

The Far East

COLUMBAN MISSION MAGAZINE

April 2015

The Superior General writes...

Columban Fr Kevin O'Neill shares about his life

My life in Korea

One man's missionary story

Bushfires

A man-made disaster in Chile



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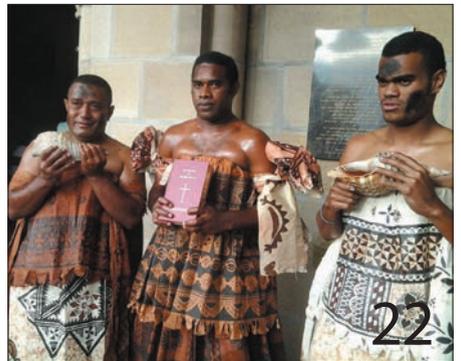
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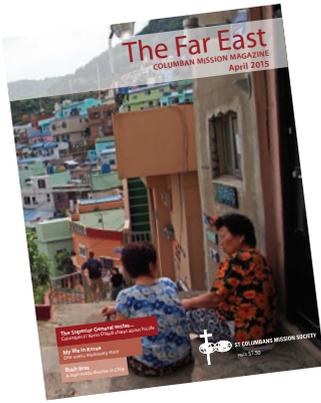


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One of the urban housing estate in Seoul, Korea, that are often under threat from developers. (see Fr Donal O'Keeffe's story pages 6-7).

Photo: iStockphoto.com



From the Editor

In their own ways

We are now in the Easter Season, the 50 days of grace and glory that takes us through the Easter season to Pentecost. This is a time to seek to deepen the experience of Christ's Risen life in our lives and in our world. All Christians in their own way are called to be witnesses of the Risen Lord.

The missionary vocation is a call to be a witness of the Risen Lord in a different place and with a different group of people from one's own. This is the life of Columban missionaries.

This April issue presents the stories of several Columban missionaries, witnesses in their own ways to the Risen Lord across the Globe

From Hong Kong, Fr Kevin O'Neill writes about his life as Superior General of the Missionary Society of St Columban, sharing a little of his vocational story and his role as Superior General. Fr Donal O'Keeffe shares with us his missionary life in Korea.

Fr Barry Cairns has served the people of Japan as a missionary for many decades. He is very familiar with Japanese culture, including funeral

rites, about which he writes. He also writes about his changing attitude to mission work in Japan throughout the decades of his life.

Columban Missionaries are returning to Myanmar after a break of 36 years with a new team of missionaries. Fr Pat Colgan writes about his recent visit there to attend the St Columban's Day celebrations and prepare for the arrival of the new team. Fr Chris Baker writes from Peru of the Golden Jubilee of St Columban's College.

Fr Michael Hoban is Episcopal Vicar for the Maipo area of the Archdiocese of Santiago, Chile. He writes of a monastery of Discalced Carmelites in the area under his responsibility, that have suffered 15 bushfires since 2012, some of them very serious.

Columban missionaries are also involved in important translation works. Fr David Arms has participated in the translation of the Deuterocanonical Books of the Bible into Fijian and Fr Robert McCulloch with the Urdu translation of the Catechism in Pakistan.

In their own ways, in different cultures and languages, amongst different

peoples from one's own, Columban missionaries are called to deepen the Easter experience, to be witnesses of the Risen Lord.

Fr Daniel Harding
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Superior General writes...

Columban Fr Kevin O'Neill is the Superior General of the Missionary Society of St Columban. He was elected for a six year period in 2012 and is based in Hong Kong. He shares with The Far East a little about his background and his role as Superior General.

*M*y family and my vocation

I come from Geelong, Victoria, where I was born in 1962, the fourth of six children. My parents still live in Geelong. My primary education was at my parish school, "Holy Spirit", which was run at that time by the Brigidine Sisters. My secondary education was at St Joseph's Christian Brothers College, also in Geelong.

Three of my siblings live close to home and three of us live overseas. My twin brother, Peter, responded to God's call to become a missionary priest with the Columbans in 1982. He works as the chaplain for migrant workers in the Diocese of Hsin Chu, Taiwan, and is also the Director of the Diocesan Migrant Centre. My younger sister, Kate, was called by God to join the congregation, "Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions." She works at a centre for street children in the Philippines.

After spending three years at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology studying Chemical Engineering I responded to God's call, joining the Columbans in 1984. Since my ordination to the missionary priesthood in 1992 I have worked in four different countries. I first lived in Taiwan where I worked as a prison chaplain.

From there I moved to Ireland after being elected for a six year period to the Columban General Council, which was then based in Ireland. I then lived in China where I worked as vocations director inviting young Chinese men to join the Columbans. I've been living in Hong Kong since I was elected by my confreres, in September 2012, to the position of Superior General. The four members of our General Council all live in Hong Kong where the Society's International Headquarters is located. The other members of our General Council are Frs Arturo Aguilar (USA), Pat Colgan (Ireland) and Darwin Bayaca (Philippines).

The Role of Superior General

As Superior General my role is to govern the Missionary Society of St Columban and guide it in its mission. The members of the General Council provide the leadership that our Missionary Society needs by directing, animating and coordinating our life and mission, bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom to the world. We work in dialogue with each Columban member and respect their personal dignity.

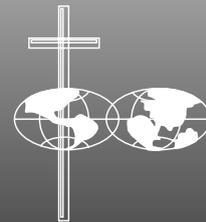
New Columban Initiatives

While continuing our presence among the poor and marginalized in all the countries where we work, in recent years we have also strengthened our mission in China. As well in 2015 a new team of Columban priests and Columban Lay Missionaries will go on mission to Myanmar. We have also enhanced our efforts in Christian-Muslim relations. Furthermore we continue accompanying and defending the rights of migrants and raising the awareness of care for creation, in particular, the ongoing threat of Climate Change.

Likewise, we constantly pray for the continued generosity of young men and women to respond to God's call to be Columban Missionary Priests, Sisters and Lay Missionaries. We also invite people to experience mission with us as short term volunteers for three to 12 months or by participating in exposure trips in the countries where our missionaries work.

Visitation

A part of my role as Superior General is to visit Columban missionaries and to meet the people among whom they live and work. These visits assist me in my role of leadership



in the Society. Here I would like to share a few of my stories on visiting our missionaries.

While in Pakistan I accompanied Columban Fr Dan O'Connor (New Zealand) to the humble abode of a Catholic family who lived in the countryside on the land they tilled for their landlord. As the sun set we gathered with the extended family for Mass inside their mud brick house. Just as Mass was about to begin a small group of young men joined us. Later I learned that they were Hindus and would sometimes attend the Mass. They didn't have their own place to worship so knowing that this was a sacred ritual the young men wanted to have this special time with their neighbours. The Catholic family always has a warm welcome for their young Hindu neighbours.

