

Fr Barry was born in Lower Hutt, the only child in his family. After completing his primary education in Lower Hutt and his secondary education in Wellington, Fr Barry decided to become a Columban Missionary Priest. His seminary formation began in 1949 in New Zealand and was later completed in Australia.

After ordination, Fr Barry was appointed to work in Japan, sailing the following November.

Upon arrival in Japan, Fr Barry studied the Japanese language at the Franciscan Language School. For the next ten years, he worked in a number of parishes, first as Assistant parish priest and later as parish priest.

After becoming ill in 1967, Fr Barry was sent back to New Zealand to recuperate. He remained in New Zealand and Australia until 1983, spending most of his time at the Columban Seminary at Turramurra, Sydney, as Spiritual Director for the seminarians and teaching on the seminary staff. He taught Homiletics, Church History, Cross Cultural Mission, Scripture and Missionary Spirituality.

Fr Barry was reappointed to Japan in 1983, where he has remained ever since serving as parish priest in a variety of parishes.

Fr Francis (Frank) Ferrie SSC

*F*r Francis John Ferrie was ordained priest in St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, by Archbishop J. Simmonds, on December 17, 1955.

Fr Frank was born at St Arnaud, Victoria, the oldest child with three younger sisters - Shirley, Joan and Maureen. He completed his primary education at St Patrick's, Korumburra, St Therese's, Essendon, St Monica's, Moonee Ponds and his secondary education at St Bernard's, Essendon and St Patrick's, Ballarat. He joined the Columbans in 1949, studying for the priesthood at Wahroonga, in Sydney and Essendon in Melbourne.

After ordination, Fr Frank was appointed to work in Korea. He sailed for Korea in October 1956. After some initial language study upon arrival, in April 1957 he was appointed assistant curate in one parish and by October the same year became the parish priest of the new parish of Chong Son. Over the next 23 years, Fr Frank went on to work as parish priest in three different parishes and as the Columban District Superior of Chun Chon.

In 1980 he was reassigned to Australia, as Chaplain to the Korean Community in Sydney and Bursar at the Columban Seminary. In 1985 he returned to Korea and has remained there ever since. During these years, Fr Frank has worked in several parishes on the southern island of Cheju and the Diocesan Migrant Ministry.



Fr Bernard Cleary SSC

Fr Bernard Cleary was ordained priest by Archbishop Justin Simonds in St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, on December 17, 1955. He had joined the Columbans in 1949, studying for the priesthood at Wahroonga, Sydney and at Essendon, Melbourne.

Fr Bernard was born in Echuca, Victoria, the second child in a family of three. His primary education began at St Mary's, Echuca while his secondary education was completed by correspondence. In 1941, he studied for the Post Office Entrance Exam and went on to work in Wangaratta and in Melbourne for the Post Office. During this period, Fr Bernard qualified as an accountant, studying at night school.

After ordination, Fr Bernard was sent to study Canon Law at the Gregorian University in Rome for two years. Upon completion of his studies in 1958, he was appointed to the Philippines where he was appointed to the island of Negros. He worked as assistant parish priest in several parishes until he was reappointed back to Australia in 1965.

In 1968 Fr Bernard was reappointed to the Philippines, where he returned to the island of Negros to work in several parishes. In 1971 he returned back to Australia to the staff of the Columban Seminary at Turramurra, Sydney. He was then appointed the Regional Director of the Australian /New Zealand Region, serving two three year terms.

At the General Chapter in Lima, Peru in 1982, Fr Bernard was elected the Superior General of the Missionary Society of St Columban. As Superior General he was based in Dublin, Ireland. When this position finished in 1988 he was reappointed to the Philippines returning to work in parishes in Negros.

In 1993, Fr Bernard was reappointed to the Australian/New Zealand Region, representing that Region as delegate to the General Chapter in Santiago, Chile, in 1994. Back in Australia, Fr Bernard has worked in a variety of positions, including canon law work for Columban Superiors across the globe. Fr Bernard retired in 2010.



Fr James (Jim) Duggan SSC

Fr James Edward Duggan was ordained priest by Bishop James Carroll at St Patrick's, Church Hill, Sydney, on December 17, 1955. He had joined the Columbans in 1947, studying for the priesthood at Wahroonga, Sydney and Essendon, Melbourne.

