

The Far East

COLUMBAN MISSION MAGAZINE

May 2016



Cardinal Pell, the Royal Commission and the Year of Mercy

Baptism in China
One family's faith story.

Rising from the ashes
A fire in a shanty-town in the Philippines.



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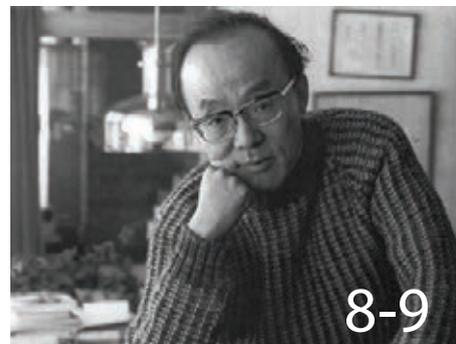
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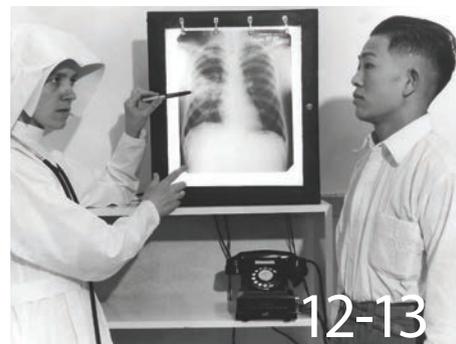
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Fr John Keenan visits residents of Parola, a shantytown in the Philippines that was recently devastated by a fire. (See Columban Fr John Keenan's story pages 22-23).

Photo: Fr John Keenan SSC



From the Editor

The Holy Spirit continues to be poured out

The May issue of *The Far East* offers many examples of how the Holy Spirit continues to be poured out upon all kinds of people and situations across the world. This year Pentecost Sunday falls on May 15.

After working in Hong Kong for 67 years, the Missionary Sisters of St Columban have decided to leave. We offer a special tribute to the work of these valiant women in health care, education and pastoral care across almost seven decades. The Sisters do not leave their Hong Kong mission lightly.

Other valiant people whose stories we offer in this May issue include modern day Japanese novelist, Shusaku Endo and Myeong Sek, a Korean woman with special needs. The Far East magazine congratulates Columban Fr Thomas Rouse on the 40th anniversary of his ordination to priesthood.

Columban Fr Paul McMahon helps survivors of trauma from the conflict in Northern Ireland tell their story. Columban Fr Noel Connelly offers a powerful reflection on the recent interview of Cardinal George Pell in Rome by the Australian Royal

Commission. According to Fr Noel, the dignified presence at this interview in Rome of the victims of sex abuse by members of the clergy was both essential and redeeming.

After working for 10 years in China, Dallon Ryall and his wife approached the Holy Family Catholic Church in Wuhan to have their baby girl baptised. There he met Columban Fr Dan Troy who helped him breakthrough to a deeper understanding of his faith.

During a violent break-in and robbery of a small business in Japan, Shoda Akira and his gang brutally murdered the owner. At his trial, he was sentenced to death. Before execution he embraced the Christian faith and was baptised. Columban Fr Paddy Clarke tells his story.

Columban Fr John Keenan shares with us the story of the faith of the people of Parola, whose shantytown, one of the largest in the Philippines, was recently destroyed by fire.

At the end of 1975, Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez, the Archbishop of Santiago, Chile, set up the Vicariate of Solidarity to document the systematic abuse of human rights by the military

dictatorship and to support the victims and seek justice for them. The Vicariate has recently completed its fortieth anniversary.

As we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost this year, let us keep in mind the work of Columban Missionaries across the world, and the power of the Holy Spirit that continues to guide and empower them.

Fr Daniel Harding

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Cardinal Pell, the Royal Commission and the Year of Mercy

FR NOEL CONNOLLY

Earlier this year I watched sections of the Royal Commission's questioning of Cardinal Pell from Rome. It was a painful event no matter whose point of view you tried to take. But I thought those four days made a couple of powerful points about Pope Francis' *Year of Mercy*.

Normally when we, in the church talk of mercy, the presumption is that it is we who will be showing mercy not needing or receiving it. I didn't know what to think when the victims asked to be allowed to go to Rome to witness Cardinal Pell's evidence. I doubted that it would be possible to do it in a constructive way but I now think their dignified presence was essential and redeeming. It totally reversed my understanding of power. It highlighted that we in the church need their forgiveness, their mercy and we cannot demand or force it. It can only be freely given in their time. We can ask for forgiveness and do our best to make amends but other than that we will have to wait patiently.

Because of our sins of deed and omission we are becoming a more vulnerable and much less respected church. Yet there may be a special meaning and opportunity in this.

The sexual abuse crisis may force us to be humble, respectful and collaborative in ways we would never have imagined or chosen. Confronted by the suffering and profound hurt of our victims we need to discover the power of silence because there are no easy solutions, just attentive listening, compassion and prayer. We have been taken down from the pedestal and freed from perfection and power, to know shame, to feel powerlessness and share the struggles and "sins" of our brothers and sisters. Above all we need mercy and forgiveness. There is something good in that.

Pope Francis, when asked by Antonio Spadaro SJ, "*Who is Jorge Bergoglio?*" Replied "*I am a sinner ... on whom the Lord has turned his gaze*". In the interview he specifically mentioned the call of Matthew but he could also have been thinking of Peter. In *Luke 22:31-34* Jesus says to Peter, "*Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail: and you, once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.*" Peter protests that he will suffer and even die with Jesus, but Jesus predicts that instead, Peter will deny him three times before the cock crows. Then at the end of the chapter

the cock crows just as Peter is denying Jesus a third time and "*The Lord turned and gazed at Peter...And Peter went out and wept bitterly*". Such was his shame.

John Paul II in *Ut Unum Sint* develops this even further. Commenting on the scene in John's Gospel when after his resurrection Jesus asks Peter, "*Do you love me?*" Presumably He was once again gazing into Peter's eyes and we can only imagine Peter's shame. Peter, in a nervous voice probably louder than necessary, answers "*Yes*". Jesus asks him three times, because Peter had denied him three times, and when Peter confirms that he does love Jesus a third time, Jesus appoints him the leader. Jesus chooses Peter because having needed mercy and having received mercy, he might be able to show mercy to his brothers.

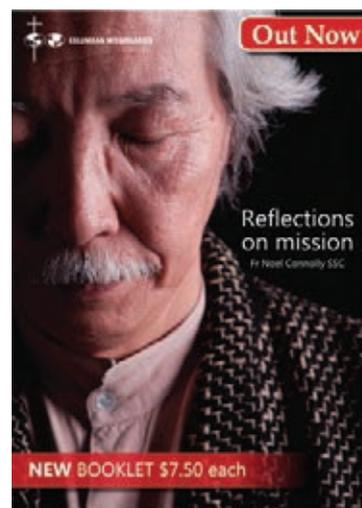
Only people who have needed and experienced mercy are likely to show it to others. Certainly those who have never needed mercy will not easily feel for others. That, I believe, is one positive possibility in our present shame.

