

The Far East

COLUMBAN MISSION MAGAZINE

June 2015

A mother's voice
Yudi's miracle story

Where is God in all this?
Parish priest in the driest place on earth

Time is running out
Sr Kateia Kaikai



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Brightly decorated cross located in Fr Michael Howe's parish in the Atacama Desert, Chile. (See Fr Michael Howe's story pages 6-7).

Photo: Chris Hochstetler



From the Editor

Events that impact on us

Most of us can remember certain events in our lives such as encounters with people, situations or realities far different from our own, that have had a powerful impact on us. We know that the Holy Spirit is at work in such events. These moments of grace can lead us into a deeper conversion and faith commitment.

Every day for seven weeks, Fr Peter O'Neill visited Yudi, an Indonesian victim of human trafficking in the ICU section of a Taiwanese hospital. In Fr Peter's powerful story he relates how the situation of Yudi has left a lasting effect on his life, empowering him in his struggle for the rights of all migrant workers.

This issue of The Far East magazine contains several stories of similar events that impact on the lives of Columban Missionaries and supporters. Coming from the green fields of Ireland, Fr Michael Howe's life continues to be enriched by discerning God's presence and will amongst his parishioners in Alto Hospico, Chile, a city in the driest desert in the world.

During 22 years of prison ministry in Western Australia, Fr Peter Toohey

time and again felt privileged to witness graced moments of courage, repentance, forgiveness and conversion.

There are two articles about El Paso which is located on the border between the US and Mexico. After a visit to El Paso with her parish community, Pauline Hovey realized that her life would never be the same. It was a powerful moment of grace for her. Fr Shay Cullen in the second article gives us an informative insight into the harsh exploitative reality of this border region.

We publish a speech by Fr Robert McCulloch dedicated to Shahbaz Bhatti, the former Pakistani Federal Minister for Minority Affairs, who was assassinated in March 2011. Shahbaz Bhatti's commitment to justice, mercy, due process and equity under the law, has inspired many people across the world. We can also be inspired by the dedication of the many environmental activists and land defenders murdered each year by big business interests.

Sister Kaiteia Kaikai recently returned home to Kiribati and witnessed the effects of rising sea levels on the atolls of her home nation. She now feels

more dedicated than ever to speak out and witness to the devastating effects of climate change on her island nation.

Maybe reading these stories of graced moments and Spirit-guided encounters in the lives of Columban missionaries and supporters will help all of us to reflect on the way the Holy Spirit uses certain events and encounters to deepen our faith commitment and enliven our journey of conversion and discovery.

Fr Daniel Harding

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A mother's voice

FR PETER O'NEILL

Columban Fr Peter O'Neill shares with us from Taiwan the story of Yudi.

Years flowed down the cheeks of Yudi's face as he listened to the voice of his mother speaking through my cellular phone while he laid on his ICU (Intensive Care Unit) bed fighting for his life. I was filled with emotion and elated joy standing by his bedside when I knew for the first time that Yudi was able to remember the sound of his mother's voice. For 3 weeks this 21 year old Indonesian fisherman had been in a coma.

This is how I met Yudi. On October 17, 2014 I received a phone call from a Hsinchu City National Immigration Agency (NIA) police officer asking me to shelter an undocumented Indonesian migrant worker with a slight mental problem. I agreed to shelter the worker.

When I met him, I was shocked upon seeing how distressed he looked. In my few words of Indonesian I greeted him with the peace of Allah, and introduced myself saying I was Fr Peter, the Director of the Migrant Workers Centre. I asked his name. In a gentle and quiet voice he said, "My name is Yudi." They were the only words he spoke. He was wearing a thick winter jacket despite the weather being hot and humid. I gently removed his jacket so he could feel more comfortable.



Yudi in ICU on life support system.

The police informed me that Yudi had gotten into a taxi and the taxi driver immediately knew that Yudi had some kind of mental problem. The concerned driver drove Yudi to the NIA office to seek assistance from the police. Inside Yudi's wallet was a copy of his passport, his Indonesian ID card and a few notes from South Africa, China and the Philippines. With this information the police were able to ascertain that Yudi was an international fisherman who had jumped ship.

Sister Lenny is our Indonesian case worker. She rang the Indonesian government office in Taipei to inform them of Yudi's condition. They rang the placement agency in Indonesia and were given Yudi's home phone number. Sr. Lenny rang Yudi's mother. She was so distraught on hearing what had happened to her son. She informed Sr. Lenny

that Yudi flew to Singapore in January 2014 to board a Taiwanese owned fishing vessel. He slaved away at sea for 7 months with no days off and no pay. When the vessel finally docked at the Kaohsiung port in southern Taiwan Yudi rang his mother to tell her his employer had given his salary to his employment broker and his broker said it was the payment for his work placement. With no money to send home to his poor struggling family, Yudi decided to jump ship and try his luck in finding work in Taiwan. For several months he worked in the mountain region of Taiwan picking fruit 12 hours a day on a meager salary of NT\$600 (US\$20) per day.

I drove Yudi to the Migrant Shelter where I live with the migrant workers. Since Yudi was so agitated and could not sleep I took him to the hospital. The attending psychiatrist examined him and decided to sedate him so he could have a good night's rest in emergency.

The next morning Sr. Lenny and I went to the hospital. Yudi had a big smile on his face when he saw us and was very calm. When the doctor asked him if he was hearing voices he said he could hear the voice of his Taiwanese employer shouting at him. The doctor prescribed 3 days medication. Three days later Sr. Lenny took Yudi for another consultation and

the doctor prescribed 7 more days of medication. Each day it seemed Yudi was recovering well.

After being in our shelter for a week Yudi woke up in the morning finding it very difficult to breathe. He was rushed to emergency and upon examination it was discovered that a virus had entered his brain through his blood stream. Tragically Yudi fell into a coma and was placed on a life support system. Every day we visited him in ICU waiting anxiously and praying to God that Yudi's life will be spared. Two weeks later the neurologist informed me there was no hope for Yudi. Sr. Lenny rang and informed Yudi's parents. They sent me their written agreement to have Yudi's life support system switched off so he would not suffer any longer.

Miraculously after being in ICU for exactly 3 weeks Yudi took his first breath by himself. We couldn't believe it. Neither could the doctor nor nursing staff. The breathing tube was taken out and Yudi started using an oxygen mask. A week later he spoke his first words and slowly began eating purified food.

Unfortunately Yudi will have to be on medication for the rest of his life as the virus has done considerable damage to his neurological system. He has lost a lot of his memory but thankfully he can remember the names of his mother, father and younger brother.

