

# The Far East

COLUMBAN MISSION MAGAZINE

March 2016

**Easter on the dusty streets of Lima**

A Holy Week experience in Peru.

**Not without you**

Ministry to prostitutes in Korea.

**The monk on the bus**

Bus travel in Myanmar.



**ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY**

PRICE \$1.50

# The Far East

March 2016  
Vol 98, No. 2

THE FAR EAST is devoted to furthering the missionary apostolate of the church and has been published by the Missionary Society of St Columban since November/December 15, 1920.

THE SOCIETY was founded in 1918 as a society of secular priests dedicated to the evangelisation of the Chinese and other overseas people. It is an exclusively missionary society.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$15 per year (AUSTRALIA)

## AUSTRALIA

St Columban's Mission Society  
69 Woodland Street  
Essendon Vic 3040  
Postal address:  
PO Box 752, Niddrie Vic 3042  
Tel: (03) 9375 9475  
TFE@columban.org.au  
www.columban.org.au

## NEW ZEALAND

St Columban's Mission Society  
P.O. Box 30-017  
Lower Hutt 5040  
Tel: (04) 567 7216  
columban@iconz.co.nz  
www.columban.org.au

## Publisher:

Fr Gary Walker  
director@columban.org.au

## Editor:

Fr Dan Harding  
TFE@columban.org.au

## Editorial Assistant:

Jacqueline Russell  
TFE@columban.org.au

## Designer:

Assunta Scarpino  
ascarpino@columban.org.au

## Communications & Publications

### Director:

Mrs Janette Mentha  
jmentha@columban.org.au

Saint Columbans Mission Property  
Association A.B.N. 17 686 524 625  
Printed by Doran Printing, Melbourne

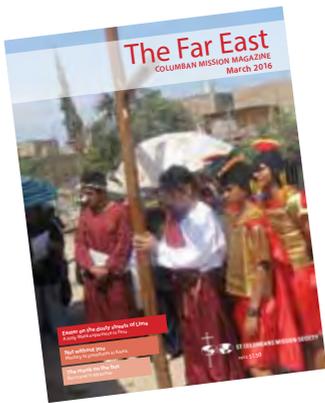


# Contents



- 3** From the Editor  
Walking with Jesus during Holy Week
- 4-5** Easter on the dusty streets of Lima
- 6-7** Rosa on Calvary  
Unlike Mary, Rosa was able to minister to her dying son.
- 8** Reflection - Why is that day called 'Good' Friday?
- 9** Reflection - Easter joy
- 10-11** Reflection - The Lord is Risen
- 12-13** Do you know my name?  
Homeless in Japan.
- 14-15** Not without you  
Ministry to prostitutes in Korea.
- 16** Mission World  
Mexico - Children missing in Veracruz
- 17** From the Director  
A new life in China?
- 18-19** The monk on the bus  
Bus travel in Myanmar.
- 20-21** Houses of horror  
Child detention centres in the Philippines.
- 22-23** 2015 Paris Climate Conference COP21  
People's power helps set a 1.5°C degree global warming ambition.
- 23** Your Columban Legacy





Parishioners celebrate the Way of the Cross liturgy on Good Friday through the dusty streets of Lima, Peru. (See story pages 4-5).

Photo: Fr George Hogarty SSC



# From the Editor

## Walking with Jesus during Holy Week

Last year during Holy Week, British couple Teresa and David Jackson, participated in the liturgical celebrations with the parishioners of a Columban parish in the poverty stricken northern suburbs of Lima, Peru. They walked the dusty streets of the parish on Good Friday with the parishioners and celebrated the joy of the resurrection with them at the Easter Vigil.

The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus became more real and immediate to the Jacksons as it becomes interwoven with the daily struggles of the people against the evils of inequality, discrimination, domestic violence, debt and corruption.

How will we walk with Jesus during Holy Week this year? How will our daily struggles become interwoven into the events of Holy Week? This issue of The Far East offers us many stories that can help us deepen our understanding of Holy Week and Easter.

Columban Fr Frank Hoare offers us a reflection from Fiji on Good Friday and Easter. Columban Fr William

Morton writes of our journey through Lent to Christ's Resurrection at Easter, with the offer of new life for us and for the world and what that means.

Columban Fr John Marley tells us about Rosa whose son died in a public hospital in Chile - her own personal Calvary.

Columban Fr Tim Mulroy gives us the story of a homeless man in Japan for whom it was very important that his name be known. Columban Sr Miriam Cousins tells us of her ministry over many years with women caught in prostitution in Korea. Columban Fr Shay Cullen describes for us the horror of child detention centres in the Philippines and the efforts made by the PREDA Foundation (*People's Recovery Empowerment Development Assistance*) to liberate and offer ongoing support for these children.

Learning to live in another culture can lead to much confusion and misunderstanding. The story of a monk on a bus in Myanmar clearly illustrates how this can happen. Finally there is some good news from the 2015 Parish Climate Conference where

people's power helped to set a limit of 1.5 degrees to global warming.

As we walk with Jesus during Holy Week this year, as we accompany Him in His Passion and in His Resurrection, let us remember those who struggle on a daily basis with poverty, illness, homelessness and various forms of imprisonment. Let us find ways to bring the new life that Easter brings into our world.

*Fr Daniel Harding*

Fr Daniel Harding  
TFE@columban.org.au



COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES

# Join Us...



Columban Missionary Priests  
'Crossing Boundaries'

For more information:  
[www.columban.org.au](http://www.columban.org.au)

The Way of the Cross liturgy on Good Friday in Lima, Peru.



