

The Far East

COLUMBAN MISSION MAGAZINE

August 2018

Columbans
hit the high notes

100 years of Columban Mission



ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY

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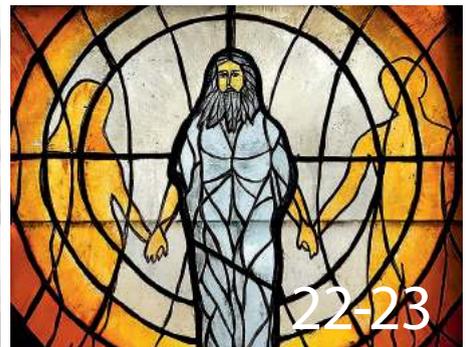
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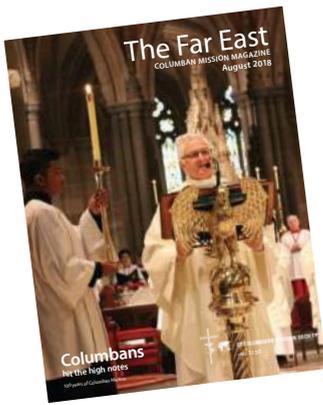
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Columban Fr Brian Vale proclaiming the Gospel at the Columban Centenary Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne (See story pages 4-7)

Photo: Melbourne Catholic, Archdiocese of Melbourne

From the Editor

Traditionally the August edition of *The Far East* magazine is dedicated to vocations. In this issue we look at the vocations of Columban priests, Columban Lay Missionaries and Columban supporters whose vocations are diverse, but with one thing in common in supporting the mission of the Church.

Our first article is dedicated to the celebration of the Columban Centenary with a Mass of Thanksgiving at *St Patrick's Cathedral*, East Melbourne, followed by an informal gathering at Cathedral Hall.

In his reflection Fr Ron Rolheiser shares with us what his wish-list would include for the church today. He says he would ask for three new saints. It's a must read and includes one of my favourite saints, St Augustine.

Australian born Columban Fr Frank Ferrie is featured in the centenary coverage *'Where are they now?'* He has spent almost all of his priestly life in Korea and is a fine example of engaging in the mission of the Church. In *'Your Columban Story'* Pat from New Zealand gives a witty account of his connection to the Columbans.

Young Columban, Fr Andrei Paz, was inspired by the words of Pope Francis who asked for people to be creative in their ministries. Fr Paz went on to become an occupational therapist and hopes that in addition to his priestly role he can make a difference where the need is great.

After three years of working in the driest place on earth in Chile, two young Columban Lay Missionaries are interviewed about their time working in shanty towns where crime, alcoholism and drug addiction is rampant.

Read about Pope Francis who made a surprise visit to dinner with the homeless in Rome and Columban Fr Brian Vale's column about learning to trust your inner guidance system.

Feast days in Brazil are colourful and noisy events as was the Feast of St George when Columban Fr Colin McLean was the principal celebrant at the Mass on Tide island.

Columban Fr Robert McCulloch recently visited Sindh, a province of south-east Pakistan, to hand over deeds to families who have never lived in a house or owned anything in their lives.

In Japan a stained glass window of the Risen Christ is much admired by Japanese Christians. Columban Fr Barry Cairns tells us why.

In his message for *2018 World Day of Vocations* Pope Francis said, *"Each one of us is called – whether to the lay life in marriage, to the priestly life in the ordained ministry, or to a life of special consecration – in order to become a witness of the Lord, here and now."*

This edition features many who have responded to God's call to a vocation. Let us pray this response continues.

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Columbans hit the high notes

100 years of Columban Mission

In a packed *St Patrick's Cathedral* in East Melbourne on Sunday June 24, 2018, Columban benefactors along with Superior General Fr Kevin O'Neill, Regional Director of Australia and New Zealand Fr Brian Vale, ten Columban and two diocesan priests concelebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving with the Archbishop of Melbourne, Most Reverend Denis Hart.

Columban relatives, co-workers and supporters, Bernadette Hevey, Jennifer Ryan and David Butler took part in the Mass as readers. Therese Dargan and Mary Tankey presented the offertory gifts. It was a memorable moment for Mary Tankey, a Columban staff member and also a niece of Columban missionary, Fr Bernard Way (Dec).

Before the commencement of Mass, Archbishop Hart incensed a relic of St Columban placed in a reliquary at the base of the sanctuary steps.

