

# The Far East

COLUMBAN MISSION MAGAZINE

July 2016



## Fr Mick's dream

A centre for children with special needs.

## A missionary journey

Fr Gerry's 43 years on mission.

Mission exposure in El Paso and Juarez  
Holy Week on US/Mexican border.



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# The Far East

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# Contents



- |              |  |              |   |
|--------------|--|--------------|---|
| <b>3</b>     | <b>From the Editor</b><br>A broad picture of Columban Mission                    | <b>16</b>    | <b>Mission World</b><br>Pope meets Cairo's Grand Imam of Al-Azhar                               |
| <b>4-5</b>   | <b>Fr Mick's dream</b><br>Centre for children with special needs.                | <b>17</b>    | <b>From the Director</b><br>When the unexpected breaks through our defences                     |
| <b>6-7</b>   | <b>Dialogue of ordinary life in Pakistan</b>                                     | <b>18-19</b> | <b>Brigade Hill</b>   |
| <b>8-9</b>   | <b>Reflection - A missionary journey</b><br>Fr Gerry's 43 years on mission.      | <b>20-21</b> | <b>A new mission in my own country</b><br>Fr Donald Hornsey finds a new mission in New Zealand. |
| <b>10-11</b> | <b>History repeats itself</b>  | <b>22</b>    | <b>Farewell to Father Vincent</b>   |
| <b>12-15</b> | <b>Mission exposure in El Paso and Juarez</b><br>Holy Week on US/Mexican border. | <b>23</b>    | <b>50th Anniversary of ordination to the priesthood</b>   |
|              |  | <b>23</b>    | <b>Your Columban Legacy</b>   |





*Soldiers of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) prepare banners for the opening Eucharist and blessing of the new St Michael's Church, Brigade Hill, Myanmar. (See Fr Bosco Ah Seng's story pages 18-19)*

*Photo: Fr Bosco Ah Seng*



# From the Editor

## A broad picture of Columban Mission

The funeral Eucharist for Columban Fr Vincent Bachelor was held on Thursday, June 2, 2016 at St Columban's, Essendon, Victoria. Fr Vincent was in his 72nd year of priesthood, which includes 40 years as a missionary in Fiji. He was 95 years of age.

The July issue carries the stories of many other Columban missionaries, who like Fr Vincent, have dedicated their lives to the mission of Christ and His Church across the globe among the people of the world.

Columban Fr Donald Hornsey has now begun a new missionary experience back home in his native New Zealand after spending more than 40 years in Chile, Brazil and lastly in the high valleys of the Andes Mountains in Peru. He now works with Colombian immigrants in the Archdiocese of Wellington.

Columban Fr George Hogarty tells the story of the dream of Columban Fr Michael Sinnott to set up a home for children with special needs in the city of Pagadian in the Philippines. Fr Mick spent most of his 50 years in the Philippines in Pagadian, including more than one month kidnapped in

2009 by Islamic extremists. He is now retired in his native Ireland.

Columban Fr Gerry Neylon has spent 43 years as a missionary first in Korea, then in Taiwan and since 1997 in China. Columban Fr Warren Kinne explains how history repeats itself as the descendants of the Chinese families who welcomed the first Columban missionaries to China in June 1920 at the docks in Shanghai, still remain friends and supporters of the Columbans today.

Columban seminarian Louie Ybanez from the Philippines has just completed two years in Pakistan as a part of his seminary formation for priesthood. He shares with us the importance of developing friendships with his Pakistani Muslim neighbours.

Columban Frs Robert Mosher and William Morton working at the Columban Mission Centre in El Paso, Texas, along with Fr Kevin Mullins in the city of Juarez, Mexico, welcomed a group of participants from Britain during Holy Week this year for a Mission Immersion Experience at the Mexican/United States Border. We publish extracts of their experiences.

This issue gives us a broad picture of the work of Columban missionaries, those deceased, those retired, those currently on missionary assignments and those just beginning their missionary journey. Let us remember them in our prayers.

*Fr Daniel Harding*

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# Fr Mick's dream

FR GEORGE HOGARTY

Fr Mick, short for Fr Michael Sinnott, an Irish Columban, who worked in Pagadian in the district of Zamboanga del Sur on the Island of Mindanao in the southern Philippines for many years, nurtured a hidden dream that stemmed from his own experience of childhood. This dream would set Fr Mick on a path that would be radically different to anything he had ever done previously as a Columban and lead him to found a centre for children with special needs called *HANGOP KABATAAN*, which means in the local Cebuano language “reaching out and embracing the children”.

In April 1998 Fr Mick launched his programme to help children with special needs by taking a survey of all the families in the parish of St Joseph where he worked in the city of Pagadian. To his surprise he discovered that in his parish alone, there were 47 families with special needs children. This spurred him to action. The problem was how to begin a project that had no precedent in the experience of the local people, the church or the Government on whom Fr Mick would have to rely if his dream was to become a reality!

The first challenge was to gain the cooperation of the parents of the children with special needs. Here experience was Fr Mick's greatest teacher. When he called the first meeting of the parents of special needs children in St Joseph's parish in 1998, Fr Mick soon realised just how isolated these parents were and what a burden they were carrying in trying to care for these special children on their own without anyone to help them. He recalls how visibly tense the parents were at the beginning of the first meeting he held in the parish but also how relieved they were when they began to share their experiences. The parents discovered they were not alone and that there was hope for them and their children.

Hence to this very day the centre offers the parents a chance to share the pain they feel and the difficulties they experience in dealing with their special needs children. They are also invited to participate in the assessments of their children's progress while being given regular updates along with spiritual formation in order to help them live more faithfully the special role of loving the children with whom God has gifted them.

The next challenge was to find a home for the future centre of *Hangop Kabataan* and here Fr Mick was helped by the local diocese which gave him the use of an unused jail built by the Japanese occupying forces in World War II. After some renovations and the acquisition of a Jeepney, (a Filipino style bus), *Hangop Kabataan* was launched on August 3, 1998 with ten children. The jail however, was not to be *Hangop Kabataan's* permanent home since the land on which the centre was operating was soon needed by the rapidly growing local diocese of Pagadian for a Catholic Secondary College which left *Hangop Kabataan* desperately looking for another site on which to establish itself.

The centre's future looked very uncertain but Fr Mick persevered in promoting his dream on behalf of the children. Eventually with the financial help of friends and cooperation from the diocese of Pagadian, Fr Mick was able to buy back the original Columban Centre House which to this day continues to be the permanent site of *Hangop Kabataan*.

Funding was another huge hurdle to be overcome before Fr Mick's dream could become a reality. At first, Fr Mick approached friends in Ireland who were very generous in helping get the project started. However, *Hangop Kabataan* also needed support at the local level if it was to survive and prosper. Fr Mick approached the local government of Pagadian which gave some support at first but later discontinued the initial help it had offered since it had almost no experience of implementing and funding a programme of this nature.

Later on, when the Government decided to invite the children from *Hangop Kabataan* to transfer to its own Education Department, Fr Mick and the teachers politely declined the offer. Fr Mick knew that *Hangop Kabataan* would give good results if given the chance and persisted in his plea for government assistance. Eventually, the local city Government, seeing the good work the centre was achieving, included the centre in its annual budget.