Listen to: Easter on the dusty streets of Lima

# Easter on the dusty streets of Lima

TERESA & DAVID JACKSON

## A Holy Week experience

*Teresa and David Jackson from Britain are old friends of Columban Fr Ed O'Connell. Last year they fulfilled one of their great dreams by visiting him in his parish in Lima, Peru, during Holy Week.*

### **Initial Impressions**

There are many things that stood out for us when we first arrived in the week leading up to Holy Week in Fr Ed's parish, Nuestra Señora de la Misiones (*Our Lady of the Missions*), amongst the dusty streets of the northern suburbs of Lima. There was the sheer size of the parish, with its tens of thousands of parishioners, spread out over 12 chapels and served by a host of lay leaders and catechists, lay missionaries, religious and four priests. The parish is a community of communities.

Fr Ed told us that the parishioners continue to struggle against injustices and poverty on a daily basis, seeking a better life for their children. The lives of the parishioners are hard, marked by all kinds of deprivations. "Take away with you a memory of the great dignity of the poor," one of the resident priests, Columban Fr John Hegerty, told us. At our first Eucharist the quality of the people's faith was evident, expressed in joyful music sung with great enthusiasm.



On a visit to the different chapels, we noticed the large number of posters on the walls, that sum up how our faith is to be lived. One read, *"Disciples and Missionaries"*. We commented to the local people, *"You got that from Pope Francis"*. *"No"*, they replied, *"our lived faith here is where the Pope gets it from!"* We found a Church with dusty, bruised feet of the streets, a field-hospital of compassion and mercy which Pope Francis talks about. The parish was beginning to weave its magic on us.

The level of pastoral planning in all the chapels really stood out for us. Lay people, called Pastoral Agents, young and old men and women, meet regularly to share the Gospel and plan sacramental and liturgical formation and activities. All this underpins the detailed work of building communities, in which laity and priests share responsibility in each chapel.

## Holy Week

On **Palm Sunday** we joined the people of one chapel in a dusty football park and walked and sang our way in procession to the chapel of *"The Black Virgin"*. People burst into applause at the end of the Gospel reading. It was as if Christ, the Word, had just entered the chapel in person! Then the liberal distribution of holy water, from three-litre plastic bottles, soaking the enthusiastic congregation to great applause and laughter.

On **Maundy Thursday** we joined a group of parishioners for the annual walk, organized by young people, around the 12 chapels. Each chapel community provided prayers, testimonies, food and drink. One young boy spoke of how he had been supported by the community after having had to leave his family and an alcoholic father. He'd been healed by the resurrected Body of Christ and by a community on the move, young and old, men and women whose faith is practical, shared, enjoyed and celebrated. Behind it lay the careful planning, allocation of tasks, assessment and formation - the slow, deliberate building of a 'communion of communities'.

We then attended the Maundy Thursday Eucharist in one of the chapels. Here 12 parishioners washed the feet of 12 others in a sign of mutual Christ-like service.

On **Good Friday** we joined three different chapel communities walking the *Way of the Cross*. Processions threaded through the unpaved streets for prayers at the homes of parishioners. The prayer themes were taken from

the lives of folk facing the long-embedded issues of poverty in these self-made settlements of the city - lack of health care, debt, child abuse, inequality and abuse of women, political corruption, denial of human rights, brutality and poverty itself. In moving symbolism the words were nailed to the cross. Jesus had died opposing these evils. The people in this His Resurrected Body continue the fight in his name.

On Saturday morning, the community leaders and those responsible for the catechetical programs of the twelve chapels, met to review the Holy Week liturgies so far and to plan the next steps in pastoral development.

Then on to the great **Easter Vigil celebration** on Saturday night with the lighting of the Paschal candle, baptismal promises and the story of the Resurrection celebrated afterwards with music and dancing in the chapel's dusty courtyard. Our journey ended with a Holy Hour, organised by the youth leaders of the communities in the St Martin de Porres Youth Formation Centre - a time for reflection with Christ.

## Final Thoughts

Looking back, what did we find in Lima? A Columban community since 1952 in Peru that is worth its weight in gold. During those years, it has developed many parishes, communities, a special needs school, women and children's centres, clinics and churches. Long ago Pizarro demanded that Atahualpa, the last Inca king, be ransomed by his people supplying a room full of gold. Here Columbans provide 'rooms' which the people are filling with the community gold of their joyful love of God.

Thanks to the dignified parishioners of Lima and the work of the Columban community there.

*"Happy the people who acclaim such a King, Who walk, O Lord, in the light of your face, Who find their joy every day in your name, Who make your justice the source of their bliss."*  
(Psalm 88)





Photo: Missionary Society of St Columban

# Rosa on Calvary

FR JOHN MARLEY

Unlike Mary, Rosa was able to minister to her dying son

*"Blessed are they, who mourn, they will be comforted" (Matthew 5: 4)*

I had just finished lunch when I got an urgent request from Rosa to visit her son Alex who was ill in the hospital.

At the time I was in charge of a sprawling parish on the outskirts of Santiago, Chile, and Rosa was the leader of the newest and smallest of the seven Catholic communities under my care.

Her community consisted of twenty-five families, the poorest of the poor. They knew they could become homeless at any given moment, because they were squatters who had built their little wooden homes on farmland to which they had no title. Moving their house would be no great problem. They could dismantle it and re-assemble it again in half a day. The problem would be finding a place to locate.

Rosa was a born leader who had organized the 25 families into a self-help community. The women held monthly meetings, in a different home each month, to plan how to raise funds for the needy days of winter when their sons and husbands would have no work on the land.

When I first met them, I realized they also wanted to be true to their Catholic faith, so we organized a second monthly meeting devoted to reading the Bible, and sharing how they tried to put their faith into practice in daily life. Rosa again showed herself to be a leader in this reflection, as she shared how she saw the hand of God in her life from her troubled childhood to the present day. At this time Rosa was married, with four children. Alex, her oldest son, was about 22 years of age.

