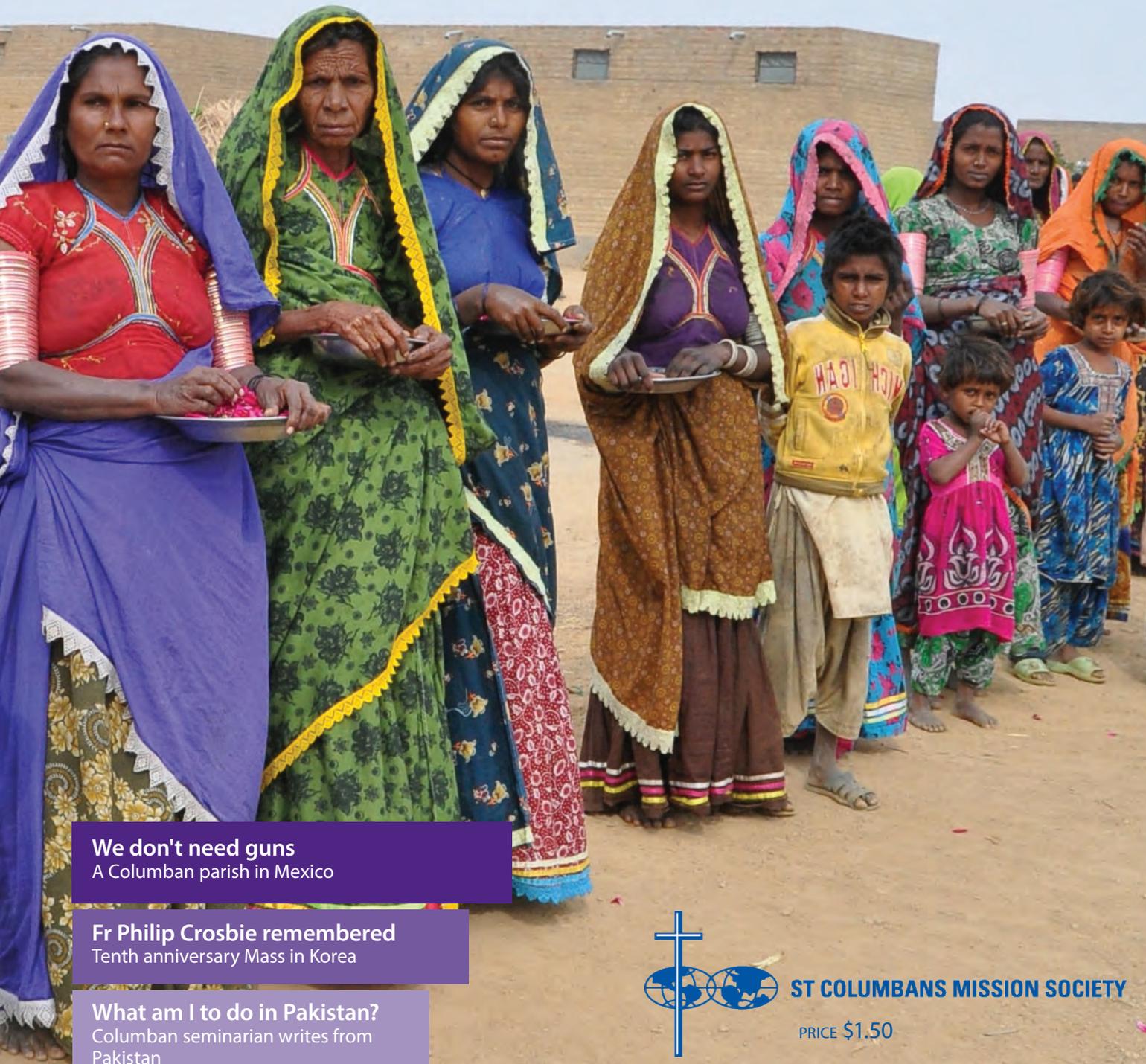


*Columban
Vocations issue
2015*

The Far East

COLUMBAN MISSION MAGAZINE

August 2015



We don't need guns
A Columban parish in Mexico

Fr Philip Crosbie remembered
Tenth anniversary Mass in Korea

What am I to do in Pakistan?
Columban seminarian writes from
Pakistan



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The Far East

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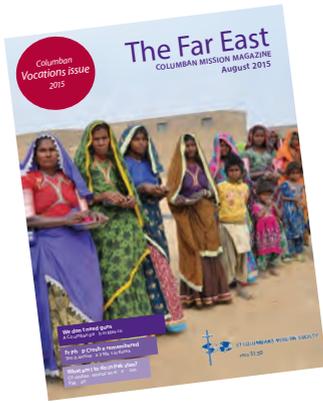
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Listen to: From the Editor



Pakistani women and children prepare to share a meal after the celebration of the Eucharist. (See Louie Ybanez's story pages 20-21).

Photo: Fr Robert McCulloch



From the Editor

Called by God to be a missionary priest

"When I realised that God was calling me to be a priest, I knew that it meant being a missionary priest. So I joined the Columbans."

These are the words of Columban seminarian Louis Ybanez from the Philippines as he begins a two year pastoral placement in Pakistan which is a part of the Columban seminary formation programme.

The August issue of *The Far East* is dedicated to Vocations. Louie Ybanez's story from Pakistan is one of many stories from Columban missionaries around the world who share with us their vocation to become missionary priests. Also included in this issue is the warm welcome by the Missionary Society of St Columban given to the new encyclical by Pope Francis, "*Laudato Si*", on our human relationship with the environment and the need to care for our common home.

Australian born Fr. Kevin Mullins is parish priest of Corpus Christi parish in the city of Juarez, on the Mexican side of the border with the United States. Fr. Kevin shares with us details of parish life in an area internationally known for poverty, for drug cartels

fighting for territory and for people smuggling. Fr. Kevin recently visited our magazine office in Melbourne.