There is something dangerous in thinking of ourselves as the unique and special dispensers of mercy and something freeing and enabling knowing our own need for mercy.

Columban Fr Noel Connolly is a Columban missionary priest. He is a member of the Columban Mission Institute in Sydney.

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Fr Noel Connolly SSC



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MERCIFUL LIKE THE FATHER



Only people who have needed and experienced mercy are likely to show it to others.

Baptism in China

RYALL DALLON

Ryall Dallon attended the English Mass in Wuhan, China for two years. He appreciated the support received from Columbans in Wuhan and is a keen reader of Church publications. Two years ago his newborn daughter was baptized at Wuhan by full immersion on Easter Sunday. There was great applause in the church when this took place.

In early 2013, I had been living and working in China for over 10 years. I was married there and our beautiful baby girl Ada had just been born, a name derived from an ancient Hebrew name meaning “adornment”.

I had managed to find my way to a Catholic church, the Wuhan Holy Family Catholic Church, one of only two in a city of some ten million people. I was there to arrange Ada’s baptism. Being of more practical mind, not one for the pomp and ceremony of such an occasion, I didn’t care if it was done in Chinese or any other language, but I soon discovered that there was a vibrant international community there that celebrated Mass in English most weekends. I think it was at that point I decided, or it was decided for me, that I would start attending church again. It may be that I would have been going much earlier had I known Mass was celebrated each week in my language, but that is a moot consideration; it was Ada’s birth that motivated me to actually seek out a Catholic Church.

This particular Sunday, the English-speaking priest was away in Hong Kong, and Mass was being celebrated in French by a priest who was flown in from Shanghai by the community at the local Citroen (*a French car manufacturer*) plant. However, I was able to obtain a phone number for the English speaker, and I was happily on my way.

Thus entered Columban Fr Dan Troy into our lives. It was a couple of weeks before I could get a hold of him, but when I did, I arranged to meet him for dinner one night. I met who I now know as one of the gentlest, most unassuming men I have ever come across, which was very lucky for me as I was about to make my first confession after what I only half-jokingly call my 30-year sabbatical from the practice of the faith, no easy task I can assure you.

The following Sunday was the day I made my confession and celebrated the Eucharist once again. And by beautiful design, the Gospel reading for the day was that of the Prodigal Son. I cannot believe that was by mere chance.

What a load off! Seriously! It was one of those rare moments in life when it has been proven to me that mind (or spirit) and body are one in so many ways. The load off my soul was just as really a load off my shoulders, and, unable to avoid the cliché on this occasion, I went home that day with a new lease on life. I remain ever so humbled that one like I could be so lovingly welcomed back “home”. I am living proof that our God truly is a God of mercy and love.

Ada was baptised by Fr Dan a few weeks later on Easter Sunday. Little did I know what excitement it would cause. After a few adults were

baptised, Ada’s naked body being lowered into the baptismal font was greeted by oohs and ahs and cheers from all corners of the church. It was great, despite our almost single-minded preoccupation with getting Ada rugged up again, for it was the middle of winter. This and the reactions to the other baptisms were borne of what I now know to be the great joy and enthusiasm with which these people practice their faith.

The international congregation started about ten years ago when a handful of students went to the Chinese priest, Fr Shu, and asked for a weekly Mass in English. He graciously agreed, and the first Mass was celebrated on Christmas Day 2006. I am told about seven students attended the first celebrations. Some time after, due to his limited English, Fr Shu invited Fr Dan to assist him in saying the Mass on a weekly basis. By the time I came along, Mass was being attended by a couple of hundred people, sometimes more.

It is perhaps quite a unique congregation. I would estimate some 60 to 80 countries were represented while I was there, making it a truly international community. It is a transient congregation. No one stays in China forever. And it was largely a young crowd, mostly foreign university students, with expats of all other ages and occupations making up the considerable remainder. I



One can also sense a great appreciation for the contributions from Fr Dan and his Columban colleagues.

don't know if one could find another congregation like it in the world.

One thing is for certain. The youthfulness of the crowd lends itself to a palpable, vibrant joy and enthusiasm in celebrating Mass that I have not experienced anywhere else. One can feel how happy everyone is that Sunday has rolled around again. The choir, which would number 20 on a good day, does a great job in selecting hymns and singing them in a way that reflects and magnifies the joy and enthusiasm.

One can also sense a great appreciation for the contributions from Fr Dan and his Columban colleagues. They are visible in being celebrants, arriving early to offer Reconciliation and even faith education classes for newcomers.

Personally, I feel so privileged that Fr Dan just happened to be the "local priest" at the time of my return from sabbatical and that the Wuhan Holy Family Catholic Church just happened to be the place I returned to. Mere chance? I don't know. Of course Ada is forever tied to Fr Dan and this church also, in an even more important way.

And as for Ada today? Well, she continues, as she has done since the day of her birth, to adorn the lives of all who encounter her.



CHINA

Fr Dan Troy, Ryall and his wife with baby Ada at her baptism.

Photos: Liu Song

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Shusaku Endo, the silence of God, the presence of God

Shusaku Endo, a Japanese novelist, died in 1996. In Japan he still features regularly in television programs, magazine articles and exhibitions. Every bookstore still has an Endo section. In Hollywood, Martin Scorsese is directing the film *Silence* based on Endo's most famous novel. It is due to be released during 2016.

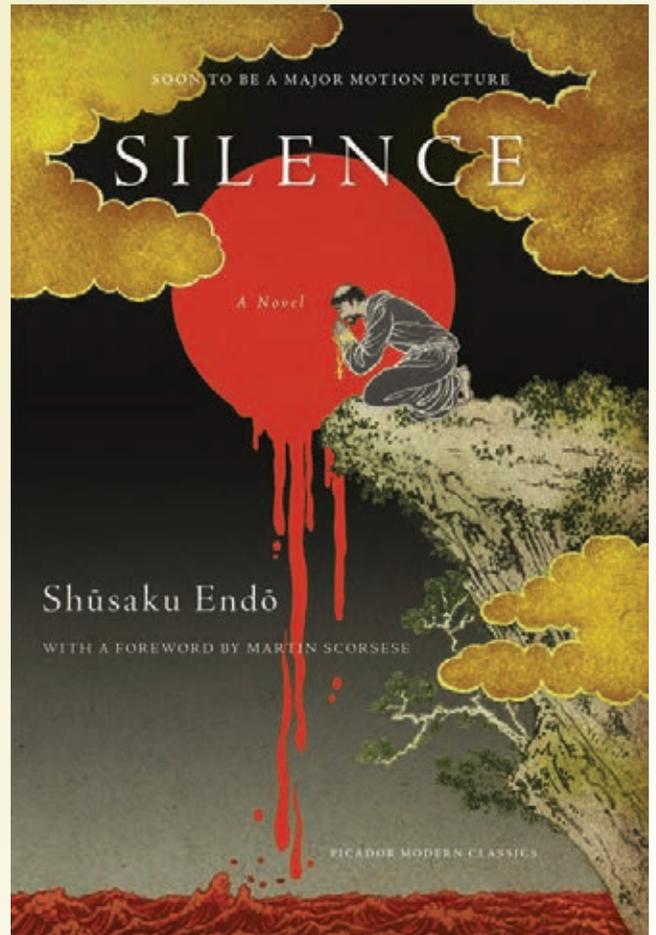
Before going any further, let me first say a few words about Endo himself. Born in 1923, he was eleven when he was baptized with his mother after her divorce. After the Second World War, Endo went to France to study for three years. There he experienced discrimination, loneliness and doubts about his faith. He later wrote, *"Many times I felt I wanted to get rid of my Catholicism but was unable to; it had penetrated so deeply in my youth and had become part of me. I was struck once again by its grandeur. To me Catholicism is not a solo but a symphony, the full symphony of humanity"*.