When I received Rosa's request to visit her son Alex in the hospital, I got the Holy Oils and took the bus to the hospital in downtown Santiago.

“

*I was able to feed my son, to ease his pain and discomfort, to hold his hand as he passed from life to death."*

*"These are the things our Blessed Mother was not able to do for her Son, as she watched Him die. So I feel privileged that God has given me these memories to ease the pain."*



When I got to the hospital, there seemed to be confusion about where Alex was located, but eventually a nurse led me down a long corridor to a quiet part of the hospital where Alex was alone in a little room, apparently in quarantine.

Rosa's message had said that Alex was suffering from pneumonia. When I saw him he seemed to be in a deep sleep, but I soon realized, on speaking with the nurse, that Alex was not only very ill. He was dying.

Rosa soon joined me in the hospital. She prayed with me while I administered the Sacrament of the Sick, and afterwards I was able to observe how she, as a mother, ministered to the needs of her dying son.

She spoon-fed him when he was able to swallow. She moistened his dry lips. She cooled his fevered brow with a damp cloth, and always had gentle words to soothe him when he became agitated or restless.

This continued for another three days, until Alex finally breathed his last.

I was there with the family for the prayers at the moment of death, and Rosa concluded the ceremony with a farewell kiss for her dying son.

The wake at their little home was traumatic, and I recall Alex's younger brother tearfully beating on the casket with his bare hands as if he hoped to wake his brother from the sleep of death.

The next day the whole community travelled to the cemetery, where Alex's casket was sealed in its niche, in the customary form of interment in Chile.

I wondered what I could say to Rosa afterwards, in an effort to console her in her great loss. She must have sensed my uneasiness, for she smiled gently and said to me: *"Father, I don't need to be consoled. God has been very good to me. I have been with my son Alex for the past week, and have been able to care for him in a way that I have not been able to do since he was a baby. I was able to feed him, to ease his pain and discomfort, to hold his hand as he passed from life to death".*

*"These are the things our Blessed Mother was not able to do for her Son, as she watched Him die. So I feel privileged that God has given me these memories to ease the pain".*

I feel privileged to have known Rosa, to have been enriched by her faith, and to have learned from her that love, for all its fragility, can overcome any pain, even death itself.

---

*Columban Fr John Marley lives in Ireland. He previously served in Chile as a missionary.*

# Why is that day called 'Good' Friday?

FR FRANK HOARE

*I*n my early days as a missionary in Fiji, I worked mainly among the Hindu Indo-Fijians around the town of Labasa. I was often invited by head teachers of primary schools to explain to their students the meaning of 'Good' Friday and Easter Monday, since both were public holidays. I gladly availed of these opportunities to share my faith and understanding of the meaning of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I used to take along to the schools a scroll of large pictures depicting scenes of the life of Christ. It contained pictures of the trial of Jesus, his carrying the cross and his crucifixion. I used these pictures to help illustrate the opposition to Jesus, the unjust accusations against him, the sentence of death and the suffering he endured. I also explained how he forgave his tormentors and promised paradise to the repentant thief.

After my presentation in one particular school, the teacher asked the children if anyone had a question. One boy put up his hand and asked, "Why is the day on which Jesus was killed called 'Good' Friday? Surely it was a 'Bad' Friday." I remember being struck by the question. I had never heard it asked before, nor had I ever asked it of myself.

I realized then that the boy was asking the question out of his own Hindu religious background. Hindus believe that the world goes through four epochs repeatedly. The first epoch, Satya Yuga is when truth and virtue rule and people live righteously. In the second epoch there is some decline. The world then consists of three quarters virtue and one quarter vice. In the third epoch, sin and virtue reign equally in the world. The fourth era, Kali Yuga, is so corrupt and vile that a divine being is born in the world to abolish wickedness by destroying all sinful people. The cycle then begins again. For my young questioner, if Jesus was God in human form he should have been powerful enough to restore righteousness by destroying his wicked enemies.

I answered the boy by saying that although Jesus was all powerful as God, he loved everyone even sinners, even those evil men who crucified him. He didn't want to destroy them but to win them over with his love. Instead of annihilating them he prayed that their evil deeds would be forgiven and that accepting his forgiveness, they too, like the repentant thief, would be given a place in God's Kingdom. Jesus wanted to overcome violence by non-violence (as Gandhi did afterwards) and to overcome evil and sin with love. And the sign that this actually happened was that God raised Jesus from the dead on Easter Sunday morning. This shows that Jesus has conquered sin and death, our great enemies. So we Christians call that day 'Good' Friday because we see revealed there the supreme goodness and extraordinary love of God and God's offer of salvation to all people through forgiveness of their sins.

I don't know if my explanation of the meaning of Good Friday made sense to that young boy, but his question certainly made me think more deeply about my faith.

---

*Columban Fr Frank Hoare first went to Fiji in 1973.*



# Easter joy

FR FRANK HOARE



## Life marred by death

The eggs that hens lay on Good Friday are collected in Ireland and marked with a cross. On Easter Sunday morning these eggs are boiled and eaten by the family. Eggs are a staple food of the poor.

We rejoice in the great gift of life. But as we grow older this gift is overshadowed by experiences of illness, pain, and loss. The certainty of an ever-approaching death often makes life itself seem meaningless.

Billions of Indian people have prayed for over 5,000 years – *“Lord, lead us from falsehood to truth; from darkness to light; and from death to eternal life.”* That heart-felt cry resounds in all people who recoil at the prospect of annihilation while being helpless to do anything about it.