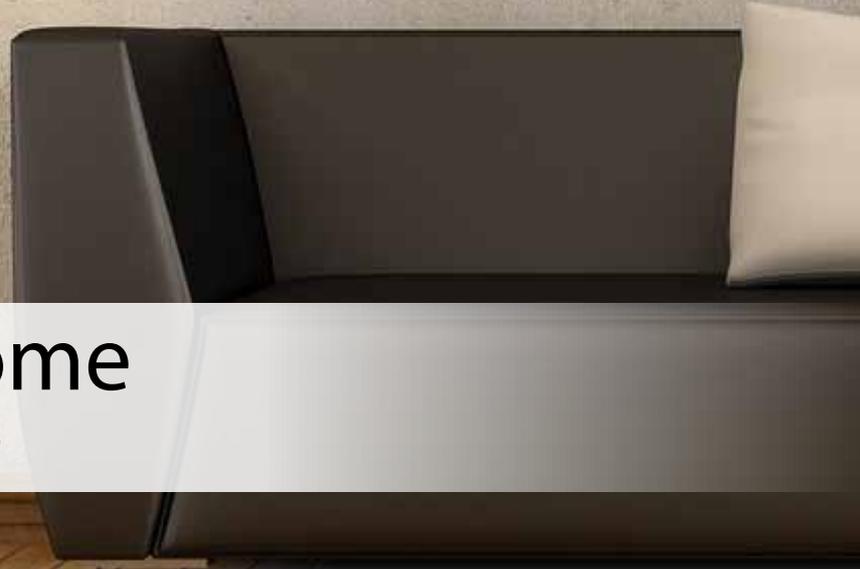
Fr James was born in the Alexandria, Sydney, the older of two sons. His primary education was provided by the Christian Brothers at Lewisham and secondary education by the Christian Brothers at Balmain. He later joined the Public Service, working for three years at Long Bay State Penitentiary.

After ordination, Fr James was appointed to Korea, sailing in August 1956. After some language studies from local parishioners, he was appointed as an assistant parish priest in several parishes and later helped found a new parish. During this early period, he worked closely as chaplain with the Little Company of Mary Sisters.

From arrival in Korea in 1956 until finally leaving Korea in 1997, Fr James worked as parish priest in many parishes in Chun Cheon Diocese and in the Seoul Archdiocese. During this period, he acquired land in different places and built several new parish churches and offices.

Since retirement back in Sydney, Fr James continues to work with the Korean Catholic Community.





Sacred art at home

2016 Columban Art Calendar

A Franciscan friar is trekking through rugged mountains, taking in the beauty of the late afternoon sun as he reaches a plateau where a village stands. From the doorway of a house the occupants gesture to him to come over.

He's impressed by their welcome. As he reaches the porch the setting sun bathes the front of the house in golden hues.

"Isn't God's creation wonderful?" the friar declares. *"Yes!"* answers the man. *"Come! See for yourself!"* insists the woman, leading him inside.

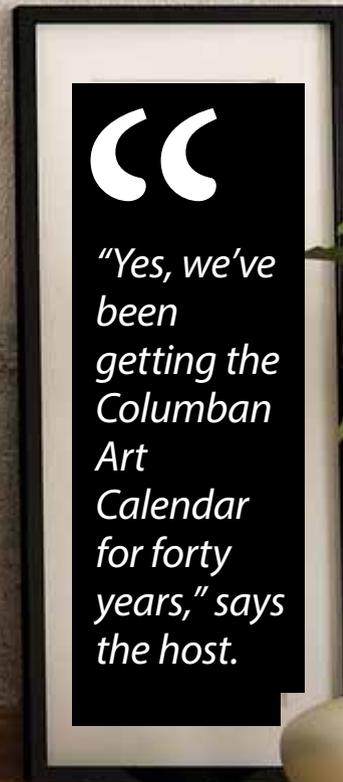
The friar arrives in the middle of the one-roomed house as sunset paints the walls an intense orange. Every centimetre of the wall is decorated with pictures of Saints, Angels, the Nativity and various Biblical scenes.

The friar recognises art works by Ghirlandaio, Raphael, Filippino Lippi, Guercino, Botticelli, Andrea Solari.