After his return to Japan, Endo was hospitalized for a few years with tuberculosis, pleurisy and diabetes. He was supported by his wife Junko. Especially in his sickness, Endo experienced great desolation which he called 'the silence of God.' That silence was not nothingness, as he somehow felt the presence of Jesus suffering in Gethsemane and on Calvary crying out, *"My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?"* Only with the eyes of faith can we experience the paradox of God's silence, yet also the accompaniment of the suffering God-man Jesus.

Endo's own experience of weakness, failure, suffering and doubt influenced his writing. In the novel *Silence* the 16th century Portuguese missionary, Rodrigues, seems to apostatize on the surface, but actually meets Jesus in a deeper way in his failure as did St Peter. Endo maintains that it is the human experience of weakness and failure in our lives that can give us new depth in understanding Jesus and Christianity.

In *Silence* Rodrigues is interrogated with the much quoted question: *"Can Christianity survive in the muddy swamp that is Japan?"* meaning that it will inevitably rot and die. Endo was greatly hurt by the adverse comments of some Bishops at the time the book was published. What Endo was saying was that for the Church to flourish in Japan, it must divest itself of its Western trappings and become truly Japanese with an in-depth enculturation. The true Christian message, the kerygma, needs now to be clothed in a Japanese cultural context or as the Japanese bishops succinctly said 20 years later, *"We need to present Jesus with a Japanese face."*

Endo also wrote many articles and books based on the gospels, for example, 'Women who met Jesus'. Over 22 years he wrote four books on the life of Jesus. He portrayed Jesus as someone intensely human who experiences joy, sorrow, suffering and apparent failure who showed us the love of God and the God of love. When we meet the human Jesus we taste the love

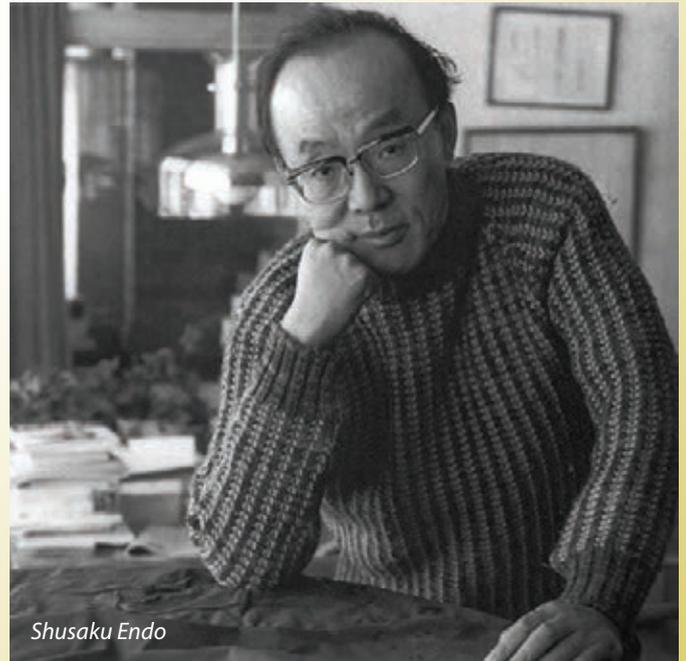


Shusaku Endo's famous novel *Silence*.

and compassion of the true God. When speaking of Jesus, Endo frequently used two particular Japanese words. One is *kyokan* which means to feel with a person. The second word is *dohansha*, someone who walks the path of life with us. For Endo the gospels have an eternal present tense. Jesus is alive and with us today.

When we consider the miracles of Jesus, Endo asks us to look not so much at the miraculous events of 2000 years ago, but rather at the compassion of Jesus that caused him to perform those miracles. We can taste the same compassion today.

Jesus himself experienced human weakness, emptiness, betrayal, bullying and misunderstanding. He accepted his frail human disciples in their failure and betrayal. Jesus is the same today. Like Rodrigues, his chief character in *Silence*, Endo asks, "Did Judas too in his last second-experience respond to Jesus' tender compassion?" Endo trusts he did. Endo summed up his work, "I have tried to depict the kind hearted maternal aspect of God revealed to us in the personality of Jesus".



Endo's perspective on the scriptures was brought home to me when I saw his own bible at an exhibition. The margins were full of notes written at different times in different inks. He understood Jesus' complexity; in addition to a compassionate suffering Jesus, he loved and depicted a joyful Jesus. I use the gospels and Endo's life of Jesus with people preparing for baptism at the point in the course when I am introducing them to the person of Jesus. I give each a copy of a small ink brush sketch of 'the smiling Jesus' which Endo displayed in his writing studio.

Endo had a practical love for those who suffered. He founded a movement called 'Warm Hearted Hospital Treatment'. Members are taught to listen carefully to patients' words spoken and unspoken. They were also always to sit at eye level with the patients, never towering over them. With the guidance of doctors and staff, these volunteers were trained to broadly explain what the patients' medicines were for. They would gently ask why a patient might be experiencing sleeplessness rather than having him or her rely on sleeping pills.

In 1985 California's Santa Clara University awarded Endo an honorary Doctor of Letters degree. The presentation scroll reads "...where faith often seems to be drowned in a sea of technology, you have re-awoken in us the knowledge that God still walks among us in unexpected ways". On a similar occasion at John Carroll University in Cleveland, the citation read, "You trace for us the earthly life of Jesus, that man who shares our needs and sorrows, allows for our weakness and shows us God's maternal face".

Fr Yoji Inoue, a life-long friend of Endo, preached the funeral homily. He said, "Endo was a man who was captured by the sad eyes of Christ who shares the sorrow, the misery of each and every person. Endo received many prizes in his life, but now he receives the crown of glory from the same gentle Christ."

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

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This tiny, fragile woman, who could not read or write, who had no concept of time or money, was my teacher, my professor.



She was my teacher

FR NOEL O'NEILL



Columban Fr Noel O'Neill founded Emmaus Industries to help better the lives of the differently abled. He lives and works in South Korea.