## God reaching out to us in Jesus

God in Jesus Christ has wonderfully answered this prayer. Jesus, moved by the Spirit, inaugurated the Kingdom of God by healing, casting out evil spirits, calling all to conversion and offering forgiveness and the fellowship of love to all who believed his message. He surrendered to God’s will in all things. He endured the opposition of his religious leaders, physical suffering, loneliness and even the sense of being abandoned by his Abba as he was dying.

Jesus lived and died in solidarity with all of us humans. He rose above our human nature in forgiving and loving those who killed him and in being raised from the dead by God. He broke the power of death by enduring it and then conquering it. Jesus was raised to a new and eternal life and offered all who believe this amazing grace too.

## The effects of Easter on the Disciples

Women were the first witnesses of this cosmic miracle. Their incredible message caused Peter and John to race to the empty tomb. Mary Magdalen wanted to cling

to her beloved Lord. Thomas refused to believe without certain proof. The apostles were paralyzed with fear and doubt until Jesus showed he wasn’t a ghost. Initially some did not recognize him but the experience of their encounter with the resurrected Christ changed them completely. They became new people. They found a new life.

The Risen Jesus brought peace, forgiveness and a new creation. This was an incredible experience of God’s love. It was a new covenant written on the heart. The joy and wonder of it all could only find expression in a mission to share this hope and love with others.

So is it any wonder that Irish people see in the egg a symbol of new life, gifted by Jesus on Good Friday and offered in all its fullness to us on Easter Sunday.

---

*Columban Fr Frank Hoare first went to Fiji in 1973.*



# The Lord is Risen

Our Lenten journey is coming to an end. Our feet are being washed, we are sharing the bread, we are walking with our weary Lord the bloody steps to Calvary. Did we really shout 'Crucify him!?' We did. And our sins are laid bare. By his stripes we are healed. By his wounds we are made whole. By his dying we are reborn.

*"As Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glorious power, we too should begin living a new life". (Romans 6:4)*

The uneasy prayers before Saturday's still quiet tomb give ample space to reflect on our imperfect Lenten project. No, we cannot save ourselves. Virtue, discipline, heroic self-sacrifice, nothing will ever be enough. And, yet, our prayer, penance and works of charity have nurtured our hope that a new world and a new life are possible.

The Easter Vigil bids us come, now, and listen to the lengthy narrative that recounts the history of God's saving interruption of the human saga. While we were yet sinners, strangers, far from God, God loved us. We fidget and fuss in our seats until our impatient sighs are finally sung into "Alleluia! The Lord is Risen!" God's love is more powerful than sin, suffering, and every form of evil the human heart can contrive, even death itself.

And now the candidates come forth - across the globe, thousands - to die and be reborn in the waters of regeneration. In those communities where baptism takes place by immersion, we view brothers and sisters being submerged into the holy waters, and rising up, gasping for air, water cascading from their faces, to the applause and approval of the gathered assembly. Lest we become too giddy, Paul sternly reminds us: "You cannot have forgotten that all of us, when we were baptized into Christ

*Jesus, were baptized into his death. So by our baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glorious power, we too should begin living a new life". (Romans 6:3-4)*

In our Lenten Journey, we are humbled to realize that we have come to the Lord's house as strangers, wanderers in rags, hands outstretched and hearts broken, to receive the Father's forgiving embrace. Now, in our Easter joy, we are honoured, as God's sons and daughters, restored and forgiven, walking in the light, together, called to move forward the work of God's Kingdom.

This annual celebration of the Paschal Mystery, flows over us in the waters of baptism, washes away our lust for self justification, forgives our sins and pours into us the new life of sanctifying grace. And we are new creatures, our lives are not our own. We are disciples, missionaries, ambassadors, servants, called to go forth and proclaim the Good News of God's saving love to all.

And our preaching will not just be in words. We who have intimately experienced the generosity of God's mercy and kindness, will love others as God has loved us. We welcome the poor and the stranger. We share our bread with the hungry. We see Christ in the poor and the vulnerable and say, "Be not afraid. I am with you. I will walk with you into the house of the Lord. The God who made us both has sent me to be with you. God has overcome sin and death. The Lord is Risen. And he walks with us. Be not afraid. You are not alone".

---

*Columban Fr Bill Morton works at the Columban Mission Centre, in El Paso, Texas, USA.*





# Do you know my name?

FR TIM MULROY

## *Homeless in Japan*

*H*e was another homeless man who had found himself a place to sleep alongside 10 or 15 others in the underground walkway of Fujisawa train station. After 10:00pm, when the station had grown quiet, these men used to set out their mats and settle down for the night. Before they fell asleep, however, a small group of us, drawn from the membership of several Christian churches, provided them with hot tea, rice cakes and warm blankets. We also used to spend a few moments chatting with each of them.

One night after I had exchanged greetings with one of these men, he looked me straight in the eye and asked, "Do you know my name?" His question surprised me.

"No, I don't", I replied sheepishly. Then I started wondering to myself, as the only non-Japanese person in this group of volunteers, why is he asking me this question? Why does he seem more concerned about his name than about the hot tea and rice cakes I am offering him? However, he just stood there looking at me. Then he said gently, "My name is Honda. Can you remember it? Please don't forget it".

In that very moment, it was as a window opened in my mind, and I no longer saw this man simply as another homeless person, but rather as a unique human being who longed to be recognised and called by his name: Mr Honda. Living as a homeless man who had already lost his job, his home and his family, the threat of losing even his name

“

*As I tried to grasp this sad news, suddenly I got a glimpse of the immense joy that Mr Honda must have felt when God called him by his name and led him home.*

must have felt like the loss of his very self. He was in grave danger of becoming a 'nobody'.