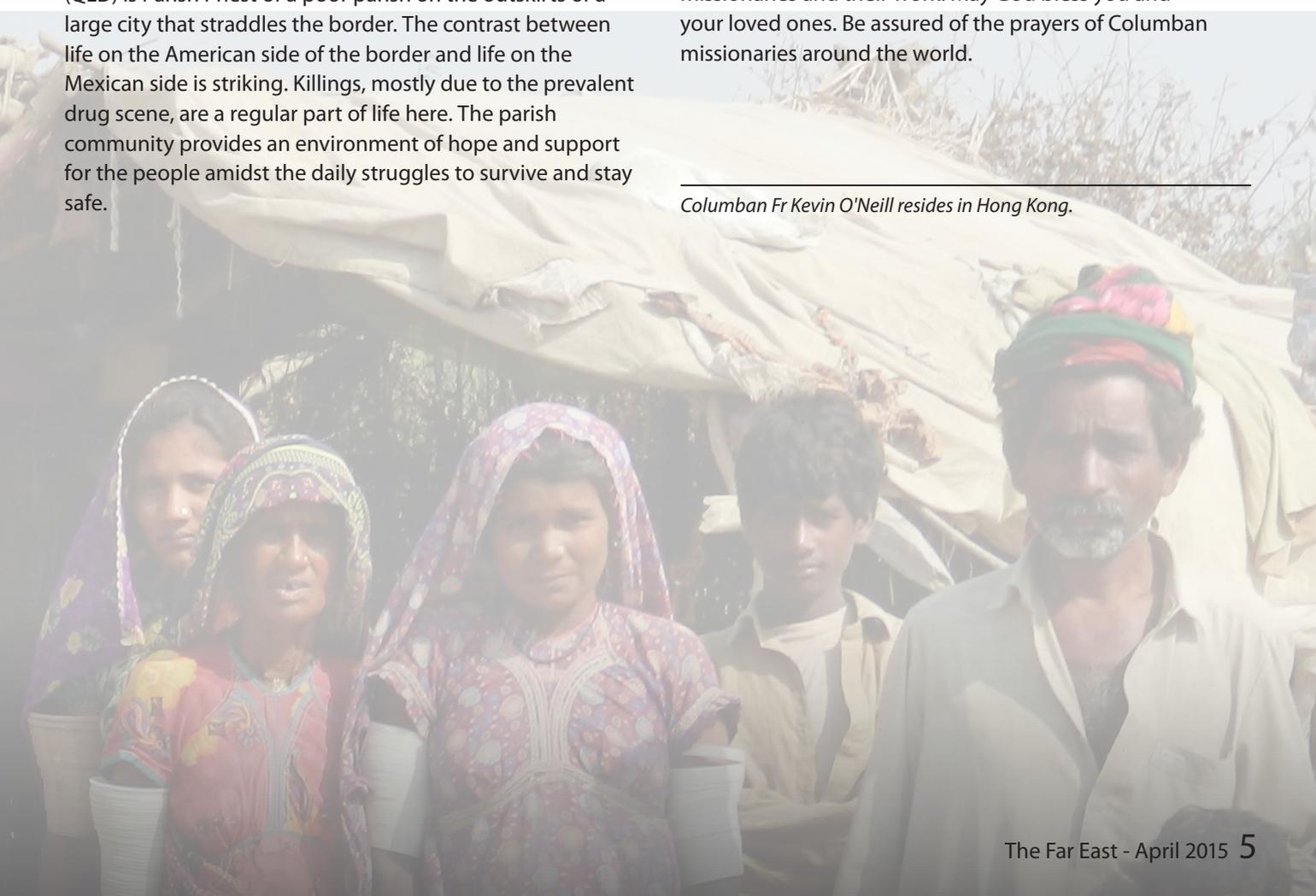
While visiting our missionaries in the United States I crossed the border into Mexico where Columban Fr Kevin Mullins (QLD) is Parish Priest of a poor parish on the outskirts of a large city that straddles the border. The contrast between life on the American side of the border and life on the Mexican side is striking. Killings, mostly due to the prevalent drug scene, are a regular part of life here. The parish community provides an environment of hope and support for the people amidst the daily struggles to survive and stay safe.

While in Peru I had a meeting with Columban Frs Bernard Lane (Victoria) and Gabriel Rojas (Peru) together with the staff at the Columban Mission Centre. They shared with me their participation in a monthly day of prayer and fasting with people of different faith traditions in preparation for the Climate Change conference held in Lima in December 2014. Different faiths have the long tradition of prayer and fasting to help bring about change. In the hope that the conference in Lima and future world conferences would bring about the necessary calls to action to reduce human induced climate change, Columbans around the world joined our confreres in Peru for one of prayer and fasting.

Thanksgiving

On behalf of the Missionary Society of St Columban I would like to take this opportunity to thank our readers and all our benefactors for their ongoing support of Columban missionaries and their work. May God bless you and your loved ones. Be assured of the prayers of Columban missionaries around the world.

Columban Fr Kevin O'Neill resides in Hong Kong.



My life in Korea

ELLEN TEAGUE

Columban Fr Donal O’Keeffe is the Regional Director for Korea. Ellen Teague, the Columban Media Coordinator in Britain, interviewed him and wrote this article about his life.



Photo: iStockphoto.com

Urban housing estate under threat from developers.

It was 25 December 1978 and Irish Columban Donal O’Keeffe had been in Korea for three years. Now, more comfortable in Korean, he had gone to a coastal island to celebrate Christmas with a small Christian community. *“I looked out over the Yellow Sea and I felt at home”.*

When he joined the Columbans he hoped to be sent to Latin America. With an uncle a priest in Scotland,

he had considered the priesthood while at school. He was drawn to Latin America after studying Spanish at University College, Cork, and being inspired by the college chaplain who had worked in Peru. He entered the Columbans in 1971 and was ordained at Easter 1975 but was appointed to Korea.

So, just 24, and excited about a fresh challenge, he arrived in Seoul. For the first few years the focus was on

language, but he got involved with industrial workers through visiting a centre for Young Christian Workers (YCW) run by the Columbans. Here he met young people who were inspired by their faith to improve their working lives.

Later appointed to work full-time with workers in Incheon Diocese, he was based in Bucheon for nine years in the 1980s. It was a time of terrible oppression when many activists were

Housing issues were prominent because poor communities often saw their houses demolished by property owners keen to upgrade housing stock to attract affluent residents.

fired or jailed. *"I saw so many of them giving their lives for justice and saw Korea anew through their eyes,"* says Donal, *"It was a huge privilege and inspiration for me".*

In 1983 he did a three-month Columban organised Justice and Peace workshop back in Ireland, receiving a "spiritual injection". Lay Koreans who participated included a staff-person of Caritas Korea, who went on to produce a range of social justice formation resources which became widely used throughout Korea. In Bucheon he lived above a centre for workers. He and the labour apostolate team ran regular five-week courses for them.

"Church groups were the only organisations able to get involved with workers," Donal recalls. *"Young workers from rural areas, some as young as 15, were coming into the cities and going straight into factories. They had little education and no confidence. With personal formation courses, conducted in the evenings after work, using the SEE – JUDGE – ACT process of the YCW, those young people blossomed and many later joined the labour movement".*

Fr Donal returned to Ireland in 1989 to do a Masters in Practical Theology at Trinity College, Dublin. He wrote his thesis on the workers' movement in Korea, focusing on how "religions empowered workers".

He says *"in my work I had seen Christian workers being inspired by the image of Jesus the craftsman; I saw others energised by reflecting on the compassion of Buddha; I witnessed workers getting new life from Shamanist rituals and so I became very interested in how Christianity, Buddhism and other*

faiths interact and become sources for empowering and liberating workers".