Almost every day for 7 weeks I visited Yudi in hospital. On my last visit, the day before he was discharged, I decided to test Yudi's memory by asking him a few questions. When I asked if his captain ever hit him he gestured by clapping his fist and hitting his head. From the first day I met Yudi my suspicion was that he was a victim of physical and mental abuse by his captain and a victim of human trafficking. Yudi's story is one of thousands. Yet until now not one Taiwanese captain has been sent to prison for human trafficking.

Last week Yudi returned to Indonesia. Yudi has left a lasting effect on my life. His will to live and to survive the intolerable abuse of human trafficking empowers me to be even more vigilant in fighting for the rights of all migrant workers.

Yudi may the peace of Allah be with you.

Columban Fr Peter O'Neill first went to Taiwan in 1991. He is the Director of the Hope Workers Centre in Taiwan.



Yudi taking his first mouthful of food.



“

Almost every day for 7 weeks I visited Yudi in hospital.

Yudi with Fr Peter O'Neill in his hospital ward.



Where is God in all this?

FR MICHAEL HOWE

Parish priest in the driest place on earth.

Columban Fr Michael Howe recently shared with The Far East a little of his life and ministry in Chile.

I was raised in the town of Killarney, County Kerry, Ireland, the eldest of eight children, four girls and four boys. My father was the Station Master at Killarney Railway Station where we lived.

In 1972 I went off to study for the priesthood at Dalgan Park, the Columban seminary in Ireland. While on summer holidays as a seminarian in 1973, I was chosen to captain Kerry County's junior Gaelic Football team, the Kerry Minors. This was a great honour for me. Unfortunately, however, we lost that year to Cork.

After ordination in 1981 I was assigned to Chile where I have ministered as a Columban priest ever since. Since 2007 I have been the parish priest of the parish of "El Sagrado Corazón de Jesús de Alto Hospicio" - The Sacred Heart of Jesus of Alto Hospicio. Alto Hospicio is a city of 100,000 people located at 800 metres on a mountain top looking over the Pacific Ocean port city of Iquique. It is located in the Atacama Desert, the driest desert on Earth.

Upon seeing the Atacama Desert for the first time I was greatly shocked. Coming from the green playing fields of Killarney to the driest place on Earth meant an enormous transition. In fact, I think I am still adjusting to the dryness.

The twin cities of Alto Hospicio and Iquique are living through something of an economic boom at the moment due to the copper and industrial salt mines in the locality. Miners spend weeks out in the desert and Andes Mountains working and then return to the cities cashed up. The port of

Iquique also handles almost the entire export/import trade of the nearby nation of Bolivia. For those who have jobs either in the mines or at the port it is not uncommon for their families to have modern cars and to see their children using 'Tablets' and 'Playstation'.

There is another side, of course, to Alto Hospicio. This is the reality of thousands of families struggling to make ends meet with substandard incomes. There are many large shanty towns in the area of the parish as well, full of families who have migrated from the central and southern parts of Chile or from neighbouring countries such as Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia that are all looking to participate in our economic boom.

As parish priest here in Alto Hospicio, I often ask myself, "where is God in all of this?" It seems to me that the first thing God wants me to do is to go out and meet families, to make contact, to listen to them and try to understand their daily struggle and get involved with them. He tells me not to be afraid to make contact with people: on the bus, in the supermarket, on the street and in their homes.

I am able to go out to meet the people through being strengthened by prayer, by reading the Scriptures, by the celebration of the Eucharist, praying the Liturgy of the Hours and with the guidance and intercession of Our Lady and the Saints. I am also supported of course by the committed members of the four Christian communities or Chapels that make up the parish.

“

*I often ask myself,
"where is God in all
of this?"*

As a parish community, our main task is to evangelize the people living in our parish. This means helping people have an encounter with Christ and commit themselves as disciples to Him and to His Church. From this commitment to Christ grows our commitment to reach out in solidarity to help those most in need - the poor, victims of domestic violence, drug and alcohol addicts, the sick, the aged, the unemployed, exploited workers, prisoners and gang members and so on.

Over the Christmas holidays we organized a one week Summer Holiday Camp to evangelize thirty five 7 to 11 year-old children who have no contact with the Church in any way. All of these children come from very poor families. Two married deacons, ten youth leaders and four women from the parish and myself organized and ran the occasion.

As all the children show signs of insufficient nutrition, each day we offered them breakfast, dinner and a lighter evening meal. After breakfast the day's events would begin with prayer and a bible reading. We would discuss in small groups the theme in the bible reading and how they relate to their daily lives. After lunch, the children participated in different sports, including going to a swimming pool on the Friday afternoon.

The week finished with all the children and their parents being invited to Sunday Mass, where the children dramatized the Gospel reading. About one third of the parents attended. My aim is to form a permanent group that meets regularly and helps these underprivileged and undernourished children, spiritually, emotionally and physically, to grow and be formed in a healthy manner.

I was pleasantly surprised at how open and interested the children were in continuing our Church group. At the same time I was surprised at how fussy they could be about food, even though they came from poor deprived families. I frequently heard comments like, *"I don't like that rice.*



My mother cooks it differently." Or, "I don't eat this or I don't eat that". One lad who was quite conflictive and difficult surprised us by saying that he would not eat his piece of cake because he wanted to take it home to his mother who rarely has cake to eat. Children are the same the world over.

As parish priest, it is important to try to understand the reality of these children and their families. I, who have come a long way - geographically, spiritually, physically - from playing Gaelic Football on the green fields of Killarney, will continue to reach out to the people living in the desert, my parishioners in Alto Hospicio.

Columban Fr Michael Howe has been a missionary priest in Chile since 1981. He has been parish priest of Sacred Heart of Jesus parish, Alto Hospicio, since 2007.



Photos: Chris Hochstetler

The souls of the just

FR ROBERT MCCULLOCH

Address given by Columban Fr Robert McCulloch, during the International Conference on Religious Freedom, 11 March 2015, Parliament Building Ottawa Canada, in honour of Shahbaz Bhatti, ex-Federal Minister of Minority Affairs (Pakistan), assassinated 2 March 2011.

"The souls of the just are in the hand of God".
(Wisdom 3:1) Nothing more exact can be said of the man in whose memory and in whose honour we gather today. He was murdered four years ago because of his witness to justice, and mercy, and equity under the rule of law. His blood is the seal upon the words he spoke in defence of individuals condemned to death through the abuse and misuse of laws in Pakistan which were ostensibly framed to protect the name of God.

Emerging legal opinion in Pakistan is that these laws themselves are incomplete in their legal formulation and that protection and due process in and under law can be achieved for those accused by the completion of the writing and formulating of the laws rather than their abolition or repeal which would be politically provocative and socially destabilizing in present circumstances in Pakistan.

