

The Far East

COLUMBAN MISSION MAGAZINE

April 2016



The fight against domestic violence
One women's story from Peru.

A killer cyclone
Destruction in the wake of Cyclone Winston in Fiji.

Widows and widowers of St Columban
A new ministry in the Philippines.



ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY

PRICE \$1.50

The Far East

April 2016
Vol 98, No. 3

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)

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



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A mother and child in Fiji in what remains of their home after the destruction caused by Cyclone Winston. (See story pages 11-13).

Photo: ©UNICEF/Sokhin



From the Editor

Columban stories from around the world

Towards the end of February this year, the Pacific island nation of Fiji suffered widespread devastation, as a result of Tropical Cyclone Winston which included the strongest winds ever recorded in the Southern Hemisphere.

Soon after the cyclone, Columban Fr Frank Hoare who has ministered in Fiji for many years in the region of Ba describes the effects of this cyclone across the nation. His story is one of many in this April issue of *The Far East*, which offers a whole range of diverse stories and articles from across the world where Columbans work.

Irish Columban Sister Abbie O'Sullivan shares with us her ministry amongst the poor in Dublin. Columban Fr Tony Coney writes of the support for victims of domestic violence offered by St Bernadette's Children's Centre in Peru. From the island of Negros in the Philippines, Columban Fr Brian Gore works to organize the human rights of widows and widowers, who are often amongst the most neglected.

Louis Ybanez, a Columban seminarian from the Philippines, writes of his experience of offering colouring-in materials dealing with biblical themes,

for the illiterate children of Catholic families of bonded labourers living in conditions of semi-slavery.

Korean Columban Lay Missionary Catharina Son describes the joys of learning the Burmese language, after having to learn English, Tagalog and Spanish since becoming a Columban Lay Missionary. Columban Sister Mary Dillon also shares with us another story from Myanmar, that of a most special family there.

On a more pleasant note, Columban brothers, Frs Peter and Kevin O'Neill, both received important awards for the work they do. In December 2015, Fr Peter received "*Hsinchu City Hero Award 2015*", for his work in promoting the rights of foreign migrant workers. Also in December 2015, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland, conferred on Fr Kevin the Doctor of Philosophy honor. Fr Kevin is the Superior General of the Missionary Society of St Columban.

During January 2016, Columban Fr Robert McCulloch accompanied the head of the crozier belonging to St Gregory the Great from Rome to Canterbury Cathedral, England, for display during January. It was Pope

St Gregory who sent St Augustine to England in 597AD on a mission to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. It was Fr Robert's idea to send his relic to Canterbury before the meeting in January of the Anglican Primates from around the world.

We hope you enjoy reading this diverse range of stories in this April issue. They offer a broad picture of the work of Columbans across the globe.

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Listen to: The fight against domestic violence

The fight against domestic violence

FR TONY CONEY

Melia phoned us in the Children's Centre, distraught and asking for help, as her ex-husband had taken their eight year old daughter, Milagros, a few months previously, and any attempt she made through the police and the local DEMUNA (*Municipal Child protection Office*) to recover her child ended in frustration.

She approached us in the St Bernadette's Children's Centre here in Lima, Peru, as a last resort and related her story. The relationship with her husband had been initially very caring and loving, but for some reason, on the birth of their daughter, he became very violent towards Melia. The violence, punches, insults and humiliations etc, all happened in front of their daughter for a number of years, the motive being that he had been mistreated as a child. Whenever there was a problem, he would take the daughter away for a time and would only agree to bring her back when Melia revoked the complaint she had made to the police for family violence. This went on for years.

One day his mother told her that as a young man he had received psychiatric treatment for the violence he couldn't control and it became a condition for their continued relationship that he would resume this treatment. But soon, the violence would start all over again. It came to the stage last year that he took Milagros away for good and no matter what Melia tried nobody took any notice. *"I would surreptitiously go to visit my daughter in her grandma's house where Rolando had taken her, but in fear of him catching me"*, she said. *"Milagros would also be looking out the window in case he came telling me that I shouldn't visit because her father would beat me again. I would go to the school where Milagros was studying just to see her, but my husband would*

arrive threatening to kill me, to shoot me and at times waving a gun at me. I was petrified, but I wanted my daughter back. He would punch and kick me in front of the other parents and the Directora of the school, but nobody interfered. The Directora (School Principal) of the school wouldn't allow me to see Milagros because my husband had told her not to let me in. Once in the school office, with the Directora present, he again started punching and threatening me".

"After one of these episodes at the school I was walking back along the road crying when I met a young man who approached me on seeing my distress. I told him my story and he gave me the address of a place where I could go to for help. But it was several months after that when I eventually called the St Bernadette's Children's Centre which also has a "Child Defence Desk" connected with the local DEMUNA office. On being invited to the Centre I met Ruth and Marcela who listened to my story". It transpired that the young man, Miguel, who gave Melia the address of the Centre, was an ex-Columban seminarian, whose wife, Esperanza, had been an English teacher in the Centre some years previously.

Ruth and Marcela decided to present an official complaint to the Department of Justice which eventually sent them to the DEMUNA office in the area where Melia lived. Having presented a complaint against Rolando, they returned to find out why, after so long, nothing was being done, and there they discovered in the documentation that the husband was listed as the ex-director of the DEMUNA in that area, and those in charge now didn't want to move against him. This is when Ruth and Marcela decided to go to ALEGRA (Free Legal Assistance) where they talked with a Dr Peláez, a lawyer who took up the case. At the

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The violence, punches, insults and humiliations, etc. All happened in front of their daughter for a number of years, the motive being that he had been mistreated as a child.

time they went to a Television Channel whose Sunday programme called *Nunca Mas (Never Again)*, highlights abuses like that of Mella. With their lawyer, they also presented a complaint to the Family Court.