In 1992 Donal returned to Korea and launched into ministry with the urban poor. Living in a poor area he worked with families, supporting community organisations. Housing issues were prominent because poor communities often saw their houses demolished by property owners keen to upgrade housing stock to attract affluent residents. Donal helped Catholic groups articulate their faith in terms of challenging structural injustice. They also sat in front of bulldozers, blocking the machines that were demolishing houses.

Today, as Director of the Columbans in Korea, Donal works with a multicultural group of Columban Priests and Lay Missionaries from Australia, New Zealand, Philippines, Fiji, Chile, Korea and Ireland. The commitment to Justice work now includes initiatives for Peace and Ecology.

Following the leadership of the Bishop of Jeju Diocese, Columbans have supported the people of Gangjeong Village on Jeju Island in challenging the construction of a naval base which will destroy the local environment and raise tension in Asia. The base is being built only 300 miles from China and will be used by the US military. *"We must address the issue of militarization,"* warns Donal.

Donal has enormous respect for the Korean Church. *"The lay people brought the faith into Korea and faced terrible persecution with more than 50% of Korean Christians being killed in the 19th century".*

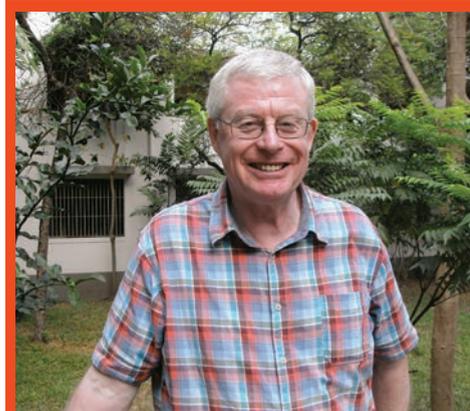
In Korean the word used for Catholics is 'church friend' and the Chinese

character for friend is one that symbolises the equal relationship between persons. From the very beginning believers saw themselves as people who strove to live the values of equality and fraternity. Donal also recalls Columbans who made their mark in Korea including the men who stayed on during the Korean War. Seven were killed in 1950, some being dumped alive into a well. One of them said of his decision to stay with the people, *"I am the pastor – if I left I couldn't live with myself".*

Those seven Columbans are now among a group of 'modern day witnesses to the faith' who are being presently advanced for beatification by the Korean Church. Donal describes this as *"a validation of the contribution of past Columbans to the spreading of the Christian message and the establishment of the Church in Korea".*

A major thrust in the work of Columbans today in Korea is helping the Church to become a missionary sending Church. However that is another story!

Ellen Teague is Media Coordinator of the Region of Britain and part of the Justice & Peace Team.



Columban Fr Donal O'Keefe

A funeral in Japan

FR BARRY CAIRNS

Recently we celebrated the funeral of Mrs Hanako Shibata. I use the word 'celebrate' because the ceremony has a palpable atmosphere of peace.

Mrs Shibata was 93, and up to her late 80s was active in the Hodogaya Church community. She was much loved by her family and our parish community.

Catholic funeral rites in Japan to a certain extent follow Buddhist practice. However, these rites are basically ancient Japanese cultural practices as they even preceded the entry of Buddhism into Japan from China through the Korean peninsula in the 6th century AD (552AD).

The following is the way of funerals in the parish of Hodogaya in Yokohama City.

• **After death** there is the solemn transferral of the body into the coffin. This small but important rite is done in the home. The priest blesses the body which is laid out on a strong cloth, then the coffin itself is blessed with Holy Water. After a prayer each of the family takes sides of the cloth and lift the body into the coffin. We all sing a hymn and offer incense.

• **Incense** is much used during the various rites. As I put incense onto the live coals I offer a prayer based on *Psalm 141:2*, "O Merciful Lord, may our prayer for the deceased ascent like incense before you." The scented smoke of the incense is a symbol of our prayer going up to God.

• **The body is transferred to the church** and met by the priest and representatives from the community. In front of the coffin is a big photo of the deceased. Many Japanese choose their funeral photo while alive. In some parishes a photographer comes to the 'Respect for the Aged Day' meal to take a portrait. This is a service much appreciated by the elderly. The photo and coffin are surrounded by flowers donated by well wishers. In the church we depart from usual practice in that we do not allow a card on each bunch of flowers indicating who sent it. This practice leads to competition which is unseemly.

• **The liturgical wake** is usually held at 6:00p.m., i.e. after working hours. In the case of Mrs Shibata the church was packed. Present were not only her children and grandchildren but also representatives from the companies and factories where her three sons worked. Also present were people from the neighbourhood, many friends and a large number of the parish community.

Of the 200 present I would estimate that about one half were non-Christians, and of those, one quarter were in a church for the first time. I base these estimates on the number of phone calls we had during the day: "Where is the church?" "What do I wear to a Christian funeral?" As to what to wear we answer, "Follow the usual Japanese custom." This for women is a black dress and a single string of pearls. For men a dark suit and black tie.

To set at ease those first-timers to the church I speak to them directly, saying something like this:

"Just relax before God who loves you and gladly accepts the way you pray for the deceased. When I go to a Buddhist funeral I do not understand the monk's sutra prayer in ancient Japanese, so I just absorb the atmosphere of prayer, which in itself becomes a prayer for the deceased. I recommend you do the same here."

The liturgical wake usually lasts one hour. We have prayer and psalms with solemn, haunting melodies. For example, Psalm 42, "Like a deer, I thirst for you my God," and Psalm 139 'Lord, you know me through and through.' The homily, when so many non-Christians are present is a wonderful missionary opportunity to tell them of God's unconditional love for all. The ceremony concludes with a resume of the deceased's life and death (with full clinical details) usually by the oldest son.

Then each person in procession places a white carnation in front of the photo as a symbol of prayer for the deceased. After the wake there is often refreshments laid out which is always Japanese sushi.

The next day is the **funeral Mass and final farewell**. The singing of the Hodogaya community is beautiful and really consoled Mrs Shibata's family.

Then after Mass the **coffin is opened** and first the relatives, then all, place flowers around the body. Even Mrs Shibata's smallest grandchild touched her granny's forehead with her flowers. She also left a handwritten note and drawing. Finally each close relative puts a hand on the coffin lid and then the coffin is closed. Notice the participation of all the family. This is a very healthy custom.