In welcoming everyone to the Cathedral for the centenary Mass, Archbishop Hart pointed out that the day's feast, the Feast of St John the Baptist, had a wonderful parallel in the life of St Columban himself and in the society of missionaries founded in his name 100 years ago, "a missionary society which seeks to do precisely as Columban and John the Baptist did, to go before the Lord proclaiming his coming and his salvific power."

In his homily, the Archbishop again referred to the work of the Columbans. "They do what John the Baptist did", he said and told the story of the initial fundraising of the fledgling society in Australia, kick-started with a gift of 100 pounds from then Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix. "Thus did our long association with the Columbans begin", reminisced His Grace. "It is a connection, and a wonderful connection, that continues between our Archdiocese and the Columbans to this very day".

In his remarks at the conclusion of the Mass, Superior General Fr Kevin O'Neill spoke about the Centenary pilgrim altar cloth that covered the altar for the Mass. It was made

up of 16 pieces of cloth that had come from each of the countries where Columban Missionaries serve.

Fr Kevin also spoke about the vision of the founders of the *Missionary Society of St Columban*. It was the catch phrase, "Millions of Chinese to be won for Christ" that was the prize that enchanted two young Irish priests, Frs Edward Galvin and John Blowick, in initiating the Missionary Society of St Columban.

Fr Kevin said, "during this Centenary year, we pray for our benefactors, our families, relatives and friends. For 100 years you have supported Columban Missionaries around the world. Without you we would not be celebrating our centenary here today." He thanked all the benefactors, some of whom had travelled far to join the celebrations.

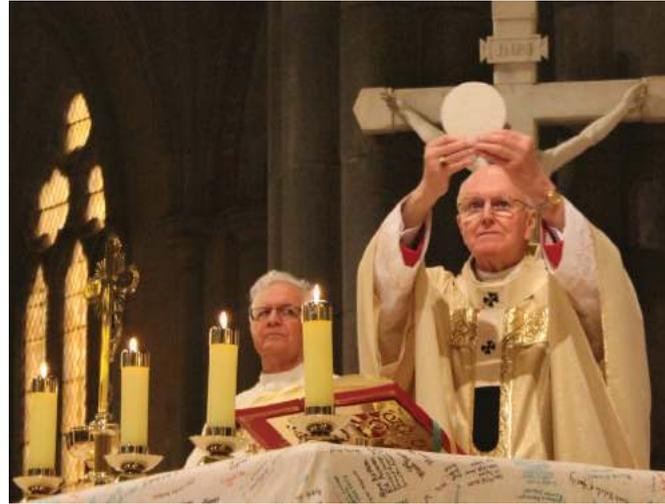
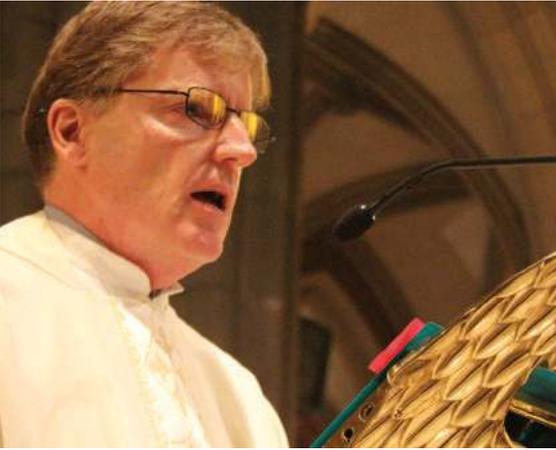
The recessional hymn, 'High is the heaven, deep is the sea', a hymn to St Columban was composed in 2015 by Liam Lawton in Ireland to mark the 1400th anniversary of St Columban's death. It is a hymn that calls to mind the contemporary Columban concerns of justice and peace, care for the earth and reconciliation between peoples.

Following the conclusion of the Mass, supporters gathered at *Cathedral Hall* where Fr Brian Vale performed the *Acknowledgement of Country* before refreshments were served. In front of the stage Columban Fr Tony Cox had created a magnificent centenary display of images and artefacts from the countries where Columbans serve.