Another crucial achievement was getting the *Hangop Kabataan Foundation* registered in the Security Exchange Commission of The Philippines enabling it to be accepted as a charitable organization and be enrolled under the Government's social security system. The remarkable thing is that only two charities are accepted each year to be part



Columban Fr Daniel O'Malley with the parents of the Hangop Kabataan Centre.



Teachers at the Hangop Kabataan Centre working with the children.



The children at the Hangop Kabataan Centre.



A family with one of the teachers from the Hangop Kabataan Centre.

of this programme and thanks to Fr Mick's tenacity and love for the children, *Hangop Kabataan* was one of those accepted. According to Mrs Erlina Aure, the Programme Coordinator of *Hangop Kabataan*, the centre is on the cusp of making Fr Mick's dream a permanent reality needing only US\$150,000 more in funds to become self-sustaining and capable of touching the lives of even more special needs children.

Today 55 special needs children attend *Hangop Kabataan* centre daily. **Ms Lucy Irog who is a teacher at the centre says that *Hangop Kabataan* is "like a family and the children just love being there"**. Another 21 children participate in a homebased programme by which the therapists visit the homes of the special children to stimulate them and teach the parents new skills to help their own children. There is also a club for deaf children and youth which has 37 members. The children learn sign

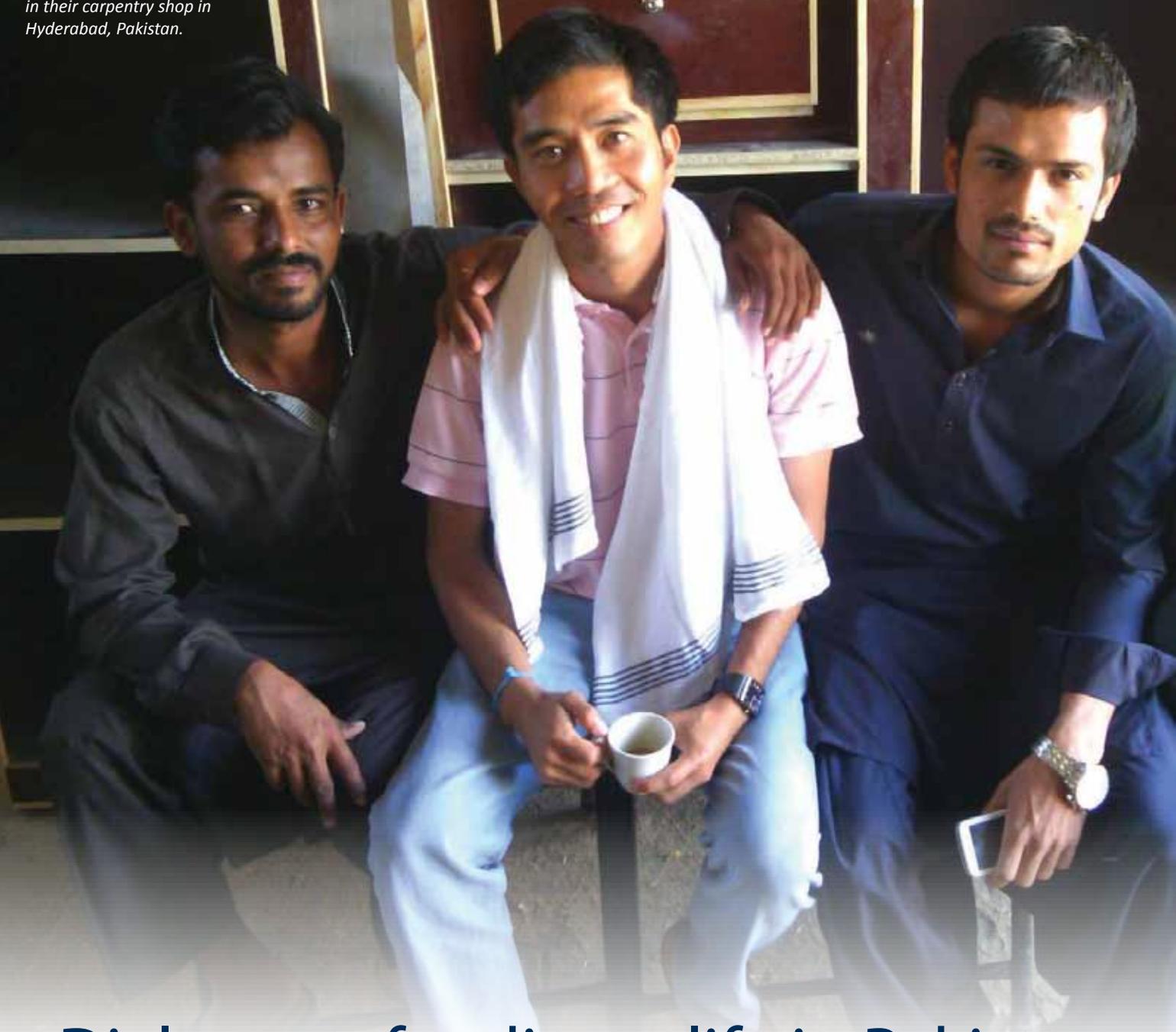
language and how to develop their personalities and handle the anger that stems from the frustration of not being able to communicate.

Unfortunately, Fr Mick was separated from all direct involvement with the centre when he was kidnapped for ransom by extremist elements in 2009 and upon release had to leave his beloved Philippines. But the centre which began as a dream now continues on as a reality and testimony to a missionary who so loved special children that even at an advanced age he would crawl on the floor during therapy sessions to be with them.

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*Fr George Hogarty is currently assigned to Columban promotion in the Diocese of Rockhampton, Queensland.*

*Louie Ybanez (centre) with Saleem's sons, Imran and Amir in their carpentry shop in Hyderabad, Pakistan.*



## Dialogue of ordinary life in Pakistan

LOUIE YBANEZ

*Louie Ybanez, a Columban seminarian from the Philippines, shares with us the importance of interreligious dialogue in Pakistan. Louie will spend two years in Pakistan as part of his missionary formation before ordination to priesthood.*



*It seems that sensitive issues are often brushed under the rug for fear of an outburst of violence.*

*I* am assigned to St Joseph's Parish, in Matli, the Diocese of Hyderabad, Pakistan. The parish has a Christian community that lives close to Hindu and Muslim neighbours. This is a great start for my interest in interreligious dialogue.

One finds many prejudices among the different religious communities. It seems that sensitive issues are often brushed under the rug for fear of an outburst of violence. If buttons are pushed, so to speak, it could lead to an outburst such as what happened in Lahore in 2014 when two churches were bombed. Two men suspected of involvement were beaten and burned to death by an angry mob.

Because of this, we look for opportunities that present themselves in ordinary daily life to share and witness to our faith.

## Here are two examples...

### Saleem and his Sons

I got to know Saleem and his sons, Imran and Amir, through Columban Fr Tomás King. Many times they have been commissioned to do some carpentry work for the parish church. During my free time, I go to their shop. We talk mostly about carpentry. I share my thoughts as well. The two sons are very friendly. Through them I have become aware of the traditions and culture of Pakistani Muslims. I also tell them about the Philippines and our culture and traditions. They introduced me to many of their friends. This has helped me grow in confidence in getting to know many Muslims and relating to them.