The program *Nunca Mas* arranged that Melia would go to the school again in an attempt to meet her daughter, Milagros, but this time with hidden cameras to tape anything that might occur. The husband did arrive and once again was very abusive, verbally and physically. The encounter was filmed so it could be presented on the following Sunday night programme. They also interviewed the Directora of the school as to why she didn't take action against the abuse that was being perpetrated outside and inside her school. It turned out, to our astonishment, that she was a psychologist who had also worked in the Children's Centre many years before, and who was the person who had the initial idea of opening up a home for children who had been sexually abused. This now

exists as part of the St Bernadette's programme for the protection of children, and the prevention of sexual abuse. She apologized publicly on television for her inertia. Unfortunately this is a common trait when it comes to trying to present a complaint, and move it through the local authorities.

Because of the television programme, the complaint was acted upon almost immediately with the Family Court awarding Melia guardianship of her daughter. Nothing more happened to Rolando other than losing custody of his daughter. Melia still lives in fear of reprisals from her ex-husband, but at least now she has her daughter with her. There were many players involved in bringing this situation to a happy end.

Columban Fr Tony Coney founded the St Bernadette's Children's Centre in Lima, Peru. He has served in Peru since 1996.



Fr Tony Coney with the children at the St Bernadette's Children's Centre, Peru.

Crayons for kids but no education

LOUIE YBANEZ



*M*y name is Louis Ybanez and I am a Columban seminarian from the Philippines. As a part of my formation to be a missionary priest, I have been assigned for a two year hands-on experience to the Columban parish at the town of Matli, in the arid Sindh province in the south of Pakistan.

Most of our work at the Matli parish is with families living in a type of modern day slavery. The majority of our parishioners are bonded labourers, which means they owe debts of money to wealthy landlords, for whom they work and who treat these people as their personal property. These parishioners are members of the Parkari Kohli ethnic community, a small impoverished minority tribal group. They live in small villages of two or three families in homes made of mud. The land they live on is owned by the landlords.

Our chief pastoral work here in the parish at Matli is to go out most days to visit one of the Parkari Kohli villages. Most villages are about one hour's drive from the parish in the middle of vast farmlands.

We usually leave the parish house around four in the afternoon and return to the parish late at night, depending on the distance travelled. A visit means sitting for at least an hour or more talking with the local people. It means trying to get to know them and to know about their daily lives. We then share a meal with the villagers and this is followed by the celebration of the Eucharist.

Keeping up the connection with our Parkari Kohli Catholics is very important. That is why these visits are



so important. I have been out visiting villages most days over the last month since being assigned here and have never visited the same village twice.

Our visits to the villages helps remind these bonded labourers of God's love and care for them and their dignity as beloved children of God. At the same time, because of the extreme poverty and malnutrition of our parishioners and their neighbours that we encounter on these visits, it allows us to offer much needed health care where possible.

As we arrive at a village, we are met with the typical greeting of welcome, "Isu ni jee", which means "Long live Jesus".

We are then led to sit on a string bed called a *charpoi*, which is set outside the homes. It is then covered by a colourful cloth called a *ralli* which reflects the great craftsmanship of the Parkari Kohli people. The different ways by which they combine colours and the geometric patterns interests me. It is truly a work of art that they themselves should take pride in.

During the ensuing conversation, a hot chai tea is served. Large numbers of children usually gather around the

conversation of the adults. With their parent's permission, I usually bring colouring books with stories from the Bible for the children to colour. As there are no tables or chairs, the children sit quietly on the dry mud floors as they colour in the images in the books. They love this activity. Very few of these children, especially the girls, have the opportunity to go to school. The few schools are very far away from these villages.

It is amazing but it is always the very first time in their lives for these children to use colour pencils or crayons to colour in. As these children, like their parents, are almost always illiterate, colouring-in brings great joy to them. It fascinates them. The children's imagination is stimulated by the use of colour and it helps them grow in their faith. During the celebration of the Eucharist, the Catechists uses the children's newly coloured-in pictures to deepen their understanding of our faith.

Each time I leave a village I usually feel a little sad. Something as simple as crayons and colouring pencils means so much to children who never go to school, never see a book, and never learn to read, write and count.

I wonder when I will be back and hope for another chance to reach out to these families in their poverty, discrimination and oppressed conditions.

This arid area is watered by irrigation canals that make agriculture here possible. As I travel around this area, crossing these canals, I have come to think that these canals are a fitting allegory for our visits to the villages. Our pastoral visits are indispensable because it is like the water that gives the Parkari Kohli people an opportunity to grow in their faith and trust in God. It also makes the Church more aware of the ongoing plight of the Parkari Kohli against a life of slavery, oppression and the terrible injustices they suffer. As a parish we reach out to bring the Gospel of hope and liberation to our parishioners.

Louie Ybanez is a Columban seminarian from the Philippines, working on mission in Sindh province in the south of Pakistan.



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He said, "there was no bread left at home this morning so I couldn't make a sandwich". OK, so why not go to the supermarket down the road. He said, "My Ma had no money to give me to buy something today".

Late for school

REFLECTION
SR ABBIE O'SULLIVAN

IRELAND

No bread, no lunch, no money - a daily occurrence

*I*t is now nine years since I started working as a personal counsellor in a Boy's Secondary School in Dublin and also nine years since I started working in the Capuchin Day Centre for Homeless People in Dublin. As regards the school I can see a great improvement over the years but as regards the Homeless Centre the needs are far greater now. The economic recovery in Ireland may have improved for many and the surge in technology and science may be impacting and benefitting many but at the same time many others are left with minimal comforts and many also live in abject deprivation.

