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# The Far East

COLUMBAN MISSION MAGAZINE

January/February 2015



**On the front line**

Mission in Brazil

**Reflection - Dancing for Mary**

Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary in the Andes

**High mountain, flowing water**

Friendship in Chinese culture



**ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY**

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# The Far East

January/February 2015  
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Members of the Candomblé community participate in a procession in Columban Fr Colin McLean's parish in Salvador, Brazil (see pages 4-5).

Photo: Columban Fr John Boles



# From the Editor

*Serving God in a different language*

*J*oan Yap is a Columban Lay Missionary from the Philippines. In this issue of *The Far East* magazine, she writes about her work in Taiwan preparing Mandarin speaking children to serve at an English language Mass attended by mainly Filipino Catholics. Her article is called, "Serving God in a different language".

All missionaries have to be open to serve God in a different language, in a different culture and amongst people of different races. This issue of *The Far East* offers many stories of Columban missionaries who serve God in other countries and through a different language from their own.

Australian Columban Fr Frank Carey, who spent most of his priestly life as a missionary in the Philippines, is one such Columban. He died recently in Manila. His obituary appears in this issue.

Australian Columban Fr Colin McLean has lived and worked for many years as a parish priest in the Brazilian city of Salvador. His parishioners are Afro-Brazilians who live in a world of racism, poverty, discrimination and drug gangs. Fr Colin and his parish

team of Catechists work tirelessly to improve the lives of the people of the parish.

New Zealand Columban Fr Don Hornsey shares with us the joyful celebration of the feast of "Our Lady of the Rosary" amongst the Quechua speaking parishioners of the parish of Combapata, high up in the Peruvian Andes, where he formerly was parish priest. Retired English teacher from Ireland, Jackie Mitchell, writes of her year in China as an English teacher through a Columban sponsored programme.

Columban Sr Mary Neylon has managed to build a strong connection between her home parish of Inagh, in County Clare, Ireland, with *Warmi Wasi*, a women's development centre she developed in a poor area in Lima, Peru. Irish Columban Fr Pat Cunningham has been involved for several years in protests against the building of a naval base on the island of Jeju in Korea.

As a part of the Jubilee Year to mark the 1400th Anniversary of St Columban in the year 615 in Bobbio in Northern Italy, Irish Columban Fr Frank Hoare offers us a picture of

sixth century Ireland, out of which came St Columban and his missionary vocation on the European continent.

Each of the contributors to the stories and articles in this issue of *The Far East* has left their homeland to serve God amongst a different race, in a different nation and in a different language. Retired English teacher Jackie Mitchell reminds us that the missionary life is only possible through trusting in the constant presence of Christ in our lives and in our missionary journeys.

*Fr Daniel Harding*

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# On the front line

FR JOHN BOLES



Fr Colin McLean chats one of his parish catechists.

*Columban Fr Colin McLean finds inspiration as well as violence in one of Brazil's notorious "favelas".*

*"Three more lifted the other night", commented Fr Colin as he read the local paper over breakfast. "Two released, one not heard of since. The poor guy is probably dead by now."*

If he said this without a hint of surprise, it is because in 16 years as pastor of "Fazenda Coutos" parish he's read it all before. Read about it, heard about it and seen it, along with most of his parishioners. The truth is that poverty, crime and violence are endemic in this sprawling slum on the

edge of Salvador, Brazil's third largest city.

The current wave of killings has come as the mainly black population finds itself caught in a war between drug gangs and the police. For years the gangs held sway over much of the area. Then, as part of a "clean-up campaign" ahead of the 2014 World Cup, the military police were sent in and set up shop next to the market. "Trouble is", reflects Colin, "I don't know if the police are the solution or just another part of the problem."

He explains that when a shooting occurs the police often don't know who's responsible. People are too scared to speak up. "So, the cops just round up a whole pile of suspects. Some they let go. Some they knock around a bit. Some just disappear. Usually, they turn up sooner or later dead."

Many of Colin's congregation have sad tales to tell. Senhora Valdelice, a Eucharistic Minister, has lost two sons in the drug wars. One Good Friday she offered to take the part of Our Lady in the passion play. "When she took Jesus

*"So, the cops just round up a whole pile of suspects. Some they let go. Some they knock around a bit. Some just disappear. Usually, they turn up sooner or later dead."*

*in her arms", Colin recalls, "It was like a Pieta for her murdered children."*

Senhora Luci Vera couldn't find her son for a good while, until finally his body was discovered on the local refuse tip.

Even Colin himself has courted disaster. At one point he heard a commotion next door and ran round to find his neighbour shot dead. Later, he had to run for his life as five armed men arrived. *"Presumably, they'd come to bump off any witnesses",* he adds. So, why does he stay? *"Believe it or not",* he explains, *"there's a lot of good things going on here."* Good things that he himself has often had a hand in.

There is a vibrant Afro-Brazilian cultural scene in Salvador which Colin and his co-workers try to tap into. Dance and song come naturally to this exuberant people, providing a counter-weight to gangland violence. So, Colin encourages presentations of (*Capoeira*) among the young folk. *Capoeira* is a frenetic cross between dance and martial arts (reputedly perfected amongst slaves as a form of defence against cruel masters).

He's set up a theatre group which specializes in stories of slavery and liberation. The group has performed widely in Brazil and abroad.

He and other like-minded Catholics have reached out to members of the (*Candomblé*) community. *Candomblé* is a fusion of Christianity and African religions. Long frowned upon by the Church authorities, contact with the movement is now encouraged, as the qualities of its spirituality become increasingly evident.

One day I followed Colin round his parish. We dropped in on a fundraising party run by two of

his most inspirational catechists – Marcelo, an all-singing, all-dancing, guitar-playing Permanent Deacon and his Whitney Houston look-alike wife Lennie.

Later, we wandered down to the quayside for evening refreshments with the crews of some of the local fishing boats. *"This is what I reckon it was really like for Jesus and His disciples",* grins Colin, *"sipping their equivalent of a cold beer on the edge of Lake Galilee after a hard day's fishing."*

Fazenda Coutos and Lake Galilee? Maybe not so different all in all, when you think about it.