• **At the crematorium** there are short prayers. The ashes are placed in a crockery urn - again by the close relatives. Crematoriums have their own customs. Every 10th day they are closed as that day is called 'Tomobiki' in the ancient



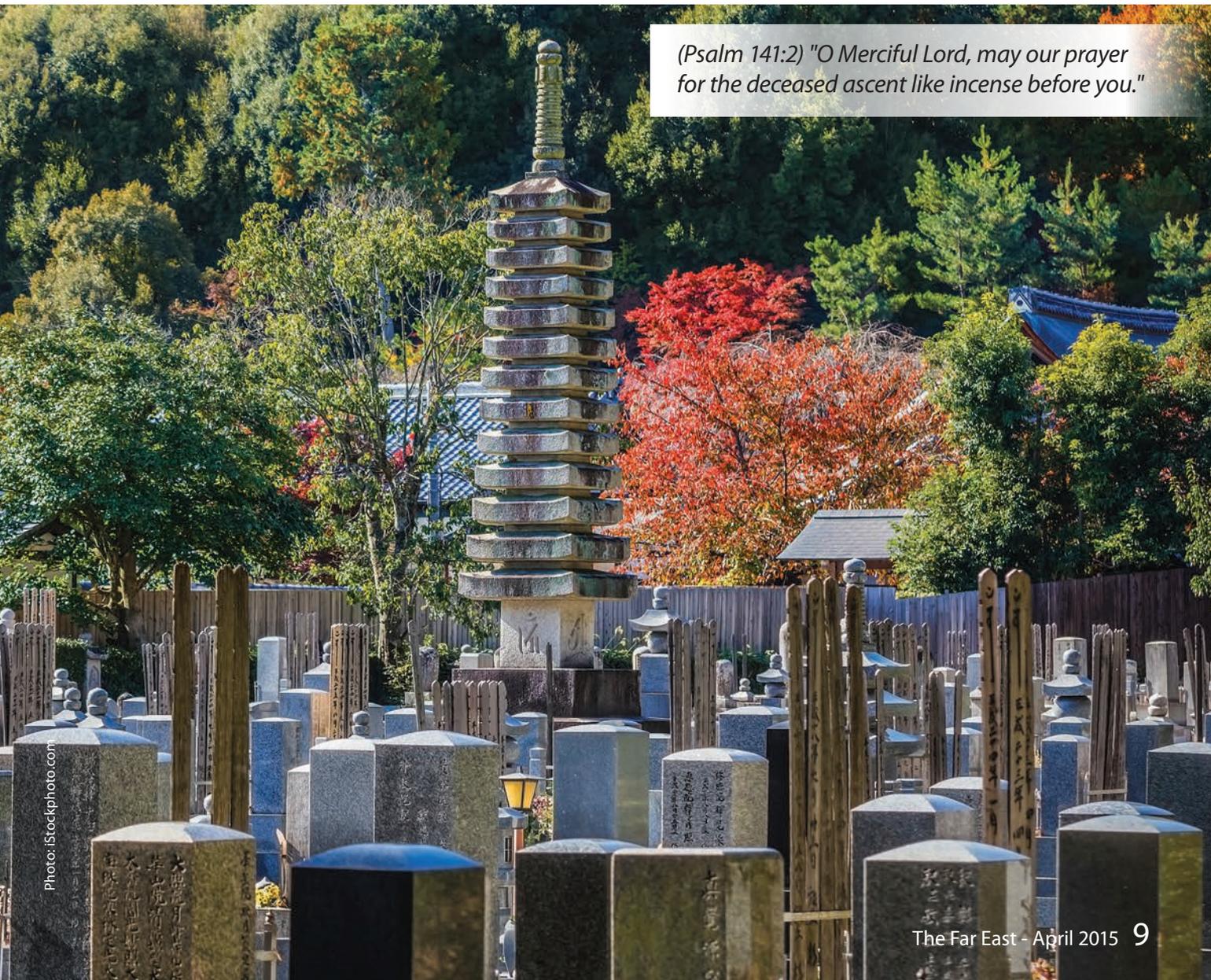
Japanese calendar. *'Tomobiki'* (Tomobiki is one of the six days of the rokuyo Japanese calendar which significance means "good luck all day, except at noon and a bad day for funerals)."

- **On the 49th day after death** the urn is solemnly placed in the family grave, which is an underground space holding 8-10 urns. Graves are well tended being visited on the Equinoxes and August 15 (Buddhist day of the dead)

and Catholics also on November 2 (All Souls). Special remembrance days are the first, third, seventh and 13th anniversaries. Mrs Shibata will be well prayed for.

"It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead"
(2 Macc 12:46).

Columban Fr Barry Cairns has been a missionary in Japan since 1956.



(Psalm 141:2) "O Merciful Lord, may our prayer for the deceased ascent like incense before you."

50 Years of Holy Disquiet

FR BARRY CAIRNS

On being a missionary priest at 80+

*F*ifty years ago when I was a young priest, I read a prayer composed by Romano Guardini that went like this, "O Lord give me the gift of holy disquiet...take my hand; help me to cross over to you." This is a healthy disquiet because it leads not to discouragement, but to reliance on the Lord. I still value this prayer.

I ask the reader of this article these questions:

Do... you somehow feel dissatisfied with life at the moment?

Do... you have an unfulfilled yearning in your heart?

Do... you feel there is something missing in your life?

Do... you want for something in life, more than what you have?

At various times in my 50 years as a missionary priest, I have answered **yes** to all of these questions. There are various strategies to escape from facing the disquiet. It is so easy for a priest to get very busy. Among other escapes that I used was to flee to the wide open spaces of the Arizona desert with a Louis L'Amour western.

As a young priest

When I was a young priest, full of first fervour, I prayed that I would "stay on the rails." Then came the stark realization that I could leave the priesthood tomorrow, especially when faced with the loneliness of living in another culture. I realized that to be a faithful, celibate priest was absolutely impossible on my effort alone. It was a total gift from God, I was just called to cooperate. I became free! I was called to rely on Christ's strength.

In my 50s

In my 50s, I was doing the priestly thing every day – Mass, Sacraments, homily, instructions for Baptism, etc. It happened that I was hijacked into doing a Marriage Encounter with another priest. In an open sharing session a married man said,

"It is seeing you priests living a celibate life that helps me remain faithful in my married life." It is this prayerful solidarity with married couples which I believe is important for priests in their vocations. We share a journey.

This holy disquiet seems to hit me every 10 years!

In my 60s

And so it was in my 60s that I was asking myself, "Is my enthusiasm for overseas mission waning?" It is my personal experience that it is not the actual work of the missionary priest that leads to stress, burn out and early retirement. Rather it is the mistaken notion that the priest has to do everything himself. That kind of responsibility is draining.



In my 70s

My turning point came at 70, I had just been appointed by my Bishop to an inner city parish in Yokohama, Japan. Our Bishop in a pastoral letter had used the difficult word "subsidiarity" (even more difficult in Japanese). I was asked to explain what it meant to a meeting of Japanese priests in our inner city Deanery. I said that subsidiarity means delegating authority and various jobs to others and trusting them to do the job given. The Parish Priest gives encouragement from the sideline, and it is very much a team effort. The Parish Priest is the symbol and source of unity for all the various jobs, especially in the liturgy.

Having studied the theory, I decided to consciously put it into practice. Within two years, in a deeper way, our community became missionaries in their own milieu. They became more united, more welcoming to the stranger, more concerned for the poor. They became just plain happy, and our liturgy became vibrant.

In my 80s

A lovely side effect of all this is that at 80 I feel freed from stress. I also feel I am a far more effective missionary than the days of my do-it-yourself youthful vigour! My prayer is still, "O Lord keep causing holy disquiet and keep giving me the courage to face it."



Photos: Fr Barry Cairns

Columbans back in Myanmar

FR PATRICK COLGAN



Korean Columban priests, Frs Carlo Jung and Jehoon Lee with Columban Sr Teresa Kim.