Recently a student, Leo, who is 12 years old was referred to me. He is a very nice quiet, gentle lad and well dressed, but socially deprived. I was told he finds it hard to remember things and he is usually quite late for school even though he lives nearby. Ask him what his previous class was and he has forgotten. Ask him what his next class will be and he doesn't know. He is very interested in school and wants to learn as much as he can and is never bored. In the course of our time together I asked him why he is always late for school. He said, *"We have nine in our family and only one bathroom. In the morning my parents use the bathroom first. Then my two older sisters and then my two older brothers. Then I can go, and after that my two younger brothers. They are in Primary School but they start later than I do so they are usually on time"*. It didn't take much stretch of my imagination to visualize the early morning scene in that house. I felt uncomfortable when I thought of two bathrooms in my house of four and a sink in every room. I asked Leo what he would do for lunch – would he go home or would he have his lunch in school. He said, *"there was no bread left at home this morning so I couldn't make a sandwich"*. OK, so why not go to the supermarket down the road. He said, *"My Ma had no money to give me to buy something today"*. I know that today means every day. And here am I trying to eat less and cut down my weight!

In the Capuchin Centre for Homeless People 280 full breakfasts are served every morning. Over 500 sit-down dinners are served every day. Every Wednesday 1,700

bags of groceries are handed out. The Centre depends on donations and there is always enough. All kinds of people come to the Centre and no questions are asked or judgments made. There are homeless Irish men and women. There are people from Europe, Africa and other places. We have drug addicts, drop-outs, gypsies, men who have lost their homes or businesses. We have women of the street, women who have been badly hurt, women whose children have been taken from them and who are pregnant again. These are the poor and the vulnerable of the earth.

They have little except their stories and each story is the stuff of a best seller. Recently, an elderly man called me. He said *"Sister, I have a tent where I usually sleep at night. I carry it around with me and pitch it where I find a suitable and safe place. But last night was warm and I slept out in the park under a tree. When I woke my mobile phone and my last 20 Euro were gone from my pocket. I have nothing now except my tent"*. The man stood there with a red, crumpled face, tears on his cheeks and a torn backpack over his shoulder. I stood beside him and felt uncomfortable in my security. He said, *"Sister, I'm not asking for anything. I just want to share my story and know that someone cares"*. I never saw him again.

Most days as I leave the Centre I question the way I live – all the things I take for granted, the demands I can make when I need something, the dissatisfaction I feel when I can't get exactly what I want. My sins are often before me and the only reparation I can make is to utter a prayer for all who are deprived and hope that someday somehow they will get what they deserve and are entitled to. These people surely are the salt of the earth.

Columban Sr Abbie O'Sullivan worked in the Philippines, Hong Kong and Britain and is presently on mission in Ireland.

The Holy Family of today

SR MARY DILLON



MYANMAR

Columban Sr Mary Dillon works in Myanmar amongst those living with the HIV virus. We publish below her letter of thanks to her supporters sent for Christmas 2015.

*O*n behalf of all the patients that we minister to daily I want to say a very sincere 'thank you'. Your support and prayers have reached out to many, many poor and struggling people. These are the people who have very little of this world's trappings but who awaken each day knowing that survival is overshadowing every movement and choice they make.

I would like to introduce you to one such family, Zau Ing, his wife, Roi Twang and their son, Ma Naw. They are the Holy Family of today's world. They are steeped in the poverty of 'not having', poverty of 'health' and poverty of 'acceptance'. The one thing they do have is dignity and this came across very forcefully when I asked them if I could take a family photo about four weeks ago. The wife, Roi Twang's first response was "*Oh my shoes are too poor and dirty*". Notice that she holds her feet up under her skirt. Then she protested and said she had to don the only presentable skirt she had. It got me thinking of how I treat the poor. I can be so busy providing things and helping them to plan for their needs but deep in the human psyche is the desire to have dignity, to come across well, to be seen to have what the other takes for granted and to be respected.

Zau Ing's family is really poor. They live in a watchman's small house, minding the property of a wealthy family. The roof is still on the house but the walls have taken a mighty battering. When I asked him if he was cold at night, Zau Ing said "*we have no wood to light a fire and very little clothing*". Thanks to your generous help we were able to give them a bag of rice for Christmas as well as warm clothes for all three of them. This warm clothing will be a great help for the frosty nights we have presently.



Zau Ing (right), wife, Roi Twang (left) and son, Ma Naw (middle).

Zau Ing contacted the HIV virus about four years ago. He looks well but the virus has left him totally blind and with severe diabetes. His son, sitting next to him, is mentally handicapped and never went to school. His older son, who is not in the photo, is a heroin drug user. His wife is illiterate. We, the Columban Sisters, gave them two small piglets a few months back and continually supervise Roi Twang as to the best practice in rearing them.

Zau Ing tells us often that when he was healthy he provided for his family but now he feels sad and rejected. Being HIV positive, many of his friends and extended family avoid him. Some even point the finger at him when he walks on the road. For me Zau Ing is a gentle soul with a very welcoming smile. He rarely complains. He loves a visit and loves to have someone to listen to him.

Zau Ing is your friend too. You have helped to lighten his burden and for this he is grateful.

Many, many thanks for your generosity, we do appreciate your care, concern and support and do know that we remember you and your families in our prayers.

Blessings, Sister Mary Dillon.

Columban Sr Mary Dillon has worked in Myanmar (formerly Burma) since 2002.