In that moment I realised that for Mr Honda, being called by his name was much more important than hot tea and rice cakes. I quickly reassured him that I would remember his name, and after I had said goodnight to him I promised myself that from then on I would always greet him as Mr Honda. My heart was still full of the emotion of that encounter as I returned to the church around midnight.

The next morning, as I entered the parish office, the parish administrator looked unusually serious. "What's up?" I inquired. His response was slow and deliberate. "Remember the homeless man with whom you had a long chat at the

*station last night?" "Yes", I responded, "Mr Honda". Then he continued, "Late last night he became ill and was rushed to the local hospital. He died there a short time ago".*

As I tried to grasp this sad news, suddenly I got a glimpse of the immense joy that Mr Honda must have felt when God called him by his name and led him home.

---

*Columban Fr Tim Mulroy served in Japan for many years and is currently the Columban Director of the United States Region.*



*You will surely go to Heaven".  
"Not without you," I answered,  
"I won't go to Heaven alone".*

# Not without you

## *Ministry to prostitutes in Korea*

*If I were to describe my 12 years ministering to prostitutes, I would have to say I felt truly powerless on the one hand and deeply aware of God's presence on the other. God's love and compassion seemed very much alive in that dark and pain-filled world. Sometimes I could almost feel God's tear as I looked into the eyes of someone not much more than a child waiting.*

The area I visited in downtown Seoul had nearly 200 brothels with around 1,500 young women working in them. Cut off from the outside world, there were big notices forbidding anyone under 18 years to enter. The streets were too narrow for any kind of transport which meant that when walking past the brothels you were very close to the girls. They were sitting in what only can be described as large shop windows, right on the narrow streets. The French doors were always fully open even in the cold of winter.

I used to visit every evening. I will never forget my very first visit to the area. Embarrassed, uneasy and even ashamed, I wanted to run away. Looking at ranks of young girls sitting in neat rows, waiting for some man to come in and pick them out from their companions, to take them into a back room and there to do as they pleased with them was horrifying. I knew from the beginning that I was not welcome. On the third night I was questioned by three different people in that notorious red-light district. I thought, 'They're on to me'. They had to be the men, maybe pimps, on the lookout for intruders and no doubt I fitted that category. But I also felt that the only thing to do was to take the bull by the horns and go again the next evening even though my legs were shaking. But nobody stopped me and I never again got the feeling I was being followed. In fact sometimes if a customer annoyed me the girls immediately came to my rescue. As I got into things and became accepted, I sometimes sat with the girls as they waited for the men. On more than one occasion a customer pointed me out, in spite of my greying hair and dowdy dress. The girls would immediately shout, "No! No! You can't have her!"

From the beginning I decided that the best way to carry out this ministry was to go alone. I did not want to be a threat to anyone. My vulnerability made contacts easier. At first I just went around and said hello to the young girls sitting in neat rows behind the large French doors under a blaze of neon



*Sr Miriam Cousins out on the streets.*



lights. There was also a Madam out on the street doing her best to get the men, who were usually in groups, to come into their brothel before the next door Madam took over. There was an on going competition between them.

The young girls were not what is usually thought of as a prostitute - scantily dressed with heavy makeup, bold and unafraid, walking the street and trying to attract any male who happened to walk past. In these brothels the girls were dressed to give the impression of innocent, docile, obedient young ladies. In those days many of them dressed in white gowns which looked more like wedding dresses. People often say that prostitution is a free choice. I think a lot depends on what you mean by freely chosen. Many of these young girls came from broken or abusive families. One girl told me of how she was gang raped. She was one of the few who went to the police. When her family heard she had gone to the police they totally rejected her. She was sent away and with no place to go and ended up in a brothel.

Many were teenagers who had run away from home; they went looking for work in job centres which were often only a front for pimps. The staff there gave the girls large sums of money to buy some new clothes and make-up and come back in a few days. They were then caught in a web, unable to break free.

And so there was I, in this hellish place, like some kind of mad woman saying 'Hello' to this most uninterested group of women, as I walked slowly past one brightly lit brothel after another. It was some time before anyone answered my greeting. But it came like Christ and with Christmas.

Slowly more and more people began to accept me and even look forward to my coming. I would sit chatting with a group of Madams; they knew I was not there to exploit them, that I had great respect for the girls, that I did not judge them. In some cases I was even welcomed into the brothel where I would sit with the girls who were waiting for their customers. But I knew that the owner was watching my every move through a one-way glass window. I hoped to give the girls my phone number and invite them to the small shelter I had set up for those who wished to come. Usually only those who had courage to leave the brothel came, and not without risk. One night a girl ran out to me and asked if I would teach her English. This was an opportunity I could not miss. "Of course," I said and invited



*Madam's post outside on the street.*

her to come to the small shelter where I lived in community with girls like her, all hoping for a way out of prostitution. She came and when I told her she was welcome to stay she was so surprised, she could not believe it was really happening to her. We were able to help her recover her true self and then get her a job and a new beginning in life.

I was probably a good while in the area when some of the women started calling me Angel. "Here comes the Angel," they would say. One evening one of them said, "You will surely go to Heaven". "Not without you," I answered, "I won't go to Heaven alone". I hope she remembers these words. They came from my heart.

---

*Columban Sr Miriam Cousins has been on mission in Korea for almost 40 years. She has been honoured by the Korean Government for her work with HIV/AIDS patients.*



# 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.*

## Mexico - Children missing in Veracruz

*People do not report them for fear of organized crime*

*"There are many cases of kidnapping. First there was talk of 50 but it seems that at least 400 have disappeared. But most of their families have not reported the kidnappings for fear",* said the father of one of the missing children, victims of drug trafficking and organized crime.