"I see you know the Columbans?" says the friar. *"Yes, we've been getting the Columban Art Calendar for forty years,"* says the host. *"Aren't the artworks featured beautiful?"* *"Yes,"* says the friar.

This apocryphal story (*a story of doubtful authenticity, although widely circulated as being true*) serves to remind us that the Columban Art Calendar has always been welcomed into the homes of Catholic families in Australia and New Zealand. Since 1923, the sale of the liturgical calendar has been a means for funding the mission of the Columban Fathers. It is also an object of beauty, bringing new insight to the faithful.

For those of us who may never tour the Vatican Museum or visit the great cathedrals of Europe, the prints featured



in the Columban Art Calendar are windows into the great tradition of sacred art that describes the journey of Christianity from its earliest days. Here are devotional objects that feed the mind, the spirit and the imagination.

The 2016 Columban Art Calendar is no exception to this rule!

Of particular interest is the art of Fra Angelico (1387-1455) whose paintings of the Madonna of the Shadows, The Presentation in the Temple, The Apostle Saint James the Greater freeing the Magician Hermogenes, and a portrait detail of Saint Dominic would not be known to us except through the calendar.

All of Fra Angelico's works are taken from delicate frescos he painted in monastic cells and chapels. These are places of great antiquity that would be difficult to ordinarily access in any case. The artist's mastery of colour and composition

is magnificent and thanks to the Art Guide commentary written by Dr Claire Rankin (*well-known Art Historian and Lecturer at Yarra Theological Union*) we can appreciate the nuances within these extraordinary works.

Learning about the story behind each painting is made all the easier by listening to the 2016 Art Guide online resource, that is delightfully brought to life through Robyn Moore's narrative voice. The 2016 Art Guide can be viewed at www.columban.org.au/2016artguide.

Don't forget to order your 2016 Columban Art Calendar today and see the New Year through the tradition of the art of adoration, peace and love.

The 2016 Columban Art Calendar features Feast Days, Liturgical Seasons, School Holidays and beautiful Works of Religious Art.

Dan McAloon works in Catholic Media as a freelance journalist.



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 and for the spiritual and the temporal welfare of all our readers, their families and friends.*

Cricket history made in Rome

Supporting history was made in Rome on October 17, 2015 as an all-Muslim cricket team from England played against St Peter's Cricket Club, comprised of Catholic seminarians in training for the priesthood.

After a closely contested match at Rome's Capannelle Cricket Ground, St Peter's won by four runs, with the British and Australian Ambassadors to the Holy See on hand to present both the winners' trophy and the runners up cup.

Fr Robert McCulloch, Procurator-General of the Columban Fathers in Rome, is one of the St Peter's Cricket Club's committee members and watched the match with great interest. Fr McCulloch worked in Pakistan for 34 years and knows well the esteemed position the game of cricket holds in south Asia. He said that having a cricket team in the city actually makes a lot of sense.

The St Peter's XI was launched in 2013 under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for Culture, with Ecumenical and Interfaith relations as an important part of the club's mission.

The Mount Cricket Club from Yorkshire in the north of England was founded back in the 1970s by Hanif Mayat who described the game as a 'language' through which people of all different nationalities, colours and creeds can communicate and learn to respect one another.

When Pope Francis was on his recent tour to America and heard about the impending cricket match, he said, *"too many walls have been put up; that it's about time we started to build bridges. This is a small bridge."*

Photos: Vatican CC



Mission Intention for November

That pastors of the Church, with profound love for their flocks, may accompany them and enliven their hope.

Mission Intention for December

That families, especially those who suffer, may find in the birth of Jesus a sign of certain hope.

From the Director

There is room at the inn



Recently we held a house meeting with the Columban Priests who reside in our Essendon house. Most of the Priests are retired but still show a keen interest in world and Church issues.

A suggestion was made by one of us that, perhaps, we could offer accommodation to a Syrian family in the vacant house we have on our Essendon property. The house accommodated a housekeeper for many years and was referred to as *The Green House* due to its colour.

The suggestion was supported by a fair majority, but human nature being what it is, some wanted to think things through. They were keen to know more details before committing to the suggestion. This was a sensible approach to take.

However, the affirmative vote was acted on and a Columban Co-ordinator was assigned to facilitate the transition of hosting refugees and to look after their ongoing needs.