A killer cyclone

FR FRANK HOARE



FIJI

November to April is known as the cyclone season in Fiji . People here expect to be tested by a tropical cyclone every two or three years. I arrived in Fiji in 1973 and since then have often heard people reminisce about Cyclone Bibi which devastated the West of Fiji in 1972. Since then cyclones with different names- Kina, Meli , Eric and Nigel, which only two days later followed Eric - have passed leaving memories of destruction behind them.



Photo: AAP Image/Naziah Ali, Mai Life Magazine

Severe tropical Cyclone Winston

In mid-February this year Tropical Cyclone Winston passed fairly close to Fiji on an eastward path towards Tonga. It missed the large islands but did damage to some of the smaller Lau islands. It damaged one of the big islands in the Tonga group and then made a sharp U-turn picking up force from the heat of the ocean below as it reversed its path towards Fiji. The government issued warnings to everyone to prepare for the cyclone by nailing wooden shields over windows, tying down roofs with wire, storing up food and water and candles and buying batteries for radios and torches. Evacuation centres in schools and halls were prepared.

The cyclone passed over the Lau islands again and the Lomaviti islands in the middle of the Fiji group before steering a path between the two main islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. It finally passed over the Yasawa group and moved south-east between New Zealand and Vanuatu. It was a force five cyclone, the strongest ever to pass through the South Pacific, with average winds of 250 kph and gusts of up to 320 kph. Its slow pace - about four hours to fully pass any point - exacerbated its effects. The winds were accompanied by strong rain and some of the coastal villages were also swamped by massive waves washing over them and sweeping up everything in their paths. The smaller islands were struck during daylight, otherwise the 50 deaths recorded would have been far more. 50,000 families are now reported homeless.

Ba Parish

The Columban parish of Ba felt the force of the cyclone from about 6:30pm until 10:30pm. Fr Nilton Iman (from Peru) and Fr John Lee (from Korea), are both young Columban Associate priests who had taken over Ba parish two months previously. They had never experienced anything like this. Fr Nilton was white and speechless with fright. Fr John thought he would not survive the night. Some louvers in the presbytery were smashed and the ferocious wind and heavy rain poured in, knocking pictures from the walls, scattering glass, books and clothes over the floor and flooding the rooms. Downstairs, parish workers Mosese and Peni with a visitor, Mosese Jr. saw the louvers in the side wall of the garage bulging inwards from the force of the wind. They feared that if the windows gave way then the new parish van would be thrown against the pillars and damaged.

Mosese Jr and Peni tried to hold the louvers despite slipping on the wet floor while Mosese Sr searched in vain for a hammer. Mosese Jr was scared that the wind would shatter the louver glass and that the shards would slam into his face. As Mosese Sr returned with a half concrete block the other two gave up on the louvers and retreated to the garage. Mosese Sr shouted to them, *"hold those windows - they are our life-savers."* The two returned and piled one table on top of the other and Mosese Sr nailed them against the windows with the make shift hammer.

The experience in the villages

Meanwhile in Natanuku village about 15km away Catholic villagers welcomed Methodists and members of the Assemblies of God into their newly built church. The Catholic catechist opted to remain with his family and two other families in his Fijian style thatched house. Sometime during the ordeal the main posts of his house gave way and the A frame thatched roof sagged to the ground. The three families survived the terrifying storm squashed together in a small cave-like space under the roof. Back in the church as the storm abated one of the Catholic leaders, also named Mosese, remarked to the people, *"I notice a few new faces here tonight. The bell rings every Sunday and some of you seem a bit deaf to it. Tonight there was no bell but you are here!"*

Votua is a big village on the Ba river with houses close together. Their veteran catechist, Ramoce, said that they were surprised that the cyclone came, not from the east as they had expected from past experience, but from the south. The noise of the galvanized iron being folded back, being torn off roofs and smashing into other roofs, was deafening and terrifying. The children screamed and the mothers cried inside the houses. People emerged from damaged houses and risked injuries from flying timber and roofing iron to rush into stronger houses nearby. Ramoce pushed tables and heavy wet mattresses against the windows of their house. They were grateful that, because the Ba river had been dredged after the last flood, the river didn't overflow its banks and flood the village as well. After the cyclone some people complained that the terrible noise of that night was still echoing in their ears. Traumatic memories continue to haunt many.

Ilowane, the catechist from the nearby Nawaqarua village, left his family in their solid concrete house to keep watch

alone in the village timber church. He was worried about the safety of the Eucharist there. After some time the howling wind burst open the front door of the church. lowane opened a side door to allow the wind an escape passage rather than risk the roof being blown off. The mats and linoleum were soaked but the church and Eucharist were saved.



The noise of the galvanized iron being folded back, being torn off roofs and smashing into other roofs, was deafening and terrifying.

The Aftermath

Back in the parish center when the cyclone had passed on about 10:30pm Peni mixed some yaqona, the traditional Fiji drink, for Frs Nilton and John Lee who had joined them during the cyclone and were now unable to sleep. There was a call for a hymn and Fr John started a hymn to Mary. Fr Nilton followed up with a hymn to Christ.

When I visited the villages of Natanuku, Votua and Nawaqarua a few days after the cyclone with some food rations I found the villagers nailing down roofs, clearing up fallen debris and drying out clothes and mattresses. Old friends greeted me. The catechists Ramoce and Lowane invited me to share a bowl of yaqona. I was glad to see that the government rations had begun to reach the most affected. As I drove away the sky was red with the setting sun behind me and the smoke and flames of the fires burning rubbish. I was struck with admiration for the courage, faith and good humour of the people of Fiji who refused to be crushed by this very traumatic experience.