*M*yeong Sek, Theresa, was special. She was special because she was differently-abled. She was special, because it was she who accompanied me as together we first began to walk the Road to Emmaus. After 25 years in the parish ministry I sought permission from my superiors to begin a new apostolate, a ministry to those people with special needs. Myeong Sek had been abandoned by her parents when she was a few years old and ended up in the Beggars Camp, a large institution which I frequently visited while in the parish ministry. After much negotiation with the authorities at the institution, I succeeded in getting permission for Myeong Sek to leave the institution and to join with me and a volunteer as we moved into a two storey house in a residential part of the city. It was October 1981. This was the first attempt in Korea to offer people with special needs the opportunity of living in the local community.

Early last year Myeong Sek was diagnosed with cancer. She spent the last 10 days of her life in a hospice. A hospice and Emmaus have something in common. A hospice is for dying people whose ailment cannot be cured. Emmaus is a home for intellectually disabled people whose disability cannot be cured. A visit to either one alerts us to the preciousness of each moment of life. It arouses within us a sense of gratitude.

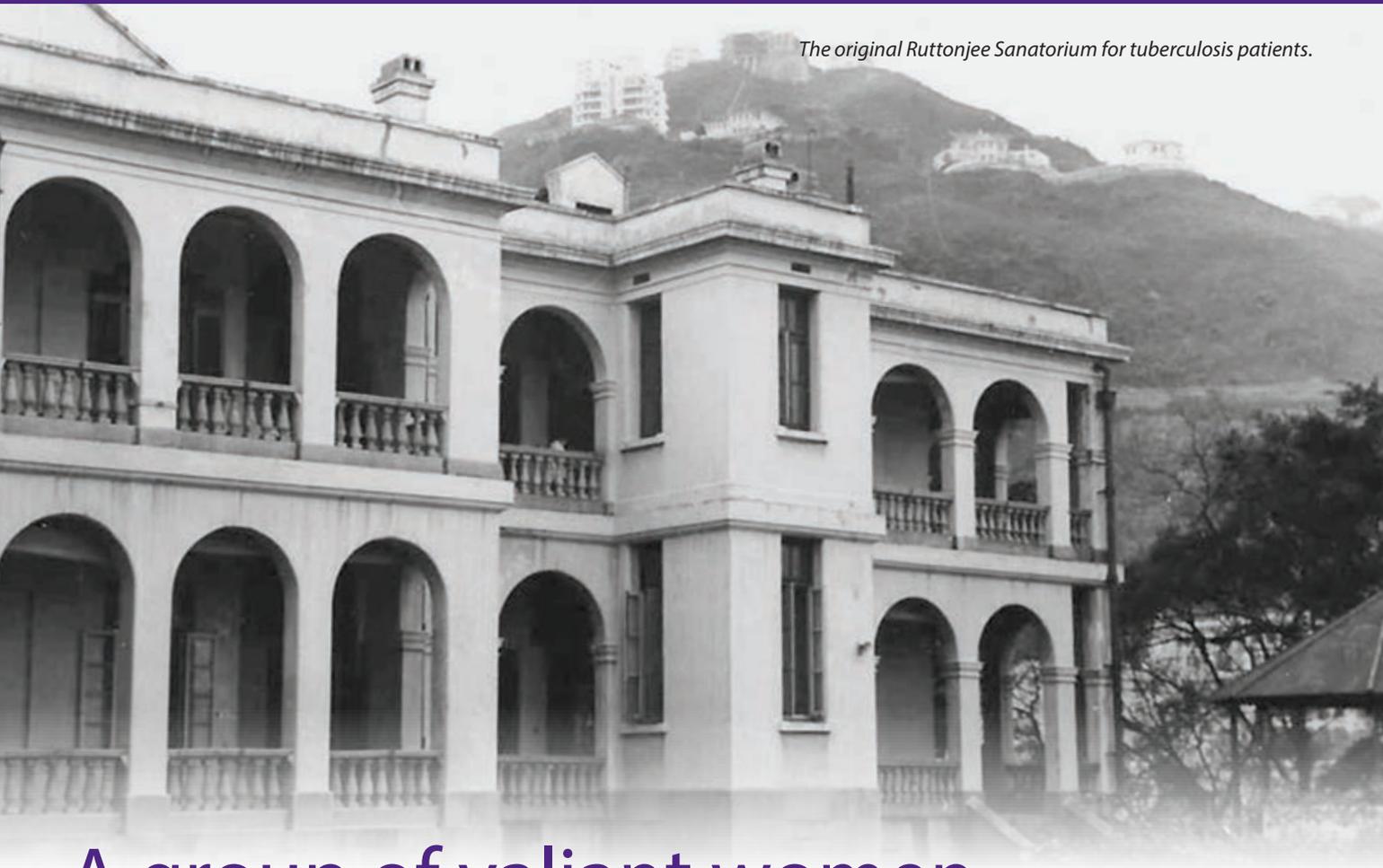
While Myeong Sek was in the hospice I visited her every day. As I sat beside her bedside and held her tiny hand, we reminisced on the funny incidents we shared together throughout the past 30 years. The times we used to sing *Kaptori Wa Kapsoni* (a Korean popular duet) and dance the 'hokey pokey'. As she lay back on her bed she would break into a broad smile, a loving smile, sending me a message that no words could express. They were happy moments, happy days, happy years. That smile also hid the many wounds and hurts she had endured in her lifetime. I was only too well aware of those painful wounds. Watching the peaceful look on her face one felt she already sensed the heavenly welcome. She could almost make the dying words of St Theresa, the Little Flower, her own, "I am not dying, I am entering into life".

Myeong Sek was waked for three days at the funeral home. Those who had lived with her in the group home were dressed in black mourning dress, and they greeted those who came to pay their respects, present staff members and former staff members who had known her for many years. Many Catholic friends and sponsors came who were touched and moved by their relationship with Myeong Sek. This tiny, fragile woman had the gift to make them feel loved and at peace with themselves as they struggled with their problems.

Myeong Sek often said, "when I die, those who come to the wake, feed them well." They came in large numbers to pay their respects and all ate well. Before leaving as each one ate and departed one could almost sense the presence of Myeong Sek as she said "*kamsahamnida*" (thank you, thank you).

At the funeral Mass, I chose for the Gospel reading the story of the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus. As the two disciples eyes were opened at seeing Jesus break the bread, so also my eyes were opened by my relationship with Myeong Sek. This tiny, fragile woman, who could not read or write, who had no concept of time or money, was my teacher, my professor. We need to invite and welcome more Myeong Sek's into our society, because they will surprise us with the manner in which they can touch our inner selves and help us to welcome our weaknesses and our old age with graceful and peaceful courage. Yes, Myeong Sek, was differently-abled.

Columban Fr Noel O'Neill founded Emmaus Industries to help better the lives of the differently abled. He lives and works in South Korea.



A group of valiant women

FR JIM MULRONEY

Columban Sisters prepare to leave Hong Kong after 67 years

*S*ixty-seven years make up a substantial portion of any lifetime, even a significant period in the brief history of Hong Kong, but less than a blink of the eye in the time-frame of the Divine. However, it is not by the number of years that we measure the contribution to life and society of those who walk this earth, but by their quality of commitment, their breadth of imagination, their ingenuity in work and, most especially, their depth of love.