While the guests were enjoying the refreshments, Columban missionaries, Frs Kevin Mullins and George Hogarty, shared some of their missionary experiences, Fr Kevin reflecting on his time in Juarez, Mexico, one of the most dangerous cities in the world, and Fr George speaking about his time in Peru and his current role of promoting Columban Mission in Australia. **It was a wonderful and fitting celebration of 100 years of Columban mission and an occasion for 'Sharing Gospel Joy'.**

Photos pages 5-7: Missionary Society of St Columban & Melbourne Catholic, Archdiocese of Melbourne

St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne...





Refreshments Cathedral Hall, Melbourne...



Needed: Three new saints

FR RONALD ROLHEISER OMI

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

If I had a wish-list for the church today, it would include a request for three saints of old to re-appear in a new guise. ***What the Church needs today is a new Augustine of Hippo, a new Francis of Assisi, and a new Thomas More.***

First, we need a new Augustine: St Augustine was a rare genius, an intellectual, an artist, a brilliant person who, before his conversion to Christianity, looked upon Christianity as a superstition, a naiveté, a gentle myth which, while it sustained his mother whom he loved, lacked the intellectual-rigor to be real truth. His original attitude towards Christianity was one of condescension, he saw it as something beneath him, beneath his intellectual and artistic dignity. Slowly, through the very honesty of his own intellectual search, he came to see the truth of Christ. A day came when he dropped to his knees, committed himself to a truth that he had once despised, and then for the rest of his life put his great genius at its service.

What he did then was to marry Christian revelation to the experience, language, art, and intellectual life of his time. In terms of an image, he wrote a software for Christianity that has, for the most part, lasted for nearly 1700 years. Bill Gates may have given us Windows 98, but Augustine gave us Christianity and Common Sense 400 AD. In the Western world, this software has endured essentially intact down to this very day.

A new Augustine is called for today. What the church would most need is for some young, post-modern genius, an intellectual and an artist, to convert to Christianity and, right by the dynamics of his or her own conversion, show that the enlightenment and what follows from it is not what it espouses itself to be, namely, something intellectually beyond Christianity, but rather that it, in its best expressions, is simply a cousin in truth. We need too for that person to write a new software for Christianity. We need a new Augustine to again make Christianity an intellectual and aesthetic option for a culture that perceives it as lacking in both.

Then too we need a new Francis of Assisi: We need someone, man or woman, who can re-inflate the romantic imagination of Christianity. Francis was a saint, but he was more than that. He was also a man of rare imagination. He was someone who, like a great artist, could reshape the collective imagination. What Francis was able to do, among other things of course, was to give to the world a new and

a more attractive vision of how Christianity is connected to nature, how a life of simplicity itself can be an aesthetic, and how the altruism which lies at the heart of Jesus' message can be more attractively imaged and lived. What he said, did, and founded became, almost instantly, something analogous to a great work of art, it drew people to itself and inflamed their imaginations. Hundreds of years later, it is still doing the same thing. But his images no longer fire the imagination as powerfully as they once did. We need a new Francis, a post-modern man or woman, who can again inflame the romantic imagination of the world in the same way that Francis once did. This is badly needed in an age that all but militates against simplicity, altruism, and nature. In a time of morally-authorized greed, where celebrity is divinity, and where restlessness and grandiosity have been taken to new levels, in a world of high-rise living, some great artist must again show us that what we really want is to live simply, altruistically, and in harmony with nature.

Finally, we need a new Thomas More: We need someone, woman or man, who is a top-level lawyer, a politician, a great humanist, a lover of the arts, fully immersed in the affairs of culture, and yet is able to combine all of these involvements, and such a love of the world, with a simple faith, an uncompromising integrity, human attractiveness, an enviable wit, and a capacity for moral martyrdom. This woman or man too, unlike Augustine and Francis, needs to be married, with children, not a monk, priest, or nun. We need models of non-celibate sanctity. Thomas More was driven by two great loves and two great loyalties - love of the world and loyalty to it and love of God and loyalty to God. His life - that of a great humanist and a great Christian - continually radiated both those loves and both those loyalties. In the end, of course, they weren't equal. God was given a certain priority, but, even then, love for the world was never denigrated. He loved both, God and the world, solidly to the end, modelling what a healthy, full, joyfilled and faith filled life can look like. We need a new Thomas More today.

And so the want-ads are out: Wanted: A new Augustine of Hippo. Wanted: A new Francis of Assisi. Wanted: A new Thomas More. Applications anyone?