---

*Columban Fr John Boles is English and has worked in South America since 1994.*

*Australian Columban Fr Colin McLean is from Melbourne and has been a missionary in Brazil since 1985.*



## WHAT ARE THE FAVELAS?

*Under the Portuguese and a newly-independent Brazil, some 3.6 million Africans were shipped to Brazil as slaves. Many entered through Salvador, the Portuguese colonial capital. They were put to work on the sugar, tobacco and coffee plantations and in the mines. Emancipation, came late, in 1888 (over 20 years after the abolition of slavery in the USA). Even then, they received little apart from their liberty, and in their thousands drifted towards the big cities in search of work.*

*They settled in shantytowns, or "favelas", on the urban fringes, where they remain to this day. Conditions radically improved in the 1990s with an economic boom and a change in government, but the difference between the "haves and have nots" in Brazil remains a disgrace. Most recently, tensions boiled over in the pre-World Cup riots of 2014.*

*- Fr John Boles*



# My year in China

JACKIE MITCHELL



Some of Jackie Mitchell's university students.

*Jackie Mitchell is a retired English teacher from Ireland. She shares with us her experience of teaching English in China as a part of the AITECE (Association for International Teaching, Educational and Curriculum Exchange), a programme supported by the Columbans and other groups.*

Since childhood I always wanted to go to China. Many years later and two holidays as a tourist had not been enough. So I explored the possibility of teaching there. Retired and on my own, a friend and I met John Quigley from AITECE in Dublin and eventually Columban Fr Teddy Collins who worked with AITECE and a team of enthusiasts in Hong Kong.

I was assigned to the city of Changchun. Some dominant initial impressions upon arrival: seeming chaos; crushed-together, never-finished tower blocks; friendliness, curiosity, stares from children and adults alike and heavy snow. A little apprehensive in a strange country, I stepped out and followed a friendly student lugging my one large suitcase.

After a bumpy ride in a university car on packed ice, we arrived at what was to be my home for the year ahead.

In my bare apartment, an American neighbour and his Chinese wife kindly showed me the water heater, got a fresh tank of drinking water and brought me extra bedding. That was my introduction to living in China.

Once there I quickly became aware of its frustrating ways of decision-making, procedures, and rules. Garreth, an AITECE colleague, well versed in teaching abroad, helped me greatly by showing me how to use the buses and light rail and find one or two Western shops! The next problem was standing in a crowded bus while eating someone's hair and trying to mark down possible signposts. Buying a cheap city



*A little apprehensive in a strange country, I stepped out and followed him lugging my one large suitcase for the year, towards what was to be my home.*

bike from Decathlon helped exploration of different routes. I go out wearing a helmet and an orange tabard - dressed like the street cleaners.

Transport is probably one of the biggest hurdles to overcome when you have little or no language. Finding taxis is easy, getting one is another hurdle. The buses near me close down at 6:30pm. Carrying a written address of where you are going is important. If a taxi is going in your direction with another passenger then you are in luck. It can be quite daunting for a *Waiguo ren...* Foreigner!

When we sign a contract with the University or establishment we have to "*Pay attention to Chinese ways.*" We are allowed to explain things like the cultural significance of Christmas and Easter. Currently I have a few students and staff who are asking difficult and important questions and within my ability I answer them, directing them also to groups of people who are better qualified in their own language. We have discussions and they say they want to aspire to what they perceive is my equanimity and happiness.

At this point I should say that I am not always composed or happy. Often I am frustrated, sometimes lonely but never for long, but always I know and trust Christ is with me. I could not survive without His constant presence. I am so aware when I have forgotten to pray for His help before a class or an event as it never flows as well as it should.

I spent my early weeks exploring Changchun and beginning to learn some Chinese. I have struggled with the language to a great degree managing to get around with simple phrases and a Hanping dictionary on my mobile phone.

My University classes did not start for some weeks and so I was easily persuaded to teach young children even though the rules say no other work. I am so glad I have had all these varied experiences though teaching children requires much more preparation time. I have been teaching English Major and Science Major students. A short "*Teaching English as a Foreign Language*" (TEFL) course at home was very helpful. Because I have over 30 students in my English classes, I have to keep a tally of those who talk and encourage the others next day.

For language classes these are crazy numbers. I emphasised to them that I was constantly "*loosing face*" in China because I could not speak Chinese and so I understood their reticence. Gradually I have teased them out of their shyness

and I must give them praise for their willingness to do anything I asked of them, usually without protest.

My second lesson each week is usually the more hilarious one when, in groups of four they have to devise a scenario, for example... "*All about Jackie!*" or "*noisy neighbours!*" or "*meeting people at a party*" or "*food related issues*". There is no time to sleep in class or to use their mobile phones! Most lunchtimes are taken up with small groups in the canteen. It can be quite funny when the canteen workers hover around listening and eventually asking questions. My students of course ignore them and are puzzled when I include them a little! One does not talk to street cleaners, canteen staff or farmers!! There is a class barrier which they are surprised I ignore.

My year in Changchun has been a rollercoaster at times. One has to keep an open mind and be ready to cope with anything thrown at you, to be aware that this is a different culture with different norms, to be gentle, truthful and yet firm.

I have been persuaded to return for another term. I have made some good relationships which I would like to develop further.

I would love to spend a few more years there immersing myself in the language, but at my age, family calls and after much prayer, I will only be doing 18 months in total.

---

*Jackie Mitchell is a retired teacher from Holywood, Co. Down, Ireland.*

*For more information visit AITECE: [www.aitece.com](http://www.aitece.com)*



*Jackie Mitchell teaches Chinese students.*

# Dancing for Mary

FR DONALD HORNSEY

*Columban Fr Donald Hornsey shares with us the feast of "Our Lady of the Rosary" in his former parish in the Peruvian Andes. The feast is celebrated with dance and brightly coloured traditional dress.*





Devotion to Mary has long been a notable feature of the church and the number of Marian shrines throughout the world testify to that. We immediately think of Lourdes and Fatima as the two most popular sanctuaries dedicated to Mary, but in fact the two shrines that draw most pilgrims are in Latin America. One is in Mexico, "Our Lady of Guadalupe", and the second is an immense Basilica in Brazil which is called "Our Lady Aparecida", a word which means 'appeared', as the devotion centres around a statue that appeared in a fisherman's net in 1717. Between them, these two shrines attract nearly 30 million pilgrims a year.