### The man on top of the bus

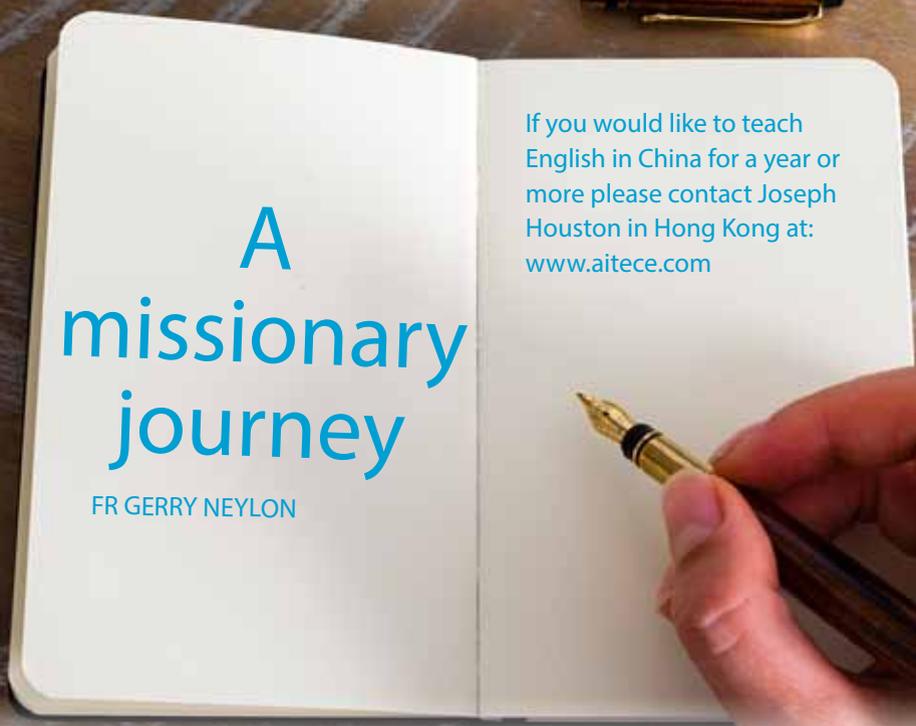
Once when I travelled to Badin from Matli, the bus broke down so I had to transfer to another bus. As it was peak hour I had no choice but to climb up to the bus roof and sit along with many people on their way home from their work. I sat comfortably in the centre of the roof with a good scenic view of the Sindh plains. Many of my fellow roof passengers were surprised and interested as to why a seemingly "Chinese man" would climb up the roof for half of the fare. Anyone from other parts of Asia is usually assumed to be from China.

Soon enough I got into a conversation and my little Urdu language became very handy. What caught my attention was this young man who wanted to talk to me but was unable because he sat too far away. He noticed the cross on the rosary bracelet that I wore that time. Unable to be heard he points to the cross and then his finger went to point towards the sky. When we reached Badin, I asked him if he is a Christian. He was a Muslim. I was stunned by a Muslim associating the cross with God. We introduced ourselves and parted ways with a handshake.

Here in Pakistan dialogue happens in the everyday reality of life. It happens as I walk down a busy alley, as I respond to the greetings of my Muslim and Hindu neighbours, as I go through different shops and am offered chai (*Pakistani tea*) as a sign of hospitality. In the school, I get to witness friendship between children of different religions. It comes about when I go to a barber shop and engage in casual conversation when being asked all sorts of questions or when I travel on a public bus where I get to stand beside a complete stranger and engage in conversation on the harsh but sometimes funny reality of Pakistani life.

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*Louie Ybanez, a Columban seminarian from the Philippines, currently lives and works on mission in Hyderabad, Pakistan.*



If you would like to teach English in China for a year or more please contact Joseph Houston in Hong Kong at: [www.aitece.com](http://www.aitece.com)

*Fr Gerry Neylon shares with The Far East magazine his missionary journey over 43 years in three different Columban missions.*

*I* was born in County Clare, Ireland, 68 years ago, the eldest of seven children, four girls and three boys. I have 13 nieces and nephews.

As a young man when I felt that God was calling me to be a missionary, I entered the Columban seminary training programme in 1965 at Dalgan Park, County Meath, Ireland.

I was one of 16 who were ordained priests on Easter Sunday, 1973, at Dalgan Park. Four of us were appointed to South Korea soon after.

## Mission to South Korea

I arrived in Korea in August 1973, just over four months after ordination. At that time, there was tremendous interest in the Church. Because the Korean government of the 1970s treated the workers very harshly, the Catholic Church along with other Churches stood up for the human rights of workers and criticized their appalling working

conditions. As a result, many workers and their families became interested in the Christian faith and many entered the Church. It was a very busy time for the Church. For us Columbans, it was challenging but very exciting to be involved with such vibrant, mostly youthful parishioners. I would gladly have spent my life in Korea but after five years my life changed dramatically.

## Mission to Taiwan

In 1978, the Columbans decided to open new missions in Taiwan and Pakistan and I was asked to leave South Korea to join a new team of five missionaries going to Taiwan. We arrived in 1979 and I remained there 18 years until 1997. Taiwan presented us with an entirely different missionary challenge.

Unlike South Korea, there was very little interest in the Catholic or



Columban Fr Gerry Neylon.



## As a young man when I felt that God was calling me to be missionary...

indeed any church in Taiwan. In fact, the people were so busy working around the clock that they did not have time to go to Church or to get involved in parish activities.

For us young Columbans, the obvious question became, "How can we make the Gospel relevant to the lives of the people of Taiwan?" In discussion with experienced missionaries, we identified a number of areas where we could reach out to the most oppressed people around us.

- As there was little respect for mentally challenged persons, Fr Thomas Murphy and I decided to set up centres to work to change attitudes towards such persons in society.
- We established two Worker's Centers to help industrial workers fight for their human rights.
- We began a ministry to Taiwanese prisoners, trying to bring the light of the Gospel into their lives.
- We also set up advocacy centres for the rights of foreign migrant workers, who often suffer exploitation and abuse.

Once again I envisaged spending the rest of my life in this very satisfying and enriching apostolate but suddenly my life took another remarkable turn.

## Mission to China

In 1997 I was asked to join the Columban team in China. A big part of my life here has been connected with the recruitment and placement of teachers in China.

During the 1980s the Columbans wondered how they could help from a Gospel point of view in the modernization of the new China. They knew, of course, that as non-Chinese, they could not be involved in any public religious activities in the China of today. They consulted widely with Chinese people and were assured that Columbans could make a considerable contribution through recruiting teachers, particularly native speakers of English and sending them to China.

In 1988 Columban Fr Edward Kelly set up the AITECE programme which provides foreign teachers to Chinese

universities across the entire nation. AITECE stands for "The Association of International Teaching, Educational and Curriculum Exchange". It has the registration number 001 with the Chinese Government in Beijing, as it was the very first foreign group of English teachers to register. AITECE is highly regarded by the Chinese Government for its reliability, professionalism and the fact that it screens its teachers very thoroughly.