Permission given by Fr Ron Rolheiser OMI, President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio Texas. Contact details: www.ronrolheiser.com or www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser

WANTED

THREE NEW SAINTS

REFLECTION



ST AUGUSTINE

Photo: Renata Sedmakova/shutterstock.com



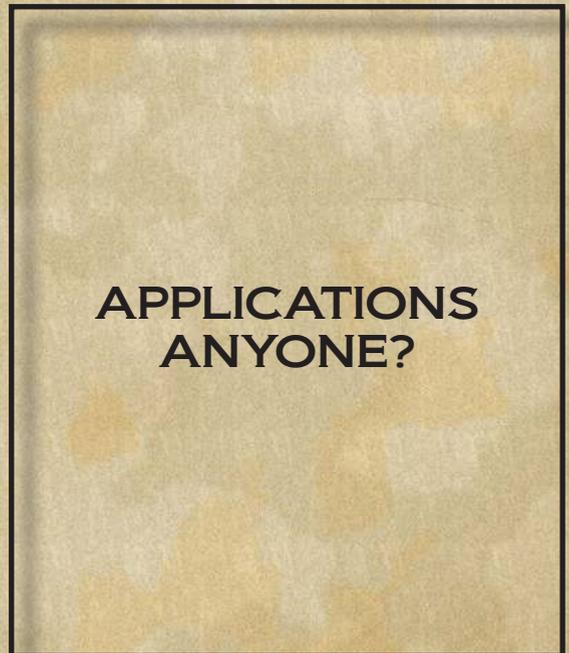
ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Photo: Zvonimir Athletic/shutterstock.com



ST THOMAS MORE

Photo: Georgios Kollidas/shutterstock.com



**APPLICATIONS
ANYONE?**



MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST. COLUMBAN

Sharing Gospel Joy

Where are they now?

Columban Centenary - Fr Frank Ferrie

1955 and 1978 were big years for the Columbans in Australia/New Zealand. In both these years the number of ordinations reached a high of nine. In 1955 three New Zealanders and six Australians were ordained. One of the nine Columbans was Fr Frank Ferrie, who after 63 years is still stationed on the island of Jeju, South Korea.

Although born in rural Victoria, Frank Ferrie grew up in the shadows of the Columban house in Essendon, attending three local Catholic schools, *St Teresa's* and *St Monica's Primary*

and then *St Bernard's College* and finally *St Patrick's, Ballarat*, to polish up his Latin. After studies and formation in the Columban seminaries in Essendon and Wairoonga, Frank was ordained by Archbishop Justin Simmonds in *St Patrick's Cathedral* in December, 1955.

In October of the following year Frank sailed with two of his classmates to Korea and began the study of the Korean language. After six months he was appointed curate to the parish of Kangnung on the east coast of Korea and then he was appointed pastor of the new parish of Jongseon in the mountains, the first of several parishes that he served in the *Diocese of Chuncheon* over a period of 20 years. An innovation that Fr Frank introduced to his ministry from his Australian experience was the *YCW movement*.

During the eighties Fr Frank spent some years back in Australia as Bursar to the *Columban seminary* in North Turrumurra and as Chaplain to the *Korean Catholic Community* in Sydney. On his return to Korea in 1985 he worked in a hill-top ministry in a very poor shanty area in Seoul before being re-appointed to regular parish work, this time on the island of Jeju, off the south coast of Korea. There Fr Frank was again pastor of a number of parishes for many years until his semi-retirement and appointment to the management of the Columban house in Jeju City where Columbans and others come for rest and recreation particularly during the summer months. ***While hosting these visitors, Fr Frank spends much time in a ministry to migrants and by helping out in parishes and convents all over the diocese.***



Fr Frank Ferrie with orphan children in Korea, 1969.



Your Columban story

Benefactors share with us...

Pat from Rangiora, New Zealand wrote:

I was born and grew up in Greymouth, New Zealand. My parents always had the Columban calendar in their house. As a young boy I was an altar server. One Sunday night 8-10 servers were lined up in pairs in the sacristy waiting for the priest to ready himself for Benediction. I was in the front row fooling with the server beside me. Next thing I was clipped over the ear by a senior boy in the rear line, Jim Rathbun. Beside him was Dennis Hanrahan. Years later Jim was a Columban Missionary priest and Dennis became a Diocesan priest and ultimately Bishop of the Canterbury Diocese. Both now deceased. RIP.