"The Month of Mary" is held in Chile starting on November 8 and finishing on December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. During this month, the rosary is said by groups of people both indoors in homes and chapels and outdoors in plazas, parks and on street corners the length and breadth of Chile. Over one million people participate in the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, (a Public Holiday) at the Sanctuary of Lo Vasquez half way between Santiago and Valparaiso. Many of the pilgrims walk for more than 100kms over several days to get there.

It is not surprising then that in the parish of Combapata, high in the southern Andes of Peru the biggest and most beautiful Fiesta of the year is also a Marian Feast, that of "Our Lady of the Rosary". I was formerly the parish priest in this Quechua speaking area. This feast is held at the beginning of October with the 7th and 8th being the main days. During the Fiesta up to 20 brightly costumed dance groups process and dance in honour of Mary.

One of our parishioners, Edwin, comes from another part of Peru. When he arrived in Combapata early last year for work reasons, he was asked by Dorita, the Coordinator of one of the dance groups if he would like to join Kullawarda. "What is it and what does it do?" he asked. The reply was that Kullawarda is a "comparsa" or dance group, composed of youth from the parish, that dance at the Fiesta of "Our Lady of the Rosary" and on other special occasions.

*These former residents always returned faithfully for the feast of their beloved patroness. The dance group, Qapaq Negro crowded around the altar to fulfil their long tradition of singing at the Mass.*

"Do you have to learn a special dance?" asked Edwin. "Yes," answered Dorita, "but we practise for a month before the feast, because Kullawarda has a number of different steps that blend together in six movements or choreographies." But Edwin was still curious. "Why do people want to dance for the Virgin?" he asked. With the wisdom that comes from experience, Dorita replied, "The best time to ask the dancers will be at the end the feast when they are flushed with the excitement of dancing."

Edwin joined the group and the next month was busy with the practices, fundraising, arranging for the food and accommodation for the band, hiring the costumes. But at last all was prepared and the feast began.

On the night of the vigil, Kullawarda went to the house of the family who had accepted the responsibility of organizing the feast and accompanied them in procession to the church where a large number of flowers and candles were carried in to add to the decorations.

At 9:00am on October 7, the church was overflowing with all the 20 different dance groups as well as the many people who were born in the town but now lived elsewhere. These former residents always returned faithfully for the feast of their beloved patroness. The dance group, Qapaq Negro crowded around the altar to fulfil their long tradition of singing at the Mass.

Representatives from each of the dance groups acted as acolytes, serving on the altar at the Mass. When the Mass finished, the leading authorities of the town carried the richly decorated statue of "Our Lady of the Rosary" on their shoulders.

When they arrived at the main plaza outside, the first dance group, chosen by lot, had the privilege of carrying the statue, while the other groups danced in front, before taking their turn to carry their "Mamacha" - little mother - on their shoulders for the next 50 metres around the central plaza of the town.

When the procession completed the circuit of the plaza, which took about two hours, the statue was placed on a table in front of the church and each group had the chance to dance their full repertoire of steps and choreographies. Then the groups composed of younger people found their allotted place in the plaza and continued to dance with all their energy.

The same pattern was repeated on the second day of the Fiesta as well as before the groups sang their farewells and the statue was returned to her place of honour in the church.

Edwin hadn't forgotten the suggestion of Dorita and the moment the last step had been danced he began to ask the participants of Kullawarda why they danced.

● **Luz Delia and Edith** burst out together saying that they danced because of their faith and devotion to the Virgin of the Rosary *"who means so much to us because she is our mother."*

● **Elmer** said simply that he danced to make Jesus and Mary happy.

● **Veronica** replied that she loves to dance at the Fiesta *"to show the affection I feel for Mary who is our mother who protects us from all danger and fills the people of Combapata with blessings."*

● **Isidora** said that her motive for dancing *"was to thank Mary for the faith that I have and also to show my gratitude to those who helped us financially so that the youth of the parish could dance to show their love for Mary and 'Manuelito' (Jesus)."*

● **Fernando's** reply was: *"I like to dance to show publicly my faith that was*

*developed in the parish youth formation programme and as I dance, I pray that Mary will bless all young people and that they will have the chances we have had to know her son, Jesus."*

*"I came from my studies in Cusco in order to thank Our Lady of the Rosary for the Columban presence in the parish which has strengthened the faith of us young people..."*

● **Yoel** added that he dances because he is a Christian and a Catholic and because in the parish he learnt to have faith and hope in Jesus and his mother, Mary.

● **Shamira** added a new note when she said that as she is studying away from home, it is wonderful to return

home to share in the lovely dance with other young people who have faith in Mary.

● Finally **Julio Cesar** thanked Edwin for the opportunity to explain why he dances: *"I came from my studies in Cusco in order to thank Our Lady of the Rosary for the Columban presence in the parish which has strengthened the faith of us young people. We have been given the heartfelt desire to dance again this year in gratitude for all that we have received from the hands of Our Mother of the Rosary."*

*"Will you all dance again next year?"* asked Edwin. "Yes," everyone shouted, *"With the help of the Virgin!"*

---

*Columban Fr Donald Hornsey has worked in Latin America for over 40 years.*



# A man of strong principles



AUSTRALIA



PHILIPPINES

OBITUARY BY FR GARY WALKER

*He had the courage to stand by his principles, but he did not impose his views on others; he did not judge.*

*Francis Henry Carey (1937–2014)*

*‘He had a gentle presence and a kind heart’.* That is how Fr Dan O’Malley, Regional Director of the Columbans in the Philippines, described Fr Francis (Frank) Carey when he informed the Columban membership of Frank’s death on Saturday December 6. Fr Frank was diagnosed with a brain tumour late in October and his health deteriorated quickly. His death has been a great shock to all who knew him.