The late Fr. Philip Crosbie was a well-known Columban priest in Korea who in 1950 at the start of the Korean War survived the infamous death march in North Korea where he was then held prisoner for the next three years. Fr. Sean Conneely writes about a recent Eucharist in Korea to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Fr. Phil's death.

Two recent visitors to the magazine office from Korea were Frs. Thomas Nam and John Lee. Fr. Thomas Nam shared with us his ministry back home after returning from Peru. Fr. John Lee is the first Korean Diocesan Priest Associate to work with the Columbans in Fiji.

Columban Fr. Walter Tudor recently celebrated the 40th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. We include in this issue the homily given by Fr. Wally which reflects on his vocational call by God to be a missionary.

The call to work as a missionary priest in another country is indeed a unique

and privileged calling. Even when the age and health of missionaries require them to return home to their original countries, there are many ways that they can continue to serve as missionaries. When 80 year old Fr. Charles Duster was told by his doctors to leave Fiji and return to the United States, he soon found other ways he could serve as a missionary back home.

Let us pray to the Lord of the Harvest to send more missionaries- priests, lay and religious, because as Jesus told us, the harvest is ripe, but the labourers are few. (*Lk 10:2, Matt 9,38*)

Fr Daniel Harding

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We don't need guns

FR KEVIN MULLINS



"It was a Saturday night and I was sound asleep. All of a sudden I was awakened by a loud noise. The whole house shook. I got up and looked out the window. I was aware that there was a wild party going on over two blocks away. Then the house shook again with that same shrieking noise. I hit the deck, thinking they must be firing against my house. I spent the night in fear sleeping on the floor.

The next day, being Sunday, I had my usual four Masses to celebrate. After the first Mass, I asked some of my close neighbours whether they had also heard the loud noise followed by the violent shaking of their homes. They replied, 'Yes, Father, we also heard and felt it. There were people from a drug cartel at that party nearby and they were firing rockets from one of their rocket launchers into the sky above the neighbourhood as a kind of party trick'".

Photo: Fr Kevin Mullins



Columban Fr Kevin Mullins has been the parish priest of Corpus Christi parish in the Diocese of Juarez, Mexico, since September 7, 2001. Brisbane born Fr. Kevin recently visited the office of The Far East in Melbourne where he shared with us about his pastoral ministry in Mexico.

Fr Kevin was ordained a priest on May 26, 1978 at his home parish of St Catherine's, Wishart, in suburban Brisbane. His first assignment as a Columban missionary was to Chile where he worked in parishes amongst the poor in Santiago and later with the indigenous Mapuches in the south of Chile.

From Chile Fr. Kevin moved to Mexico in 2001 to take up work in the newly founded Columban parish of Corpus Christi. This parish was located in one of the poorest areas on the edge of the city of Juarez called Rancho Anapra. In the beginning only about 30 people came to Sunday Mass. Today, as a result of Fr. Kevin's and other Columban missionaries' continuity, hard work and commitment, around 600 people attend Sunday Mass. Sainiana Tamatawale, a Columban lay missionary from Fiji, has valiantly worked alongside Fr. Kevin in the parish for the last few years.

Fr. Kevin has many stories to tell of his life in what was once described as the most dangerous city in the world outside of a war zone. The city of Juarez is located on the Mexican side of the border with the United States city of El Paso, Texas and the border is the northern boundary of Corpus Christi parish.

Due to its location Juarez is the centre for Mexican drug cartels that smuggle drugs and people across the border into the United States. Competition between the cartels for territory and in the people trafficking 'business' sometimes results in an all-out war. The situation got so bad a few years ago that the Mexican Army had to come into Juarez and occupy the city as if it were a war zone.

"Since then, the number of drug related shoot outs and executions has diminished somewhat," says Fr. Kevin. "We have not had a drug related execution by a rival drug cartel in this parish for two years now. The last execution by rival dealers in Corpus Christi parish was of a young couple who were murdered one night in front of their three year old daughter. The little girl slept cuddled up to the bodies of her mother and father throughout the night and early next morning told the neighbours that something was wrong with mummy and daddy. The little girl is now being raised by relatives and seems

not to be doing too bad the last time I saw her. Of course it is impossible to really know how she is."

Fr. Kevin often receives foreign visitors to the parish who are participants in Columban Exposure Programmes to the border reality. Most of these visitors come from the United States, but a recent group came from Britain. Many of these visitors are not quite sure what to expect upon arrival. Fr. Kevin relates, *"Because of the reputation of the city of Juarez, most of our foreign visitors come expecting to find the people of the parish weighed down by their poverty and suffering. They are pleasantly surprised however when they discover how alive, dynamic and vibrant the parish and indeed the Diocese of Juarez is. The foreign visitors enter into the spirit of celebration, community and welcome at Mass and come away deeply moved.*

In reality the foreign visitors receive so much from the happy and friendly parishioners of Corpus Christi. They learn a lot about professing and living the Christian faith in an active committed way. Apart from the five Sunday Masses, we have Mass every day of the week. We have a weekly Bible Study group, another group that visits the sick and the needy poor. We have a Sacramental preparation programme led by lay catechists. Finally, due to the high rate of obesity and diabetes amongst the parishioners, we have a Zumba dance fitness programme most nights of the week, attended by over 80 people, including (down the back) the parish priest.

At our four day long Diocesan Youth Congress, 12,000 young people attend with great enthusiasm and energy. Many go from our parish. A movement for married couples gathers about 4000 couples at their annual congress, 300 couples going from the parishes of our deanery".

Recently, however, a parishioner came to Fr. Kevin and offered him and another Columban priest working there at the time, two brand new Glock 45 guns still wrapped in their original cases. They were offered for a discount price of US\$375.00 each.

"You might need these, Father, for self-defence, you never know," said the parishioner to Fr. Kevin. "Sadly," Fr Kevin says, "the whole area is awash with guns."

"I told this parishioner that our lives are in the hands of God and the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico's Patroness. We don't need guns."