In the blink of an eye, two women from the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project came to assess the situation; they cleaned *The Green House* and advised us that the house could accommodate about five single men. St Vincent de Paul arrived shortly after with some furniture.

Already we have a Nigerian man living in the house. This morning I met a man outside our office who is a Muslim from Afghanistan, he belongs to the Hazara tribe which has been persecuted by the Taliban in Afghanistan for many years. After arriving in Australia, he spent five years in detention before his papers were finalised. He is interested in leaving his present accommodation in order to come and live at *The Green House*. Good news travels fast!

During the same house meeting, one of the Columban Priests suggested that I move out of the small house I live in, just down the road and make room for a family. There is enough room for a small family, Syrian or otherwise, who are in need of a home where they can begin the long journey back to a normal life.

He is interested in leaving his present accommodation in order to come and live at The Green House. Good news travels fast!

Moving is somewhat inconvenient for me but nothing compared to the terrible suffering many of the Syrians and other peoples experienced at home and on their way to Australia.

I would expect that they may also have some difficulties settling into a new home and country, a country where

the culture, language and food are so different. These problems may be compounded by trauma and personal loss.

Our offer to accommodate some refugees will not be determined by their faith. The family may be Catholic or Muslim. In any case I am thrilled with this turn of events. Why wouldn't we do this?

As we come towards the end of the year, we pray for those who have died: our own family members, also friends, but especially the many refugees who have lost loved ones on their journey, looking for safety and a better life.

As Christmas is approaching, let us remember there was no room for Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. We know there is no room for most refugees in the First World; the barricades are going up, the minds and hearts of governments and some people have become hard. Still we will do what we can to welcome these people whom we call refugees.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr Gary Walker
director@columban.org.au

Columbans in partnership 2015



Columban Missionaries would like to thank all those involved in the Columban Partnership Programme including some individuals who wish to remain anonymous.

Walkathon raises \$12,000

*S*t Vincent de Paul Primary School, Strathmore, Victoria, has come up with a novel way to raise money in support of a reforestation project amongst Pehuenche families in Chile. The Pehuenches are an indigenous ethnic group who live in isolated high mountain valleys of the Andes Mountain Range in South-Central Chile near the border with Argentina.

On Friday August 17, 2015, the children, along with their parents and teachers, participated in a Walkathon in the streets around the school. They raised an amazing \$12,000 which has been sent to Chile in order to buy seeds, organize green houses, digging materials and a water system for the project.

This is the third year that St Vincent de Paul Primary School has worked to support the Pehuenche project, which aims to help these indigenous people generate enough income to remain on their land, and thereby protect their own unique language and culture.

10 Years in Columban Partnership

*G*eelong West Pastoral Cluster, Victoria incorporates the parishes of Ss Peter & Paul, Geelong West, Holy Family, Bell Park and Holy Spirit, Manifold Heights. The associated schools are Holy Family, Bell Park, Holy Spirit, Manifold Heights and St Patricks, Geelong West.

For the past ten years teachers and staff from the Geelong West Pastoral Cluster has visited Columban projects in the Philippines on five occasions.

The schools and parishes have held annual fundraising events including movie nights, wine and cheese events, morning teas, and dinners with guest speakers including Columban Fr Brian Gore who works in the Philippines, Cardinal Wilfrid Napier, Archbishop of Durbin, South Africa and Sr Kate O'Neill RNDM who works in the Philippines and is the sister of Columban Frs Kevin and Peter O'Neill. Fr Kevin is the current Superior General of Columban Missionaries.

This year, Tet Sambali, a leading parish worker from the Columban Malate Parish in the Philippines has been invited to the annual dinner, *Kristmas for Kuya*, to speak about her experience working in a parish of over 250,000.

On behalf of Columbans, I would like to thank the Geelong West, Pastoral Cluster for their many years of support.

Columban Fr Gary Walker SSC

Regional Director, Australia and New Zealand.

Trivia Nights raise significant funds

*F*or many years, St John the Baptist Social Justice Group, Ferntree Gully, Victoria has raised significant funds for Columban projects in the Philippines. They have supported the micro credit scheme KAZAMA Grameen and the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) program for people and families with disabilities. Thanks to the Ferntree Gully Group CBR has been able to employ a physiotherapist for many years.