*About the same time I was selling race books outside the Greymouth racetrack. A patron gave me two entrance tickets valued at 2/6d each. I sold them to a racegoer who was only too happy not to have to line up at the turnstiles with his wife. When I got home and told mum where I had got the extra 5/- she made me take the money the following Monday to the secretary of the Jockey Club. **He explained to me the money was not actually the property of the Jockey Club, but to reinforce the message my mum was making to me, he suggested we put the money in the Columban Mission box on his desk. Never forgotten.....***

Jim's priesthood was my inspiration to become a regular benefactor. I now keep the Columban Calendar in my home.

If you would like to share your Columban story with us, in 100 words or less, send your story and photo (optional) to:

Columban Mission Centre

PO Box 752

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'Do whatever you can'

SARAH MACDONALD

Fr Andrei Paz is a Filipino Columban missionary who hopes to use his skills as an occupational therapist to help those marginalised by their disabilities.

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

"The Columbans are still interested in you, I hope you are still interested in us." With those words, Columban Fr Tom Shaughnessy concluded his letter to Andrei Paz. It was an invitation which put the young philosophy graduate back on track to becoming a Columban missionary.

Thirty-six-year-old Fr Andrei is from the Philippines. He joined the Columbans in 1998 and was ordained a priest in 2009. He has since served in the Philippines, Taiwan and China. For the past three years he has been studying at *Creighton University* in Omaha, Nebraska, for a doctorate in occupational therapy which he successfully graduated with in May this year.

He grew up in Bangar in the Province of La Union in the Philippines. He learnt about the *Missionary Society of St Columban* through a vocations campaign which brought a Columban priest to his secondary school. *"At the time I was quite interested in missionary orders because I have a grand-uncle who is a missionary and he had worked in Mexico and the Dominican Republic. I used to correspond with him."*

The visiting Columban left copies of *The Far East* magazine and these helped Andrei to become "interested in how the Columbans do missionary work". While the written word was helpful to him in discerning his future path, it was actually meeting Columbans that proved "more powerful".

After he joined the Columbans in 1998, he did his initial formation in Cebu, where he studied philosophy at the University of San Carlos. But two years into formation he decided to leave. *"I continued my studies at the university and lived in a very poor area with a poor family. I was planning on finding a job in Cebu where I could continue to live with and help the family."*

But he was also still feeling a tug towards the Columbans. *"I thought it was all over with them. I sent a text message to my former high school principal, who was a nun, and told her that part of me wants to go back to the Columbans but part of me wants to stay here in Barrio Luz to help the people. She replied, "There are many more Barrio Luzes in the world". I think that helped me in my decision to return to the Columbans."*

An accompaniment programme had just begun and Fr Tom Shaughnessy was "instrumental" in his decision to return

and take part in the programme in 2002. *"If it hadn't been for him, maybe I would not be here today."*

Fr Andrei has an older sister, an older brother and a younger sister. His siblings and their families all live in Canada and in 2015 his parents moved there too. *"It was then that it dawned on me that I now have no place to call home because if I go to the Philippines, none of my family are there and if I go to Canada, even though my family are there, I don't really feel at home."*

After studying in Manila for two years, Fr Andrei went to Chicago to study theology. In 2006 he did his overseas missionary placement in China and later he returned to Chicago to finish his theology studies.

Immediately after ordination, *"I worked for about nine months in the Columban parish of Malate in Manila. It is a very poor area and so it is a good preparation for mission. I was then sent to Taiwan in 2010."*

During his three years in Taiwan, Fr Andrei worked with the *Atayals*, a tribal people, who live in the mountains in the centre of the country. The *Atayals* are marginalised and discriminated against, he explains. *"They are seen as drunkards, poor farmers and uneducated." The role of the Columbans was to "accompany them and show them that we are interested in them and that God believes in them."*

"I enjoyed my time with the people as they didn't really care if you were good at the language or if you could preach really well. What they cared about was that you cared about them and that you would go to their homes and eat, sing and be with them."

Prior to his appointment to mainland China, Fr Andrei had wanted to work with people with disabilities. He had identified occupational therapy as something that would enable him fulfil this calling. But as it turned out, he was appointed to China immediately and began working as vocations coordinator after he arrived there in October 2013.

In between travelling around the country and meeting young people who were interested in exploring a vocation to Columban missionary priesthood, he visited a number



Fr Andrei Paz (right) singing with the Atayal parishioners in Taiwan.

of orphanages, particularly one in north west China, where there were no professionals working with the children.