Columban Fr Frank Hoare first went to Fiji in 1973.



Photo: AP Photo/Tertius Pickard



Photo: AAP Image/Leca Vunibobo



Photo: AAP image/Fiji Ministry of Information

Anglican Archbishop sends 1000 'thank yous' to Columban

FR ROBERT MCCULLOCH

Accompanying relics from Rome to Canterbury

In the January 7, 2016 Vatican Radio interviewed Columban Fr Robert McCulloch on the occasion of the accompaniment of important relics from Rome to Canterbury.

(Vatican Radio) Relics associated with St Gregory the Great and St Augustine of Canterbury will be brought together in Canterbury Cathedral next week as Anglican leaders meet for an encounter concerning the future of the worldwide Communion.

Part of a precious pastoral staff from the Roman Church of San Gregorio al Celio is being shipped across to the UK on Friday, where it will be on display, alongside a rare 6th century book of the Gospels given by Pope Gregory to St Augustine as he set off on his mission to take the Christian faith to England. The manuscript is the oldest surviving Latin illustrated Gospel book and one of the most ancient European books in existence.

The idea of loaning the relic, just ahead of the annual "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity", was the brainchild of Australian Fr Robert McCulloch, a long time missionary in Pakistan who currently serves as Procurator General of the Society of St Columban here in Rome. Fr Robert, together with Rev Marcus Walker, associate director of Rome's Anglican Centre, will accompany the relic on its historic pilgrimage to and from Canterbury Cathedral.

Just before leaving Rome, Fr Robert came to Vatican Radio to talk to Philippa Hitchen, Vatican Radio about the significance of this important ecumenical event.

Fr Robert says the relic is an ivory carved head of the pastoral staff traditionally associated with Pope St Gregory the Great. It was he who, in 597, sent St Augustine to convert the English after the famous incident at the Roman forum where he saw some English slave boys and called them 'not Angles, but angels' (non Angli, sed angeli). The story, Fr Robert remarks, underlines Pope Gregory's concern for evangelization throughout Europe.

Fr Robert says the idea of this ecumenical venture came to him after the Archbishop of Canterbury, last July, invited Australian Cardinal George Pell to celebrate Mass at the High Altar of Canterbury Cathedral – the first cardinal to do so since the Reformation.

Fr Robert notes with a chuckle that all the necessary permits and insurance documents were gathered from the Vatican, the Italian government ministries and the British government in just two weeks – described by some as an ongoing miracle of Pope Saint Gregory the Great!

The relic, valued at £250,000, will be escorted by security guards to the airport in Rome, and again from Heathrow airport to Canterbury Cathedral, where it will be officially received by the Dean at the conclusion of Evensong on Friday.

It will go on public viewing for the weekends of January 9/10 and 16/17 and during the week it will be available as an object of meditation for the Anglican Primates meeting at their closed door encounter.

On January 15, 2016 the St Augustine book of the Gospels will also be on display there, in what Fr Robert describes as "an extraordinary coming together" of the head of the staff, symbol of ecclesial authority and the book of the Gospels, symbol of the authority of the Word of God.

St Gregory relic back home at start of Christian Unity week

Fr Robert says it's important to note the relic associated with St Gregory is returning from Canterbury to Rome on the day that we mark the beginning of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Through this object, he says, we can "recapture the missionary link" in common faith, history and heritage between Catholics and Anglicans.

Fr Robert notes that this year also marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Anglican Centre in Rome, following the first official meeting of an Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, to Pope Paul VI. He talks about the important ministry over the past 50 years of linking the Roman Catholic Church with the Anglican Church, of "maintaining a fraternal, ecumenical and deeply spiritual presence" of the Anglican Church in Rome.



Relics of St Gregory & St Augustine on display in Canterbury.

Archbishop Sir David Moxon KNZM, Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative to the Holy See and Director of Anglican Centre in Rome, in an email January 20, 2016 thanked Fr Robert McCulloch (*Procurator General of the Society of St Columban*) for his great and loving initiative and efforts regarding the sharing of the crozier head of Pope St Gregory the Great with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates meeting at Canterbury this January.

Dear Robert,

Grace and peace to you,

I write to place on record for your own files and also the files of your confreres and superiors, the profound gratitude of the Anglican Centre in Rome for your great and loving initiative and efforts regarding the sharing of the crozier head of Pope St Gregory the great with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates meeting at Canterbury this January.

This idea of using an ancient relic from Rome which is deeply connected to the evangelisation of the south of England at the end of the 6th century was ingenious and challenging, but your care and your diplomatic efforts bore so much fruit, in such a short time, seemingly against the odds. You gave so much time, effort and care to this possibility and literally and personally saw it through in every detail. Only you could have facilitated this, assisted by Father Marcus Walker from the Centre here and Steve Townsend from the British Embassy to the Holy See. As you know the Archbishop and his family were moved to their core when the relic was handed over at Canterbury and this memory will remain indelibly printed on their hearts and minds for as long as they live.

The presence of such a potent sign of the Catholic origins of the Archbishopric of Canterbury at a critical meeting such as the recent primate's one, undoubtedly had an effect on those present. Surely it was a symbol of what catholic unity means from one of the oldest of our stories as Catholics and Anglicans. Indeed this phrase "catholic unity" ended up in the primate's communique as a sign of what they achieved and what they intend to seek to maintain into the future. And so you have greatly helped the Anglican Communion at a crucial moment of its history, by an act of sheer grace and goodwill.

I thank God for you and for your far seeing discernment of what grace is capable of, reaching across the denominations, across time and between hearts.

Deo Gratias!