Columban Fr Pat Colgan writes about a new Columban chapter about to begin. A team of Columban missionaries (pictured above) will begin work in 2015 with the Kachin minority in Myanmar where Columbans who had previously worked from 1936 to 1979.

St Columban's Day celebration

St Columban's Day 2014 came early in the hills of Kachin State. Over 2000 people had already started boarding trains for the three day journey to Yangon, the capital of Myanmar, for the upcoming national 500th anniversary celebrations of the arrival of the Catholic faith (initially through Portuguese traders) due to be held the following weekend. So it was decided to have the local Diocesan Jubilee celebration, an ordination to the Diaconate and St Columban's Day (patron of Myitkyina Diocese) all on November 15.

About 3,000 representatives from many parishes gathered in the early morning at Edin, the large piece of land containing St Luke's Catechists' school (founded by Australian Columban Fr Bernard Way) for Mass at 7:30a.m. We were led by a loud Kachin marching band to the grotto prepared for the outdoor celebration. What followed was a mixture of the Roman Ordination Rite, a Kachin gong ceremony, a colourful offertory

dance and further "entertainment" after Communion, including an unusual and poignant item from some young men dressed in both cultural and paramilitary fatigues with symbols depicting the Kachin dream to have a homeland under local administration. This potentially risky gesture, given the precarious stage of ongoing negotiations between the Myanmar Government and Kachin independence groups, (KIA) occasioned both loud cheers and quieter tears. (Three days later, the Myanmar Army dropped a bomb on a KIA training camp in nearby Laiza, killing 23).

After the entertainment, words of thanks and the Bishop's final blessing, all either went to a dining room or received a lunch box with rice, pork (ten pigs had been either bought or donated for slaughter), other curries and, for the chief guests – Columbans and Kachin elders, fermented rice wine poured from bamboo stalks. A number of the elders had been

students of St Columban's College before it was 'nationalised' by the military in the early '60s and attributed their careers in politics, the civil service and their people's independence struggle, to the good English taught them by the "Irish Fathers".

We then waited excitedly for the start of the St Columban's Cup Football final at the Edin ground, the prizes for which we had donated this year. Seventeen teams had been whittled down to a final between Edin (the hosts) and Yuzana Parish.

Edin made an impressive outing, winning 3-0 and received their cash prize along with the winners of the badminton, volleyball and caneball competitions. These sports tournaments are seen by the Diocese as an important plank in their drug rehabilitation and youth ministries.

Opium production and use is unfortunately a major problem in Kachin State, exacerbated by both

poverty and the ongoing political conflict.

The new Columban team

It seemed very fitting that two anniversaries - the 1400th of the death of St Columban and the 500th year of the presence of the Catholic faith in Myanmar – were celebrated together in the year when Columban missionaries are preparing to reopen their mission among the Kachins.

In my few words at a welcoming ceremony that evening for two newly ordained Korean Columban priests, Carlo Jung and Jehoon Lee, who have been assigned there, I shared that although the Society does not have the big number of young priests that it did before, we are happy to send from our small numbers what we have to the Kachin people, knowing that it will once again be a blessing for both of us.

I hope the four Columban priests, resting gently in the nearby cemetery, would have smiled at that and will guide our new team of priests and lay missionaries to many more good St Columban's Day celebrations

among these determined but gentle people.

A visit to an important Columban site

In the days after the celebration, Bishop Francis Daw Tang of Myitkyina, Myanmar, was anxious that the two newly assigned priests and myself, visit one of the sites of the original Columban mission among the Kachin people.

We drove 27 miles north to Tanghpri, a scenic spot where the Mali and Nmai Rivers form the 'confluence' of the famous Irrawaddy River. I quote the following from a *Far East* article of January 1962 of Fr Laurence McMahon, himself a missionary in Burma at the time:

"Tanghpri is a powerhouse of Columban activity. Fr Bernard Way from Melbourne, runs not only a Catechists training school but also the Catholic printing press. The press, like Fr Way, is never idle. From it flows a monthly paper, the Jinghpaw Kasa ("Kachin Messenger") plus a constant stream of Catholic books and pamphlets. The press gets its power from a diesel generator; none of us has ever been

able to figure out where Fr Way gets his energy! Like all our parishes here, Tanghpri is vast and includes a mountainous district called "Hpungyin Dung" which is every bit as formidable as its name suggests; some mountain tracts here are so deep that even the Kachins call them "steep ascents that make the children cry"...

We heard the stories of many other Columbans on our way back to Myitkyina, the fidelity to their people – Thomas Walsh, dead from malaria at 34; John Walsh, 43, shot through the head and found in a shallow grave; Thomas McEvoy, 56, who collapsed and died climbing to another village for Christmas Mass.

With such a foundation, this new chapter in our walk with the Kachins will bring its own joys and tears as together we join their long struggle for the dignity and the rights they believe that God, if not yet the Myanmar government, wills them to have.

Columban Fr Patrick Colgan is on the General Council of St Columbans Mission Society in Hong Kong.



Local people in traditional dress offer gifts for the Offertory Procession.

Golden Jubilee

FR CHRIS BAKER

St Columban's College in Lima

One of God's surprises hit me when I arrived back at the Columban Centre House in Lima, Peru, around 3:00a.m. on November 21, 2014. My unbroken return journey from Melbourne, Australia, to my usual residence in Lima had taken around 11 hours at airports and 23 hours in the air.

However a bright invitation tempted me to glance at it immediately and to realise that I was expected to share in some Golden Jubilee celebrations starting at 4:30p.m. that same afternoon. They were to celebrate 50 fruitful years of the parish school founded by the Columban Sisters in what was then a new parish in Condevilla, some 10kms from the centre of Lima.

How could I miss such a glorious occasion for a school with which I had been constantly associated ever since joining the parish in 1978? At that time the Columban Sisters were still there in force since its humble beginnings in 1964. The first director was Sr Mary Majella Ryan, in a primary parish school opened in collaboration with Columban Fathers such as Fr Michael Fitzgerald. For the next 17 years the Sisters and their many local teachers and families gradually expanded the school till it could be handed on to other educators.

While I was still in that parish, in 1981 the Sisters of Charity of Kawasaki (Japan) took charge of the school and convent. Due to the increased population and need for higher education, the Sisters set afoot plans to open a secondary college as well on the same campus. Sr Michaela availed of the best local teachers to act as directors, but as they pushed ahead with organising the secondary college, they decided in 1986 to entrust the larger project to a Peruvian foundation, the Dominican Sisters of St Rose of Lima. Within a year Sr Juana Sarmiento OP became the director of the school, which has remained a parish primary and secondary school keeping its name of St Columban.

With joyful thanks we began the Golden Jubilee celebrations with a Mass presided over by Diocesan Bishop Lino Panizza OFM. He kindly invited representatives from all three groups of Sisters and their teachers to recall the growth of the school. Today it embraces all years of

education, beginning with children of three years old and finishing with fifth year secondary. Fourteen hundred pupils now enjoy fine facilities and dedicated teachers whose efforts have led to the school being given international accreditation for the quality of its education.

Next a reception was held in the large hall built to start the expansion into a secondary school. It was another opportunity for all three groups of Sisters to share stories of their years watching the growth of students and their families, as well ever increasing class halls. The spirit of friendship and generous collaboration on all sides was truly inspiring and encouraging for the future of the school.