The Missionary Sisters of St Columban are outstanding in all four aspects. Although never numerous, they brought creative, meticulous and

high quality medical care to Hong Kong. They injected great ingenuity into their schools. They introduced a quality of palliative care that the city had never dreamed of. They welcomed and befriended sex workers. They were creative in cancer counselling, as well as in prison and hospital chaplaincy services.

Life was never only about science and technical expertise, it was always about love inspired by faith in the God who saves. Their ministries aimed for holistic development, physical and spiritual, and they were at the forefront of the foundation of the Catholic Nurses Guild, the Catholic

Doctors Guild and the Legion of Mary. While life was hectic, there was time for everyone. Staff and patients were welcomed as part of their Columban family. The Sisters' particular interest in each individual patient, and in their medical, educational and social service endeavours is remembered fondly and cherished.

An English nurse, who worked at Ruttonjee Sanatorium for tuberculosis patients for 30 years, reminisced, *"I enjoyed the work tremendously. It was so worthwhile and satisfying and I so enjoyed the nuns, all of whom had a great sense of humour. Their work was meticulous. Most of the patients were*

very ill, so ill in fact that I wondered how they had managed to walk around and do their daily chores before being admitted. In the early days there was little money ... medical equipment was scarce ... loaned from ward to ward ... Ruttonjee was a place of terrific cooperation ... memories are of a very happy place."

In his 2009 Gerald Choa Memorial Lecture, Dr. S.H. Lee reminisced on the era when his generation of doctors trained at Ruttonjee, saying, "The Hong Kong Tuberculosis Association had benefited considerably from the dedication and devotion of the Catholic Sisters from the St Columban Mission of Ireland who provided quality care and love to the patients."

A talented surgeon, Choa had been a great supporter of the Sisters in his lifetime, providing his services and highly sought-after medical advice free of charge.

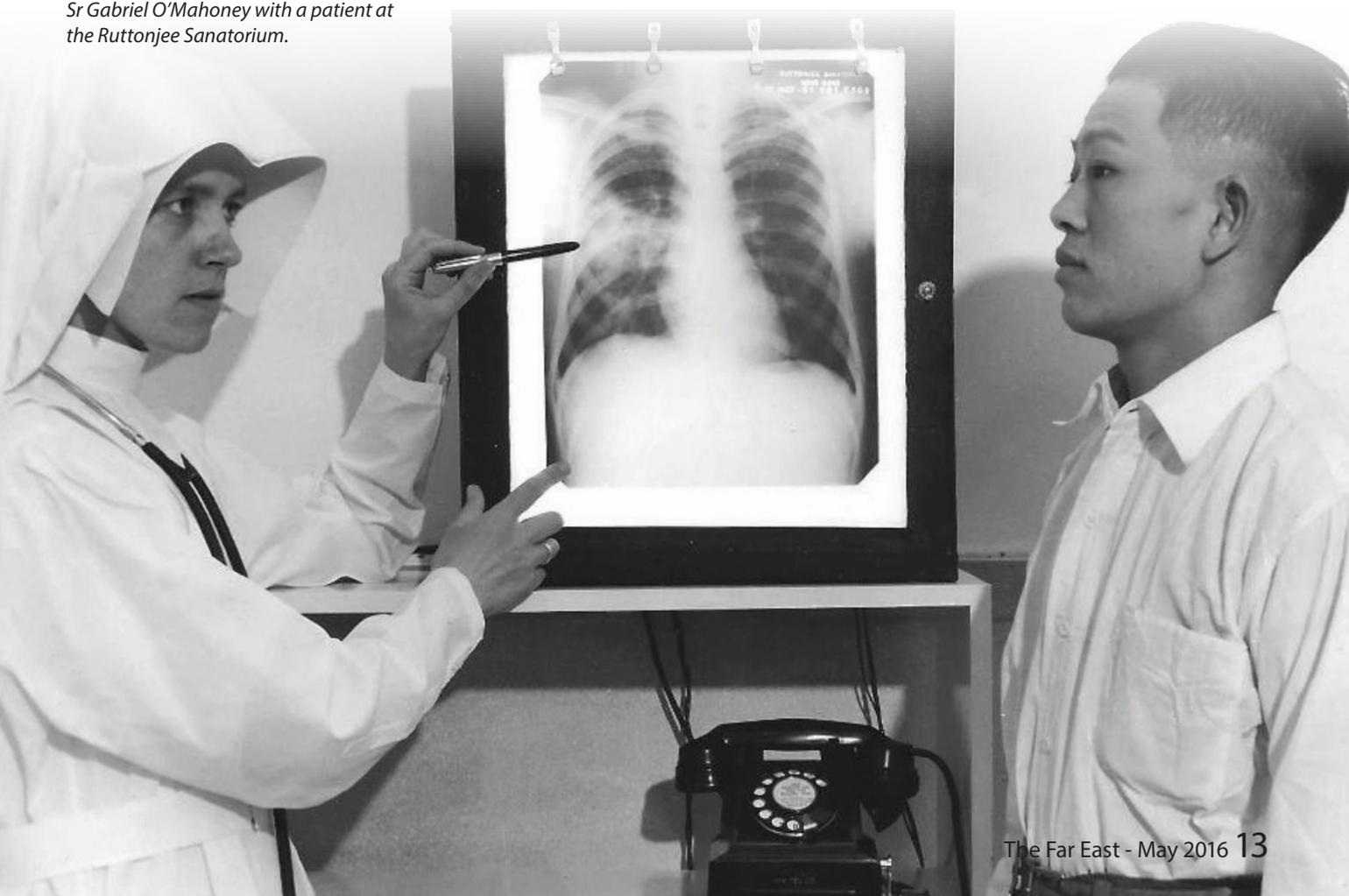
But as the Sisters prepare to leave, they reflect, as they did when they left their first location at Ruttonjee Sanatorium in 1988, "***We journey with Christ, sharing his mission even to the giving of life itself. Together with Him we face insecurities, including the call to let go and move on, not always sure of the way ...***"

The missionary life can be judged on what is bequeathed. The work the Columban Sisters began, continues, and their successors have imbibed

their spirit. The challenge of the moment is to say farewell. They have made their decision. Letting go of something as precious as the Hong Kong mission comes only with pain. But, taking risks and living with uncertainty is their way, and it is graciously blessed by God and the people of Hong Kong. Those who know them must also say farewell to those who, in biblical terms, can only be described as a group of valiant women.

Columban Fr James (Jim) Mulrony is Editor of the Sunday Examiner and this article contains quotes from a special supplement on the Missionary Sisters of St Columban published on 22 November 2015.

Sr Gabriel O'Mahoney with a patient at the Ruttonjee Sanatorium.





We don't leave a mission lightly

SR PATRICIA BYRNE

*I*n the end there were just three Columban Sisters left in Hong Kong, three to say goodbye to a much loved mission, three to share the blessings in that final farewell on behalf of all who had ever been there on mission. Sisters Mary Anthony Ryan, Isobel Loughrey and myself, Patricia Byrne, shared the reflections and the graces of those final days.