The words of Shahbaz Bhatti are sealed in his blood.

Exactly 400 years ago, St. John Ogilvie, a 36 year-old Scottish priest, was bloodily butchered in Glasgow. As the knives were brought to slaughter him, he said *"I am dying for religion alone. For that I am prepared to give even a hundred times"*. These words echo the motivation and the heart of Shahbaz Bhatti.

We compare this with the bloodlust of Daesh and Boko Haram and the Taliban to take the lives of others by the

hundreds and the thousands: of innocent children in Peshawar, of the innocent in Nigeria and Cameroon, of the innocent in Libya and Iraq and Syria. Done in the "in the name of God"! The time has come to label this lot as butchers of human lives with their knives and their bloodlust. And the time has come for Muslims to deny these butchers the title of "jihadi".

Evil is evil and good is good. Cardinal John Henry Newman said 140 years ago:

"No Pope can make evil good. No Pope has any power over those eternal moral principles which God has imprinted on our hearts and consciences. If any Pope has, with his eyes open, approved of treachery or cruelty, let those defend that Pope who can.... Craft and cruelty... eventually strike the heads of those who are guilty of them."

No Pope, imam, Dalai Lama, maulvi, rabbi, bonze or priest can make evil good. No religious leader or politician can make evil good. Pope Benedict XVI dramatically reminded the world of this at Regensberg in Germany in 2009.

"I am not speaking here of legislated principles decided by the majority of a political party or the attitude of the media or the balance of an opinion poll. I am referring to 'those external moral principles which God has imprinted on our hearts and consciences'".

A person may deny God but cannot silence the insistent voice of heart and conscience. Whether one wishes to listen is another issue.

I wish to present two points which are relevant to affirming and asserting the right to religious freedom both in the context of the witness of Shahbaz Bhatti in Pakistan and in the situation which confronts the world today. These are, firstly, what I call the "national heart" of countries and, secondly, the invocation of God.

Shahbaz Bhatti challenged the mind of Pakistan by speaking to its heart. The urgent demand is not to mistake the terrible acts of violence being perpetrated in Pakistan by butchers masquerading as "soldiers of God"-- as being representative of the heart of the nation of Pakistan. The Taliban and the violent fundamentalists in Pakistan who killed Shahbaz Bhatti, who butcher little children in schools, and who blow up innocent worshippers at prayer in mosques and churches may have seized the headlines of the international media but they do not own or represent the heart of Pakistan. And similarly for Nigeria and Iraq and Syria and more. The heart of a nation is greater than the brutality of perverted men and women who butcher and kill and oppress falsely and perversely "in the name of God".

This perverse brutality and butchery and savagery and oppression is carried out in the name of God. But it is idolatry. **God is almighty, compassionate, and merciful.** **We who are Christians call Him in truth and in faith and in devotion "Our Father".** Compassionate to all and merciful to all, and so to limit the boundless limits of the mercy and compassion of God to the dimension of one's own ideological boundary or sectarian imagination is atheism.

The problem with the Daesh and Taliban and Boko Haran is not GOD but ATHEISM: an atheism which is the absence of God in spite of banners and slogans which proclaim His name, or the presence of a limited "god" manufactured and controlled by human reason, passion, and lust, and erected in contradiction and opposition to GOD. The crisis of religious freedom is ostensibly about God, but in reality it is a crisis created by these religious terrorists who make themselves their own centre in place of God. These religious terrorists are rationalists and kaffir who have established themselves as controllers and manipulators of God.

Irreligion masquerades as religion. Atheists masquerade as believers. Rationalism masquerades as Faith. Butchery masquerades as devotion. An idol being erected in place of God. We who are believers understand the horror, the blackness, the deceit and the presence of the Prince of Lies in this masquerade being perpetrated in the name of God and faith.

There is a religious basis for the contemporary and widespread crisis of the denial of religious freedom. Paradoxically, the religious basis is itself a perverse misuse and abuse of religion in the name of God.

As a boy growing up in the village of Khushpur in the rich agricultural plains of the Punjab in Pakistan, Shahbaz Bhatti knew the rhythm of the cultivation of wheat and rice. He understood that *"unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."* (John 12:24). We this afternoon are witnesses to this.

To read the unedited version of 'The souls of the just' visit:
<http://goo.gl/pkggtE>

Fr Robert McCulloch was a missionary in Pakistan for 34 years. He is currently the Procurator General of St Columbans Mission Society in Rome.



Ministering at the border

PAULINE HOVEY

Columban volunteer Pauline Hovey writes of her experience at the Columban Mission Centre on the US-Mexican border in El Paso, Texas.

*M*y first encounter with the Columban missionaries at the El Paso, Texas - Juarez, Mexico, border occurred in February 2013 when I joined four women from my home parish in Virginia for a one-week "Border Immersion" experience. During that trip, our group stayed at the Columban Mission Centre (CMC) in El Paso. Nearly every evening, Columban Fr. Bob Mosher guided us through a reflection of our day. One night, he posed a question about our response to the poor. Immediately I recognized something had shifted within me and my life would not be the same.

Two years later I'm back at the border as the communications resource person for the CMC, publishing a newsletter for the borderlands' human rights groups and writing about the amazing local ministries dedicated to serving the migrant, the refugee and the marginalized.

Driving through the streets of downtown El Paso one can't help but notice the proliferation of businesses that thrive on the undocumented, offering help with asylum cases, residency papers or quick cash, at a high cost to the client and, at times, with an unrealistic or fraudulent promise. As in any city there are those who take advantage of the poor and vulnerable.

Beyond these establishments lies an extended network of service providers and volunteers whose open-hearted commitment to the migrants and refugees far outweighs anything negative. El Pasoans' compassion, generosity and welcoming attitude toward the immigrant and the refugee surpass anything I've encountered elsewhere. They seem to really get what Jesus means when He says, "Whatsoever you did to the least of these, you did unto me." (Matthew 25:40)

One shining example is El Paso's response to the waves of unaccompanied minors and mothers with young children presenting themselves at the U.S.- Mexico border since this past summer. Over the months of June and July, 2014, as violence continued to escalate in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala and in some states in Mexico, the number of youth and families fleeing their countries exploded, well surpassing U.S. government predictions. The CMC joined the many churches and other faith-based organizations that

opened their doors to provide temporary shelter for those arriving by the planeload, sometimes twice daily.

Border Patrol would first screen the undocumented, then turn them over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) who processed the people before boarding them on planes to temporary shelters throughout the United States. The CMC received up to 40 people at a time. Often, the refugees only stayed one night at the centre before moving on to connect with their relatives while they awaited their court date, along with the probable news that they would be deported.