Relatives of victims of the missing children gathered at the Virgen del Carmen Parish in early February to take part in a Mass celebrated by the Bishop of Veracruz, His Exc. Mgr. Luis Felipe Gallardo Martín del Campo, S.D.B. The Church has become the only point of reference for many families in search of faith and hope.

Mgr. Gallardo Martín del Campo read the list of the 23 missing persons from the local area in recent weeks. *"Some time ago it was known that the armed gang of guerrillas in*

*Sierra Guerrero enlisted people by force. Now the fact that drug trafficking and organized crime have entered into our society there is no control, the justice system has been destroyed, there is violence everywhere. And now the authorities do not know how to stop the problem",* reported the Bishop.

*"Not even the Church is free of this violence" continued the Bishop. "We have had more than five cases of abductions, with priests kidnapped and then released in the middle of the fields, simply to steal their car. Two seminarians were kidnapped but luckily found. Our parishes have to deal with robberies and extortions on a daily basis".*

*Agencia Fides - Information Service of the Pontifical Mission Society - February 6, 2016*

## Mission Intention for March

That those Christians who, on account of their faith, are discriminated against or are being persecuted, may remain strong and faithful to the Gospel, thanks to the incessant prayer of the Church.



# From the Director

## A new life in China?

Easter is the most important feast day in the Catholic calendar and people in all parts of the world will celebrate the belief that death is conquered by Jesus Christ.

There will be sadness in the Middle East where so many Christians will be unable to celebrate this important feast. These are the people who have endured the scourges of war, lack of food and water, sickness, anxiety and becoming 'collateral damage' over which they have no control.

Whilst there does not seem to be any resolution to the Middle East crisis, good news seems to be on the horizon for the Chinese Catholic Church. There are whispers abroad that the Chinese government and the Vatican may end years of official silence by resuming diplomatic relations more than 60 years after the Pope's representative, the Papal Nuncio, left Beijing in 1952. It will not happen in time for Easter this year, but it will be wonderful when it does happen.

There is even speculation that Pope Francis may visit China in 2017. Such a visit would be historic - the Pope travelling to China has never happened before.

The Pope's interest in improving relations with China is significant for Columbans as the Society's first mission was in China almost 100 years ago. Today we have missionaries in China who work in limited capacities; how good it would be if they were free to evangelise without restriction.

In round figures, four million Catholics are enrolled in the Chinese Patriotic Association and 16 million followers in the 'underground Church' outlawed and subversive because it has always been loyal to Rome. They have all suffered for their faith and the day when the whole Church in China may pray together is hopefully not far away.

On January 28, Pope Francis gave an extraordinary interview to Francesco Sisci, China Renmin University senior researcher and an Asia Times columnist. It seems significant that the interview took place in a Vatican hall decorated with a painting of *Holy Mary, Undoer of Knots*, in which she performs the miracle of untying impossible knots.

*The Pope's interest in improving relations with China is significant for Columbans as the Society's first mission was in China almost 100 years ago.*

In the interview, Pope Francis said that China had always been a reference point of greatness, and more than that, a great culture with an inexhaustible wisdom. Even as a boy, the Pope was inspired to read anything about the country. He added that the Chinese people were in a positive moment and we should not be afraid of China.

The Pope sent Chinese New Year greetings to the Chinese people and to President Xi Jinping, for the lunar New Year. He is the first Pope to do so in 2000 years.

Time might heal some wounds but obviously this is difficult. People did not choose their faith over loyalty to the government even though the government sees it that way. A chance for peace and reconciliation.

What a gift of new life!

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

# The Monk on the bus

FR JEHOON AUGUSTINE LEE

## *Bus travel in Myanmar*

*A*lmost six months ago I arrived in Yangon to begin my mission assignment. During these past six months so many things have happened to me, or have happened around me, that I haven't always been able to understand. My lack of understanding is no doubt due to not being that familiar with the culture, language, and the way of life here in Myanmar. On a daily basis I still learn new things about the culture and language. Most of these things I learn just come from daily happenings, as well as my own mistakes and misunderstandings.

I would like to share one of these experiences, to show how even a simple misunderstanding can be an opportunity to gain some cultural learning.

A couple of weeks after I came to Myanmar I started Burmese language study. At the beginning the easiest way to get to my classes was by using a taxi. After a few weeks, I had gained a little confidence and worked up the courage to try to take a bus, even though I could not speak and read Burmese properly. So, one day, I got on a bus to get back home from school. It was my first time ever taking a bus in this country.

Getting on and off the bus wasn't a problem, thankfully. The process was pretty simple and straight forward. I continued taking the bus either going to school or getting back home. Even better, as I discovered, taking the bus seemed faster than taking a taxi and is almost 15 times cheaper than the taxi! However, this doesn't mean that everything has always gone smoothly on the buses!

I usually take a seat on the bus whenever possible. One day the bus was not packed with people, so I took a seat. After a few more stops and several more people getting on, the bus slowly became a little crowded. Since I had a seat, I did not mind whether or not it was packed. I was comfortable enough. The only problem was that I got the seat right behind the driver and soon discovered that a young Buddhist monk was standing right next to me.

To be honest, I had no idea that the seat I was sitting in was reserved for the Buddhist monks. I saw that there was a small sign written in Burmese near the seat, but I did not understand it at that time. Thus, I kept on sitting in my seat, reading and looking at my school handouts in Burmese.

All of a sudden, people on the bus started talking loudly to each other. I did not realize that they were talking to me. Finally, one man who was standing came to me and said something in Burmese. I did not understand what he was trying to say... but I got some sense that whatever he was saying didn't seem too pleasant. I sensed that he was insinuating that I had to give up my seat for the young monk.