Fr Kevin Mullins SSC has worked for many years in Juarez, Mexico, one of the most dangerous cities in the world. It was previously referred to as Murder City.

Fr Philip Crosbie remembered

FR SEAN CONNEELY

As people grow old many ask the question or begin to wonder, "Was my life worthwhile?" "Have I made a contribution to humanity?"

"Were my efforts worthwhile?" "Does anyone care?" "Will I be remembered?"

As missionaries we reminisce with the same questions, especially in a foreign country.

As I grow old I ask myself these questions. *Will I be remembered here in Korea in 30, 40, 50 years' time? Will anyone care and carry on my work and other Columban ministries?*

When I visit different parishes throughout Korea in order to look for support for Columban missionaries, it is always a great joy and affirmation when people come up to me to tell me how a certain Columban priest baptized them or supported them in time of need or encouraged them to go to the seminary or the convent.

Many parishioners go out of their way to inform us of their pride and gratitude for their connection with Columban missionaries in the past.

I was pleasantly surprised and grateful earlier this year when I got an invitation from Fr. Simon Shin from the Chuncheon Diocese to attend a ceremony to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the death of the Australian Columban Fr. Philip Crosbie who died the evening of Holy Thursday, March 24, 2005 in Melbourne.

Columban Fr. Joseph Kang and myself left early morning through the heavy traffic of Seoul to go to Gethsemane Retreat House, the last place Fr. Phil built and lived in before returning

at the age of 84 to his native land, Australia.

Being a cold early spring morning in the hills of Kang Won Province and also being the season of Lent, only a small crowd of people and four diocesan priests had gathered.

Fr. Simon told us that a bigger event in the open air was being planned in November to celebrate Fr. Phil's 100th birthday when a big crowd is expected.

In his sermon Fr. Simon reminded the congregation of the great works Fr. Phil had accomplished since he came to Korea in 1940, the churches he had built, but especially his time in captivity in North Korea from 1950 till 53, as Fr. Phil himself recorded in his book "Pencilling Prisoner". (The second printing of the Korean translation of the book is coming out soon).

At the beginning of the Korean War in 1950, Fr. Phil and fellow Columban Bishop Thomas Quinlan, along with 750 other prisoners, were forced to take part in an eight day long death march with the retreating North Korean Army. Only 250 prisoners, including Fr. Phil and Bishop Quinlan survived this death march. They remained prisoners of the North Koreans until May 1953.

Fr. Simon also mentioned and praised the zeal, fervour and spirituality of Fr. Phil, and how in his own quiet way and consistent presence he influenced so many people. He also told us of his last memory of Fr. Phil. It was a gathering of all the priests of the Chuncheon Diocese a few days before Fr. Phil left for home.

He was asked to say a few parting words before he left. In typical

Fr. Phil fashion he was brief and to the point. As he looked around on all the gathering of priests he said, "When I came here 59 years ago there were only three Korean priests in the Diocese of Chuncheon, now, thank God, there are 150."

Looking around at the big gathering of priests, with bowed head, in gratitude, pride, and sorrow for leaving, he walked slowly and quietly down the aisle and out the door. In other words all of his mission in Korea was completed. The rest was in God's hands working with the new crop of Korean native priests. He was free to go home.

Sad as his parting may have been he was leaving knowing well that he had given his all and grateful for his part in developing the new native church, especially in the Diocese of Chuncheon.

"Thank you, Fr. Phil, for your deep faith, endurance and example to us all. I'm glad and grateful to have served in the same mission as you and you'll be always in my heart and mind."

Columban Fr Sean Conneely has worked for many years in Korea.



Cover of Fr Philip Crosbie's book 'Pencilling Prisoner'. Currently out of print.



“

*Were my efforts worthwhile?"
"Does anyone care?" "Will I be remembered?"*



Personal but not private

Columban Fr. Walter Tudor is the Parish Priest of the parish of Apollo Bay in the Diocese of Ballarat. At the Eucharist to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of his ordination to priesthood on May 10, 2015, he delivered the following homily on the call to the ministry of priesthood.

The call to the ministry of priesthood is a personal call but not a private one.

It comes from the grace received in Baptism and is based on God's love and faithfulness.

It is a call to serve rather than to be served and is always strengthened by the support of family, friends and parishioners.

It is in this context that I give thanks today for all of you who have come here to celebrate this special occasion with me.

My vocation grew out of God's love for me which I discovered in family life, especially in the groundwork and love of my parents whose Christian values they shared with us.

My siblings and extended family have also encouraged me over the years and I'm very pleased to say that my only living aunt has come all the way from Queensland to share this occasion with me. Thank you, Mary, for that honour.

The parish community of Gordon (95ks West of Melbourne) can lay claim to the rising grace within me to serve God.

The Sisters of St Joseph, affectionately known as the 'Brown Joeys' encouraged me in primary school and I owe them a great deal for care and teaching in showing me the way to love God.

In Secondary College, the Christian Brothers challenged me to overcome adversity in a way that I didn't understand at the time.

I don't need to go into every detail of my journey to where I find myself at this time but I am pleased to have gathered around me a number of Columban priests with whom I have studied and who have become lifetime friends and supporters.

Naturally enough the diocesan priests are unable to be with us because of their weekend commitments but the spirit of the priests of the diocese is wonderful and a great



My vocation grew out of God's love for me which I discovered in family life....

support on the journey of ministry often in very difficult circumstances, as we will all find ourselves in with the Royal Commission in Ballarat for public hearings.

Much of my 40 years of priesthood has been overshadowed by the inexcusable events of clergy abuse and cover-ups by people in leadership.

It is indeed thanks to the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives that we can gather together today to celebrate Christ's gifts to his people even though some have let us down very badly.

Enough about that at this time except to say that we need to show continual support to those who have been abused and let down by people who should have been able to shepherd them through rough times, leading to a breakdown of trust and loss of hope.

May they find justice, healing and peace through the Royal Commission.