Despite initially being concerned about how to handle feeding and caring for so many people, Fr. Bob, Fr. Bill Morton and Fr. Denny O'Mara - the three Columbans ministering at the border - soon discovered God would provide. "The generosity of the people of El Paso made the task seem easy," said Fr. Bob. "And it was clearly a way to live our Christian faith so that a deep peace entered into all of our hearts."

Today the flood of immigrants has significantly decreased and the CMC no longer serves as a temporary shelter but the Columbans continue to minister to those arriving at the border. Among their many ministries, Fr. Bill provides pastoral care and Fr. Bob brings border awareness groups to both visit and serve at one temporary shelter/hospitality centre that has remained open since last June. Known as the Nazareth Hospitality Site, this unused wing of a health centre/nursing facility belonging to the Sisters of Loreto was reopened last summer in response to the great need. Since June, the site has been completely supported and supplied by volunteers, who do everything from washing bed sheets and cleaning rooms, to preparing and delivering meals for the immigrants who pass through its doors.

I manage to join them one day a week, fulfilling my need to be with the people. I am grateful to witness and walk with the migrants on this small part of their treacherous and unpredictable journey. Many of the mothers who pass through Nazareth's doors will travel by bus for days, with their young children in tow, to reach their relatives in other states. They carry images of Our Lady of Guadalupe and rosaries that have accompanied and strengthened them



MEXICO



USA

thus far. The women share their fears and their faith - a simple but powerful faith - that, along with their courage, teach me much about what it means to truly trust God. I consider my own journey and the risks I've taken to leave home for a while and serve at the border. They seem minimal in comparison.

Pauline Hovey is the Communications and Resource person for the Columban Mission Centre in El Paso, Texas.

“And it was clearly a way to live our Christian faith so that a deep peace entered into all of our hearts.”



The complex at the border between El Paso, Texas and Juárez, Mexico.

Photo: Fr Peter Woodruff

The migrant children of the desert crossing

FR SHAY CULLEN

*E*l Paso, Texas. Just a few kilometers on the outskirts of El Paso on the US border with the Mexican City of Ciudad Juarez, I lean against the long wire mesh fence that keeps out the flood of migrants and asylum seekers from Central America and Mexico seeking the safety and economic prosperity of the United States. It is silent and deserted but for a few houses on the Mexican side. Asylum seekers and refugees from violence and poverty will not attempt an illegal entry to the United States here; it is too well guarded for a successful crossing. It is here against the fence that the spiritual unity between the communities on either side of the border is renewed and strengthened by an annual Eucharistic celebration attended by hundreds on both sides of the fence led by the US and Mexican bishops.

My guide, Columban Missionary Roberto Mosher from the Columban Mission Centre, points towards Mexico to the Parish in Rancho Anapra where his fellow missionary Fr Kevin Mullins bring comfort, support and inspiration to the people who have lost loved ones to the violence and those separated from friends and relatives by the international border fence.

Juarez is called the most dangerous city in the world and in 2010 alone as many as 3,000 were murdered there. The number killed from January to March this year is 81 in all and this is expected to rise.

Since 9/11 the easy coming and going across the border came to an end and stricter surveillance, vigilance and apprehension is now the order of the day, every day and night.

But further along the border the fence runs out and the desert takes over. Hundreds of migrants endure the dangers and risks of death in the parched dry desert under a blazing sun. Such is their desperation to escape poverty and hardship and join relatives in the prosperity and safety of the United States. Many die in the desert abandoned by their paid guides called "Coyotes."

The thousands that try to cross over are fleeing the harsh poverty, land confiscation, political oppression, police and gang violence of the drug cartels that make life dangerous, precarious and no place for a child to grow up. The most precarious and violence-ridden countries are Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Oligarchies made up of a few super-rich families in cahoots with multinational corporations allow economic exploitation and rule their poverty-ridden and exploited countries with brutal police forces causing thousands to flee.

Many of those children that make it over the border and claim asylum are detained. Some are released to relatives in the United States to await the decision on their asylum claims. Some are unsuccessful and are deported back to the crime-ridden and violent streets of Mexico where some towns are like war-zones.

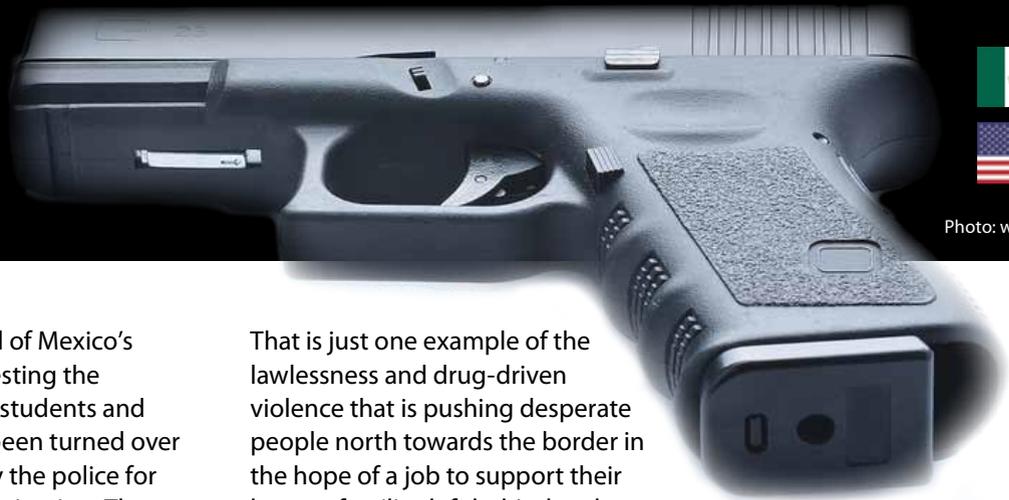
Last October 2014, six people were shot and killed by Mexican police as they marched in the town of



A religious procession in the Columban Parish Juarez, Mexico.
Photo: Fr Kevin Mullins

The border fence between El Paso, Texas and Juarez, Mexico.

Photo: Fr Peter Woodruff



MEXICO



USA

Photo: www.bigstockphoto.com

Chilpancingo, capital of Mexico's Guerrero state, protesting the disappearance of 43 students and later found to have been turned over to a criminal gang by the police for execution and extermination. The local mayor has been arrested and accused of being behind the killings and 22 officers from the city of Iguala were detained and charged with homicide.

That is just one example of the lawlessness and drug-driven violence that is pushing desperate people north towards the border in the hope of a job to support their hungry families left behind and seeking safety for the children that are sent to the border in ever increasing numbers.

By September 2014, the number of unaccompanied children being sent across the border for safety and a secure life with relatives and friends was 60,000 up from 20,000 in 2009.