David

The Anglican Centre in Rome
promoting Christian unity in a divided world
Palazzo Doria Pamphilj, Piazza del Collegio Romano 2
00186 Rome Italy

www.anglicancentreinrome.org



The Very Reverend Robert Willis & Fr Robert McCulloch.



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.*

SOUTH KOREA - Five new Korean missionaries "ad gentes"

Ad gentes is the Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church.

*S*eoul, Korea (*Agenzia Fides*) – Five new Korean missionaries have been commissioned to carry the good news of the Gospel to distant lands.

In a special Mass celebrated in Seoul Cathedral on March 3, 2016 Cardinal Yeom Soo-jung, Catholic Archbishop of Seoul, conferred a solemn missionary mandate on five priests of the archdiocese who will soon start their missionary adventure in a foreign country.

They are:

- Fr Nam-eun Goong, who will go to Saitama diocese in Japan;
- Fr Shin Gwang-ho, who will go to Sydney, Australia;
- Fr Kim Sung-min is destined for the Chinese diocese of Xi'an;
- **Fr Lee Hyun-gyu and Fr Jung Sung-hoon will join the Missionary Society of Saint Columban as associates.**

Since 2006 the Korean Catholic Church has sent 19 priests from Seoul on mission "ad gentes" in ten countries-Taiwan, China, Japan, Tanzania, Peru, Guatemala, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Spain and France.

The Mass was organised by the Seoul Foreign Missions Department, an office instituted by Cardinal Yeom in 2013 to underline the importance of mission ad gentes. Fr Park Kyu-hee, Missions Department head, said: *"We will do our best every year to send more missionaries to spread the Gospel of Our Lord"*.

The Mass was presided over by Cardinal Yeom Soo-jung and concelebrated by his auxiliary bishops. With their Mandate as a sign of diocesan unity, the five priests received a special stole bearing the official Seoul archdiocese logo and the laying on of hands by the concelebrating auxiliary Bishops.

In his homily reflecting on the passage in the Gospel where Jesus sends his disciples to proclaim the Gospel, Cardinal Yeom reminded those present that it was thanks to the work of foreign missionaries that the Catholic Church developed in Korea. *"Now it is our turn to go to countries in difficulty and share the Good News with them"* he said.



Agenzia Fides - Information Service of the Pontifical Mission Society - March 4, 2016

Mission Intention for April

That Christians in Africa may give witness to love and faith in Jesus Christ amid political-religious conflicts.



From the Director

After Easter

Easter is a wonderful celebration of the surprising nature of God. Who would have predicted or expected the resurrection of Jesus?

The liturgy in our Church tracks the happenings of the disciples post-resurrection in readings from the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel of John.

Life for the apostles and for many people was exciting and dramatic. They had experienced the turmoil of the death of their leader and the fear that they would be next.

The Gospel of the Second Sunday recounts how the Apostles, after the resurrection, huddled in a room for fear that the Jews would kill them. Then Jesus appeared among them and changed their fear into joy. Even the doubter Thomas was convinced by Jesus who invited him to place his hand in the wound made by a spear. This was later followed by the Pentecost experience which changed them, made them bold.

The Second Sunday of Easter is also known as Divine Mercy Sunday but the Sunday readings are not about mercy. They are about the power of Jesus' Spirit residing in the apostles as they gathered in Solomon's Porch in the outer Temple.

It seems three groups were present. Those who held the apostles in high regard but did not join them; others who did join this group of new people and people who brought the sick to be healed, even by Peter's shadow falling on them.

Nothing has changed today. There are those who admire the works of the Church but do not want to belong to it. And there are those who do receive that mysterious gift of faith, while others are only interested in getting help. They are often not people of faith, but will try anything to get their family members healed when scientific treatment is no longer an option. For them, the source of the blessing is immaterial, it really doesn't matter where it comes from.

As we read further into the Acts of the Apostles, disunity in the group appears; they are expelled from the synagogues and all sorts of new problems arise. For example, the Gentiles wanting to join the group.

Nothing has changed today. There are those who admire the works of the Church but do not want to belong to it.

The same human concerns are present today but we can take heart in the figure of Thomas who is an archetypal figure for us. He is the 'father of all disbelievers'. When Jesus first appears to the Apostles, Thomas is not present and declares that he will not believe that Jesus is alive unless he puts his hand into the wound made by the spear. So it happens, when Jesus re-appears, Thomas' doubt becomes faith with the resounding words, "My Lord and my God!"

From such a tenuous beginning it is amazing that people today believe in the same realities of the death and resurrection of Jesus after 2,000 years.

Each generation has believers with a deep faith in the risen Lord, deep enough to die for it as the apostles did.

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



Brothers receive awards

Fr Kevin O'Neill receiving an honorary Doctorate, December 14, 2015.

Columban Frs Peter and Kevin O'Neill are twin brothers who hail from Geelong, Victoria. During the month of December, 2015, both received awards.

Columban Fr Kevin O'Neill receives an honorary Doctorate in Philosophy

*O*n the December 14, 2015, Fr Kevin received an honorary Doctorate in Philosophy from St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland. Fr Kevin has been the Superior General of the Missionary Society of St Columban since 2012. He received this honorary Doctorate as Superior General, during the commemoration year of the 1400th Anniversary of the death of St Columban in 615AD.

Fr Kevin's honor was intended to recognise the outstanding missionary work done by the entire Missionary Society of St Columban – formerly the Maynooth Mission to China – from its foundation until the present day.

In his acceptance speech Fr Kevin stated:

"On behalf of the Missionary Society of St Columban I wish to thank the Pontifical University, St Patrick's College, Maynooth,

for conferring this award in commemoration of the 1400th anniversary of the death of St Columban and in recognition of the work of the Missionary Society of St Columban. This award honors the rich heritage and legacy which unites our work and mission.