Fr Francis Carey was born in Melbourne on 19th August 1937 to Paul and Marion Carey, the eldest of three children, Marion and Philip. He attended Our Lady of Good Counsel, Deepdene for his primary education and the Christian Brothers College, East St Kilda for his secondary studies.

Australian Columban, Fr Pat Baker, who was a close friend of Fr Frank’s for 58 years gave the homily in Our Lady of Remedies Church, Malate. He said that Frank was a man of strong principles, he had the courage to stand by them, but he did not impose his views on others; he did not judge. He said that Fr Carey had a great relationship with his father who was a lawyer. Not a high-profile barrister, but a lawyer who had great compassion for and commitment to the poor. He got many of his priorities and values from his Dad.

Fr Frank first arrived in the Philippines in September 1963 and was assigned to the island of Mindanao in the Southern Philippines where he spent more than five years in parish work.

In 1975 he was appointed to the Australia/New Zealand Region for five years and worked as a university chaplain to overseas students in Melbourne. Fr Frank returned to the Philippines in 1976. He began a series of appointments as chaplain



and Student Action Co-ordinator in various colleges and universities for the next 14 years. Through Student Catholic Action he encouraged students to become aware of the social situation around them and to become involved in bringing about necessary change. The Administration felt threatened by these activities which they regarded as subversive, and he was dismissed from the chaplaincy. This was a real blow to him.

He had a break in Australia to heal his wounds and during this time Fr

Frank did a course on Permaculture in Malanda, North Queensland. Upon his return to the Philippines in 1996, he was assigned to the parish, Our Lady of Remedies at Malate. During that time, the Malate parish came up with the idea of a demonstration farm or ecological centre in Silang, Cavite, one hour south of Manila.

Fr Frank had a major role in helping to establish the Centre for Ecozoic Living and Learning (CELL) and keeping it going for 15 years. He revelled in the chance to share with others his great love of creation, to help others have a greater understanding of the wonders of the earth and a greater commitment to caring for them.

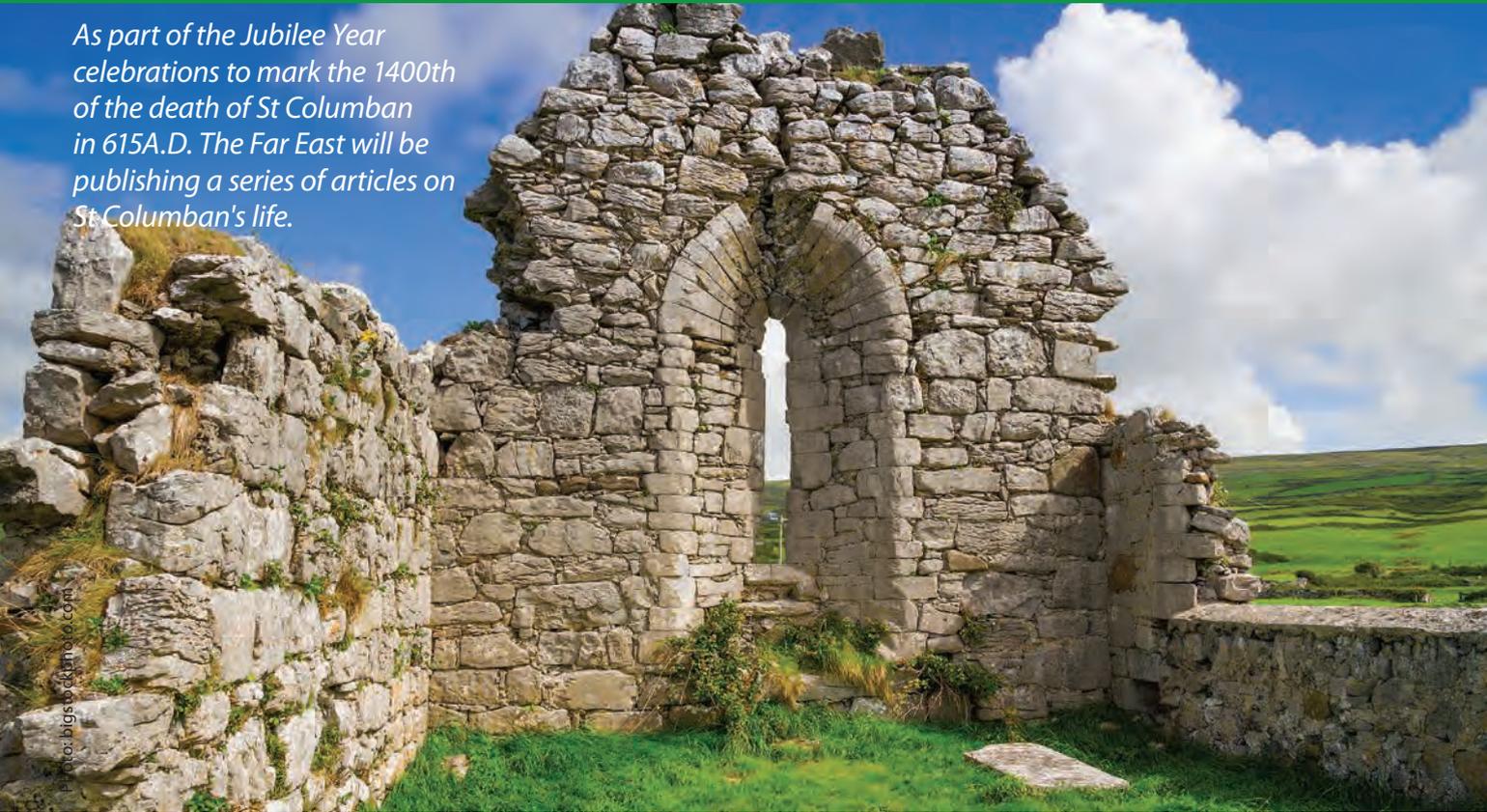
CELL hosted approximately 100,000 students to seminars over the years, most of whom Frank addressed. Government offices regularly visited for seminars as well to get the low-down on care for the environment. Fr Frank continued to be involved in CELL even though in recent years he was in charge of the Columban house in Baguio City in the mountains of northern Luzon. It was there that he began to feel ill in October and returned to Manila.