Even though I had that sense, to be honest I did not feel like giving him my seat! I was presuming that even if I stood up, the young monk might not accept my offer, as he seemed too young to take someone's seat. In addition, I was thinking that he might feel embarrassed if I give up the seat for him! All of these thoughts came to me at once. So I made up my mind to just remain in my seat.

Unfortunately, this only seemed to outrage the passengers even more. One old lady was even yelling at me. So I spoke to her in my broken Burmese, *"I am not Burmese, I do not understand what you are talking about. So please, speak slowly"*. All the people were looking at me and became very quiet. Then, I saw that one older man who was sitting finally stood up and dragged the monk to his seat.

As it happened it was just about the time that I had to get off the bus, anyway. When I got off, it seems like all people on the bus were glaring at me with angry looks on their faces. I was a bit embarrassed but I headed out to school.

In my class, I talked to my teacher about what happened to me on the bus. My teacher was laughing and then explained this facet of Myanmar culture. She said that Buddhism is of deep importance all throughout Myanmar. It is common courtesy to show monks great respect. If you have a seat on a crowded bus, you must give it up to a monk should one board. And she added that women are never to touch monks and never sit next to monks in this country.

Listening to my teacher, I ended up feeling a little bad. I felt that what happened to me on the bus, perhaps, showed a sign of disrespect to the culture, and this was never my intention. And I have to admit that I also felt some anxiety thinking about what else I did not know about the culture. This led me to do some personal reflection on my own indifference and ignorance of this culture.



I know there are always many different kinds of challenges no matter where in the world we are, and we are called to 'face the music' wherever we are. Each place we go has its own people, culture, language, food and major religion.

I hope to keep learning about Myanmar and expect to continue to make constant discoveries about the culture. These learnings might even come from making some more mistakes. But the fact is that I live in this culture now, and I am called to face the reality of what that means and demands of me. What's important is for me to control myself and face these challenges that come ultimately from deep within my own self.

---

*Columban Fr Jehoon Augustine Lee from Korea is part of the new Columban mission team in Myanmar.*

“

*Even though I had that sense, to be honest I did not feel like giving him my seat!*



# Houses of horror

FR SHAY CULLEN

## *Child detention centres in the Philippines.*

'Houses of horror' is how one visitor described the centres where children are held illegally behind bars or in cages.

Senior Philippine officials responsible for the protection of Filipino children at risk made spot inspections of four child detention centres around Manila following a series of negative reports in the foreign media. The officials representing various government agencies were shocked and greatly disturbed when they saw the terrible conditions of the jailed children behind bars in these detention centres run by local government agencies. The national government has limited jurisdiction over them.

In one centre children are held in these conditions from three months to over one year and nine months. The cells for boys are overcrowded. In another detention centre there is only one social worker to handle the 43 cases. In three centres the children were in prison cells behind bars. In one jail a child looked as young as six years old.

All the children in another centre were barefooted walking on wet floors. One little girl had swollen feet. The children

interviewed told the team that they just do cleaning and food preparation all day. Some of the children were mentally challenged and in need of special care. A mentally challenged old lady was in with the children in one centre.

The fact-finding teams saw that the children suffered 24 hours of confinement with no sunlight exposure. There was bad ventilation and dirty toilets and the smell of urine pervaded the place. The investigators asked for the case studies and social workers' reports, files or records of the children. There were hardly any! Many children were unidentified and without birth certificates and no effort had been taken to find parents or relatives. One child was found to be eight years old.

The government spot inspections were made over a period of two days. They saw the abusive conditions of dirty, smelly toilets, young boys and girls mixed with older youth, wearing dirty clothes, unwashed and caged behind steel bars and others like criminals in rooms like mesh cages.

They saw children lying and sleeping on concrete floors. Most centres were lacking beds, sleeping mats and



*They saw children lying and sleeping on concrete floors.*

mosquito nets. Food was eaten sitting on the floor.

The floors and walls were dirty and one was covered with graffiti. There were no programmes for psychological healing, therapy, education, physical exercise, games, books or any mental stimulation. Some children have been sexually abused by the older youth in the detention centres. One girl was sexually assaulted in the Marikina youth centre by a male guard. A criminal case is now in court but this guard still works at the centre and has control over the other children. How can it be allowed to happen?

Young girls who are victims of serious crimes such as sexual abuse, exploitation and human trafficking are locked up in centres all over Manila and elsewhere as if they were criminals instead of victims. They are easy prey for guards and police to be sexually exploited again.

The girls held in separate cells receive no therapy or healing. Many are returned to their pimps and abusers since the sex industry is tolerated and sex bars and brothels are permitted to operate with a city permit signed by the mayor.

The fact-finding team was made up of senior representatives of a number of social welfare agencies including the PREDA Foundation which was founded in 1974. The PREDA Foundation promotes the human rights and dignity of the Filipino people, especially women and children. Its main focus is to assist sexually exploited and abused children. PREDA stands for 'People's Recovery Empowerment Development Assistance.'

PREDA runs a number of homes for rescued children, offering them legal support, educational opportunities, therapy and health care.

---

*Columban Fr Shay Cullen SSC has been a missionary in the Philippines since 1969. In 1974 he founded the PREDA foundation.*

# 2015 Paris Climate Conference COP21

*People's power helps set a 1.5°C degree global warming ambition.*



*T*he Paris Agreement to counter Global Warming was announced by 196 nations on December 12, 2015. Its language has changed from merely limiting a global average temperature rise to 2°C degrees by setting a 1.5°C ambition. I am sure God smiled.

Addressing about 400 mainly Christians gathered at the hall of the Basilica of Saint-Denis, Cardinal Hummes of Brazil delivered a strong statement on the integral link between faith in God and human action to address the challenge of climate change. He quoted liberally from Pope Francis on the need to love and care for the earth as our common

home. His encyclical ***Laudato Si'*** has been a game changer.