Many of the young women and children are in grave danger from human traffickers even before they cross the border and some of them are enslaved in the brothels of Juarez, a city of violence due to drug cartels and criminal people-smugglers. The sex tourists from the north travel down to exploit their young innocent bodies. This is the worst evil of the migration crisis.

The rich and wealthy of Juarez have moved into the calm and order of El Paso, one of the safest cities in the United States. Approximately 11 million people are living in the United States

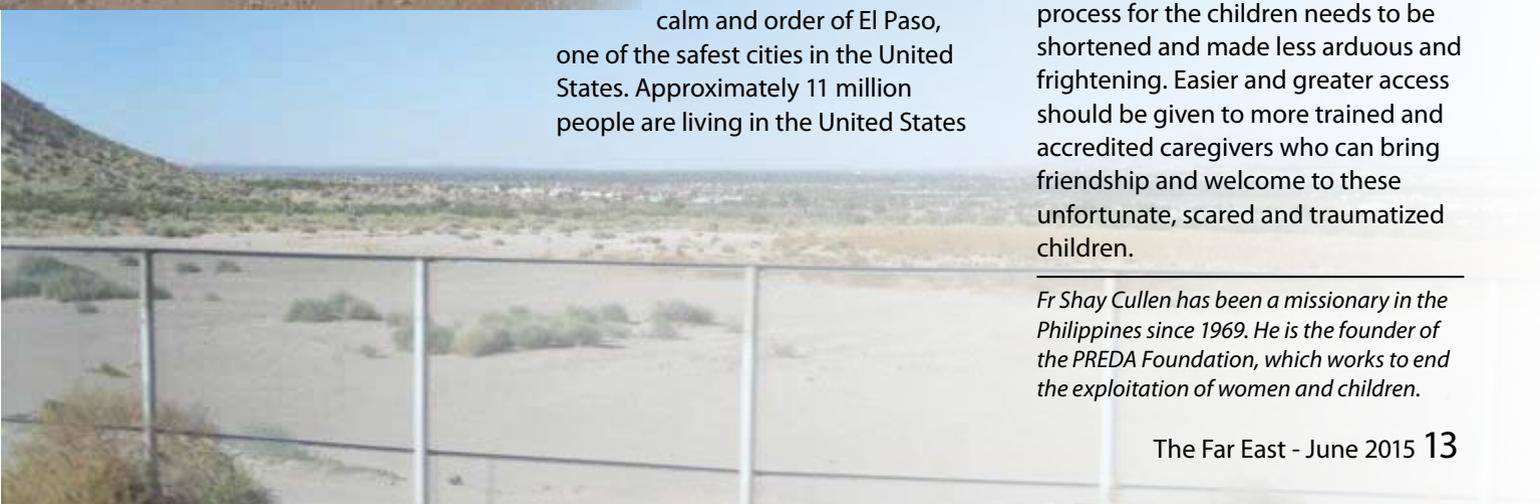
illegally. A law giving them a road to citizenship passed by the Senate has been rejected by the Republican dominated Congress.

When children do cross illegally into the United States and when they are from a country other than Mexico and Canada, they are sent to a secure shelter to be processed and it can take 35 days. This is according to a 2008 anti-trafficking law.

God knows how much the victims of these criminals need care, compassion and protection. The United States can provide that at little or no cost. A new anti-trafficking law passed last 22 April 2015 promises just that - financial aid for the victims to be paid for from a fund made up of money confiscated from the drug cartels and human smugglers.

Yet it is only a community of caring people that can give the emotional support, understanding and compassion that these young people desperately need. The bureaucratic process for the children needs to be shortened and made less arduous and frightening. Easier and greater access should be given to more trained and accredited caregivers who can bring friendship and welcome to these unfortunate, scared and traumatized children.

Fr Shay Cullen has been a missionary in the Philippines since 1969. He is the founder of the PREDA Foundation, which works to end the exploitation of women and children.



You're doing 'life', Father

FR PETER TOOHEY

Today I celebrated Mass for the last time in prison. For the past 22 years I have been working as a Prison Chaplain in Western Australian jails. The prisoners used say to me: "You're doing 'life', Father, just like some of us!" But now I realise that God is calling me to take a different path and leave this ministry to others.

I feel immensely grateful for all the blessings God has given me over these years. It's been such a privilege

to walk with so many prisoners a little of their journey to God. I have been entrusted with so many secrets of the heart, confessions of guilt, experiences of anguish, loss and self-hatred. There is nothing they have confessed to me which in some shape or form I have not myself experienced. Indeed if I had grown up in a home where there was violence and abuse, perhaps I would be wearing green like them!

Much of my time as a Prison Chaplain has been spent building relationships of trust with both staff and prisoners. I was aware that many of the prisoners were very damaged people who had known great sadness and deprivation earlier on in their lives. I tried to help them see that God does not write them off as "crims" or "scum" but sees them as a beloved son or daughter. No matter what they had done to hurt others, no matter what others

“

*"You're doing 'life',
Father, just like some of
us!"*



had done to hurt them, God believes in them. God wants to forgive them, mend broken relationships, and help them to be there for those who love them. There is a part of them which simply wants to be accepted for who they truly are – someone who is able to love and deserving to be loved.

I was often touched by the courage of people who were prepared to own up to their offences and the damage they had done to the victims of their crimes. They needed that very much, the chance to grieve over all that had gone wrong in their life, to let go of self-hatred and the need to punish themselves endlessly.

You see people in a very different light when they tell you something of what they have lived through. It has made me realise that God is at work in every one of us and that the most powerful thing any of us has to share is our own story. Because our story is ultimately the story of what God is doing in us.

Working with prisoners has been for me an uplifting and rewarding experience. I loved especially the Restorative Justice workshops where victims of crime came into the prison to share the trauma they had suffered, encouraging prisoners to “fess up” and accept responsibility for their offences.

I loved also the Masses I celebrated with the prisoners. It was an opportunity for them to share their reflections on the Scriptures and how and where they had met Jesus on their own journey. There was such an honesty and earthiness about the story of their addiction to alcohol or drugs, their underlying sense of worthlessness and how they came to discover “Amazing Grace”.

There were of course times when I felt spirited. In prisons there is often

an undercurrent of deep frustration and rage. There is a lot of bullying, gang violence and drug dealing. For vulnerable young prisoners especially, jail can be a harsh and dehumanising experience. Yet even in this darkest of situations the Light is never extinguished.

Leaving the Prison Ministry I am conscious that prisons are more overcrowded than ever, putting great strain on staff and prisoners alike. Aboriginal prisoners are hugely over-represented in the prison population. Much needs to be done to provide alternatives to imprisonment for the mentally ill, the addicts, those who have unpaid fines, etc. Rather than building more prisons, the emphasis needs to be on building communities where the most vulnerable are supported, where conflicts are resolved through dialogue between victims and offenders and their families.