While AITECE is an independent organization, the Columbans have always played a leading role in supporting it. The present AITECE manager is Joseph Houston, a Columban from Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Since 1988 AITECE has sponsored almost 400 foreign teachers and experts, working in over 90 universities across China, in 13 provinces, two municipalities and one autonomous region. Many of the AITECE teachers have come from New Zealand and Australia as well as Ireland, Britain, Canada, the Philippines and the United States. Chinese universities are desperately looking for teachers and warmly welcome them.

I am delighted to be involved with the AITECE programme. The teachers are making a tremendous contribution to China by their very lives. They must not engage in any form of religious activities but they witness to Jesus Christ by their very life as a teacher. Their life, like mine, is about forming relations and interacting with their students in as deep and intimate way as possible and letting them see for themselves what a Christian is.

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*Columban Fr Gerry Neylon continues to work with AITECE recruiting teachers for China.*



*Kelly DeCastras with AITECE students - China.*

Fr Warren Kinne with Vincent Zhu, his wife and their daughter Zhu Hao Yun.



## History repeats itself

FR WARREN KINNE

*I*t is said that history has a habit of repeating itself. This seems to be so in one particular case at least. In June 1920 when Columban Founders Frs Edward Galvin, John Blowick and Owen McPolin on board the Yawata Maru docked in Shanghai, Nicholas Zhu and Lo Pa-Hong were there to meet them.

Eighty years later, in 2000, when I came to take up residence in Shanghai after three years language study in Beijing, the great grandson of Nicholas Zhu, named Vincent, was there to meet me. He was the son of a teacher Zhu working in Guang Qi Press where I used to help out. Vincent and I had frequent outings together and he was very helpful for me in bargaining when it came to shopping and in fixing my computer. Only later was I to discover that Vincent was the great grandson of Nicholas Zhu. Quite a co-incidence!

This family is also related to Ma Xiang Bo, the founder of Fudan University. He was the uncle of Nicholas Zhu. By chance, I was also to teach at Fudan University for 10 years and so I had that remote connection with the former Jesuit Ma Xiang Bo as well. Now Vincent had a daughter

and my hope is that she can continue the memory of the relationship of the Columban Missionaries with the Zhu family.

Nicholas Zhu was a ship-builder and one of the important commercial go-betweens between foreigners and Chinese workers in Shanghai. He was also a very prominent Catholic who funded many schools and hospitals and other charities and who took the Gospel and its works of mercy seriously, even to visiting prisoners. In 1937 he was to receive a Papal award. When the prayerful man died in 1955, he was in his 90s.

As an aside, Nicholas had a younger brother who became a Jesuit priest and later one of the six Chinese bishops consecrated in 1926. Through the generations there have been a good number of priests and sisters in their extended family. Later in June 1920, when the three newly arrived missionaries steamed up the Yangtze, from Shanghai for several days and docked at Hankow, the nephew of Nicholas Zhu was there to meet them and to put himself at their disposal.

Another person on the docks in 1920 to meet our Founders and first Columban missionaries was Lo PaHong (1875-1937), the famous businessman and philanthropist. A friend of the Columbans, Theresa Wo Ye knows direct descendants of Lo PaHong and through Bishop Jin, I had a most pleasant meeting with them.

Teresa is the grand-daughter of Lo PaHong and "Crystal" his great grand-daughter. Crystal currently works for an investment company and also helps charities become self-sufficient without the need for fund-raising.

The following day in June 1920 after the three new Columbans arrived in Shanghai, they celebrated Mass at St Joseph's Hospital. This hospital used to be in the compound of what is now the Gongyi Xintiandi which was only officially opened in 2013 as a platform for various social innovation and charitable activities. This is a most interesting site.

Lo PaHong bought this land in 1913. Two years previously, in 1911, he was the Director of a newly built Government charity organization but in 1913 he moved this to the new site and that is now preserved. There was a school, a workshop, a hospital, a kindergarten, retirement facilities all dedicated to helping the disadvantaged people. It was called Xin Puyu Tang after the old charity called Puyu Tang.

There are some incredible statistics on the new notice board at the recently opened site which went close to demolition but was finally preserved. The land is now extremely valuable. The notice board says that in the first six years of operation, Xin Puyu Tang adopted 102,525 orphans, treated 2,194,070 patients and became the top example of social philanthropy in China.

Lo PaHong's photo is there with a chest-full of awards some of them papal. Indeed his family had the first Vatican approved private chapel in China in their home.

In the tumultuous times of 1937 when most of the family fled China, Lo PaHong was murdered on the eve of his departure for Hong Kong. The story has it that he was on his way to Hong Kong when he went back to distribute clothes to the homeless. It is not known who or what group was behind the assassination – Japanese or Communist or Guomindang or someone else.

***It is fascinating for me to know the direct living descendants of these two families who featured in the first steps of the Columbans in China.***

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*Columban Fr Warren Kinne served several decades working in Shanghai, China.*



*"Crystal" Mary Ding Jingyi with her mother Teresa Lu Qinming, Fr Warren Kinne and on the wall is Lo PaHong.*



# Mission exposure in El Paso and Juarez

*During Holy Week 2016, a mission exposure trip was organized by the Columban "Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation" office in Britain. The participants spent Holy Week on the US/Mexican Border at El Paso, in Texas, United States, and at the city of Juarez, in the Mexican State of Chihuahua.*

*Activities were organized by the "Columban Mission Centre" in El Paso and the Columban parish of Corpus Christi in the suburb of Rancho Anapra, in Juarez.*

*Here is a sample of the reflections made by participants regarding different aspects of their experience.*

## Migrant Farm Workers in the El Paso area, Texas, United States

*Venus Garcia-George is a youth worker based in London. She shares her experience of the plight of migrant farm workers.*

"On day four of our exposure visit, the harsh reality of the plight of migrant farm workers in Texas has hit hard. We visited the Sacred Heart Parish, where we had a talk from Carlos Marentes of 'La Frontera (Frontier) Farmworkers Centre'. We then visited the 'El Paso Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Service,' at which we received a detailed and passionate presentation on immigrants' rights from Carlos Marentes and Shalini Thomas. We later toured 'the Annunciation House Refugee Shelter'.

"Between July and November, thousands of workers from Mexico come looking for work. So what does a day in the life of a farmworker look like? It begins at two or three in the morning when recruitment of the workers takes place in South El Paso. Young labourers are hired first, leaving the older workers behind. The chili pickers leave for the fields at about 3:00am in the morning and start work at 6:00am. They then travel to the different farms, some of which are as far as Arizona. However the most popular ones are in New Mexico where chili peppers are a billion dollar industry. They finish around 4:00pm then return to El Paso and arrive around 6:00pm. It is a 16 hour long day.



*The British participants in El Paso.*

Photos: Participants from the mission exposure trip



USA



MEXICO



“Chili pickers get paid piece rate for what they produce. For each bucket that is filled, the farm worker receives a plastic chip to be redeemed for payment at the end of the day. Each chip is worth US\$65 cents, that is 65 cents a bucket.

“In order for a picker to make at least the minimum wage, they have to fill eight buckets. Each full bucket weighs around 18 kg, which the workers carry on their backs to be unloaded every hour. By 3:00pm the chili picker is so tired from carrying these heavy buckets and from bending over to pick chilies from one metre high plants. Most pickers will pick an average of 30 buckets, which earns them a daily rate of US\$19.50 even though in New Mexico the minimum hourly rate is US\$7.25. The average annual income of chili pickers in the United States is US\$6,700 yet a household of five in the United States is considered below the poverty line if their annual income is US\$20,000.”