One who knew him well described him as ‘unflappable, calm, non-judgemental. He was balanced, weighed things up and saw both sides. He allowed people to have their point of view and could sit with ambiguities and opposites.’

May the gentle heart of Fr Francis Carey be opened wide to the gift of eternal life. May he rest in peace.

# The Ireland that produced St Columban

As part of the Jubilee Year celebrations to mark the 1400th of the death of St Columban in 615A.D. The Far East will be publishing a series of articles on St Columban's life.



## *C*olumban's Vocation

Columban was born into a wealthy farmer's family in the south-east of Ireland around the year 540A.D. When his mother was pregnant with him, according to his biographer Jonas, she had a vision of a glittering sun rising from her breast and lighting up the world. Columban had a tutor to teach him Latin (probably from the book of the psalms).

The handsome young Columban was later advised by a woman hermit to flee from temptation. Columban's mother pleaded with him not to leave home and threw herself across the door way. In the first great mortification of his life Columban begged her not to grieve, stepped across her body and journeyed to the monastery of Cleenish in the North of Ireland.

*What was the social and cultural background to this dramatic incident?*

### Geography

Ireland is shaped like a saucer with mountains around the coast and lowlands in the centre of the island. Rain which falls all the year round had in sixth century Ireland favored extensive forests broken up by rivers, lakes and squelchy brown bogs. The forests were home to wild animals like deer, pigs, foxes and wolves. They were also a refuge for outlaws, robbers, the mentally disturbed and people who were excommunicated from the community. Travel within the country was very difficult.

### Kinship and Religion

A king ruled the households within a small territory (*tuath*). Society was hierarchical with warrior nobles at the top; craftsmen, learned men,

metalworkers, medicine men, and musicians in the middle strata and manual workers, herdsmen, servants and bondswomen at the bottom level.

The pagan Irish were animist in religion. They believed in the spirits of rivers, trees and wells. They also had a fascination with the sun. Their main feasts were in May, August, and November and the pagan priests or druids were very influential.

### Habitation, Food and Clothing

There were no towns or villages. Extended families usually lived in isolated farmsteads beside rivers or lakes, in clearings or on hilltops. They were protected from enemies and wild animals by ditches and high circular embankments. Inside these forts were timber houses with walls of reeds daubed with clay and with thatched roofs. The clay floors had

straw or animal skins for beds and a fire with which to cook and warm the house. In the dark nights people gathered around the fire to listen to stories, genealogies and songs.

The people wore clothes made of sheep's wool or animal skins. They ate a kind of porridge, bread, vegetables, fish, fowl and cooked or salted meat. A man who owned cattle was wealthy because cattle were the units of currency, the price of slaves and fines for wrong-doing. Cattle were also the spoils of raids and battles.

### *Christianity*

People had little choice in life up to the fifth century A.D. But then Christianity was probably introduced to small communities around the coast by traders from Britain. In 431A.D. Pope Celestine ordained a bishop named Paladius and sent him to pastor the Christians in Ireland. Columban reminded Pope Gregory of this in a letter, 80 years later, to show the direct connection between Irish Christians and the successors of St Peter in Rome.

Around 432A.D. a bishop named Patrick, who had earlier spent six years in slavery in the north of Ireland, arrived to spread the Gospel among the pagan Irish. He worked mainly in the northern half of Ireland, making Armagh his base and centre.

He tells us in his Confession that he baptized thousands, ordained clerics everywhere, gave presents to kings, was put in irons, journeyed everywhere in many dangers and rejoiced to see the flock of the Lord in Ireland grow splendidly and the children of kings becoming monks and virgins of Christ. The Irish had an oral culture and spoke old Irish language.



As they learned to read and write Latin their inner world and imagination was broadened immensely by familiarity with the Bible, with pagan Roman authors and with writings of European monks such as John Cassian.

### **Monasticism**

St Patrick introduced monasticism to the Irish. It is amazing how quickly this way of living an intense Christian life became dominant in Ireland. The monasteries were built on the model of the family homesteads with a wall around the monastery separating the monks from the outside world they had left. The monks constituted a spiritual family with their abbot as the king. Obedience and respect for the abbot was strictly enforced. Monastic life was marked by discipline, austerity and silence. The monks ate only one meal (normally vegetarian) a day, in the early afternoon. They woke to chant the psalms in the middle of the night. Monks, advanced in prayer, would spend days apart and alone in a cave or forest.

### **Three Pillars**

Prayer (especially the psalms), manual work (like humble commoners) and study (of scriptures, theology, astronomy, computing (maths), Latin and rhetoric) were the pillars of the monk's life. A few of the monks were ordained – to celebrate Mass on Sundays and big feast days and to provide the sacraments for the monks and for lay people from surrounding areas.

The early prevalence of the monastic life in Ireland illustrates how fervently the leaders and people accepted



Christianity. It seemed to clarify the struggle within them of good and evil. A devoted Christian strove to have God within and be preserved from the influence of evil spirits.

The sacrifice of leaving home and living the austere life of the monastery was undertaken by many early Irish Christians because they valued it as a way of living for and with Christ.

### **Pastors of the People**

Monasteries in Ireland overshadowed the usual structures of Church life i.e. parishes and dioceses. People flocked to the monasteries to hear sermons, to confess their sins privately, to pray for their needs, to be educated in the monastic schools and finally to bury their relatives close to that holy place.

The abbot, who might not even be a priest, was seen as more holy and more powerful than the local bishop. So Columban, when he was later in conflict with bishops in France, considered himself independent of them. *"We obey not your rules, but the commands of God. Help us to be*

*pilgrims rather than hinder us,"* he wrote.

### **Exile for Christ**

The Irish at this time had a communal way of living. Columban sacrificed family belonging, his status among his kin and worldly pleasures for the penitential life of the monastery. This was known as green martyrdom.

When later he left Ireland from the monastery of Bangor and set out in a boat to wherever the winds of God would take him he was imitating the faith of Abraham in accepting white martyrdom.

The monks' exile from normal society to focus on an intense love of God and struggle against evil within and without was a remarkable experiment of the early Irish Church.