Topping the list of disabilities is cerebral palsy, mostly children, over 300 who suffer from a stroke, Parkinson's Disease, spinal cord injury, epilepsy, and other brain or spinal infections. There are more than 200 who are deaf, hearing impaired, mute, blind or partially blind and others with a variety of disabling conditions.

New emergency department

*T*hanks to the generous support of St Bridget's, Gisborne Columban Partnership Group, Victoria plans have been drawn up for a much needed new emergency department at St Elizabeth Hospital, Pakistan.

The group raises funds through movie nights and their annual Camino "Cross to Cross" walk in November. The purpose of the Camino day is to raise funds for the St Elizabeth Hospital in Hyderabad, Pakistan.

The round walk commences at the Holy Cross Primary School in New Gisborne and follows the railway line through Macedon village before entering the Macedon Regional Park and then following the Macedon Ranges Walking Trail up to the Mt Macedon Memorial Cross. The total distance of this return walk is approx. 27km.

Youth celebrate religious diversity

ASHLEIGH GREEN



**YOUTH
PoWR**
PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

*M*ore than 400 young Australians representing diverse religious and cultural backgrounds assembled for the inaugural Youth Parliament of World's Religions (*Youth PoWR*) on 17th September. *Youth PoWR* is an initiative of the Columban Mission Institute and this year's event was coordinated by a passionate, enthusiastic team of young people representing different religious communities across Sydney.

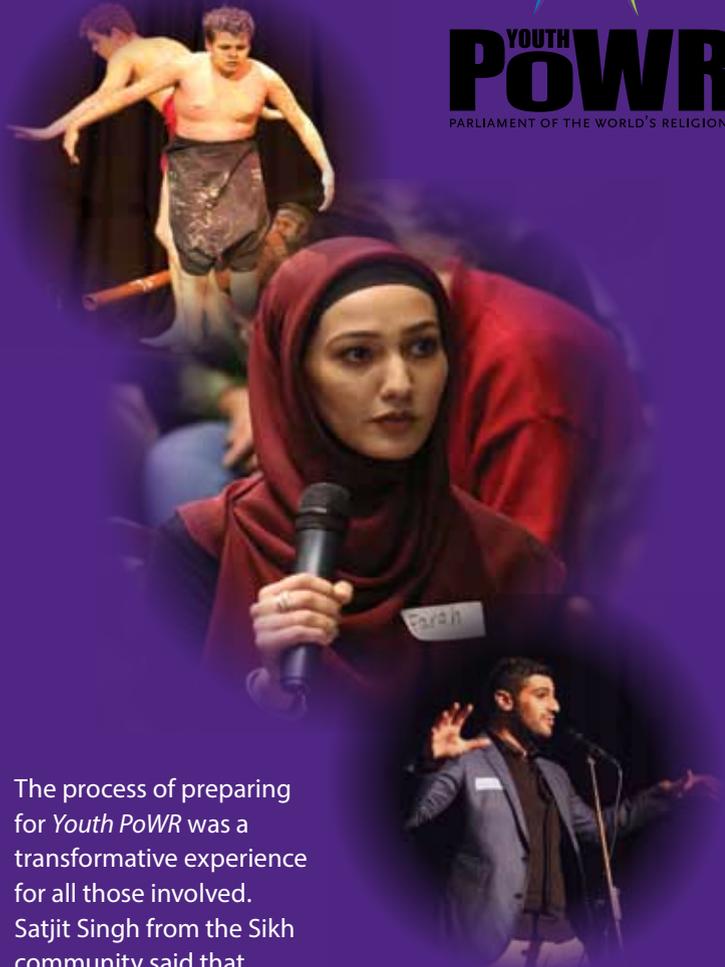
The event at the Sydney Baha'i Centre featured speakers from the Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Baha'i, Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu communities who addressed a Message to Youth and a Message to Religious and Civic Leaders. While the Message to Youth urged other young people in society to join in the interfaith journey and to encourage their friends to do the same, the Message to Religious and Civic Leaders thanked our leaders for their leadership and asked that they open up for us those texts in our respective scriptures that illuminate and inspire positive interfaith relations.

Ms Sahba Clara Delshad from the Baha'i community addressed the Message to Youth, *"Youth are needed as leaders and decision-makers not only in youth conferences, committees and panels but in those spaces where the course and direction of society as a whole is determined."* She encouraged her peers to take leadership and play their part in building a vibrant, inclusive, multi-faith society.