## Border Control

*Rosemary O'Leary is a teacher based in London. She shares her experience of a visit to Border Control.*

“After a brief introduction by Columban Fr Robert Mosher of the ‘Columban Mission Centre’, we all piled into the van along with 11 fold-up chairs and off to the American Border Control we went. We were pleasantly greeted by two Border Control officers, Joe and Giovanni.

“Open to the elements, we sat by the Anapra Fence with Mexico behind us. Joe and Giovanni talked to us about what their jobs entailed and what they experienced on a day to day basis, giving us some background to the ‘fence’s’ history and the experiences they have had during their time patrolling the fence.

“Before this talk, I had a very negative impression of the words ‘Border Control’ but their talks made me feel humbled by the sheer passion they have for both sides of the fence and the concern these officers have for the humanity they are trying to sustain on a daily basis.

“We later returned to the Columban Mission Centre to hear a talk by Molly Molloy, a Border and Latin American Specialist and the Librarian at the New Mexico University. She spoke about the fence that separates Mexico and the US and how different this fence is in different places.

“She also introduced us to the rate of crime that exists in Mexico, and how devastating it can be for the people living there, often facing desperate situations which may lead some Mexicans to venture over to the US illegally. This talk gave us a great insight into the gang culture and crimes that lead to someone wanting to risk their precious life to better themselves and their families.

“That evening we celebrated a bilingual Chrism Mass, in St Patrick’s Cathedral, El Paso, led by Bishop Mark Seitz and 70 priests.”



*The group with the Border Guards at the US/Mexican Fence.*

### Immigration Court

*Julia Corcoran is a Columban "Faith in Action volunteer" in Britain. She shares with us the experience of the Immigration Court.*

"This morning we went to the Immigration Court. I was struck by how efficient the court is. Each case was brought forward to the judge and then the judge asked a few questions and a decision was made. None of the ten or so cases we saw today involved anyone being deported. At the same time our hour or so in court left me feeling emotionally drained. My degree and Masters is in Law and so I knew what to expect but I was still shocked at how the cases were decided. One of the attorneys on the phone was asked about the papers he had submitted and he admitted to not having the file in front of him. The judge seemed like an understanding but very busy judge. He even allowed us time to ask questions once all the cases had been seen. Today he will have seen 50 cases!"

### Good Friday - The Way of the Cross

*Mark Brown, a teacher from Dorset, England, shares his reflection of the Good Friday "Way of the Cross" liturgy at Corpus Christi Parish, Juarez, Mexico.*

The procession wound its way through the streets of Juarez and up Mount Anapra. It was led by American Columban Fr Robert Mosher from the Columban Mission Centre, El Paso, Australian Columban, Fr Kevin Mullins, the Parish Priest at Corpus Christi and Fijian Columban Lay Missionary Sainiana Tamatawale.



*The procession through the streets of Juarez.*

1. **Jesus is condemned to death.** For all those "undocumented" migrants. How often do we make accusations about immigrants that are totally without foundation!
2. **Jesus takes up His cross.** I thought of farm workers who rise each morning just after midnight, with little more than three hours sleep, to search for work to feed their family whom they rarely see.
3. **Jesus falls the first time.** All those who because of the colour of their skin or the place of their birth fall through the system and are treated as criminals when all they wish for is a safe life for themselves and their children.
4. **Jesus meets His sorrowful mother.** I thought of the mothers of Juarez, Mexico, who have seen their sons murdered and their bodies left on the street.
5. **Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross.** I prayed for the wonderful Columban missionaries, Fr Kevin and Sainiana, who walk alongside their parishioners in Anapra, risking their own lives to walk with the poor and oppressed.
6. **Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.** We saw the face of Jesus in so many members of the parish community.
7. **Jesus falls a second time.** For all those who find themselves in court, confused by the language of the state. Unable to afford decent representation and so place their future in the hands of ill prepared attorneys and translators.



USA



MEXICO



8. **Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.** Ruben Garcia from Annunciation House in El Paso, reminded us that simply feeling sorry for the poor is not enough. They do not need our tears but for us to change our behaviour.
9. **Jesus fall the third time.** That I may stop being part of the problem, destroying God's beautiful world and begin to think more ethically about how I live and how I use the world's resources.
10. **Jesus is stripped of His garments.** The factory workers in Juarez are denied basic rights and live on a wage far below the poverty line in order for us in the west to be able to buy cheap products.
11. **Jesus is nailed to the cross.** For those who flee dangerous homelands and come to the wealthy west seeking safety and sanctuary but instead find their family separated and are detained in detention centres.
12. **Jesus dies on the cross.** For all those men and women who have disappeared over recent years. For all the children who were taken from their families to be used for organ "donation". For Rosa from Corpus Christi parish, whose brother and sister were murdered because they saw too much. For all those who refuse to pay "safety money" to the gangs.
13. **Jesus is taken down from the cross.** Annunciation House and those who offer free legal advice to the undocumented. For the Columban Missionaries in El Paso and all those who care for those who feel nobody cares and educate us that we might do better.
14. **Jesus is laid in the tomb.** That I might not be a secret witness to Christ like Joseph of Arimathea, afraid to share my faith.

## Easter Vigil

*Nathalie Marytsch is a Columban Lay Missionary from Chile working in Birmingham, England. She shares with us her experience of the Easter Vigil in the Cristo Rey community of the Corpus Christi parish, Juarez, Mexico*

"In the early evening we crossed the border to Mexico to celebrate the Easter Vigil with the Cristo Rey community. It was one of the most amazing celebrations I have been part of. A large crowd processed behind the Paschal Candle. The congregation of 400 people was comprised of many children, elderly folks and some street dogs, which the liturgy leaders tried very hard to keep out. There was also a talented group of about twenty musicians.

"One of the most striking parts of the service for me was the blessing with the Holy Water. Columban Fr Kevin Mullins took time to go round each isle and corner of the church to bless the people, the candles and the water they had brought to be blessed. Fr Kevin took his time to greet people, with a kind smile and words of encouragement.

"I somehow felt that this is how I picture Jesus went around the crowds of people who were coming to listen to him. It was far from a quiet ceremonial ritual. There was a profound sense that it was a joyful occasion, the celebration of the resurrection of Our Lord and every part of the Mass had its sense of joy."



*The British participants in El Paso.*

Photos: Participants from the mission exposure trip



# 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.*

## Pope meets Cairo's Grand Imam of Al-Azhar

*Meeting between Pope Francis and the leading authority on Sunni Islam. It marks 'a first'.*

Pope Francis met the Grand Imam of Cairo's Al-Azhar, Ahmed al Tayyeb, at the Vatican, marking a first of such an encounter between a Pope and the Imam of Al-Azhar, who many Muslims consider to be the highest authority in Sunni Islam.

According to a statement released by the *Holy See Press Office*, the meeting between Francis and the Imam of Al-Azhar who heads Egypt's Al-Azhar Mosque and Al-Azhar University, considered to be the most authoritative theological-academic institution of Sunni Islam, lasted about 30 minutes and their discussions were "very cordial."