I stand before you humbly admitting that my growth in the priesthood is due mainly to you parishioners in this wonderful parish of Apollo Bay and to all the parishioners of every parish I have had the privilege to serve as a priest. I thank you sincerely.

Having had the experience of living and working in the Philippines for the first six years of my priesthood, I want to share with you two pastoral experiences which have stayed with me over the years.

It was my first funeral. Indeed it was the blessing of a stillborn baby brought to the church by a very poor family in a shoe box wrapped with brown paper and a makeshift bow as a gift - a gift from God returned to God with sorrow and sadness but believing that God would welcome that baby home.

That was a very powerful lesson about appreciating all that comes from God and people's encounter with the God of hope.

One of the few names I remember from those days is Teresita Tabilon, who suffered from polio and was confined to a wheelchair at the little sari-sari store (a small convenience store) in a barrio (district) that to me was very depressing. Teresita always had a smile and never complained and always looked forward to receiving Communion on my weekly visits. She was so delighted to meet my parents and my sister Anne and one of my brothers when they came to visit in 1978.

I relate these two experiences not simply to reminisce but to confirm that they played a substantial part in the way my ministry has evolved from those early days and they are a practical example of today's Gospel in which we are called to love one another as Christ has loved us.

I was first loved by God and my parents and so many friends and relatives along the way in such a way that I have been able to love others.

This is the gift of discipleship - loving through thick and thin - graced by the Sacrament of Baptism and reinforced by the other Sacraments along the way, especially the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is at the centre of my priestly life. It is where I find God's love in all my weakness and sinfulness and where I discover God's faithfulness and mercy, the gifts that Pope Francis emphasizes in calling for a Jubilee Year of Mercy beginning in November.

And it is why our celebration today is firmly embedded in community life - it is not so much about me and my vocation but more about us and our various vocations in discipleship - a discipleship that keeps Christ among us and brings Christ to those around us.

We are called to various ministries within the community and the challenge for all of us is that we respond appropriately to the specific call given to each one of us so that Christ is truly present in our lives and we help to make him present in the lives of others through the way we live the Gospel values of compassion, justice, peace and equality.

As Jesus reminds us in today's Gospel: *"I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from the Father. You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last."*

This is indeed the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.



Columban Fr. Wally Tudor is the Parish Priest of the parish of Apollo Bay in the Diocese of Ballarat.

Columban Missionaries welcome Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment



LAUDATO SI'

June 18, 2015. Columban Missionaries welcome and celebrate Pope Francis' newly released encyclical on the environment, "Laudato Si', mi' Signore" (Praise be to you, my Lord) *On Care for our Common Home*.

Columban Superior General, Fr. Kevin O'Neill says of 'Laudato Si', "We thank Pope Francis for his visionary and pastoral leadership which invites us as faithful disciples of Jesus to an ongoing ecological conversion. Our lived experience speaks to us as we see the impacts of the exploited earth and exploited peoples. We believe, as stated in our 2012 General Assembly, 'that we are called to

solidarity with marginalized people and the exploited earth (which) are ways we participate in God's mission'."

Pope Francis invites us to new understandings, reflections, and actions when he says, "I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all."

Photo: ©iStock.com/neneos



We are reminded in *'Laudato Si'* of the inter connectedness of the human and natural worlds in these words, *"Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."* For Columbans this interconnectedness and solidarity can be found in our own Constitutions which say, *"The biblical perspective of stewardship inspires our attitudes and challenges our use of material resources. It should lead to a lifestyle in keeping with Gospel values."*

As pastoral leader Pope Francis calls us into communion when he says, *"The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. In this way, they make their own that Trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created. Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity."*

.....

Internationally recognized eco-theologian, Columban Fr. Sean McDonagh says, *"Laudato Si'* is an important step in the Church's understanding of our human relationship with both the Creator and all of creation. We must continually learn from science, evolve our theology, and humbly situate ourselves in the wider creation story that began with the initial flaring forth 13.7 billion years ago to the world in which we live now and in to the future. We must be open to encounter creation and learn from it."

.....

Amy Woolam Echeverria, International Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Coordinator for Columbans says, *"Having worked for many years in the care and respect for creation as an expression of our missionary spirit, we are filled with hope that Pope Francis' leadership will energize the entire Church and wider community towards an ongoing ecological conversion. We believe that Praised Be has enormous potential to inspire change in both individual and institutional lifestyles as well as for national and global environmental and economic policies before it is too late."*

Columban missionaries have been dedicated to the care and respect for creation for decades through theological

reflection, academic study, sacramental and liturgical practice, grassroots projects, policy advocacy, and artistic expression. Recognizing that care and respect for creation is a universal call which unites people of all faiths, many of whom, inspired by the resources of their own traditions, are actively involved in care for the environment; we commit ourselves to working with them in a spirit of ecumenical and interfaith cooperation as well as with grassroots partners like the Global Catholic Climate Movement and Our Voices.

We wholeheartedly commit ourselves to working with the Church as well as with our ecumenical, interfaith, and grassroots partners wherever we are present to promote and integrate *'Laudato Si'* into the work for giving praise and glory to God through our care and respect for our common home.

.....

Fr. Gary Walker, Columban Regional Director, Australia & New Zealand says, Columban Missionaries welcome and celebrate Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, *'Laudato Si'*. The encyclical marks an historic moment in the Church as the first encyclical regarding the human relationship with all of God's creation.

Pope Francis expresses his concern for the future viability of humankind and the planet due to the impacts of human behaviour on ecosystems. One of the most immediate is the influence of global warming. He has given ecological issues a high profile not only to the Catholic Church but to the rest of the world.

The document attempts to re-define a balance between humans and the rest of creation. Human needs must be met in a way that does not endanger the rest of creation, or irreversibly damage it.

In *'Laudato Si'* 13, Pope Francis says, *"The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change."* Climate change sceptics will resent the interference of a 'man of religion' but others will welcome the weight of authority which Pope Francis brings to the issues around the future of the planet and our human place on it.