"As Columbans we enter into a given cultural context sharing life with the people among whom we live and serve. We deliberately choose to locate ourselves among those most in need and strive to live in solidarity with them. We encourage people and walk with them on their faith journey and in their struggle to change the unjust structures that keep them poor and on the margins of society. The source of our witness and actions is our faith in Jesus. We desire to mirror in our lives the pattern of Jesus' life, helping people of all faiths, or no faith, to gain their dignity as sons and daughters of God, loved by God."



IRELAND



HONG KONG



TAIWAN

Columban Fr Peter O'Neill received the 2015 Hsinchu City Hero Award

On December 26, 2015 the mayor of Hsinchu City, Taiwan awarded Fr Peter O'Neill and two other people the 2015 Hsinchu City Hero award.

Fr Peter received the award in recognition of his 23 years of service to migrant workers and immigrants in Hsinchu City.

Fr Peter is the director of the Hope Worker's Centre founded by the Missionary Society of St. Columban in 1986. The centre works to educate migrants on their rights, lobby the government for fair employment conditions and assist immigrants in distress.

In his acceptance speech, Fr Peter stated:

"At our rally in 1996 we began lobbying the Taiwan government to reduce the work hours from 48 hours/week to 40 hours/week.

Recently we received some good news that at long last the Taiwan government has finally approved a 40 hour work week which many industrialized countries have had for over 40 years.

In 2000 the working hours were reduced to 84 hours every 2 weeks. We have waited 20 years for this victory."

The Super General of the Society of St Columban, Fr Kevin O'Neil, twin brother of Peter, arrived in Taiwan just in time to attend the award ceremony. It had been 15 years since they celebrated Christmas and the New Year together.

We congratulate Frs Peter and Kevin on their well-deserved awards.



Fr Peter O'Neill protesting with migrant worker in Taiwan.



Widows and widowers of St Columban

FR BRIAN GORE

*I*n November 23, 2015 we celebrated the 1400th anniversary of the death of St Columban and here in the Philippine Church we celebrated 2015 as the “Year of the Poor”.

To mark these two occasions and to give more substance to them, I decided to organize the widows and widowers around San Columbano Retreat House, our former Columban Central House, on the island of Negros. This had been in my mind for some time.

We are calling this organization, in the language of the island of Negros (Ilongo): “*Asosasyon sang mga Balo ni San Columbano*” or in English “*Association of the Widows and Widowers of Saint Columban*”. In Ilongo the word for widow and widower is the same – Balo.

While the government gives some recognition to Senior Citizens and People with Disabilities, widows and widowers

can only hope to get 500 pesos per month (around \$15 Australian or New Zealand). However this rarely happens!

The needs of widows and widowers are very different to those of seniors or people with disabilities. This situation has to change.

I was also very aware of how the prophets and, of course, Jesus regarded the plight of widows and orphans. They were then and are even now, especially in countries where the majority of people are poor, prime examples of the most needy in our societies.

The week before the feast of Saint Columban, I announced at Mass that we would have a meeting the next day of the widows and widowers in our small community here in Batang, in Negros. To my pleasant surprise 33 came. I explained the reasons for bringing them together and for the need to organize themselves into a registered



I was also very aware of how the prophets and, of course, Jesus regarded the plight of widows and orphans. They were then and are even now, especially in countries where the majority of people are poor, prime examples of the most needy in our societies.

association. I told them as long as they remain silent and do not complain nothing would change. Being registered would give them legal status and the ability to dialogue with government agencies.

At the next meeting a week later the attendance grew to 55, 52 women and three men. I have been assured that there are even more! To have such a large number of widows and widowers in a small community is quite a revelation. Obviously there is a great need to be met.