The final hours of celebration were out in the large courtyard, covered over with light plastic material and well lit with many spotlights for the speakers on the platform, then for the lovely traditional dances performed by large groups of students from various associated colleges from as far away as Arequipa and Cusco. For Peruvians, dancing is at the heart of any big celebration and often continues on happily well into the next morning. This night it reluctantly stopped at 11:00p.m. in view of so many visiting students and their families being involved.

On the way home I reflected contentedly how fitting it was that here in South America the name and influence of the Irish abbot, St Columban, lives on. In Europe the Church and civil leaders of several nations have already combined to launch a Columban Year to mark the 1400th Anniversary of his death in Bobbio, Italy, in November of 615. In the Lima Archdiocese there is a modern parish chapel dedicated to St Columban and St Toribio, while in the newer diocese of Carabayllo there are chapels and a school bearing his name.

May the Centenary celebrations help Christians around the globe to see how great has been the influence and impact of that energetic missionary, Columban, right down to our own day.

Columban Fr Chris Baker has been a missionary in Peru since 1971.



San Columbano

On the way home I reflected contentedly how fitting it was that here in South America the name and influence of the Irish abbot, St Columban, lives on.



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.*

Suicide bomb attack on Churches in Lahore

*O*n Sunday morning, March 15, 2015 there were two suicide attacks on two Churches in Yohannabad, Lahore – St. John’s Catholic Church and Christ Church Protestant Church, in which 15 were killed and over 70 injured. The first attack was on St John’s but it could have been much worse as the security guards stopped the attackers who detonated the bomb outside the gate. A few minutes later the second attack happened at Christ Church which is only a short distance away. People at the church claim that two of the three Government police on duty were actually at a nearby shop watching the Pakistan-Ireland World Cup Cricket match and as a consequence the bomber got further into the church compound and most of the deaths and injuries were at Christ Church.

Violent protests erupted after the blasts, with a mob killing two men accused of involvement in the attacks and news reports also claimed the mob set their bodies on fire. There is deep anger in the Christian community at the Government’s failure to protect minorities, especially in the aftermath of the suicide bomb attack in All Saints Church, Peshawar on September 22, 2013 in which 83 people were killed. There were protest marches taken out by Christians in other cities all over the country on Sunday.

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and President Mamnoon Hussain have condemned the latest bombings. The Government also announced compensation for the victims – Rupees 500,000 (\$5,000) to each of the families of those who were killed and Rupees 75,000 (\$750) each for those injured.

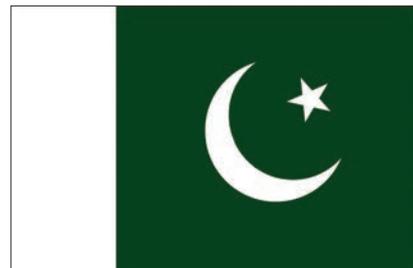
Nabila Ghazanfar, a spokeswoman for the Punjab police, said the deaths from the attack on Sunday included 13 worshippers, two police officers deployed for security

outside the churches and the two suspects beaten to death by the mob, in addition to the two bombers. Dr. Muhammad Saeed, the chief doctor at Lahore General Hospital, where scores of the wounded were brought, said that many were in critical condition.

Yohannabad is the biggest concentration of Christians in Lahore with an estimated 100,000 living there. There are numerous problems facing the community –poverty, unemployment, drug use, violence- and a sense that the entire area is being neglected by the government in terms of development and infrastructure.

The militant group, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, has claimed responsibility for the attack. Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP), also known as the Pakistani Taliban, is an umbrella organisation of various militant groups, one of which is Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, those responsible for the suicide bomb attack on the two churches.

Columban Fr Liam O’Callaghan wrote this report from Pakistan on the day after the two bomb attacks.



Mission Intention for April

That persecuted Christians may feel the consoling presence of the Risen Lord and the solidarity of all the Church.



From the Director

From Privilege to Pauper

The Easter liturgical season extends right through April. What we are celebrating during this time is the fact that Jesus died a death which, far from signalling His end, marked the beginning of his story. Secondly, in the gospels the post-Resurrection appearances of Christ with the disciples reveal that they had committed themselves to a living Christ and not to the memory of a dead one.

A living Christ still inspires people today. In the Catholic Church we reserve a place for saints, not because we worship idols but because some people exhibit an outstanding commitment to and relationship with Jesus Christ. Such a person was Elizabeth Maria Satoko Kitahara.

Her story is like so many saints: she encountered Christ in the face of the poor whom she discovered quite accidentally. Elizabeth may become the first saint of modern times in Japan. She is currently in the process of canonisation.

She was accepted among the rag pickers; perhaps she had a transparency of spirit that allowed her to be seen as some special person (not a 'do-gooder') who entered totally into their lives. In her decision to become like them she was imitating Jesus Christ.

Elizabeth was a daughter of both privilege and culture in Japan. She trained as a pharmacist and like many civilians endured the bombing of Tokyo during World War II. Like many of her friends Elizabeth felt betrayed by the government and felt a loss of hope for the future. In her search for some answers she met by chance Brother Zeno, a Franciscan friar who was dedicated to people who were

scavengers in a place called the Village of Ants. During the meeting she was shocked to learn that thousands of people lived in destitution less than a kilometre from her home.

She began to visit the Village of Ants teaching basic education until a smart remark from a bystander made her realise that she did not know or understand a rag picker's life because each day she returned to her fine home. She became a rag picker!

She was accepted among the rag pickers; perhaps she had a transparency of spirit that allowed her to be seen as some special person (not a 'do-gooder') who entered totally into their lives. In her decision to become like them she was imitating Jesus Christ.

Recently Pope Francis invited us to get to know the poor, whoever they are. He asks us to treat them as persons and respect them. He prays that we might learn what they have to teach us. Like Elizabeth we need to find a way to get to know and learn from the poor.

Elizabeth Maria Satoko Kitahara is a wonderful example of a modern day disciple, challenged by difficult circumstances. She belonged to Christ in the same way that the disciples did and the same way that we all belong to him.

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

Fr Gary Walker
director@columban.org.au

A man-made disaster



Chile is a country prone to natural disasters: earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, floods and more. In May 2008, the Chaiten volcano erupted and destroyed the town of Chaiten forcing the 4,200 residents to evacuate their town.

In February 2010, the sixth largest earthquake ever recorded on a seismograph, struck the central valley of Chile and caused a huge tsunami to flood the coastline in six regions of the country. More than 500 people lost their lives in the earthquake and tsunami. Twenty percent of the homes in the region of Maule, south

of Santiago, were either destroyed or badly damaged. It is estimated that the cost of repairing the damage of this earthquake was more than 15 billion dollars.

On April 1, 2014, the northern city of Iquique was hit by an earthquake which measured 8.2 on the Richter Scale. Chileans have learned to cope with these natural disasters in the knowledge that they cannot do anything to prevent them, but they can do many things to limit and repair the damage caused. After the 2010 earthquake, the Jesuit organized charity "*Un Techo Para Chile*" (A

roof for Chile) together with other charitable organizations built 23,886 prefabricated transitional homes. Coastal towns affected by the tsunami have developed a warning system with evacuation procedures which will save lives in the future.