Upon his arrival in the Vatican, the Grand Imam was welcomed and then accompanied to his audience with the Pope, by the President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, and by the Secretary of the same dicastery, Bishop Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot.

The two religious leaders, the statement noted, acknowledged "the great significance of this new meeting in the framework of dialogue between the Catholic Church and Islam." They also discussed "the common commitment of the authorities and the faithful of the great religions for peace in the world, the rejection of violence and terrorism, the situation of Christians in the context of conflicts and tensions in the Middle East and their protection."

Those in the Imam's delegation included: Dr. Abbas Shouman, Undersecretary of Al-Azhar; Dr. Mahmaoud Hamdi Zakzouk, member of the Council of Senior Scholars of Al-Azhar University and Director of the Center for Dialogue of Al-Azhar; Judge Mohamed Mahmoud Abdel Salam, Advisor to the Great Imam; Dr. Mohie Afifi Afifi Ahmed, secretary-general of the Islamic Research Academy; Ambassador Mahmoud Abdel Gawad, Diplomatic Advisor to the Grand Imam; Tamer Tawfik, Advisor; and Ahmad Alshourbagy, Second Secretary. The delegation was accompanied by Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Holy See, Hatem Seif Elnasr.

During the meeting, Pope Francis gave the Grand Imam the medallion of the olive tree of peace and a copy of his Encyclical Letter on the environment, '*Laudato Si'*'.

After meeting with the Pope, the Grand Imam and his delegation met briefly with Cardinal Tauran and Bishop Guixot Ayuso.



Photo: AAP image/PA/©VATICAN POOL/ CPP

ZENIT - The World seen from Rome - May 23, 2016  
by Deborah Castellano Lubov

## Mission Intention for July

That the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean, by means of her mission to the continent, may announce the Gospel with renewed vigor and enthusiasm.

Listen to: From the Director - When the unexpected breaks through our defences



# From the Director

## When the unexpected breaks through our defences

Last week I attended two funerals: one of a young man killed in a road accident, the brother of one of our Columban Missionaries in Japan and the other of a Columban priest who died in his 96th year.

The funerals were at the opposite end of the scales in terms of grief and happiness.

At the young man's funeral I found it incredibly painful to witness the grief of the widow who sat silent with her heart breaking, and to listen to the young children who prayed for their father. I think that many people shared the same feeling. It was of some comfort to sit quietly and listen to the excellent choir putting into song what the congregation felt.

The congregation which was predominantly Vietnamese knew a lot about pain, suffering and loss including this young man who left Vietnam on a boat with his brothers. Their stories are horrific and we ask ourselves how do they survive them? But they do.

The other funeral was straight forward. The elderly Columban Priest died in his hospital bed aged 95 years. The funeral was a happy and orderly event celebrating the full life of a missionary priest who had spent over 40 years in Fiji and included many other roles in formation, lecturing and chaplaincy.

How do we regain our defences in the face of tragedy or deep sadness?

The late Henri Nouwen, a Dutch Catholic priest, professor, author and theologian had the ability to describe complex or difficult issues like the pain of losing a son, husband, father and brother.

*....the widow who sat silent with her heart breaking, and to listen to the young children who prayed for their father.*

In one of his books Nouwen describes how a monk invited him to pray in a certain way. He told Henri to lay aside one hour in the morning and a half hour at night before going to bed to pray, but to pray in a particular way.

The monk told Henri that it was 'useless' time in which Henri was to do nothing but come to terms with his basic powerlessness in the presence of God. He was to come to terms with his inability to solve his own problems or to change the world. Henri Nouwen observed that praying in this manner became as important as eating and sleeping.

In the face of tragedy or deep sadness, when the unexpected can strip us of our powers, it is difficult to hold oneself together. It is often even more difficult to let go and find that God will hold us together.

I pray that the grieving family of the young man will continue to be held together through the power of God's love.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary Walker".

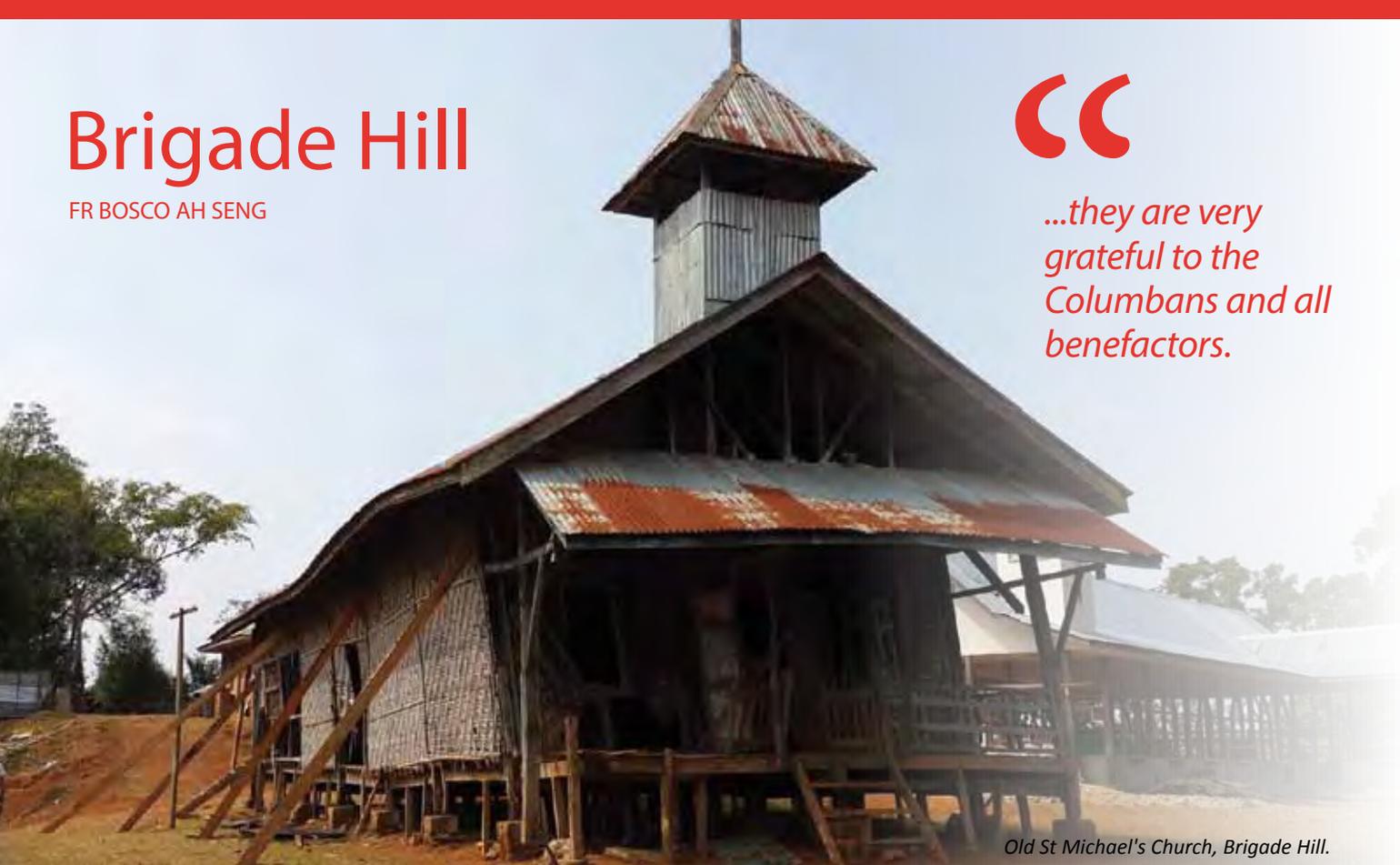
Fr Gary Walker  
director@columban.org.au