Columbans wholeheartedly welcome *'Laudato Si'* and are committed to working with the local churches, for its wider promulgation and dissemination among all the faithful.

From Daejeon to Suva

FR JOHN LEE YONG BUM

Korean Diocesan priest goes to work with the Columbans in Fiji



"I have to learn to be like a Fijian, to think like a Fijian, to act as a Fijian, while at the same time I am and always will be Korean". These are the words of Fr. John Lee Yong Bum, a 38-year-old priest from the Diocese of Daejeon in Korea who recently passed through Melbourne en route to Fiji. He is the first Diocesan Priest Associate from Korea to go to work with Columban Missionaries in Fiji. Columbans have worked there since 1952.

Fr. Lee was ordained priest in January 2009 and since then has worked as an assistant priest in three different parishes of his home diocese. Beginning in a small way and gradually growing stronger and stronger in the years since ordination, a feeling that God was calling him

to work as an overseas missionary in a different country and a different culture developed.

"I was aware that many people in Korea are not aware of God's existence and His love for them and the world. I knew that there is important work to be done at home in Korea and that many people do not love one another in the way Jesus teaches us to do. Yet, at the same time, I felt God calling me to an even greater need for the experience of God's love overseas. I felt I had to go while I was still young enough to go," he says of his missionary calling.

Fr. Lee's family were quite surprised when he first told them he was considering applying to work as a missionary overseas for several years. He is the eldest son in his family. He has a sister and a brother.

According to Korean culture, it is the responsibility of the eldest son to remain close to his parents, supporting them in whatever way he can.

In time, however, his parents not only accepted his decision but came to actively support his missionary vocation each day through a period of prayer support. Upon arriving from Korea in Melbourne, where he spent several days before travelling to Fiji, he received a message from his mother which said, *"Please be a good missionary priest in Fiji, for the sake of God, for the sake of the Church and for the sake of the Fijian people."*

Fr. Lee's desire to be a missionary with the Columbans in another country was further encouraged by the example of four other priests from



I felt God calling me to an even greater need for the experience of God's love overseas.



FIJI



KOREA

his home diocese who have served or are currently serving overseas with the Columbans. One had served six years in Chile and was now back in Korea. Three others are still on mission overseas—one in Chile, one in Peru and one in the Philippines.

In May 2014 Fr. Lee decided to apply to the Columbans in Korea to be a Priest Associate with them in another country. He also had to apply to the Bishop of Daejeon, Bishop Lazaro, for permission. In time Fr. Lee received permission to work overseas with the Columbans in any country where he was most needed.

In January 2015 he began a month-long formation programme for Korean missionaries going overseas run by the Columbans at the Columban Mission Centre in Seoul. He then began a four month intensive English language course because he will learn Fijian through English. In other words, the Fijian language teachers will speak to him in English to then be able to teach him Fijian.

In the beginning of his missionary formation programme, Fr. Lee did

not know to which country he would be finally sent. At this time, Fr. Lee met his first Fijians, two Columban lay missionaries working in Korea. Originally he had not considered going to Fiji as no Korean Diocesan Associates had worked there before.

However over time, the idea of being a missionary in Fiji grew stronger and stronger with him. At the same time, the Columbans in Fiji had asked for the assistance of Korean priests to work in Fiji with them. So Fr. Lee was appointed to Fiji. It is important to note here that there are Fijian Columban priests, seminarians and lay missionaries working in other countries such as Chile, Taiwan, Mexico, Korea and Pakistan.

On June 15 2015 Fr. Lee had his Commissioning Mass when he was sent in the name of the Columbans in Korea and the Diocese of Daejeon to work in Fiji. It was a very happy occasion for Fr. Lee, his family and all the Columbans in Korea. Fr. Lee arrived in Suva on Friday July 3. After a few days of settling in, he then began a six month long intensive Fijian

language course. After completing the language programme, he will be assigned to a Fijian parish. A whole new life awaits him.

Diocesan Priest Associate Programme

Fr. Lee stands at the head of a long line of Diocesan Priest Associates who have worked with Columbans overseas going back to the foundation of the Missionary Society of St Columban.

They have come from the different dioceses of New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland, the Philippines, the United States, Chile, Peru and Korea. Australian and New Zealander priests have served in Chile, Peru and in China.

If any diocesan priest is interested in finding out more about this programme, please contact:

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Fr John Lee with family and Fr Thomas Nam (right) at airport.



A missionary in his own country

"How can I be a missionary in my own country? This has been the question that has haunted me since returning home to Korea from Peru several years ago" Columban Fr. Thomas Nam from Korea reflected with the staff at the office of The Far East in Melbourne on a recent visit.

Fr. Thomas was ordained in 2002 and spent eight years in Peru as a Columban missionary. "When I was young I never knew the Columbans. I was an altar server in my parish and always thought I would become a diocesan priest. It was through a friend that I was introduced to the Columbans and then decided to become a missionary priest. My parents live in Seoul and I have one brother who is married".

"Back in Korea it took a lot of prayer and discernment with fellow Columbans to discover the most urgent missionary tasks I could commit myself to. I now have three missionary commitments in my own country."

Promoting Columban supporters

Looking for Columban supporters throughout the different dioceses of Korea keeps Fr. Thomas very busy. Every Sunday Fr. Thomas visits a different parish to celebrate the Eucharist and to invite parishioners to subscribe to the Korean Columban magazine and support the missionary efforts of Columbans by their prayers and contributions. This is difficult but important work. There are now many Korean Columban missionaries spread around the world who need the support of the Korean faithful to be able to continue their work.

On the first Friday of each month Columban supporters in Seoul meet at the Columban Mission Centre for a talk on the missionary nature of the church, followed by the celebration of the Eucharist.