In recent years Chile has been affected by another form of disaster - *Bushfires*. On April 12, 2014, a fire broke out on the edges of the city of Valparaiso, located on the coast of Chile. The unseasonably high temperature and strong winds spread the fire rapidly and destroyed 2,900 homes. Most of these homes belonged to the poor

and had been built on the hillsides of the city with no planning permissions and without the basic infrastructure of proper sanitary conditions. 12,500 people had to flee to safety while firemen and forest brigades fought the blaze. In the end, 15 people lost their lives. It was the worst fire in the history of the city and is known today as the "Great Fire of Valparaiso."

The investigation conducted after the fire stated that the fire was not intentional. CONAF (National Cooperation of Forestry) has stated: *"As to the origin of bushfires, there is no doubt that in Chile and in the rest of the world direct human action is the cause of the majority of fires: carelessness, negligence in the use of fire in wooded areas, outdated agricultural practices, lack of respect for the environment as well as the intentional use of fire to cause damage."*

The reality of the intentional use of fire to cause damage became very clear to me this year. The Maipo Vicariate is one of seven territorial Vicariates which form the Archdiocese of Santiago. Our Vicariate includes two municipalities: Puente Alto and San José del Maipo. Puente Alto is the most populated municipality in Chile. San José del Maipo is a totally different reality, because it is located in a scenic mountain canyon known as the Cajon del Maipo which stretches and winds along the various rivers for more than 145kms to the Argentine border.

The canyon was formed by the confluence of several rivers: El Volcán, Yeso, Colorado and Maipo. The Cajon del Maipo is vitally important to the city of Santiago because of the two water reservoirs which provide 60% of the city's water. For the residents of an overcrowded city the Cajon is

also the place where they can recreate and enjoy the beauty of the Andes Mountains. The more adventurous visit the El Morado National Park and climb to the El Morado glacier. In the background the San José volcano can be seen. But during the last few years the Cajon del Maipo has been suffering from an unwelcome visitor - Bushfires.

"As to the origin of forest fires, there is no doubt that in Chile and in the rest of the world direct human action is the cause of the majority of fires: carelessness, negligence in the use of fire in wooded areas, outdated agricultural practices, lack of respect for the environment as well as the intentional use of fire to cause damage."

Every Friday I celebrate Mass for the Discalced Carmelite Sisters whose monastery is located in an isolated part of the canyon. Seventeen contemplative Sisters live, work and pray in this humble monastery known as *El Monasterio del Amor Misericordioso y la Virgen del Carmen* (Monastery of Merciful Love and of Our Lady of Mount Carmel). My weekly visits to the monastery help me to realize that I, too, am called to be a contemplative, even if I am only a contemplative in action.

On March 29, 2014, some neighbours called the Sisters to warn them that a bushfire was advancing rapidly toward the monastery and told the Sisters to evacuate their property immediately. The Sisters quickly discovered that warning was real. Srs Paula and Cecilia put the older nuns into the monastery's vehicle and headed down the dirt road

which leads to the main road. On both sides of the road the fire was spreading. The electric gate which some neighbours had installed would not open so Sr Paula and Sr Cecilia opened it manually and drove their older companions to safety. They headed back to the monastery hoping to bring out the other Sisters.

Once they were inside the monastery grounds, they realized that the fire had spread so quickly that there was no hope of driving out again. The flames of the fire had blocked any escape. They heard the screams of elderly neighbours whose electric gates would not open. The Sisters ran to their assistance and opened a hole in the fence and led their neighbours to the monastery. Within minutes 40 of their neighbours had made their way to the monastery for safety.

The nuns decided that they would have to chance escaping down a steep ravine on the other side of their property. As they made their way down the ravine they sang hymns and encouraged their neighbours to help one another down the ravine. The neighbours would later comment that the hymns of the Sisters were like the songs of the angels leading them to safety.

All the Sisters and their forty neighbours managed to get out of harm's way. Another of their neighbours, Rigoberto Catalan, an elderly farm worker was not so lucky. He died from smoke inhalation when he tried to escape from his small prefab home on the side of the mountain. Miraculously, the wind changed the direction of the fire just before it would have entered the property of the monastery. However the homes of three of their neighbours were completely destroyed.

Unfortunately, this bushfire was not an isolated incident. Since 2012, there have been 15 bushfires in the area. Four of these fires have seriously endangered the monastery. As a result of a bushfire which occurred in November 2012, a criminal investigation was undertaken. That investigation revealed that the fire had been intentionally set but it was impossible to determine who was to blame.

When another bushfire in December 2013 threatened the monastery, the Sisters presented a "*querrela*" (a request for a criminal investigation) which is still in process. The local neighbours have also presented a "*querrela*" demanding that the recent bushfire be investigated. That investigation is also under way. At present the area is under police protection.

The Carmelite Sisters established their monastery in the Cajon Del Maipo in 1995 and there were never any fires until 2012. This fact has raised suspicions about the origin of the fires. Are they the result of the recent drought which the Central Valley of Chile is still suffering? Some

neighbours believe that the fires are related to the various development projects in the Cajon which include the building of a hydro-electric dam and the expansion of the tourist industry.

According to this theory, unscrupulous developers want to force the Sisters and their neighbors to leave the area. Others suspect that there is an arsonist who travels from Santiago to set the fires. There are a number of theories but no actual proofs. In such an isolated area it is very difficult to discover who is responsible for the fires. But the fact that they have become more frequent and concentrated in the area where the monastery is located is sufficient reason to be concerned and to try and determine who is responsible.

The Sisters are determined to remain in their monastery. In the weeks after the recent fires two Sisters kept watch during the night to ensure that there was no danger of another fire. Recently the winter rainfall has dampened the ground and made it more difficult to start bushfires and the Sisters have become experts in combatting fires.

Together with their neighbours they are taking measures to protect the monastery and themselves. A number of improvements need to be made and already some benefactors have donated a fuel operated water pump. A path with stairs is being built down the steep ravine to the road. The hermitage which is used by visitors needs to be made more fire resistant. The constant prayer of the Sisters is that the fires will cease and that they can continue their lives of contemplative prayer.

The Cajon del Maipo is often called "*los pulmones de Santiago*" (the lungs of Santiago) because of the winds from the canyon which bring fresh air to our contaminated city. The prayers of the Carmelite Sisters are lungs for our Vicariate bringing the Spirit (the breath of God) into our lives. We hope and pray that the sisters can stay with us and continue to pray for God's mercy for all of us.

Columban Fr Michael Hoban lives and works in Chile and is the Episcopal Vicar for the Vicariate of Maipo, with the Archdiocese of Santiago.

Fr Wally Tudor 40th Anniversary of Ordination to Priesthood

April 5 marks the 40th anniversary of Columban Fr Walter (Wally) Tudor's ordination to priesthood. Fr Wally comes from Gordon, near Ballarat, Victoria. He was ordained to the priesthood at St Patrick's Church, Gordon, by Archbishop Francis Little on April 5, 1975.

After serving in the Philippines as a Columban missionary for several years, Fr Wally returned to Australia to undertake a variety of pastoral appointments. In recent years, he has served the people of the Diocese of Ballarat as parish priest in many parishes throughout the diocese. He is currently the parish priest of "Our Lady, Star of the Sea" parish, Apollo Bay.