After the speakers addressed the parliament, 400+ young people voted in support of the messages, which will now be circulated and shared with religious leaders, civic leaders and youth organizations in NSW.

The youth were given the opportunity to make their own commitments to interfaith dialogue. Some committed to visiting another's place of worship, others expressed interest in starting a multi-faith association at their universities, while others simply committed to embracing each other with hands of true friendship. The civic and religious leaders present on the night also made their own commitments *"to engage in interfaith dialogue with compassion, to challenge prejudices and to uphold good character even when we disagree with each other."*

The programme was brought alive by engaging performances from Aboriginal students at St Joseph's Hunters Hills, Spoken Word poet Ahmad Al-Rady and a Polynesian performance group.



The process of preparing for *Youth PoWR* was a transformative experience for all those involved.

Satjit Singh from the Sikh community said that working with individuals from diverse backgrounds, opinions and beliefs revealed how much they have in common, *"I am proud to call these people my friends. Youth PoWR is a perfect example of how we can achieve peace, harmony, unity and happiness for our communities."*

It is hoped that *Youth PoWR* becomes an annual event that continues to give youth a voice in shaping our multi-religious society. *Youth PoWR* visionary, Columban Rev Dr Patrick McInerney believes that *Youth PoWR* is greatly needed in Sydney and across Australia in 2015, *"Ours is a multi-faith society. Harmony can only be achieved by reaching out to the "other" and getting to know them as my sister and my brother."*

Ashleigh Green works in the Columban Mission Institute's Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations.

Photos: Missionary Society of St Columban

Saint Columban's College on pilgrimage to Bobbio



The Catholic secondary college at Caboolture, Brisbane, is the only Catholic High School in Australia to proudly bear the name of St Columban. The College's motto is: **Spirit, tradition, community.**

St Columban, often confused with Saint Columba, another Irish Monk who founded a contemplative monastery on Iona on the west coast of Scotland around the same time, founded monasteries as centres of evangelization and christian education in Europe, the most famous being Annegray, Luxeuil and Fontaines in Southern France. St Columban spent over 20 years of his life establishing these centres until he and his monks were expelled from the local Kingdom because of his outspoken condemnation of the immorality of the king and his court.

As a way of celebrating the 1400th anniversary of St Columban's death in Bobbio, Northern Italy, in 615 AD, the teachers, pupils and parents of Saint Columban's, Caboolture, decided to do something special to deepen their bonds with St Columban by going on a pilgrimage to Bobbio.

Led by Principal Mrs Ann Rebgetz and Assistant Principal of Religious Education and Identity, Mrs Raechel Fletcher, the Caboolture pilgrims

met up with Fr Robert Mc Culloch, the Columban Procurator General in Rome, who travelled to Bobbio to celebrate Mass with the pilgrims over the tomb of St Columban in the crypt of the Basilica in Bobbio.

After meeting many other European pilgrims in Bobbio, the Caboolture pilgrims realized that they were not alone in their devotion to St Columban but members of a much wider family.

On their return the college re-enacted that same spirit of St Columban by celebrating a Memorial Mass to commemorate his 1400th anniversary on Tuesday October 13.

Columban Fr Trevor Trotter and myself, being the local Columbans in Brisbane, were invited and concelebrated the Mass with Fr Wrex Woolnough, the parish priest of Caboolture and Bribie Island.

In his opening remarks, Fr Wrex described St Columban as a man and a saint who lived in a very different time. "*Columban*", he said, "*lived in a Europe ravaged by social upheavals brought about by the arrival of warring barbarian tribes who disrupted and in some cases, destroyed the early Christian Church established under Roman rule. The situation demanded a man like Columban with the resolve to engage with the new pagan tribes*

as a Christian with a decisive and courageous missionary spirit"

Fr Trevor said in the homily that saints are often remembered because they help us to recognize that part of ourselves that is saintly, that part of ourselves which is contemplative just as St Columban was. "*The great challenge*", Fr Trevor said, "*was to become missionary disciples of Jesus just as St Columban had been*".