None of us walk alone. In my case I have had great encouragement from a little group of lay Catholics meeting at the Christian Centre for Social Action each Wednesday evening. There we would reflect on the following Sunday's Gospel and talk about what it meant for us and what God was doing in our lives. I have felt held and carried by this little group over the years and inspired by their passion for justice and compassion for the poor.

Over the years I have been greatly supported also by Lay Volunteers who would come into the Prison Chapel with me on a Sunday for Mass and share a cuppa with the prisoners afterwards.

I also owe a lot to a wise and caring woman who was my Pastoral Supervisor for much of my time as a Chaplain. I could “unload” onto her

my concerns and frustrations and gain insight into myself, my own ambivalence, woundedness and blockages.

It seems to me that many prisoners are hostages to defeat and shame long before they come into jail. They inhabit an inner prison of loneliness and failure. And as we know from our own experience, “hurt people hurt people”.

I think of an older prisoner who had come through a period of deep depression. He was greatly loved by his wife and family. He told me how finally he felt able to forgive himself for the shameful things he had done and the trauma he had inflicted on others. Somehow other prisoners sensed the change in him. He found that men who presented such an image of macho toughness to their mates were coming to him for help, crying like children over long-withheld grievances. I have been privileged to witness many such graced moments.

In particular, I have been brought to an experience of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. As Pope Francis has reminded us, Jesus stank of His sheep. What else would you smell of when you are forever searching for lost sheep, picking up the injured and carrying them home?



Fr Peter Toohey

Columban Fr Peter Toohey has retired from 22 years of prison ministry in Western Australia.



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.*

Environmental activists killed

Sent from "Agenzia Fides", the information bureau of the Pontifical Mission Society, which is based in Rome.

According to the news report from the international organization "Global Witness", 88 environmental activists and land defenders were killed in Latin America in 2014, with indigenous communities hardest hit.

This report, titled "How many more?" states,

- The number of environmentalists killed in Latin America amounts to three-quarters of all environmental activists and land defenders killed worldwide, followed by South East Asia. The number killed in 2014 are: Brazil 29, Colombia 25, Honduras 12, Peru 9, Guatemala 5, Paraguay 3, Mexico 3, Ecuador 1 and Costa Rica 1. With regards to South East Asia, 15 were killed in the Philippines.
- Worldwide at least two people are killed every week for taking a stand against environmental destruction.
- Some are killed by police during protests, others are murdered by hired assassins. When companies seek new land to exploit, there are always many people that ultimately have to pay in some way for their opposition to the loss of their land.
- Worldwide, 40 percent of the victims belong to indigenous communities, with hydropower, mining and agri-business the key drivers of their deaths.
- Environmental activists killed were engaged in conflicts over territory involving mining activities, water, forests and agro-industrial enterprises.

- Worldwide, 116 murders of environmental activists and land defenders occurred last year, almost twice the number of journalists killed during the same period. This was an increase of 20% compared to 2013.

However, the report points out that one cannot know the exact number of activists killed because many of these crimes, "occur in remote villages or in the jungle, where communities have no access to means of communication. Therefore, we suspect the number of murders is much higher".

Agenzia Fides 07/05/2015



Barlie Balives (second from right) and his son Gerry (third from left) were killed for protecting indigenous Subanen land, from land grabbers in the Philippines.

Mission Intention for June

That the personal encounter with Jesus may arouse in many young people the desire to offer their own lives in priesthood or consecrated life.



From the Director

Humility the fine virtue

In his book *Francis of Rome, Francis of Assisi*, Leonardo Boff writes that the kind of Christianity that Pope Francis is promoting is one that does not proselytise. Rather, it is a religion that wins people over by attracting them to its beauty and deep humanity. He adds that these values will save humanity.

The Church that I belong to is much humbler now in the wake of the sexual abuse scandals involving members of the Catholic Church, especially the clergy. We have come a long way in regard to this sinfulness but have further to go. We are no longer as triumphal as we were when I was growing up in the 1950's and 1960's. Humility is good for us personally and as a faith community.

Many of the stories that come through *The Far East* magazine are about humble people. Either the missionary is humble in his relationship with people or the missionary has met a humble person and written a story about them. There is a certain beauty in that sort of interaction.

Pope Francis wrote that our challenge today is our need to respond adequately to many people's thirst for God.

One such person was my friendship with an elderly man named Berris whom I met when I was on mission in Jamaica. I regularly gave him a lift to Mass on Sundays and I got to know him quite well. Berris had a particular presence about him and people enjoyed being with him. I remember him with fondness and gratitude because of the man he had become. He owned nothing and was a truly humble man with a great sense of dignity and pride. His simple deep faith made him a beautiful man.

And what of humanity? Pope Francis in his wonderful apostolic letter *The Joy of the Gospel* comments on popular genuine forms of religiosity and commends them because they involve a personal relationship with God, with Christ, with Mary, with the saints. He adds that these devotions are fleshy, they have a face; they endure and help people keep contact with the Church.

I am reminded of examples of this type of devotion when I have been celebrating Mass and watched grandmothers take their grandchildren to Our Lady's statue in the church. Sometimes they light a candle in front of the statue, they say a prayer, they talk to their grandchild explaining who Mary is and how to ask her for what we need. I praise these grandmothers for their deep humanity and their profound way of handing on our Catholic faith to their grandchildren.

Pope Francis said there are many ways of approaching God. I remember the disdain I had for popular devotions soon after the Vatican Council when we were going to have people involved in scripture and up to date understanding of the Eucharist, and the sacraments, not to mention many more rational approaches to our faith.

But Pope Francis wrote that our challenge today is our need to respond adequately to many people's thirst for God. They are looking for a spirituality in the Church which can offer them healing and liberation and fill them with life and peace. They are trying to find their humanity.

Beauty and deep humanity can be found in the Church if our starting point is humility and respect for others.

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

Fighting bureaucracy

FR DERMOT CARTHY

Columban Fr Dermot Carthy who has been on mission in Peru since 1960 shares with us the story of his 25 year struggle with bureaucracy to build a new Church in the northern suburbs of Lima.

When I returned to Most Holy Redeemer Parish in 1989 I noticed how the population had grown. The fertile farmland was sprouting new homes. It was obvious sites for a new church and several chapels would be needed. By law, in Peru, 2% of the area for new housing must be left aside for "other needs". The Church can request the use of such spaces from the local municipality.