Columban held to these two polarities in his care for the inner spiritual life and in his zeal for evangelization of lukewarm Christians, pagans or schismatics. Faithfulness to contemplation in action is a legacy through which St Columban continues to challenge us.

# Hands across the Ocean

SR MARY NEYLON



The story of this Youth and Family Project, and the connection with Inagh, my home parish in Ireland, go back a long time. Since I came to Huaycan, south of Lima, Peru, in 1997, there has been great interest and support for the people here and for my involvement with them.

Uprooted from their homes in the mountains of Peru during the years of political violence in the 80s and 90s, thousands of families settled in the sandy, rocky hills of Huaycan, about 25 miles from the capital, Lima. It was a huge and painful upheaval for them. To help the people adjust to their new setting and in an effort to empower them in moving forward, I began the Women's Development Centre, *Warmi Wasi*, with support from the Parish of Inagh, Co. Clare, Ireland.

Here, the women found a meeting place as well as opportunities for human development and the learning of new skills. They told their stories and shared their hopes and dreams for a better future. Concerns for their children, and for the teeming youth population were always to the fore.

So, with the help of local professionals including a psychologist, social worker and a couple of teachers, we

explored some possible ways in which we might be able to contribute. We saw that the needs were greatest in those areas further away from the centre of the town.

*I was very happy to be there and felt overwhelmed with the wonderful support from my home parish.*

At first, we were happy to be offered the use of a room in a local Health Centre, but with the growing interest and increased need, we soon found that the space was too small. Our next move was to a vacant old chapel of the Parish in the same area. Here we developed a Project entitled "*I am a Valuable Person*" offering courses on self-awareness, human rights, communication and citizenship.

Now, three years later, the needs have increased as more and more people hear of our work. But our old chapel is in bad repair and we simply must enlarge it. So, not having any Government support, I looked again to my home parish of Inagh and found, as always, an overwhelmingly supportive response. Great credit and gratitude are due to the initiatives and work of the local committee - and

indeed to the many people in the Parish of Inagh and beyond - who so generously contributed.

Soon, please God, the new building will become a reality and greater opportunities will be available to the youth and families of Huaycan. The final results of the magnificent effort to collect for the Youth and Family project in Huaycan, Peru, were received enthusiastically at a function in Dillon's Bar, Inagh, Co. Clare, on July 19, 2014.

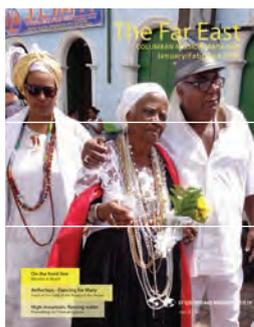
I was very happy to be there and felt overwhelmed with the wonderful support from my home parish. A wide range of fundraising activities had been organised by the local committee during the previous four or five months, all resulting in the extraordinary sum of 12,800 Euros.

This happens to be the year of my Golden Jubilee as a Columban Missionary Sister. I thank the Lord for His many, many blessings and most especially for the people of Inagh and Huaycan who are surely a sign of God's presence in our world. Blessings on all!

---

*Columban Sr Mary Neylon served in Ireland, Britain, the Philippines and in Peru for the past 25 years.*

## COMING SOON



### The Far East Magazine

#### CRASH FOLDING saves 28% in postage

By triple folding *The Far East* magazine, we are reducing the cost of postage by 28%. This will begin with the next issue *March 2015*.

We are committed to sending *The Far East* to you in ways that keep costs low and show care for the environment, so that you can continue to receive and enjoy the real life stories that arise out of Columban Mission.





# 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.*

## **Church in England & Wales looks to ethnic minorities for future priests**

*As in Australia and New Zealand many vocations to the priesthood in Britain now come from immigrant communities.*



Photo: bigstockphoto.com

**T**he Catholic Church in Britain is to target men from ethnic minorities to boost numbers at seminary.

The move follows a fact-finding visit to the United States where vocations promoters have started having "Hispanic breakfasts" with community leaders. Spanish speakers outnumber English speakers in many US dioceses

yet the number of Hispanic seminarians remains very low.

Fr Stephen Langridge, Chairman of the Conference of Diocesan Directors of Vocation of England and Wales, who was a member of the group that visited the United States in September of this year, said: *"The Catholic Church in our country has been greatly enriched by immigrants in recent years. Many families*

*from Asia, eastern Europe and Africa are very strong in the faith. We want to help the young men in these families to recognise that God may be calling them to serve as priests in their new homeland. Sometimes, if they don't see priests from their ethnic group in their parishes, they can lose heart. We need their ministry!"*

The vocations directors, at their annual meeting at the Kairos Centre in London last week, also considered a raft of other measures including relaunching the popular "ukpriest.org" website, special assemblies for 10 and 11-year-olds and resourcing parish priests, who are seen as the main promoters of the "culture of vocation".

During the three-day conference, psychotherapist Fr Anthony Doe told the priests that their first duty was to be mindful of their own interior lives. *"You must go further into the Heart of Jesus so that you can inspire those whom you are accompanying to experience conversion too,"* he said.

*Source: Archbishops House - Independent Catholic News*

## **Mission Intention for January**

That in this year dedicated to consecrated life, religious men and women may rediscover the joy of following Christ and strive to serve the poor with zeal.

## **Mission Intention for February**

That married people who are separated may find welcome and support in the Christian community.



# From the Director

*Written with a shaky hand*

*The* Christmas Appeal is nearly over for 2014 but Columban benefactors still send in their donations months later. An increasing number of people donate online these days but I still receive letters written with a shaky hand. These letters are a cause for humility on my part and thanksgiving to our donors as well.

They write that they are getting old now and living on the pension; with increased expenses due to sickness and sometimes the death of a spouse, they don't have money to spare to donate to St Columban's Mission. Therefore, with great regret they ask us to take their name off our mailing list.

Or a variation is that they don't read much now and don't want to receive *The Far East* magazine any more but they have loved the magazine and the interesting stories of the missionaries working for God; but all good things come to an end. They have especially loved the trials and tribulations of the young school boy in Mickey Daly's Diary.