Celebrating the Eucharist at different protest sites

"Celebrating the Eucharist in the open air during protests against injustices has a long tradition in Korea" says Fr. Thomas. He adds, "I believe it is important for the Church to accompany those who suffer injustice and to express solidarity with them. One way we do that is by offering the Eucharist as a sign of solidarity with them, in a very public manner, right out on the street or at the protest site."

Jeju Island Naval Base

"Each morning the Eucharist is offered at this protest site against the construction of a naval base on the southern island of Jeju. Columban Fr. Pat Cunningham and myself when possible, participate in the celebration of this Eucharist. For at least one hour, according to Korean Law, construction of the naval base has to come to a halt because of the presence of

a religious celebration. Other religious groups also hold their religious ceremonies at different times during the day."

Fr. Thomas explained that many people including the Bishops, clergy and laity of the local dioceses both on the island and close-by on the mainland, oppose the construction of this naval base, not only because it will lead to the militarization of the area, but also because of the great environmental harm caused by its construction. Its construction has also greatly damaged the livelihood of local fishermen.



Photo: Fr. Thomas Nam

Sewol Ferry Disaster

"As I am based in Seoul, it is much easier for me to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist each Wednesday at the protest site for the victims of the ferry, the Sewol, that capsized last year on the 16th of April, travelling from Incheon on the mainland to the island of Jeju. Most of the 304 victims were secondary school students".

"Many of the relatives of the victims believe the Government investigation into the disaster was inadequate because of the lack of accountability from high level authorities. They accuse the Government of corruption and incompetency that helped cause the ferry disaster".

"Every Wednesday at a protest site in a public square in Seoul, where the relatives of the ferry victims have erected a tent in a permanent protest site, different religious congregations including the Columbans take turns to celebrate the Eucharist and pray for justice for the victims and their families. I believe it is important for me to be one of the celebrants of this Eucharist."

The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions

"The Eucharist is also celebrated every first Monday for workers belonging to Trade Unions who fear reductions in wages, job security and retirement benefits due to government policies," explained Fr. Thomas. "When possible I try to participate in this Eucharistic celebration."

Coordinator of the Priest Associate Programme

My third missionary commitment is to coordinate the Columban Priest Associate Programme," explained Fr. Thomas. "This is a programme which invites diocesan priests, with the approval of their bishops, to work with Columban missionaries in an overseas appointment for a maximum of six years.

"At the moment, there are 13 Korean Priest Associates from five Korean dioceses working in Chile, Peru, Fiji and the Philippines. There are 18 priests who have finished their overseas missionary experience and have now returned to their home dioceses.

"My job is to invite diocesan priests to consider the possibility of an overseas missionary experience, to help train them once they have been accepted and to help them re-integrate into their home dioceses upon return."

Conclusion

Fr. Thomas concluded his conversation by stating that God has blessed him in his life as a missionary priest both in Peru and now back home in Korea. He gives thanks to God for his calling to missionary priesthood.



Relatives of victims of the Sewol Ferry Disaster.



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.*

Dire need for more priests, parishes as global Catholic population grows

The global Catholic population is growing - so quickly, in fact, that priest and parish numbers cannot keep up, says a new study on trends in the worldwide Church.

And this poses a challenge: With an overall growth in the number of Catholics, especially in Africa and Asia, but not enough growth in the number of parishes and priests to supplement it, there are fewer opportunities for Catholics to receive the sacraments and participate in their parishes.

"The Church still faces a global 21st century problem of keeping Catholics engaged with parish and sacramental life," stated the study by the Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

The study *"Global Catholicism"* drew from Vatican statistics and other surveys since 1980 to detail where the Catholic Church has grown and shrunk at the parish level and to predict the demographics of the next few decades for the Church.

This growth was examined at the parish level because parish life is ultimately the *"brick and mortar"* of the Church where Catholics receive

the sacraments, associate with fellow Catholics, and participate the most in their faith, the study explained.

It tallied the growth of Catholics, priests, religious, parishes, reception of sacraments, seminarians, and Catholic welfare institutions like hospitals and schools in five regions - Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania and the Americas.

The overall finding of the report is that the Church is in the midst of a *"dramatic realignment"*.

It is waning in its historical centre of Europe, its growth is slowing in the Americas and Oceania, and it is booming in Asia and Africa.

This forecasts a Catholic shift away from the traditional centres of Europe and the Americas and toward the *"Global South,"* the mostly-developing parts of the world that include Central and South America, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Oceania and much of the Far East.

Dr Mark Gray, a senior research associate with CARA, explained the implications of this shift in an interview.

One problem highlighted by the study is that most of the world's parishes are still in Europe and the Americas, where

the Church is declining or stagnating in population. The developing world is seeing more Catholics, but not nearly enough parishes to serve them.

"You've got all these beautiful parishes," Gray said of Europe. *"You can't pick them up and send them from one part of the world to another very easily. So in one place the Church is going to have to close parishes, and in another place it's going to have to build a bunch more, and it's going to have to figure out how to manage its clergy."*

Another finding of the report is that Catholics are participating less in the Church as they grow older, as seen in sacramental participation rates.

In every region, the number of infant baptisms per 1,000 Catholics is greater than the number of first Communions, which is greater than the number of confirmations, which is greater than the number of marriages conducted within the Church.

While this may not be surprising in regions like Europe, which is seeing an overall decline of priests and religious, it is also the case throughout other regions where Church numbers are growing.

*UCAN News June 16th, 2015
Catholic News Agency-CNA*

Mission Intention for August

That setting aside our very selves we may learn to be neighbours to those who find themselves on the margins of human life and society.

Listen to: From the Director - Is God doing something new?



From the Director

Is God doing something new?

*F*or many years we have been witnessing a decline in vocations. When I went to the seminary in 1965, over 30 young men were in my year in the diocesan seminary. Not now. Does it mean the end of the Church? The end of enthusiasm to be a person consecrated to Christ? Or might it be that something different is happening? Is God doing something new?