# Brigade Hill

FR BOSCO AH SENG



*...they are very grateful to the Columbans and all benefactors.*



*Old St Michael's Church, Brigade Hill.*

*The diocese of Myitkyina, Myanmar, thanked the Columbans for their donation given to help complete St Michael's Church, Brigade Hill in Kachyi Htu parish. Construction work was completed at the end of February 2016 and the new church was blessed by the diocesan chancellor, Fr Paul Lum Dau, on April 8, 2016.*

*Fr Bosco Ah Seng is a priest of the Myitkina Diocese, who works in the Diocesan Pastoral Projects Department. He was ordained on November 23, 2013, the Feast of St Columban. He shares with us the story of the construction of the church.*

## Background to the construction of the church

*B*rigade Hill takes its name from the headquarters of the Northern Command of the First Brigade of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), which is still technically at war with the Myanmar National Army. Catholics have been increasing in number in this area in recent years due to the influx of displaced people from the surrounding villages in the nearby mountain country. The majority of the soldiers in the KIA army camp are Catholic.

The people in the area still practice slash and burn methods of agriculture to produce rice and other food crops. Some work as hired labourers, while many others are self-employed, particularly in small scale gold mining.

There is one Public Health Dispensary, a high school and hostels for 300 boys and girls from other villages, all run by the KIA "government". They also supervise a refugee camp which houses 40 students who have fled from the Myanmar Government controlled area. As a result, the whole region



that is under the control of the First Brigade, is at present safe and peaceful. The civilian population is not directly affected by the current war between the KIA and the Myanmar Government.

It was the local Catholic community at Brigade Hill that wanted to rebuild their church. It was a part of their pastoral plan to better serve the local community's liturgical needs. The church will also provide shelter in case of emergencies.

Each Catholic family was asked to collect around US\$20 for the construction. Little progress was made during the first four years until the Columbans offered a donation to help complete the construction. The local community continued to support the project by producing cement bricks for the church at a reduced cost.

## Difficulties that arose

Construction work had to pause during the monsoon season each year. On top of this, fighting broke out again in June 2015 between the KIA and the central government in the area. This forced the people to leave their villages. Also as a result of the renewed conflict, outboard motor boats on the nearby Irrawaddy River that collect construction materials like cement and lime, could not work for a period of almost two months. When allowed again, transport costs had greatly increased.

## Getting to work

St Michael's foundation was laid in 2010.

On December 1, 2014, we received a grant from the Columbans to help complete the church. We could now collect some necessary construction materials such as hinges, bolts, nails, handles and window panes. We now finished one third of the walling and some of the flooring. The ceiling work was done with the kind donation from Catholic Kachin Community in Canada.

The local Catholics contributed their labour from time to time as well. The construction committee also asked help from the KIA. It went on a trip to the gold-mining town of Hpakant. Other parishes and the gold mines along the Irrawaddy River were asked for help for the construction of St Michael's.

The lack of nearby water sources at Brigade Hill also hindered the construction works. Luckily students from

the nearby boarding school offered to fetch water from a distant spring. This boarding school is subsidized by the Columbans.

## Conclusion

With the help of all the donations and the sacrifice of the local faithful, Brigade Hill (*Dap ba Kawng*) now has a new church. The faithful are very proud of it because it is the biggest one in Kachyi Htu parish. A local woman told me that they have been having liturgical celebrations in the dilapidated wooden church for years. Now they have a new one and are very excited about that. She said that she cannot wait to see catechism classes for the children and other church activities to be conducted in this new church.

The chief catechist of St Michael's Church also said that before they felt small for they did not have a decent church for Sunday Masses while the other Christian denominations had much better churches. He said that the local people are very proud of their sacrifice and labour and they are very grateful to the Columbans and all benefactors. He promised that the local faithful will never fail to remember their benefactors in their prayers.

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*Fr Bosco Ah Seng is a priest of the Myitkyina diocese, Myanmar.*



*The new, reconstructed St Michael's Church, Brigade Hill.*

# A new mission in my own country

ROWENA OREJANA

*If Columban Fr Donald Hornsey had been asked last year if he would like to return to continue his mission in South America, the answer would have been an unequivocal "yes".*

But these days, Fr Don is fired up with *"a new mission in my own country"*.

*"You know, New Zealand is short of priests. So in many ways, returning to your home country is a way of showing that we are all missionaries and that it is no longer necessary to go overseas to be a missionary,"* he told *New Zealand Catholic* newspaper in a recent interview.

Fr Don who spent the past 40 years as a Columban missionary in Chile, Brazil and Peru, was asked by Cardinal John Dew to help with Colombian refugees in Lower Hutt and Porirua. There are about 400 Colombian refugees in Wellington.

*"Working with South Americans makes me very happy because I can speak to them in Spanish and have meetings and visits with them,"* he said. *"I don't like to say 'working', because it's a joy for me."*

Initially Fr Don studied to be a diocesan priest, but later asked Auckland's Archbishop James Liston to be allowed to leave the diocese to become a Columban missionary.

*"I felt that I liked working with people of other cultures, and at that stage New Zealand seemed to have sufficient priests which, of course, it doesn't now. Chile, Peru and Brazil didn't have as many priests to cover all the needs,"* he said.

After graduating from a Spanish language school in Bolivia in 1975, Fr Don was appointed to a parish in Santiago, the capital city of Chile.

Three years later, he was asked to set up a new mission in the city of Arica, on the northern Chilean border with Peru.

*"That was a very wonderful experience, to live in the middle of four separate housing estates for the poor. Here I lived close to the people, buying everything in the markets and forming youth groups. The only problem was that this was during the dictatorship of Pinochet,"* he recalled.

Fr Don said that at that time priests working with the poor were branded as communists. *"There were very tense situations and we were involved in protests and things like that,"* he said.

After seven years in Arica, Fr Don volunteered to join the new Columban mission in Brazil where he worked in rural areas of the Brazilian state of Bahia. Here, while working as a prison chaplain, he experienced being jailed.

*"It was a set-up. The mother of a prisoner asked a Brazilian priest for some money to get a lawyer to get her son out of jail. And he, the Brazilian priest, didn't have money. So she said, 'I will get revenge on another priest'. She asked one of her sons to give me a package to take to another son who was in jail,"* Fr Hornsey recounted.

The mother then tipped the person in charge of the prison to inspect

Fr Don's package. The package had brandy and marijuana cigarettes.

***"The prison authorities said I was taking drugs into the jail. I was asked to spend some time with my friends the prisoners. But I wasn't there very long,"*** he said. *"Because I knew all the prisoners, I was happy to spend some time with them."*

He spent 17 years in Brazil until the Columbans decided to close that mission. He was then assigned to the Andes Mountains in Peru where he would spend 12 years in parish work including becoming the Director of Evangelisation and Catechesis in the area.