"The children would wait every day to be fed. They had no activities." He realised that if he were trained in occupational therapy he could make a difference in their lives. He was reading Pope Francis' 'Joy of the Gospel' at the time and he was "inspired by the Pope's encouragement to be creative in ministry and get your feet or hands dirty."

His hope, having now graduated, is to return to China to practice occupational therapy there. *"But I've seen how plans can change; I am just open to whatever comes along. When Bishop Galvin, co-founder of the Columbans encouraged the first group of Columbans in China, he said 'Do whatever you can'. That is the saying of Bishop Galvin's that I like most, because we are all unique, we have different talents and skills and we have to use whatever talent we have."*

Sarah MacDonald is the Editor of *The Far East* magazine in Ireland.



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Mission in the driest desert on earth

Lay Missionaries Gilda Comayas and Lorna Cañete from the Philippines share their experience of working in shanty towns in Alto Hospicio, 700 metres above the port city of Iquique, Chile.



Gilda: Upon arrival in Chile, we were assigned to the Columban Parish of the *Sacred Heart in Alto Hospicio*, 1800 kilometres north of Santiago and located in the Atacama Desert.

Lorna: The twin cities of Alto Hospicio and Iquique share in an economic boom with the duty free port which serves Bolivia and inland mining activity.

Gilda: This economic boom has attracted lots of migrants from the neighbouring countries and also Chileans from down south, all seeking a better life. There are families from Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Haiti and Argentina, all seeking an escape from poverty.

Our Parish Response

Gilda: There are three shanty towns in the parish. A shanty town is an illegal occupation of either private or public land, where precarious houses are constructed out of used shipping crates, plastic, pine board and cardboard. The homes generally have dirt floors.

Lorna: Our work was to try to reach out to the families living there. In the smallest of the three shanty towns, there are around 50 children and the largest would have about

100 children. Imagine life growing up in a crime ridden shanty town, without running water, electricity or sewerage and where your illegal lean-to home could be demolished at any time by the police.

Gilda: In order to respond to the pastoral needs of the three shanty towns we divided ourselves into three teams, each to attend one of the shanty towns. The teams came from the two Columban priests, Frs Michael Howe and Thomas Hanley, Diocesan Associates, Frs Francisco Jung and Andres Lee, Columban Lay Missionary, Oisín Kenny, a permanent deacon and religious Sisters.

Lorna: In one of the shanty towns, we have set up a soup kitchen to feed undernourished children and unemployed adults. The wives of Chilean Navy personnel, stationed in the Port of Iquique, donate food which we use in the soup kitchen and clothing which we help distribute. The Columbans are the principle suppliers for the soup kitchen.

Gilda: We have also set up various craft and educational workshops for the children and their families. Much of our work is really listening to and accompanying the people in their daily lives. Often there is little we could do but being present most days of the week for the people helps to build trust.

Lorna: We were present when the police arrived to demolish one of the shanty towns. The occupants protested but in the end they were moved on, because the Government wants to build a large public hospital on that land. We supported the people as much as we could. Not all the shanty towns were demolished. In some cases, after a few years, a process of regularisation of the shanty town can begin, whereby the government builds low cost public houses with all the necessary amenities for the families.

Life in the shanty town

Lorna: Neither Gilda nor myself could walk freely through the shanty towns alone. It was too dangerous. There is a lot of crime, alcoholism and drug addiction there. The different chapels in our parish are constantly being robbed. Drug addicted thieves rob anything that is not nailed down.

Gilda: There is a lot of unemployment in the shanty towns. Many of the men work in construction or at the port. With the presence of so many miners, sailors, port workers and truck drivers in the area, there is sadly a lot of prostitution in the area.

Lorna: A small percentage of the families in the shanty towns are dishonest, trying to work the system. These people already have a house or two, rent them out and live in the shanty town, hoping to get a free house from the Government.

Gilda: Nevertheless the great majority are genuinely poor. Many of the families are quite dysfunctional. In one family, the aunt looks after the three children, as the mother is a drug addict. Making sure the children go to school can be very difficult. It is really heart breaking.