"Why are you leaving?" We faced the question over and again from our friends, former patients, colleagues, co-workers. Not an easy question to answer. We have been praying and discerning over the years and have come to understand that a difficult decision was called for as there were no younger sisters to replace those

who had left the mission. So we began to see that the time would come when we would have to leave, a difficult thing to do, as Hong Kong has been a special mission in the life of the Congregation since the first Sisters arrived in 1948 and began work at Ruttonjee Sanatorium in the following year.

The three of us now in Hong Kong have been here for approximately 40 years. We have seen great changes and development during these decades. The local Church is vibrant and youthful, and growing all the time. The Hong Kong people too are now missionaries in the local community and overseas. New foreign missionaries are coming to

Hong Kong as well. We are aware that while we must leave this particular mission, the Spirit is inviting our younger members to embrace mission in places of perhaps greater need, such as Myanmar and Pakistan.

We don't leave a mission lightly; neither do we hold on tightly. Having lived and worked with the people of Hong Kong for so many years, our uppermost feeling is one of sadness and loss. We have received so much from the people here. They have shared the riches of their culture, the warmth of their welcome and the loyalty of their friendship. People ask us what will we miss most - maybe the wonderful food, the lively city, or the beauty of the culture?



Our answer is always the same - we will miss the people we have been privileged to work alongside. We have been enriched in our varied work in the Catholic community, in spiritual outreach to our Protestant brothers and sisters, as well as in opportunities to meet with members of the Buddhist community. We have been blessed by those on the margins of our society - the poor, the imprisoned, the demeaned, the marginalised and the ostracised. As we say goodbye, we marvel at the generous outpouring of love from former colleagues, friends and collaborators. It is all a bit overwhelming and, at the same time, we feel great gratitude and affirmation, which gives us the

strength we need to board that plane, which will take us away from the place we have come to call home and the people we have come to love so much.

As a Congregation, we are called to mission to the poor and to those who have not yet received the Gospel message. Hong Kong has been a place in which this call to mission could be realised. We leave knowing that the charism which we brought will continue to burn brightly in this precious Pearl of the Orient.



As a Congregation, we are called to mission to the poor and to those who have not yet received the Gospel message.

Columban Sr Patricia Byrne from County Wicklow, Ireland, has been assigned to Hong Kong since 1976.



*One of the many farewell dinners for the Sisters.
The Far East - May 2016* 15



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.*

CHILE - For 40 years the "Vicariate of Solidarity" has been defending human rights against repression and violence

*T*he Vicariate of Solidarity ("*Vicaría de la Solidaridad*") was created in Chile 40 years ago by Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez, the Archbishop of Santiago, during the military dictatorship. Its first executive Secretary, Javier Luis Egaña, a lawyer, remembers the difficult job entrusted to him by the Chilean Catholic Church in defence of human rights.

Egaña was just 32 when Cardinal Silva Henríquez and Fr Cristián Precht asked him, at the end of 1975, to take the post of Secretary of the Vicariate of Solidarity, whose principle role was to defend human life against human rights abuses. He worked in this job until 1981. His testimony sent to Fides by the Archdiocese of Santiago on the fortieth anniversary of the creation of the Vicariate also reports on its importance today.

"It all started under the inspiration of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Our goal was to provide assistance to those in need, regardless of sex or religion or political affiliation. At the beginning we were a few and gradually we became almost 300 people and were financed by support from abroad, especially from the World Council of Churches", says Egaña. "There were dramatic moments. There was a situation of pressure and harassment against those who worked in the Vicariate and in 1985 Jose Manuel Parada was killed, an extraordinary man".

"It was a tragic period for the nation," remembers the lawyer. "Many people were killed, many disappeared, one million Chileans were expelled, including some of my brothers. We also helped many people to flee abroad. Sometimes we thought that we were doing very little in comparison to the requests. We did not have the time to do everything we wanted to do".

"Since the return to democracy in 1990, much has been done. There is a lot of research work being carried out and teaching on this topic. University students elaborate their thesis on this topic. There are schools that come to see us to understand what happened in Chile with regards to the violation of human rights during the dictatorship. There is a permanent activity to keep alive a heritage that was built through the efforts of many people", concluded the lawyer.

The "*Vicaría de la Solidaridad*" now has more than 85,000 documents on human rights violations in the country, from 1973 to 1990: court papers, legal documents, appeals and descriptions of torture.



Chilean Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez.
Photo: AAP Image/AP Photo/Santiago Llanquin

Agenzia Fides - Information Service of the Pontifical Mission Society - January 21, 2016

Mission Intention for May

That families, communities, and groups may pray the Holy Rosary for evangelization and peace.



From the Director

Part of the bargain

On the back wall of St Columban's chapel in Dalgan Park, Navan, Ireland hang 24 photographs of Columbans who have died violently while on mission. Twenty three were Columban priests and one was a Columban Sister.

You only notice the photographs as you leave the chapel - the very chapel from which those young men left for foreign missions to build up the local Catholic Churches and to evangelise those who did not know Christ.

Some of those killed were unfortunate victims of robbery or a kidnapping that failed, but some were 'martyrs' in the true sense of the word; they were killed because they were Catholic priests.

Columban priests have been martyred in China, the Philippines and Korea. Irish Columban Fr Cornelius Tierney, who died after rough treatment at the hands of bandits in China in the 1920's, summed up the situation when he wrote that it was *"a part of the bargain that one made when going to China"*.

I would imagine that it was an unexpected bargain, not sought out in any mission country, but accepted in faith as a possible consequence of living in volatile and sometimes dangerous circumstances.

It may surprise readers to know that today Christians are being persecuted for their beliefs in many parts of the world.

Notable author John Allen Jr, in his recent book *'The Global War on Christians'*, asks the question that many other commentators are asking: why is the western world, the so called Christian West, not protesting, not bringing attention to the systematic persecution of Christians in the world?

Some of those killed were unfortunate victims of robbery or a kidnapping that failed, but some were 'martyrs' in the true sense of the word; they were killed because they were Catholic priests.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, a well-known British writer and member of the House of Lords, protests the 'ethnic cleansing' of Christians in the Middle East.

We see evidence of 'ethnic cleansing' in Mosul in Iraq, where people have celebrated Easter from apostolic times until 2014, when ISIS took over and no Easter ceremonies were permitted for probably the first time in nearly 2,000 years.

Once again Christians are being overwhelmed. The ideological forces of Fascism and Communism in the 20th century has seen thousands and tens of thousands of people of all faiths murdered and terrorised.

Whether such Christian people are 'martyrs' in the strict sense of the word by dying for their faith is difficult to discern, but their faith in Jesus Christ leads them to follow His example, ending in the same conclusion. The example is that they may be treated badly or even killed. They may spend years in prison. But they will continue to live according to their understanding of their faith and what Christ means to them.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Walker".

Fr Gary Walker
director@columban.org.au



Grown up and still traumatised

FR PAUL MCMAHON

One of my present jobs is to offer counselling in a centre for survivors of trauma after the conflict in Northern Ireland. From 1969 until 2001, an estimated 3,523 people were killed in the conflict, 40,000 were injured, not to mention the thousands of husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, children, relatives, neighbours and teachers psychologically affected by those traumatic events.