Fr Don said coming back to New Zealand *"in a way, was very disappointing"*.

*"I certainly miss the people I worked with. They are very friendly. And they send me emails and we keep in touch,"* he said.

While not overjoyed to be back in New Zealand, Fr Don says he is *"content"*.

*"I am content to be rediscovering New Zealand and working with people from South America and maybe helping them by becoming a bridge for them to the New Zealand culture. It is a new mission in my own country,"* he said.

---

*This interview of Columban Fr Don Hornsey by Rowena Orejana of the New Zealand Catholic newspaper was published on February 7, 2016.*



*Fr Donald Hornsey with parishioners in the Peruvian Andes Mountains.*



# Farewell to Father Vincent

FR RAY SCANLON



Columban Fr Vincent (Vinnie) Batchelor died on May 28, 2016, at Box Hill Hospital, Melbourne. He was 95 years of age and in his 72nd year of priesthood.

After living in retirement at St Columban's, Essendon, since 2007, he moved to "Nazareth Care" in Camberwell two years ago. A few days before his death he was admitted to Box Hill Hospital.

Fr Vincent was the fifth child in his family of five brothers and four sisters who grew up in Cohuna, a town on the Victorian side of the Murray River. After attending primary school at St Mary's, Cohuna, he received his secondary education at St Patrick's Christian Brothers College, Ballarat, an experience which he remembers with much pride and gratitude.

Fr Vincent's brother, John, was a Jesuit priest who died recently, aged 102. Another brother, William, also deceased, was a priest of the

Sandhurst Diocese and two of Fr Vincent's sisters, Jessie and Mary, joined Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (OLSH) Sisters and worked as missionaries in the Philippines, Darwin and South Sudan.

In 1941, along with a number of other Columban seminarians, Vincent travelled to Omaha, Nebraska, USA, to study theology and complete his seminary formation. The war in Europe at that time prevented travel to Ireland where

Australian Columbans normally studied theology in those times. He was ordained in Omaha on December 21, 1944, and in the following year made the long journey back home by ship across the Pacific.

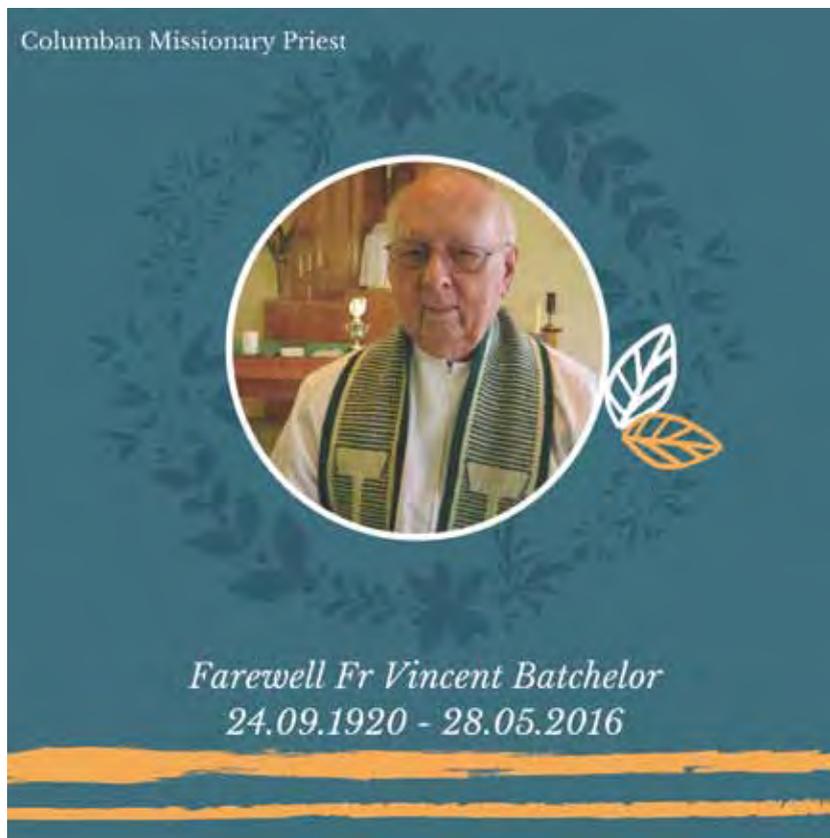
Back in Australia Fr Vincent began his priestly ministry in various parishes in Australia and New Zealand and became a chaplain to Asian students for a number of years before

joining the staff of St Columban's Seminary. For many of us younger Columbans he was our Spiritual Year director.

In 1967 Fr Vincent was appointed to Fiji where he served for 40 years in many parishes, as a hospital chaplain, as a teacher and chaplain at Xavier Secondary College in Ba and as a chaplain to the De Montfort Brothers. **He is fondly remembered in Fiji. He also served for a few years in a parish in Vanuatu.**

A Requiem Mass for Fr Vincent was offered on June 2, 2016 at St Columban's

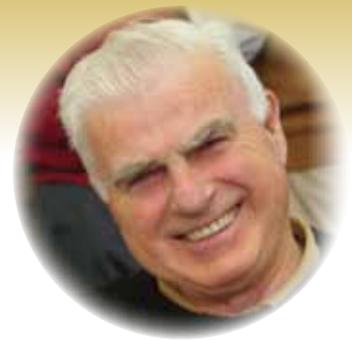
Essendon by his Columban confreres, his two sisters, Margaret and Sr. Mary, other relatives and a number of his friends, former students and parishioners. He was laid to rest at Melbourne General Cemetery, Carlton. May he rest in peace.



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*Columban Fr Ray Scanlon is the Vice-Director of the Columban Region of Australia & New Zealand.*

# 50th Anniversary of ordination to the priesthood



Columban Fr Reginald (Reg) Thomas Howard was ordained priest on June 17, 1966, at Maitland, NSW, by Bishop Toohey.

He was born in Cessnock, NSW, the eldest of four children. After completing his secondary education, he went on to study law, eventually practicing as a solicitor in Maitland and Liverpool. Feeling the call to priesthood, Fr Reg joined the Columbans, studying for the priesthood at the Columban seminary at Turramurra, NSW. After ordination, he was appointed to the Philippines and later returned to the Columban Region of Australia/New Zealand where

he has held many significant positions such as Regional Director, Vice Director, Regional Bursar, Delegate to two General Assemblies, Director of the Columban Mission Institute in Sydney and Regional Councillor.

During this period Fr Reg has also continued his connection with his home diocese of Newcastle-Maitland, including undertaking several years of pastoral work there.

*The Far East magazine congratulates Fr Reg on the golden anniversary of his ordination to priesthood as a Columban missionary. We give thanks for his 50 years of loyal and generous service.*



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## Fr Mick's dream - Philippines

Remembering his own experience as a child, Columban Fr Michael Sinnott had a dream of providing a centre for special needs children from poor families in the Philippines. Today 55 such children attend the centre daily and 21 receive home based care.

**With your help**, Columban Missionaries like Fr Michael are able to reach out and support special needs children in the Philippines. (see pages 04-05).



Photo: Fr George Hogarty SSC



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