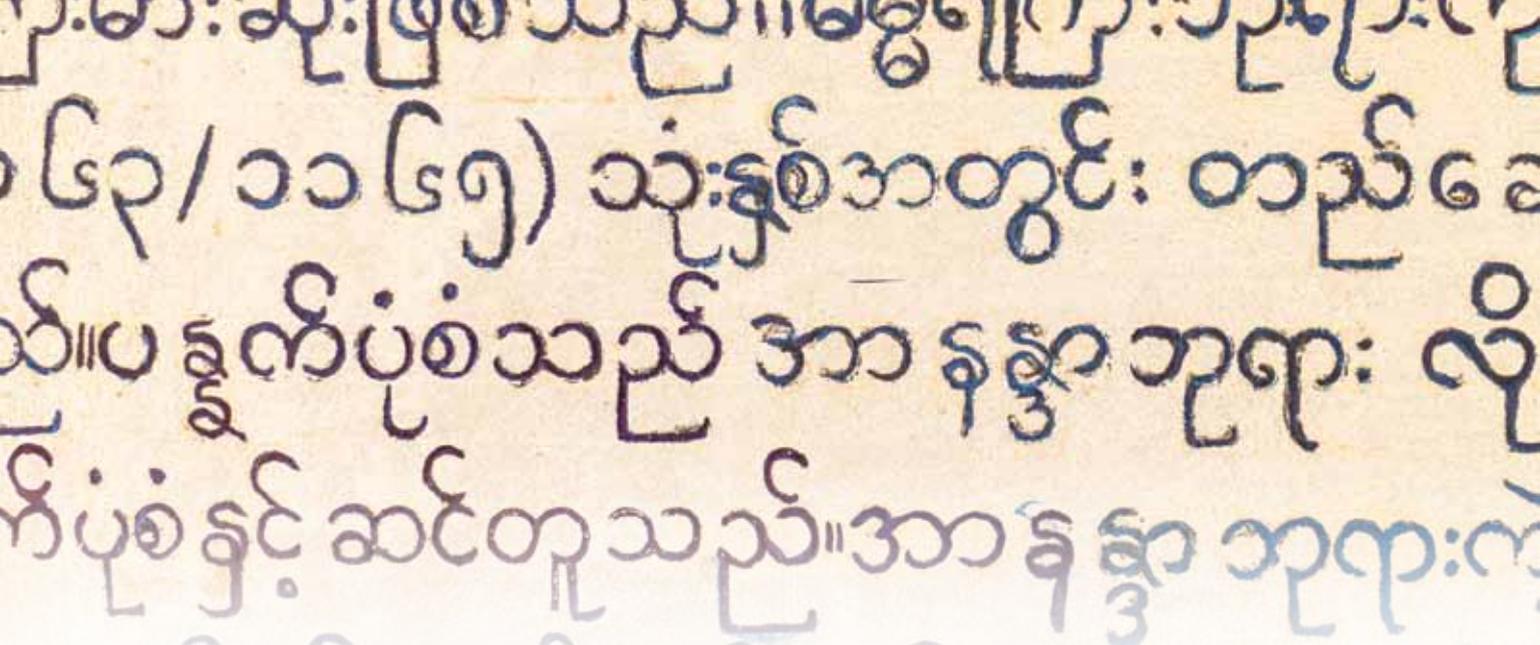
For their concerns to be acknowledged and met the widows and widowers need a united voice. A strong association is essential in achieving this. In the coming months we will continue to meet in order to draw up the vision, mission and activities of the association. A major activity of the association will be learning how to access government funding for their needs. The Philippines is a rich country with a lot of poor people. The poor, because they are not organized, have no chance accessing this wealth. There is plenty of money for less important things so why not for the widows and widowers?

The association will be a faith based group where faith, compassion and service to our neighbour is central.

I believe that this is one good way to honor Saint Columban as we celebrate 1400 years since his death and to continue the Columban commitment to the poor in the Philippines, not just in 2015 but into the future.

Columban Fr Brian Gore works in the Philippines on the island of Negros at the San Columbano Retreat House and also with "The Negros Nine Human Development Foundation".





Learning Burmese can be fun!

CATHARINA SON

Since I joined Columban Lay Mission Programme in 2000, I have had to learn three different languages - English, Filipino (Tagalog) and Spanish, apart from my own native language, Korean. Now, since my assignment to Myanmar last June, I am learning yet another language - Burmese!

Some people tell me that I am so lucky because I can speak four languages. But honestly I don't have much confidence to speak any of those languages. It seems all languages are mixed up in me! When my Burmese teacher asks me something in English, many times I answer 'Si!' (yes!) in Spanish since Peru was my last (and unexpected) assignment. When I get surprised, until now I express myself 'Ay, naku! Jesus Maria Josef!' as the Filipinos do! Luckily my two companions in our house, Columba and Lenette, speak Tagalog so we don't have much difficulty among ourselves saying something in Tagalog.

From my past experience of learning different languages I realize that everyone needs some time to get used to speaking a new language. Some can get the language a little bit faster and some might need more time to get it.

As I see it, I am not a quick learner. So when I arrived in Myanmar, my concern about learning Burmese was not how fast I could get it, but rather how much I could enjoy learning this new language!

Burmese is a 'very new language' for me. In Burmese, they have their own alphabet and characters with four tones including nasal sounds which I am not familiar with. And they use their own characters for numbers as well as using the Arabic numerals (1,2,3....) so I was not even able to read the bus numbers going to school at the beginning. Their numerals are mostly round shapes that, to me, look like a kind of design and it took me some time to discover how different from each other they are! They look very similar but all are different letters.

After my language class, I practice how to 'DRAW' those letters correctly. One by one, I draw the letters repeatedly in a blank notebook. I feel that I have gone back to when I was a six year old child and had just started



Photo: ©iStock.com/panyajompatong
Photo: Catharina Son



MYANMAR

Some people tell me that I am so lucky because I can speak four languages.

learning how to write Korean! Thank God, I found that it's interesting. I made a joke to my friends that I fell in love with these lovely Burmese letters. About five months has now passed and the beautiful designs have now become like letters to me. I can write them more quickly and in a better way without too much confusion. I still need more practice to properly pronounce them but the Myanmar people can get what I am trying to say. How smart they are!

I remember one TV program in Korea about some elderly people who missed the opportunity, as children, to learn to write in Korean. When they got the chance to learn how to write in Korean in their later life, they really put their heart into their studying. They 'draw' the letters very carefully but happily with their shaking hands. It was a beautiful scene and I admired them as I saw their smiles. They wrote their first letter in Korean for their beloved families and to say thanks

to their husband, daughters, sons and grandchildren for their support, encouragement and patience.

My Burmese is getting into better shape now. When I am able to write my very first letter in Burmese, I will celebrate by sending it to a Burmese friend of mine.

Columban Lay Missionary Catharina Son comes from Korea and has worked in the Philippines, Peru and now in Myanmar.



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"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.

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Crayons for kids but no education - Pakistan

Columban seminarian Louis Ybanez goes out with the Columban priests of the parish of Matli, in Pakistan, to visit families living as bonded labourers for rich landlords.

Louis brings crayons and colouring books with biblical themes for the children to colour in. These children, especially the girls, never get a chance to go to school.

With your help, Columban Missionaries like those in Pakistan are able to reach out to the poorest amongst the poor. (See pages 6-7)



Photo: Louie Ybanez



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