I know from my experience as a missionary in Pakistan that the support of a group can be healing and empowering for those who have suffered a trauma. That's why I was happy when I was asked to facilitate a group of women on the topic of 'Reminiscence and Overcoming Trauma' at The Survivors of Trauma Centre in North Belfast.

'Survivors', as it is commonly known, was established in 1995 by Brendan Bradley together with other relatives of those who had been killed in North Belfast during the Northern Ireland 'troubles'. In this area alone there were 600 sectarian murders.

At *Survivors*, Marie Close, the Director, and her team work tirelessly for peace, reconciliation and healing for those affected by the trauma of 'the troubles' irrespective of their religious and political background. For the last 15 years both in Ireland and in Pakistan I have been interested in the way

psychological trauma affects people's lives, and together with Christian faith, what are the paths to healing and recovery.

I was well aware how the group of women at *Survivors* had each a story and sometimes many stories of the awful loss of loved ones. In fact in our meeting room there was a large banner of a tree with over 400 leaves and each leaf represented a person who had been killed in the local area due to the conflict. So I had to respect their heartache but also to affirm their resilience and strength.

I had been asked to facilitate reminiscence, that is to 'think and talk about things remembered from the past'. I realised that it would be of help to the women to recall their common memories of growing up at home, the games they played as children and their journey into work, relationships, and for many starting families of their own.



NORTH IRELAND



IRELAND

“

...each leaf represented a person who had been killed in the local area due to the conflict.

Each time we met we would spend an hour reminiscing about our past with the help of old photographs of children's street games such as hopscotch, swinging round lamp posts and skipping. To my surprise the whole group could identify with one another's experiences of growing up at home, or playing in the street, or going to school.

Then after a scrumptious tea break our focus changed from our thoughts and memories to the effect trauma can have on our bodies. *'The body keeps the score'* as Dr Bessel Van der Kolk a leading expert on trauma tells us. *"In order to change, people need to become aware of their sensations and the way that their bodies interact with the world around them. Physical self-awareness is the first step in releasing the tyranny of the past."*

The fascia under our skin and our senses are affected by traumatic experience, before our minds can

try and make sense of it by creating memories. When trauma is very overwhelming, literally beyond our comprehension, then our minds sometimes postpone processing what has happened, but all this time 'our body remembers!' Therefore with great gentleness we took time to listen to the body.

We then looked at how the traumatic incidents had affected us by making a graph of how our lives have developed. I did this by giving each person a ribbon and using the open floor, asking them to show a graph of how they perceive their lives to have developed. All of the graphs started with a straight horizontal line followed by a sharp dip at the time of the trauma. Some noted how after the traumatic experience their lives remained at the 'lower level' – but then a shift would take place and they were able to move the graph higher up the scale of well-being.

What was very touching was when some women extended their graph way beyond the normal position. They were identifying how the traumatic experience, terrible though it was, had helped them realise their strengths and resilience, and how they had met many great people who supported them in their struggle.

After our weekly sessions concluded it was a great joy for me to learn how the women had continued to meet and had created a beautiful 'Reminiscence Tapestry'. Remembering family, street games, friendship and play. The gifts of life and faith have helped them through the challenges and difficulties of loss.

Columban Fr Paul McMahon was ordained in 1991. He has worked on mission in Pakistan and more recently Belfast, Ireland.



He was no saint

*M*any years ago, when I worked as a Columban missionary in Japan, there was a man I would have liked to have met. His name was Shoda Akira. I came to hear about him through a chance meeting with his mother. One Sunday morning when I was instructing a class of adults, a woman whom I did not know approached and asked to sit in on our class. Later I learned that she was Shoda San (Mrs.), a parishioner of the adjoining parish, who came to Mass in our parish. I was told that her son, Akira, was a prisoner in the Tokyo Detention Center awaiting execution. Gradually I began to learn more about Shoda Akira.

He was born in Osaka in 1929. He graduated from the prestigious Tokyo Keio University in 1953. Japan at that time was slowly recovering from World War II. It was a time when the occupation forces had not yet left, and when the young generation of Japanese was deeply disillusioned. In this milieu, Akira began working as a trainee with a stockbroker firm in Tokyo. He was intelligent and a quick learner.

He also proved to be a young man burdened with emotional issues and insecurities. Within a relatively short time he had to resign his job to avoid dismissal. Within a month, aided by two others, he formed a plan to kill and rob a business man of a large amount of cash. They brutally murdered the man. However, the plan failed. The two accomplices were quickly arrested, Akira escaped with the money and it was three months before he was arrested. Tried and found guilty of murder, he was sentenced to death by hanging.

The practice in Japan, even up to the present time, is to wait until the condemned man shows signs of remorse

before carrying out the execution. Akira showed no signs of remorse as he began his sentence. He came into contact with Fr Candeau, a French missionary, chaplain to the prison. Later on he asked for instruction in the faith and was eventually baptized.

Gradually his whole life changed as he embraced his new faith. He had always loved literature, and he discovered that he had a gift for writing. He began to publish essays and a novel, and co-edited a colloquial translation of the New Testament. His publications were well received by Tokyo's literary community. Over the years it was assumed by his readers that his sentence would be commuted to life imprisonment.

At this point the focus of the story returns to his mother. Down through the years she had visited him each week. Then, one day she received a telegram from the prison requesting her presence on the following day. On arrival, she was informed that her son was to be executed the next day.

That was to be her last meeting with her son Akira. Later she was told that he had spent the remaining part of that day writing letters of thanks to those who had helped him down through the years. Akira was hanged on December 12, 1969. **He was no saint. Neither was he an evil man. He was a man who found Jesus, the hidden treasure.** His life underlines an important truth which Sr. Helen Prejean, in her ministry in the United States against the death penalty, has expressed in few words, *"Every human being is worth more than the worst act of his life."*

Columban Fr Paddy Clarke has spent more than 30 years on mission in Japan. He is now retired in Dalgan Park, Navan, Ireland.

40th Anniversary of ordination to the priesthood

Columban Fr Thomas Rouse was ordained priest on May 8, 1976, in St Patrick's Church, Napier, by Archbishop Delargey, the Archbishop of Wellington, New Zealand.

Fr Tom was born in Napier in 1951, the third in a family of three sisters. Upon completion of his High School education at St John's College, Hastings, in 1969, he decided to follow his missionary vocation by joining the Missionary Society of St Columban. He went on to study at the Columban Seminary at Turramurra, Sydney, from 1970 until his ordination to priesthood in 1976.

Soon after ordination he was appointed to the Columban Mission in Fiji. He arrived in Suva in 1977 and soon began the study of the Fijian language. Apart from an occasional holiday at home and several short term formation programmes, Fr Tom continued to work in Fiji until 1991 when he was appointed to work back in the Columban Region of Australia and New Zealand. In Sydney, Fr Tom worked in the Columban seminary formation programme and as Chaplain for the Fijian Catholic Community.