The Sacred Scriptures inform us that our God is not only a God of initiatives but also a God of the future who calls us into new ways of being the Church. We have to remind ourselves that Jesus Christ gave His life for the sake of the world so the way of the Cross is part of the journey.

In the book of the prophet Isaiah (43:16-21) God tells us through Isaiah that He is doing something new, *'now it emerges, can you not see it?'* The context is God making a new Exodus in which *'the people I have shaped for myself will broadcast my praises.'*

The history of the Church, reveals God calling out to His people to do new things for the good of the world. St Columban and his monks responded to the call to do new things by travelling through Europe to preach the Gospel. This phase was called monasticism. It is still with us today but not as the predominant form of life in the Church.

St Columban's phrase 'we belong to Christ, not to ourselves' is still relevant today. But what does that mean in 2015? Where is the Holy Spirit leading us?

When Europe was up and running again the Church experienced another change. People of the church began to leave their homelands to spread the Good News. Among them were Franciscans and Dominicans. The prophets of doom said they would lose their vocations if they left the protection of the monastery but God called and these great Orders of men and women followed.

Today we are still experiencing new ways of being Church. The Catholic Church is no longer a European Church, it is a global Church. Our own missionary society of priests and sisters reflect great changes because we are now multicultural and multinational in composition. We have a significant number of lay missionaries who fulfil their divine call to be missionaries to the nations.

Until we are certain of our direction it is understandable to witness a decline in our vocations.

St Columban's phrase *'we belong to Christ, not to ourselves'* is still relevant today. But what does that mean in 2015? Where is the Holy Spirit leading us?

Until we are certain of our direction it is understandable to witness a decline in our vocations. It does not mean we are lost. I believe that we are still on track. We have a future because our God has promised it.

Fr Gary Walker
director@columban.org.au

A ministry of gratitude

FR CHARLES DUSTER

The report from the cardiologist and his follow up letter to the Columban Superior in Fiji came as a real shock. In light of the most recent tests, he strongly recommended that I leave Fiji and be reassigned to the United States. The Columban Regional Council in Fiji decided *"sooner was better"* so it was just a matter of some days until I arrived at the Columban residence on the north side of Chicago. *"What am I going to do now?"* I asked myself after nearly 40 years of overseas appointments: Japan, Rome, Fiji. The answer wasn't long in coming. I became a *"Thank You Columban."*

Since the founding of the Missionary Society of St Columban in 1918, the lives and labours of Columban priests and seminarians have been made possible through the interest and generous assistance, both spiritual and financial, from our supporters who are literally our *"partners in mission."* These benefactors live throughout the USA, Britain, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand and now in Korea and the Philippines. They have initiated and maintained contact with the Columbans through letters, our mission magazine and occasional personal engagement.

Expressing gratitude towards our benefactors has been a key component of Columban tradition and culture since the earliest Columban went to China in 1920, so a full time *"ministry of gratitude"* is nothing new. What has changed is the manner in which our appreciation is conveyed to

our mission partners. Mostly, because of the size of the countries where our benefactors live, we still have to rely on the printed word. But we try when and where possible to supplement it with the *"spoken word"*; a telephone call of appreciation, a personal visit when possible and appropriate, or perhaps a small benefactor appreciation event.

Since returning from Fiji, this has been my principal contribution to Columban mission. Most days I try to make a number of thank you phone calls to supplement the thank you letter each donor will receive. Believe me, that is a most enjoyable task: to express our appreciation when one is able to do it in a more personal manner.

Then there are home thank you visits. The people we visit or contact seem pleased that there is no hidden agenda in the telephone calls or personal visits, just an expression of gratitude and appreciation for years or perhaps decades of partnership with us in taking the Good News of God's love and concern for all people to those who have not heard it or heard it only imperfectly.

Another means of contacting our extended family is through our magazine appeal for magazine subscribers. If there are Columban supporters in the immediate area of the parish where we are assigned to speak at all the Masses, we try to contact them and if possible meet briefly for a chat or perhaps a cup of coffee. That way we can catch up with old friends while meeting new ones.

One of my favourite topics to introduce when speaking to a donor is to inquire if he or she recalls how they first came into contact with the Columban Fathers. Many people of course do not remember anything specific, but many have fascinating accounts of their first link to the Columbans and our work.

One woman I met in Chicago remembered that when she was a little girl she did Irish step dancing for Columban Co-founder Bishop Ned Galvin when he was returning to China. Another in San Francisco recalled receiving a tiny red jewel box which she still treasures from Columban Bishop Quinlan, a friend of her Jesuit priest uncle. Bishop Quinlan survived the infamous death march and imprisonment in North Korea during the Korean War.



Photo: manera/Bigstock.com



USA



FIJI

Some are distant relatives or friends of Columbans, some met a Columban Father when they were serving in the armed forces overseas. Every day seems to bring another fascinating account which makes me anxious to keep making phone calls and visits. One never knows when the next incredible original connection will emerge, obvious signs to me of the working of the Holy Spirit.

It is discouraging to look at maps and realize the tiny percentage of Columban supporters who will be reached with a spoken word of thanks. Yet the journey of 1,000 miles begins with one step. So along with several other Columbans and lay staff, we spend a good part of our days in this wonderful ministry of gratitude and being available to the friends we contact if they have questions or suggestions.

It is a privilege to round off one's missionary career in this way. At 80 years of age and nearly 54 years of ordained Columban life one hesitates to metaphorically buy green bananas, but while the Lord gives me the energy I want to *"do what I can."*

That's the advice Bishop Galvin gave Columban Father Aedan McGrath who served in China and was arrested by the Communist government in 1951 and spent three years in prison, mostly in solitary confinement. Some years before his arrest Bishop Galvin was assigning him to a town in the hills and said, *"there isn't a church there and there isn't a house there and there never will be but do what you can."*

I believe that is good advice for all who support the missions in whatever way. It is the best any of us can do and we'll leave the rest to the Lord.

Columban Fr Charles Duster lives and works in St Columbans, Nebraska, United States.