I shared a brief reflection with the students about my own call to the missionary priesthood saying St Columban must have been urging me on because I was born on the very day of his anniversary, November 23 and that my missionary journey to South Korea, Chile and Peru reflected St Columban's call to be a pilgrim for Christ.

It was obvious that the students took up the spirit of St Columban. Their house banners and flags presented on the altar, their singing and their dance, "*Oceans where feet may fail*" reflected their willingness to begin the journey of becoming missionary disciples just as St Columban had at the age of 17-18 years of age.

Columban Fr George Hogarty has worked in Chile and Peru and now resides at St Columbans, Sandgate, Queensland.



“

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Fr Trevor said, "was to
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Students performing a dance at the Memorial Mass to commemorate the 1400th anniversary of St Columban.

The Catechist who stood her ground

FR MAURICE FOLEY

Señor Fernandez was worried. His son would not receive First Holy Communion with the rest of his class. The Catechist was consulted and she presented the evidence. Kike Fernandez was absent seven times and the limit was three times unless he was gravely ill. Kike was captain of the football team which distracted him from his First Holy Communion classes. His father pleaded that he knew his prayers and went to Mass on Sundays. The Catechist countered that it wasn't just a matter of knowledge, what about the 15 others that were in the class and had supported each other during the whole year forming friendships, correcting bad habits and discovering together? Isabel, the Catechist, put it plain and simple. *"You can let Kike go forward for his First Holy Communion, but if so, I am resigning."* Kike was facilitated for his First Holy Communion in another parish.

Isabel had a point which was that even though knowledge was important so also was the accumulated enthusiasm of the group which animated them and inspired the affection which led them to the altar of God to receive their First Holy Communion. Very often the unity they had formed meant more to them than unadorned religious facts.

Isabel was a second year nursing student who valued her own contribution to the faith. Her serious attitude towards the work she was doing for the parish was shared by other Catechists who voluntarily gave their time and energy for the preparation of the youth and started

them on the road of a new spiritual life. Every Catechist has her or his own way of doing things and some could be classified as teachers, but the Catechist is different and aspires to a more intimate relationship with their pupils. Classes often take place in the home if the facilities of the church are occupied.



Catechist prepare children for their First Holy Communion in Fr John Hegerty's parish, Peru.

In the Our Lord of Peace parish (*Lima, Peru*), there are more than 100 First Holy Communions annually. There would be about 30 Catechists. The First Holy Communion fiesta every year finds the church far too small and many of the invited have to take their place in the nearby hall waiting for their "heroes" to file out after Mass. There is an official reception with speeches by all who cooperated in the preparation of this great day. A ceremonial lunch is shared by all the First Holy Communicants, but the

young communicants are anxious to go home where they can celebrate with their neighbours and share their joy with them. Saluting their neighbours is important as it brings a message of intimacy and joy to the neighbourhood that suffers almost daily stories of robberies and violence. The First Holy Communion lifts up their hearts and gives them evidence of the presence of God.

And what about the Catechists? Their former pupils cover them with affection and for years afterwards treat them with profound respect. The Catechists find their satisfaction in the faith. Parents recognize their achievements and praise their work in different ways. The net result is that the presence of God gives new life and confidence to the people of God in their parish community. The aura of God's blessing seems to settle into homes and neighbourly attitudes which come from the faith inspiration of Catechists who love their parish and are willing to offer what they can in the apostolate of First Holy Communion.

Whilst the explanation of doctrine may have fallen flat at times their enthusiasm more than made up for the technical errors. The God of love and the example of Jesus Christ came home to live in the lives of their students. *What greater achievement is there than to make Christ live in the hearts of the young, and this is what the Catechist does for his or her parish.*

Columban Fr Maurice Foley has been a missionary in Peru since 1978.

Photo: Janette Mentha

Home of Hope for adults and children with HIV/AIDS - Myanmar



Photo: Sr Mary Dillon SSC

Columban Sr Mary Dillon lives and works in Myitkyina, Myanmar where she ministers to those suffering with HIV/AIDS.

There are nearly 80 people in the Home of Hope which was built for people from distant places so that they could receive medical care. Sadly, many of the residents are small children.

With your help, Columban Missionaries like Sr Mary can continue to respond to the Gospel message to care for the poor and the sick. Your "stringless" gift helps us to respond with flexibility to the most **urgent needs** of people.



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