*Sometimes, I have telephoned a benefactor to thank them for their generosity. They are surprised and then delighted that I have contacted them personally. It is not possible to do this with everyone so this column is an attempt to say 'thank you' to all the people who support Columban Mission. And especially to those benefactors who are getting older and who have been so faithful to us for such a long time.*

There is regret in the words and the shaky handwriting is a clue to the age of the donor. *'I am 86 years old now, and I have been a supporter of the Columban Mission for 50 years...'* or *'My wife died five months ago and I feel as if a part of me has gone and I pray the good Lord will take me soon so I can be with her...'* or *'Our mother just died and she asked us to*

*continue to get The Far East magazine so I am taking over her subscription. My address is...'*

Confronted with the faithfulness and commitment of these benefactors to the Missionary Society of St Columban, to give us a formal name, I sit at my desk humbled by their support over many years, their unflinching generosity in a world in which thousands of charities are clamouring for their attention and they remain faithful to us. Without our benefactors we would not be able to continue to do missionary work as we have been doing it for nearly 100 years.

Sometimes, I have telephoned a benefactor to thank them for their generosity. They are surprised and then delighted that I have contacted them personally. It is not possible to do this with everyone so this column is an attempt to say 'thank you' to all the people who support Columban Mission. And especially to those benefactors who are getting older and who have been so faithful to us for such a long time.

God bless you.

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

Fr Gary Walker  
director@columban.org.au

# Letter from Jeju Island

ART LAFFIN

Art Laffin from the United States has just concluded a three day visit to Jeju Island in South Korea. He is a member of two important Catholic peace and social justice movements, "Pax Christi USA" and "The Catholic Worker Movement". Recently he visited Jeju where he met Columban Fr Pat Cunningham and other protestors against the construction of a massive naval base at this World Heritage site.

Today was a rainy day in Gangjeong village. At 7:00am Columban priest, Fr Pat Cunningham, and I joined several other friends for the daily bowing ritual at the main entrance of the new naval base under construction. As a Buddhist meditation about peace and compassion is recited over a sound system, 100 full prostrate bows are done. I stood and bowed as my knees aren't what they used to be.

As the rain fell, my meditation brought me back some 37 years ago as I recalled the Thames River in New London/Groton, Connecticut, being dredged so that the soon-to-be Trident submarines would not scrape the river bottom. Yesterday, I saw massive cranes dredging the port where this new naval base is under construction. God forgive this unspeakable desecration in which the United States is fully complicit!

After the ritual, Fr Pat took me on a trail where I could see another side of the base being built. The trail stretched alongside a small stream that fed into the beautiful South China Sea. As I was told yesterday, and was reminded again today, the ancient Gureombi rock formation is now nonexistent, as it was blasted away two years ago. In the March 2014 issue of the *Gangjeong Village Story* Newsletter, the lead article lamented the second anniversary of the destruction of this sacred formation: "For thousands of years, Gureombi has been a playground, a garden, and a mother's arms, embracing and embraced by the people of Gangjeong. Thus it was perhaps the most painful and sorrowful moment of this eight

year struggle to experience the partial destruction of the Gureombi Rock.

*My friend, Fr Pat, who has been an enormous help to me, departed for the mainland later in the morning. I then attended the daily 11:00am Eucharist at the main entrance of the construction site, where I sat next to Fr Mun, the renowned and revered peacemaker.*

*Still, though we cannot see Gureombi anymore, it lives on in our memories."*

My friend, Fr Pat, who has been an enormous help to me, departed for the mainland later in the morning. I then attended the daily 11:00am Eucharist at the main entrance of the construction site, where I sat next to Fr Mun, the renowned and revered peacemaker. The reign of God was truly at hand as rain came down for most of the Mass.

Like yesterday, those who were sitting directly in the path where vehicles enter and exit, were moved several times out of the way by police. Shortly afterwards, those who were moved went back to their blocking positions. Like yesterday, no arrests were made for this action. As the caravan of cement and supply trucks entered and exited the site, I pondered how the needs of countless poor could be met if the resources going into this site could be redirected.

Right before the sign of peace, Fr Mun always sings a beautiful prayer for peace. He later commented to me that he often feels like crying whenever he sings the song. At the end of the

Mass, Fr Mun conveyed to me what a beautiful Mass it was. He said: "This is our Church, a church in the streets." Following the Mass the gathered community prayed the rosary. When the rosary was finished, a human chain was formed by about 30 people at the main entrance of the site.

I was very honoured to be asked to sing several songs during this time. When the human chain ended, all gathered and broke out into a synchronized dance that was most impressive. Even though there was a heavy rain, this did not dampen the spirits of those dancing. Rather, the people danced with even more spirit and swagger. It was truly an amazing sight to behold!

Later in the afternoon, I was interviewed by a long-time activist and writer who is doing a story about The Catholic Worker movement for a progressive Catholic publication in South Korea called "Now and Here". Part of the reason she was doing the story was that several Catholic Workers have previously come to Jeju and she was very interested to know why. She also wanted to know more about The Catholic Worker movement, my involvement in it, and why I had come to Jeju. We had a great two-hour interview which included a translator.

The rain has stopped. I am so grateful to be here. I carry all of you who read this in my heart and prayers. Thank you for your loving support and prayers. Please pray for all those who are resisting the construction of the new naval base here. Thank you for all you are doing to help create the Beloved Community.



*Columban Fr Patrick Cunningham, with Fr Mun, the renowned and revered peacemaker.*

# Serving God with a different language

JOAN YAP

*Columban Lay Missionary Joan Yap from the Philippines shares the story of her work in her parish in Taiwan, training Mandarin speaking children to become Altar Servers at the English speaking Mass.*

Photos: Joan Yap



*Joan Yap training future altar servers in Taiwan.*

The organization of “New Immigrants Children” consists of the children of Filipino women married to Taiwanese men. Growing up in Taiwan, these mixed Filipino/Taiwanese children, however, only speak Mandarin Chinese, the official Taiwanese language.

The children's Filipina mothers have encouraged them to make Mandarin Chinese their mother tongue. Not only do these mothers wish to develop their own use of Mandarin but they also wish to help their children fit into Taiwanese society.