I spotted a very suitable site and set about getting it. Little did I guess it would take 25 years. The relevant authorities knew nothing about such land. Two years later the reason became clear. The housing cooperative which was developing the locality had never handed over the land. The group's president was trafficking in vacant sites and was trying to sell illegally the "other needs" ground. The residents finally succeeded in voting him out after 19 years. He kept his grip on power by suing or accusing anybody who questioned or opposed him. Accusing in the police station cost him little, but the accused usually had to pay a lawyer lest the matter got into the snail-paced courts.

The new officials of the cooperative supported my request and together we started on the red-tape paper work to have the site transferred to the municipality. However the new mayor was in the pay of the ex-president and the officials did not trust either the mayor or the municipal employees. The previous 19 years of payoffs had sown that problem.

Two years later I got permission to wall off the site. When work began on digging foundations, Mr X (a local powerbroker) paid some thugs to attack the workmen. Next day the mayor revoked the licence. Endless trips to the office of the oh-so-busy mayor and the repeated mantra of "come back next week", went on for two more years.

Finally a new mayor was elected who did agree to give the site. But first the cooperative's officials had to be convinced to sign over the land to the municipality. Their fear was he might hand it over to somebody else. Eighteen months later all was signed and sealed.

Then Mr X and friends took the matter to the courts to have the agreement annulled, with the mayor, the bishop and me as plaintiffs. I was the one who had to face the music in several hearings.



In the first court the decision was against us on the fragile grounds that the decree did not specify what the land was for. An appeal to a second court was in our favour. This in turn was appealed to the Supreme Court, which found in our favour. These legal details took only five years.

The next three years were full of tiring trips to municipal bureaucrats, some in the pay of our dear and expensive friends. Building permission was delayed time and again because the plan had to be corrected, or changed, or signed by an absent engineer. Once our address was put in a locality 20 miles away. This took three weeks to rectify. The paper work must have travelled from office to office on the back of a lame tortoise.

As the licence began to take shape Mr X began lodging complaints in different authorities around town. I was accused of trying to take over a public park, of destroying trees and damaging the ecology, of exceeding the area granted by the municipality, of having the support of only 20 people while he had 200 (forged) signatures rejecting the project.

At last work began with around-the-clock police protection. By law if a house or building site is taken over for 24 hours, all work must stop and only a court order can remove the



*After 25 years of struggle Fr Dermot's church has been completed.
Photos: Fr Dermot Carthy*

squatters. Remembering my five-year trip through three clogged courts, I decided it was better to employ off-duty police.

Three months later a municipal engineer stopped the work. Every week he kept on discovering flaws and gaps in the approved plans. Twelve weeks later he could not discover anymore and gave his approval.

After a whole year we finally inaugurated the 700-seater church. 1200 people attended and they liked the end result.

Eventually I hope to build on the site a parish residence and several meeting rooms for preparing children for First Communion, youths for Confirmation, couples for marriage and adult catechesis. Funds for most of this will come from the sale of the nearby 130-seater chapel and the collections of the parishioners which have been generous.

Sometime in the future this will become a parish, dividing the present one into two with a mere 45,000 people each. The main hitch in this scenario is that the 18 year-old diocese (cut off Lima Archdiocese) has a population of 2,700,000 and 103 priests, of whom over half are Columbans and other foreigners, most of whom were young 40 years ago.

Columbans have worked in this area since 1952, setting up half of the present parishes in this diocese. **Columban benefactors have been very generous over these years and for this we are truly grateful.**

Fr Dermot Carthy was ordained in 1959 and has ministered in Peru since 1960.





Time is running out

SR KATEIA KAIKAI

While dealing with climate change seems to be a low priority for some, urgency faces the small island countries of the Pacific.

Australians and New Zealanders are aware of the devastating effects of Cyclone PAM in March 2015 on Vanuatu. They are not so aware that some islands of Kiribati were also swamped by massive storm surges triggered by Pam. Much of the land is only two to three metres above sea level. The king tides washed over the sea wall on the lagoon side of Tarawa, the main island, flooding homes and infrastructure like the clinic in Betio and strewing them with coral debris. The government was forced to shut down the main causeway, linking Southern Tarawa to the island town of Betio. The lagoon is called Red Beach because of the killing of American soldiers there in WW II. Now the threat is from rising sea levels and more dangerous storms.

Wells, that the people previously could rely on for clean fresh water, have been further polluted by sea water because of pounding by five metre waves. Kiribati's residents battled to save livestock as flooding and winds caused further erosion. With few domestic rain water tanks

on Kiribati, many of the nation's over 110,000 inhabitants, along with livestock such as chickens and pigs raised for food, are now in desperate need of clean fresh water.

Sr Kateia Kaikai is a Marist Mission Sister from Kiribati who has been volunteering in the Columban Mission Institute's Centre for Peace, Ecology and Justice. After a recent trip home to Kiribati, she shared with The Far East her worries for the future of her homeland.

Here is her testimony:

"I fear for the future of my nephew and niece. Will there be anything of our unique culture for them to learn or to carry forward? What will their future be like?"

When I was home, I saw much evidence of changes taking place, affecting the landscape and lifestyle of the islands of South Tarawa where I grew up and did most of my high school education. At home, I could not collect shellfish as

I used to do, because they have been wiped out by coral bleaching. Nor did I see other children or women collecting shellfish out in the sea at low tide. Most of the men now set out fishing at early dawn and return by 11 am before the sun gets too hot. Sea level rise, coral bleaching and an increase in ocean temperatures are threatening our main sources of income and food security.

Life on Kiribati is getting tough. At first, the residents of Kiribati had a hard time accepting the fact that the oceans really are rising as a result of climate change. But with evidence and education they have been forced to and thankfully families in my community are becoming more resilient and innovative in finding creative ways to adapt.

Kiribati is known for a high rate of infant mortality, so parents are particularly careful to provide everyone with rain water or boiled ground water for drinking. My family spent money to install a water tank to collect rain water for drinking and cooking. An overhead tank with a water pump is used to collect water from a well to use for laundry, watering the garden and for the toilets and shower. Some neighbouring families also developed new ways to recycle leaves to retain water by creating banana circles.

However, most families in the community cannot afford tanks and pumps. As the sea level rises, residents of Kiribati crowd onto less and less land. It is predicted that by 2050 Kiribati will lose a third of its gross domestic product (GDP) and most parts of the islands will suffer sea level intrusion.