In 1997, Fr Tom completed a Masters of Literature Thesis on the topic, *"Developing a Method of Reading the Bible in Present Contexts of Mission and applying that Method to the Issue of Vanua (Land) in Fiji"*.

In 2004, Fr Tom returned to work in Fiji, first as Assistant Parish Priest in the parish at Ba, then for two three year terms as Columban Regional Director, firstly in 2007 and then in 2010. Upon completion of his second term as Regional Director, Fr Tom undertook a six month Sabbatical Programme at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, USA.

In 2014, Fr Tom returned to work in New Zealand, becoming the Coordinator of the Columban Mission in New Zealand.

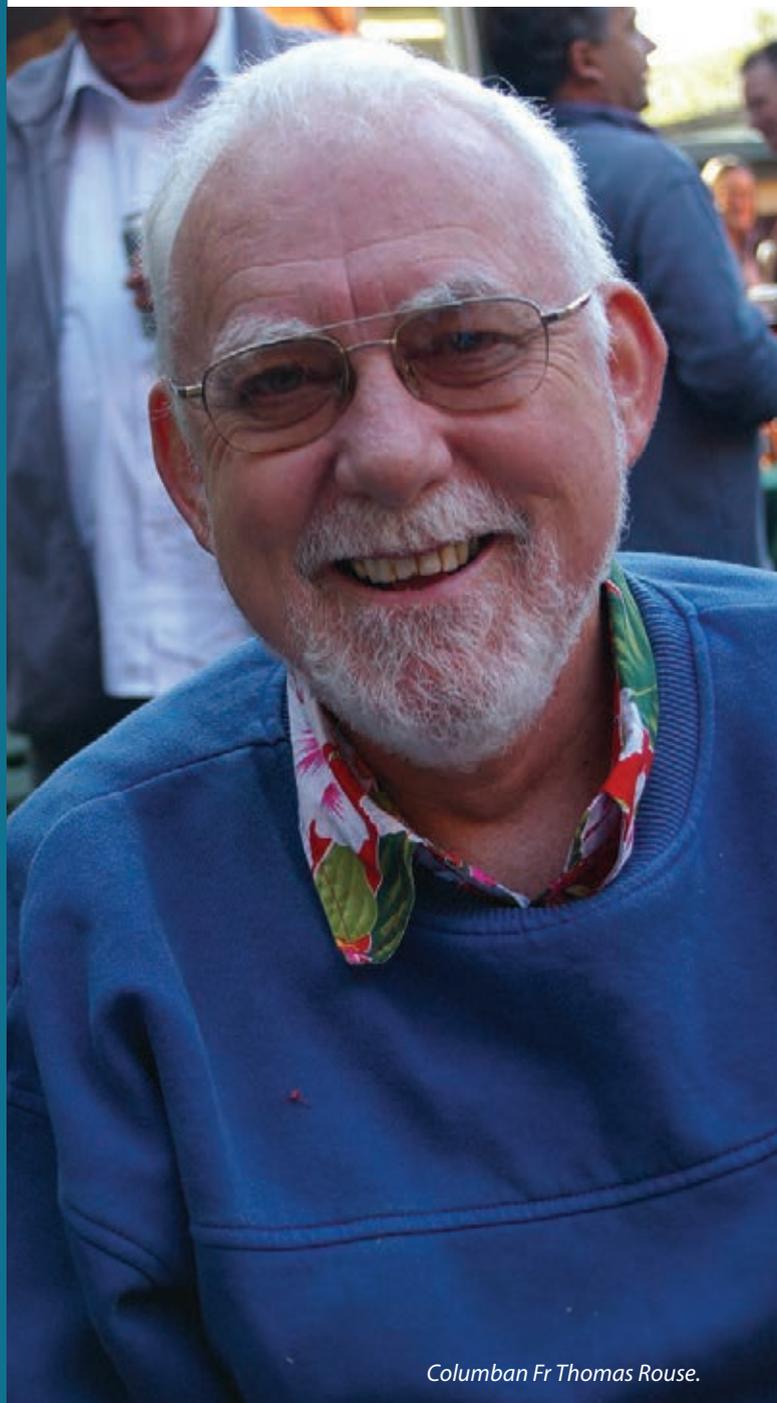
The Far East magazine, along with Columbans and supporters worldwide, congratulates Fr Tom on the 40th anniversary of his ordination to priesthood and his 40 years of missionary service to the people of Fiji, New Zealand and Australia.



NEW ZEALAND



FIJI



Columban Fr Thomas Rouse.



Rising from the ashes

FR JOHN KEENAN

Parola is one of the largest shantytowns in the Philippines. It is in the capital, Manila, on a long stretch of low-lying land between the Pasig River and the busy North Harbour Shipping Terminal. It is the home to some 4000 families. On March 2, 2015, a fire which started from an unattended flame, swept swiftly through the whole area devouring everything in its path.

Because the fire spread so rapidly the residents were lucky to escape with the clothes on their backs. Amazingly, not one life was lost. Fire trucks could do little but hose water from outside since the shacks were haphazardly built with no proper streets, only narrow footpaths which zigzagged between the houses. By the time the flames died and the smoke began to clear all the houses had been destroyed.

As I made my way there soon after the fire I did not know what to expect or what to say. To my great surprise I was met by an enthusiastic community gathered in their burned out chapel anxious to have Mass celebrated even though all that remained of the chapel, the altar, seats and statues was a heap of cinders. I have rarely taken part in such an impressive liturgy. The singing and joyful participation was truly uplifting. They were praising and thanking God that no lives were lost.

One of the people said: *"As long as there is life there is hope and with God's help all obstacles can be overcome in time."*

Even though we have lost everything, we are alive and that is what matters." To say something like that at a time like that certainly was a great act of faith.

Government agencies offered to relocate many of the families from the water's edge to nearby provinces but because wages for laborers and tradesmen are low and the cost of travel expensive, many have preferred to stay in Parola even though living conditions are terrible.

The shacks have been re-erected and the narrow lane ways are again full of activities. The voluntary labour of the Christian Community members has partially restored their chapel and it remains a work in progress with the support of Fr Jeremiah Adviento (Parish Priest). The chapel has been re-roofed and is being used for religious activities, meetings and catechesis.

Shantytown fires are not uncommon in the Philippines. Because of its size and destructiveness the one in Parola was a terrifying experience for those who had been forced to make their homes there. Economically they may be close to the bottom of the social ladder but when it comes to resilience and faith in God and in each other, they surely must be counted among those near the top.

Columban Fr John Keenan has been a Columban missionary priest in the Philippines since 1966.



As long as there is life there is hope and with God's help all obstacles can be overcome in time. Even though we have lost everything, we are alive and that is what matters."



Fr John Keenan visits the residents of Parola.



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Rising from the ashes - Philippines

Columban Fr John Keenan regularly visits Parola, one of the largest shantytowns in the Philippines.

In March 2015, 4,000 families lost their homes due to a fire which swept through the entire Parola area.

With your help, Columban Missionaries like Fr John are able to reach out and support those in the shantytown and they struggle to improve their lives. (See pages 22-23)



Photo: Fr John Keenan SSC



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