The Far East congratulated Fr Wally as he celebrates his 40th anniversary and wishes him God's blessing on his priestly ministry into the future.



Urdu translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

 On 24 November, the Pontifical Council for New Evangelization at the Vatican approved the Urdu translation of the official text (1997) of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and authorized its publication by the Pakistan Episcopal Conference.

The translation work has taken 13 years and was done by Mr Emmanuel Neno, executive secretary of the Episcopal Commission for Catechetics, and Australian Columban Fr Robert McCulloch who worked in Pakistan for 34 years and is now Procurator-General of the Missionary Society of St Columban in Rome.

Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and is used in parts of north India. It is spoken by more than 1000 million people. According to Pakistani government statistics for 2013, there are more than 3,500,000 Christians in Pakistan of whom Catholics comprise a substantial majority.

According to a report received by the Pontifical Council at the Vatican, “the availability of the Urdu translation of

the Catechism of the Catholic Church will help Catholics in Pakistan to deepen their understanding of their Catholic faith so that they can give an even more fruitful witness to Our Lord”.

...in the catechetical mission of the Church in Pakistan and said that it will assist in the preparation of new catechisms adapted to the various local and cultural situations of Pakistani Catholics but manifesting the unity of Catholic belief.

The Urdu translation will also be of great benefit to Urdu-speaking Catholics working in the Middle East and the Gulf States or who have migrated from Pakistan to other countries.

Fr McCulloch expressed the hope that the translation will foster inter-religious dialogue by proving a source of information to those who wish to obtain a better knowledge of the Catholic faith and the beliefs of Catholics with a view to entering into a richer level of dialogue.

Officials of the Pakistan government’s Board for the National Language have praised the translation project because it represents an encounter between the culture and language of Urdu and Catholic doctrine and theology.

Fr McCulloch said that the development and use of a new vocabulary in Urdu in the Catechism to express Catholic theological terminology and concepts is an important contribution to the Urdu language.

The Pontifical Council for New Evangelization praised the Urdu translation as a significant step in the catechetical mission of the Church in Pakistan and said that it will assist in the preparation of new catechisms adapted to the various local and cultural situations of Pakistani Catholics but manifesting the unity of Catholic belief.

Columban Fr Robert McCulloch was a missionary in Pakistan for 34 years. He now resides in Rome as the Procurator General for St Columbans Mission Society since 2011.



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First full-length Fijian Bible

On the feast of St Luke on October 18, 2013, Archbishop Peter Loy Chong, the new Archbishop of Suva, Fiji, presided at the launch of the first full-length Fijian Bible. When the Christianisation of Fiji began in the 1830s and 1840s, an effort was very quickly made to translate some of the Scriptures into the Fijian language.

Soon the Methodist Church was able to put out a translation of the entire Bible, minus the Deuterocanonical Books. These are the seven books and the additions to Esther and Daniel that the Church has read from the beginning but which the Jewish community decided in the first and second century were not part of the Bible and so dropped them.

In modern times, the Catholic, Orthodox and a few other Churches still accept them as part of the Bible, but the other denominations do not. Although in due course some short portions of these books were translated as required for the Catholic lectionary, they remained basically un-translated until recently.

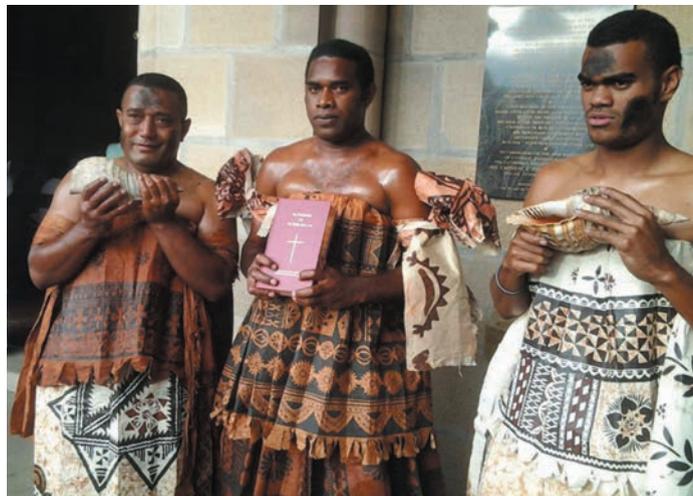
In the 1960s, with the agreement of the Christian Churches, the Bible Society of the South Pacific began a new translation of the entire Bible. In the 1990s, the Bible Society suggested that if the Catholic Church was prepared to undertake the task of translating the Deuterocanonical books, the Bible Society would be prepared to publish two versions of the newly translated Bible- one without the Deuterocanonical Books, and one with them.

The Catholic Church accepted this challenge and its translation office, called *Vosa* (which translates as "word" or "language"), set to work. Since I was in fact the director of that office, I managed to get together a small committee of translators who were certainly very competent but who could only meet occasionally. Since the *Vosa* office itself only had a staff of two or three (besides myself) and had other translation tasks to attend to, the work progressed only slowly, but progress it did.

Vosa's principal translator, Mr Aminiasi Qiatabua, prepared a first draft, then the translation committee worked on the draft to produce a translation that was both faithful to the original and acceptable modern Fijian. The *Vosa* office then formatted the work appropriately and the Bible Society kindly undertook the task of setting the whole volume and having it printed. Of course, finances were an ongoing problem, but donations helped fund the translation work and eventually helped pay for the publication of the new Bible.

The launching ceremony itself was very impressive. After the Archbishop had solemnly entered the Cathedral, a copy of the new Bible was ceremonially processed up to him to the accompaniment of a Fijian *lali* (wooden drum) and *davui* (conch shells). The Archbishop blessed and launched the new volume, and immediately a section was read from the book of Wisdom and from the Gospel of John. The Archbishop gave a stirring homily on the importance of the Word of God in our lives. After some touching prayers of the faithful, the religious service came to a triumphant end with a fitting hymn sung by all.

That was not the end of proceedings, however. All were immediately invited to descend to the crypt under the Cathedral. There, talks were given by myself (for the Catholic Church) and Epenisa Lewatoro (for the Bible Society) giving background about the Bible and about this particular translation effort, accompanied by a video. Then all broke up for light refreshments and socialization, while the new Bible went on sale (at a reduced price) and was enthusiastically purchased by many of the faithful.



Columban Fr David Arms has been a missionary in Fiji since 1971. He is a qualified linguist and an authority on the Fijian language.

Bushfire endangered

Columban Fr Michael Hoban works hard in Chile to support a monastery of 17 Discalced Carmelite Sisters who have suffered 15 bushfires since 2012.

He is in the process of helping the Sisters find funds to construct an escape path down a steep ravine, away from any future bushfire.

With your support, Columbans such as Fr Michael can continue to support those most in need.

Thank you.

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 Michael Hoban



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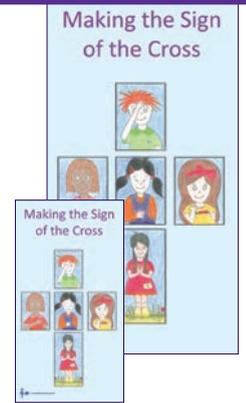
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