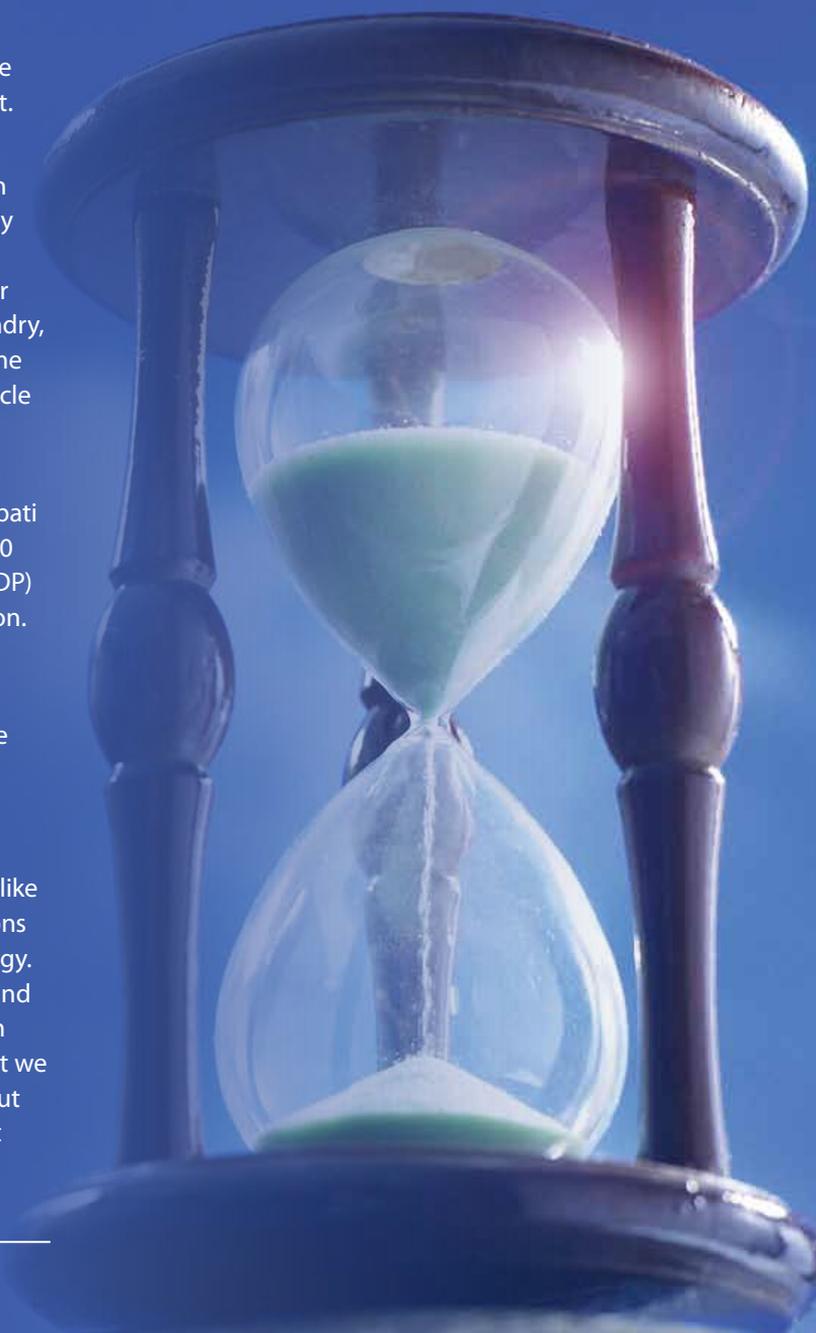
The people of Kiribati are the human faces of climate change and will possibly become the first island nation to lose their home and, along with it, their fragile culture and identity, their language and traditions that are tied so closely to their tiny atolls. But there is still hope that something can be done.

I would like to urge uncommitted developed countries, like Australia, Russia and India to join the allied United Nations to end the use of fossil fuels and turn to renewable energy. This is the most desirable action that will ensure a safe and promising future not just for Kiribati but for planet earth and the next generations who depend so much on what we do today. This is what I think Pope Francis will write about in his encyclical on Caring for Creation which will be out before the end of the year."

Sr Kateia Kaikai has finished her time at the Columban Mission Institute's Centre for Peace, Ecology and Justice.

“

But there is still hope that something can be done.





50th anniversary of ordination

The Far East magazine congratulates Columban Father Michael Gormly as he prepares to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.

He was ordained priest on the feast of SS Peter and Paul on the 29th of June, 1965 in the church of St Mary of the Angels, Wellington, New Zealand by Archbishop McKeefry, the Archbishop of Wellington.

Fr Michael is the son of Val and Mary Gormly, of Hataitai, Wellington, New Zealand. He had two sisters, one who married and the other became a Sister of Mercy.

During his 50 years of ministry as a missionary priest, Fr Michael has served the Lord and His people faithfully in many various capacities. After ordination, he was appointed to Korea where he served for 17 years as parish priest and Columban Superior in several dioceses.

Between 1984 and 1990, Fr Michael was reappointed back to the Columban Region of Australia and New Zealand, working in a variety of areas. After a period of study in 1983-84 in the United States, he worked in Mission Education in New Zealand and as a consultant to the National Mission Council in New Zealand.

In 1986, Fr Michael was appointed the Regional Director for the Columbans in Australia and New Zealand. Upon completing his term as Regional Director in 1990, he was appointed to Pakistan where he served until 1993. After Pakistan, Fr Michael returned to work in Mission Education in New Zealand. Between 1995 and 2000, he served as the Columban Coordinator for Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC), based at the Columban Mission Institute in Sydney. He was also the Convener for the Peace, Ecology and Justice Centre in Sydney.

In 2000, Fr Michael returned to New Zealand to continue his work in Mission Education and JPIC work. Since then he has worked in a variety of roles back at home in New Zealand. He has been the Columban Superior in New Zealand, whilst continuing his work in JPIC, Mission Education, Columban Promotion, Vocations, Fundraising and the on-going care of retired Columbans.

Congratulations to Fr Michael on these years of priestly ministry well spent in the service of the Lord and His people.



Remember the Missions in your WILL

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

A bequest will help Columban missionaries to continue their work with the poor and marginalised and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Why not speak to your lawyer about it?

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Niddrie Vic 3042
Tel: (03) 9375 9475
email: info@columban.org.au

Parish Priest in the driest place on earth

Columban Fr Mike Howe is parish priest of The Sacred Heart of Jesus parish in Alto Hospicio, in the Province of Iquique, Chile. It a city of 100,000 people and is the driest place on earth.

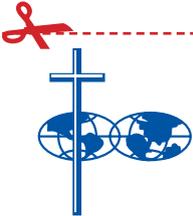
Fr Howe says, as parish community, our main task is to evangelize the people living in our parish. This means helping people have an encounter with Christ and reaching out in solidarity to help those most in need.

With your support, Fr Howe can continue to work with those most in need.

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: Chris Hochstetler



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