At the same time, I have noticed that many of these Filipina Mums attend the English Mass for the Filipino community as they have difficulty understanding the Chinese Mass as quite often they are not very fluent Mandarin speakers. The difficulty arises when these Mums bring their Mandarin speaking children to the English Mass, which of course they usually do and the children do not understand the Mass.

For the Filipino mothers, being away from home, the Catholic parish has become their refuge. A mother's faith becomes a gift to the community. What inspires me most is that, since there are only a few Catholics in Taiwan, these Mums are very generous in allowing their children to help and participate in any church activities.

It was through their generosity and volunteering spirit that our parish was inspired to organize an altar servers' guild for these Mandarin speaking children this year at the English speaking Mass. It was really not that easy to start with because of the language barrier between Mandarin and English.

However we believed that by the grace of God we would be able to understand each other and in time everything went well. Language differences didn't become such a huge barrier as long as we knew that what we do is for the glory of God's name.

My experience with the altar servers gives me the opportunity to look back at my own childhood years. I remember how every Sunday my parents would bring myself and my brothers and sisters to Mass.

At that time Sunday Mass at the parish church was for me the most peaceful place I knew, even though I didn't always have much understanding of what was happening. All I knew was that I was there to pray and speak with God.

It was through attending Mass that my vocation started. I remember how I dreamed of becoming a nun because I saw how active they were in the different pastoral and liturgical ministries of our parish. I have always appreciated people who volunteer for church ministries and their commitment to serve God, the community and parish.

From a young age my parents brought me with them to all the different kinds of church activities they were involved in, as well as



PHILIPPINES



TAIWAN

*...I have always appreciated people who volunteer for church ministries and their commitment to serve God, the community and parish.*

Sunday Mass. I was exposed to the work of a parish community. I participated in it. I became involved in it and it became an inspiration for me. And so the seeds were sown for my desire to serve God and the community began.

The inspiration of my parents in giving their life in the service of the Church has led me to where I am now as a Columban Lay Missionary in Taiwan, a foreign country. These Mandarin

speaking children have taught me that language is not everything there is to understand in this overseas mission.

What is most important is how you relay the language of love, which is God's love.

The children may have difficulty in understanding the English Mass but this does not hinder them from being of service. Just like their mothers, I am proud to see them giving

themselves and serving God and the community in our parish church. It is my prayer that they become a hope for our future in our parish. I pray that someday, as they grow old, they will have something to hold on to, an experience with God, that helps them mould their vocation in life, just as it did in my life.

*Columban Lay Missionary Joan Yap from the Philippines is assigned to Taiwan.*





## Remember the Missions

### in your WILL

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

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

*Why not speak to your lawyer about it?*

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

# High mountain, flowing water



CHINA

FR DAN TROY

*Fr Dan Troy illustrates the age-old appreciation of friendship in Chinese culture.*

An appreciation for deep friendship has been at the heart of Chinese culture since at least the first millennium before Christ.

On a number of occasions I have visited a memorial park in Wuhan, where I live and work, which celebrates the Chinese story illustrating the beauty and wonder of friendship. The park known as the Gu Qin Tai, located at the foot of Tortoise Hill, Hanyang, was first built in the fifth century. The present platform was built in 1957 in the style in which it had been restored by Emperor Guangxu, the reforming emperor of the late 19th century.

Recently I had the chance to speak at length with Mr Wu Chuqi, director of Gu Qin Tai. I asked him about the expression “*high mountain flowing water*” and its relationship to the place of friendship in Chinese culture. He recalled the story of the origin of the expression, reminding me that there are a variety of versions of the story, but all revolve around the same theme of deep friendship. The tradition goes back many years as the *qin* instrument (*pronounced: chin*) dates to 1,500B.C. and Confucius wrote about it over 2,500 years ago.

Mr Wu talked to me about the musician, Bo Ya, who was very skilled with the ancient Chinese instrument, known as the *qin* (akin to a harp). Bo Ya always found others unable to comprehend his music until one day he met a poor man, Zhong Zi Qi, who listened secretly at a distance. A string broke on the instrument and Bo Ya immediately concluded that someone was listening secretly. Zhong Zi Qi came forward. Bo Ya played a tune and asked his audience of one what image it brought to mind and he replied, “*High mountain*”. “*Correct*”, he said, and then played another tune and asked Zhong Zi Qi the same question, to which he responded, “*Flowing water*”. Bo Ya was elated because he had at last found someone who could understand his music.

Zhong Zi Qi and the musician were in harmony and they became soul friends. Nature, contemplated and reflected in the arts of writing and music had drawn two men together in deep friendship. The massive stability of the mountains and the gentle movement of the river found expression in the artistic hearts of two men. While it is true that people like stability, it is also true that the more open person also



Photo: Fr Peter Woodruff

*Mr Wu Chuqi plays his qin instrument.*

likes to see and participate in movement. Such are the insights of Confucius, which were conveyed by Bo Ya with his *qin* instrument and recognized by Zhong Zi Qi. When Bo Ya heard later that Zhong Zi Qi had died, he smashed his instrument, declaring that it was of no further use to him as now there was no one to appreciate his music.

In his work as director of Gu Qin Tai, Mr Wu Chuqi takes every opportunity to promote the idea of friendship between people and between nations. He has books about *qin* music for specialists and an array of DVDs for all who may be interested. He himself plays the *qin* instrument with great skill and is most patient with foreigners who may not speak Chinese quite as well as he does. Mr. Wu Chuqi pointed out that, “*Friendship between two people promotes friendship between groups, which promotes friendship between nations. Friendship between nations is the cornerstone of peace in our world*”.

---

*Columban Fr Dan Troy was ordained in 1999 and has served in mainland China since then.*

# In the *favelas* of Brazil

Columban Fr Colin McLean has worked amongst the Afro-Brazilian people of the Brazilian city of Salvador for many years.

In a city marked by poverty, violence and drug wars, Fr Colin and his parishioners reach out to those in need in the poorest 'favelas' of their parish.

With your support Fr Colin and Columbans can continue to build God's kingdom in these communities.

We thank you for your support.



Photo: Fr John Boles

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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