“

Expressing gratitude towards our benefactors has been a key component of Columban tradition and culture since the earliest Columban went to China in 1920....





Well, what am I going to do here in Pakistan in any case?"



What am I to do in Pakistan?

LOUIE YBANEZ



Louie Ybanez, a Columban Seminarian from the Philippines writes from his Urdu language school at Murree, Pakistan, as he begins his missionary assignment. An overseas missionary experience such as that of Louie, is part of the Columban seminary programme.

When I realized that I was called to be a priest, I knew that this call meant being a missionary priest. So I applied to join the Columbans. As I went through my years of seminary formation, I felt drawn to Pakistan. Why? Well, I always ask myself the same question. It's like a calling. I don't know the logical reason but there is an inner voice that draws me to Pakistan. Even though most of the news about Pakistan is negative, I am willing to take the risk and find something worthwhile for me to do here as a missionary.

I remember how my heart leapt for joy when the seminary staff told me that I was going to Pakistan. I knew it will be a different experience for me since I come from the Philippines, which is mostly Catholic. Pakistan is an Islamic country where religious minorities comprise only about three percent of the population. To live in this context, so different from my own country and to learn Urdu, an entirely different language, is a real challenge for me. I share this first missionary adventure with Columban seminarians from other countries - Joachim Chun from Korea and Pat Roland from Fiji.

In one of my afternoon walks here in Murree where I am learning Urdu, I met two Muslim men who approached me. I am always happy to speak with the local people so as I headed back to the house, they walked with me and began asking me where I was from and what was

I doing in Pakistan. I told them that I am a Catholic missionary and I am currently learning their language. Then one of them made a quick reply, "so you are here to convert Muslims to be Christians!" I looked at him, smiled and said, "I don't think I am here to do that." I'm quite sure of my answer, but his presumption left me pondering a very fundamental question, "Well, what am I going to do here in Pakistan in any case?"

Upon arrival in Pakistan and before beginning our language studies, we had the chance to meet some of the Catholics in a Columban mission parish in Badin, Sindh province. Most of the parishioners come from a minority tribe called the Parkari Kohli. These people are on the margins of the Pakistani society, without caste and therefore untouchables. Most of them are bonded labourers in the vast surrounding farmlands which are owned by wealthy landlords. This is the only way for them to survive.

We went to celebrate Mass in a village situated in the desert. The houses were made of mud bricks and usually fenced by dry bushes bundled up together. I was with Columban Fr. Dan O'Connor and a male catechist. We celebrated Mass outside the house of one of the Catholics there. The Mass was celebrated in the local language which helps the people reflect on the Gospel in their everyday lives. It was held in the open air with the sky as our roof. There were no pews nor altar, but mats laid out and a small

low-lying table with the congregation seated together on the ground. I was thinking to myself that the early church must have been something like this.

After the Mass, a simple meal followed - chapatis, a vegetable curry, and a cup of chai or hot milk tea. The Gospel seemed uniquely alive to me here amongst these people. A week old in Pakistan then, I could not understand the language. However I sensed that even though they lived in dire poverty my faith would be nurtured by their strong faith.

I can see that Christians here and Catholics in particular are a special community within an Islamic state. Pakistanis are naturally friendly and this makes me feel happy as I begin to mix with both Catholics and Muslims. As I walk around I meet people who unhesitatingly ask about me, my religion, and my impressions of their country. I find this to be an opportunity to befriend the local people. This helps to foster familiarity between people of the different religions and builds friendships.

As I continue to find meaning in my missionary life here in Pakistan, I feel that I am personally challenged to follow Christ and to be His loving presence in living with the Catholic minority, to understand a new culture, to embrace the diversity of life and to not be indifferent towards people of other faith. These things might not be easy for me to do but it seems to be the way to be a missionary in Pakistan.



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Fr. Kevin Mullins is the parish priest of Corpus Christi parish in the city of Juarez, on the Mexican side of the border with the United States.

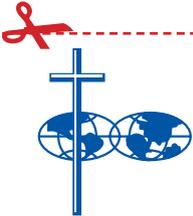
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Your **kindness** and **support** make it possible for Columbans to meet and minister to many people. Your "stringless" gift helps us to respond with flexibility to the most **urgent needs** of people.



Photo: Fr Kevin Mullins



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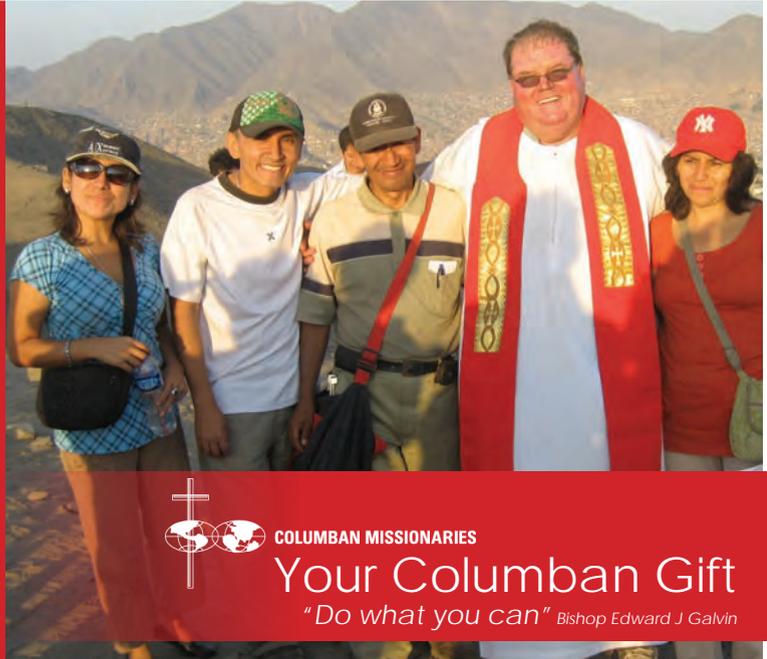
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