Significantly he gave voice to the combined call by faith based and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from over 90 countries for actions to limit global average temperature 1.5°C. This ambition has mainly developed in Third World countries which are already experiencing the impact on their lives of global warming. The island homes of many peoples in the Pacific and Indian Oceans are being made uninhabitable by just a small rise in sea levels. Huge river delta populations from Vietnam to Nigeria are under threat by flooding from

the sea, fearful for their children and growing angry.

The People's Call to World Leaders to limit the rise in the global average temperature to 1.5°C did not come out of nowhere. The People's Call was organised. Since Easter last year multiple 'People's Pilgrimages' have left Ecuador, Vietnam, the Philippines, Pakistan, Africa, Canada, the United States, England and many counties in mainland Europe headed for Paris to make their voice heard.

A petition for climate justice signed by 1,780,528 people in a few months was handed to Christina Figueres, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention

Photo: rrodickbeiler/Bigstock.com

on Climate Change, by Anglican Archbishop Thabo Makgoba from Cape Town, South Africa. She wept. In her response she elaborated on the four letters on the word **WALK**: eliminate **Waste** in human consumption patterns, **Affirm** that action must be taken, **Love** the planet and all who live on it, **Know** what scientists are saying about climate impacts if humanity does nothing.

Faith based groups have helped change the conversation about the climate challenge. The new emphasis in the teaching of local bishops has been important and the Australian Bishops' *Catholic Earthcare Australia*

*organisation* was cited with praise. The Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM) has pulled together groups from many languages. It was started just last January by young social media savvy Catholics. Their ease with the power of the media was apparent as they cut across old established lines. Disparate groups including Franciscan, Jesuit, Caritas, Columban and others met in Paris with common cause at GCCM's invitation.

The powerful place of prayer and fasting around the climate challenge was apparent in Paris. The Pope's call was heard loud and clear at an ecumenical service led in Notre Dame

Cathedral by the Cardinal Vingt-Trois of Paris. The need for an ongoing Catholic response was recognised at a GCCM meeting as it cited Columban Fr Sean McDonagh's call for a three year Synod on the environment and celebration of a September Season of Creation in the church's liturgical year. COP21 Paris showed that people of faith who love Earth as our common home can be a powerful force for good.

---

*Columban Fr Charles Rue is a member of PEJ (Peace Ecology & Justice Centre) at the Columban Mission Institute in Sydney, Australia. He went to Paris in December 2015 for the COP21 Climate Conference.*



## Your Columban Legacy

*"Do what you can" Bishop Edward J Galvin*

### Remember Columbans 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.*

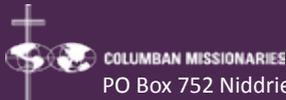
*By leaving a Gift to Columban Missionaries in your Will you become a partner in our work and you are leaving a lasting legacy for the future.*

*Why not speak to your lawyer about it?*

#### FORM OF WILL

"I give and bequeath the sum of \$..... to the Regional Director for Australia of the Missionary Society of St Columban to be used for that Society's general purposes as the Regional Director sees fit".

**AUSTRALIA:** PH: 03 9375 9475 E: bequest@columban.org.au www.columban.org.au  
**NZ:** PH: +64 4567 7216 E: columban@iconz.co.nz www.columban.org.au



COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES  
 PO Box 752 Niddrie Victoria Australia 3042  
 bequest@columban.org.au

## YOUR COLUMBAN LEGACY

Will information request

*Please fill in your details below if you would like to receive further information about Your Columban Legacy:*

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Suburb: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ P/Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

 Email: \_\_\_\_\_



**ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY**

Australia Brazil Britain Chile China Fiji Ireland Japan Korea Myanmar  
New Zealand Pakistan Peru Philippines Taiwan United States

[www.columban.org.au](http://www.columban.org.au)

**SHOP ONLINE TODAY**  
Purchase Columban products online at [www.columban.org.au](http://www.columban.org.au)

# Easter on the dusty streets of Lima - Peru

*Columban Fr Ed O'Connell is the Parish Priest of 'Our Lady of the Missions' Parish in the poverty stricken northern suburbs of Lima, Peru. It comprises of 12 chapels, served by a host of Lay leaders, Catechists, Lay Missionaries and Priests.*

**With your help**, Columban Missionaries such as Fr Ed O'Connell are able to "reach out" to those who struggle against poverty and inequality. (see pages 4-5)



**ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY**  
TFE @columban.org.au



**Please fill in your details below:**

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Suburb: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State: \_\_\_\_\_ P/Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## SUPPORT COLUMBAN MISSION

The Far East "subscription" (\$15 per year)  \$ Australia only

**DONATION TO COLUMBAN MISSION**  \$

I WISH TO HELP ON A REGULAR BASIS:  \$  
 QUARTERLY  MONTHLY

Please send me ..... Columban Calendars @ A\$10.50ea  \$  
 NZ\$12.00ea (inc GST & postage)

**TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED**  \$

Please accept my:  Credit Card (Fill in details below)  Money Order  Cheque

Please debit my  VISA  MASTERCARD

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

I have included the Columbans in my Will

Send me information on Bequests

NAME ON CARD (PLEASE PRINT)

EXPIRY DATE

SIGNATURE

Send to: **Fr Gary Walker** • St Columban Mission Society, PO Box 752, Niddrie Vic. 3042

**Fr Thomas Rouse** • St Columban Mission Society, PO Box 30-017, Lower Hutt 5040, New Zealand

**Online Subscriptions: [www.columban.org.au](http://www.columban.org.au)**

St Columban Mission Society A.B.N. 17 686 524 625