Saying goodbye

Gilda and Lorna: After three years of supporting, praying the rosary, enrolling children in the soup kitchen, distributing toys and clothes, and walking with the families it is time for us to say goodbye. ***We thank the Lord for this blessed opportunity. We leave a big part of our hearts in the shanty towns in the Atacama Desert of northern Chile.***

Columban Fr Daniel Harding, Parish Priest of San Columbano Parish, Santiago, Chile.

Columban Fr Michael Howe, Parish Priest, Lay Missionaries Lorna Cañete and Gilda Comayas and two religious sisters, standing outside one of the shanty towns.



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.*

Mission Intention for August

That any far-reaching decisions of economists and politicians may protect the family as one of the treasures of humanity.



Photo: sgame/Bigstock.com

Francis surprises homeless at new Cardinal's dinner

He dined with the poor and spent about two hours chatting with them.

Pope Francis made a surprise visit to a dinner for the poor and homeless that was being hosted by the new Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, the Pope's official almsgiver.

"I came for the poor, not for you," a smiling Pope told Cardinal Krajewski, as he dined with the poor and spent about two hours chatting with them on June 29, 2018.

The date was the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, the patronal feast of the Church of Rome and a public holiday in the city.

Some 280 people were invited to a dinner by Krajewski who was made cardinal by Pope Francis at the Consistory the previous day, June 28, 2018.

About 60 volunteers served dinner to the poor, including Carlo Santoro of the *Community of Sant'Egidio* of Rome. Santoro collaborates with Cardinal Krajewski's Office of Papal Charities to assist the homeless in Rome

"It was a specially warm visit because it was a dinner of the new cardinal with the poor," Santoro said. "To the surprise of all, the Holy Father arrived. We thought it was a simple greeting and he would be off soon," he said.

Santoro said Pope Francis greeted each guest at the dinner with great affection.

At the table where the Pope sat were several Syrian refugees who had arrived through the efforts of the Sant'Egidio Community.

Also sitting at the same table was another refugee who told the Pope how he arrived in Italy - via a 11 month journey, full of dangers.



The Pope dining with the poor and homeless of Rome on June 29, 2018.

Another guest from Senegal, a Muslim, said it was his third time at a meal with a Pope. He had been with both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI for lunch, and this was the third time.

Pope Francis jokingly told him about starting "a collection of Popes!"

Santoro said they also introduced to the Pope some of the homeless who sleep around *St Peter's Square* at night.

He was moved to hear that many homeless people also help the volunteers help others, Santoro said.

La Croix International, <https://international.la-croix.com> July 2, 2018

Photo: Vatican News - www.vaticannews.va

From the Director

Let your life speak

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

During June and July this year I had the privilege of meeting many friends and relatives of the *Missionary Society of St Columban* at our Society's centenary celebrations in Melbourne and Sydney. Melbourne was a huge gathering for a Sunday Mass at *St Patrick's Cathedral* and most of the people I met were new acquaintances as I am new to Melbourne. In some cases, however, they were long term donors to our Society's missionary work so I was able to put a face to names of people that I had read and written to in my role as Regional Director.

Many people contacted me to say that health or distance prevented them from attending the Melbourne Mass or reception. I know some of them are now living alone. Reflecting on some of those conversations I thought about the importance of relationships in our lives and how each of us changes as relationships come and go. Many of these friends of our Society have been faithful readers and donors for many years and are now less active and less mobile. As we grow older many of us move into lives with a degree of solitude, especially after the death of a spouse or family member. Being alone can be challenging and painful but if we are able to face those moments it can become a pathway to a deeper understanding of ourselves.

When we can take time to sift through memories we can rediscover important moments of inspiration and growth in our lives, moments when something greater was happening which we perhaps did not sense at that time. If we can be still and present to the feelings which arise at these times we can discover a new inner wisdom and belonging that God invites us into. Sometimes we may be overcome with moments of grief. Sometimes we have to let go of unfulfilled hopes and own moments of doubt or feeling lost and surrender to them. As one author puts it: ***"By trusting your unknowing, your old standards of progress dissolve and you become eligible to be chosen by new, larger standards, those that come not from your mind or old story or other people, but from the depths of your soul."***

Learning to trust this inner guidance system takes time and practice but if we look around we may find people who have taken that pathway. They are good role models for us and some of them may like to companion us. Perhaps

they are waiting for an invitation from us to begin such a conversation. The saying that *"old age is not for the faint-hearted"* is applicable to any age when we risk listening to the inner voice of God as it takes courage to persevere as we walk through clouds of unknowing.

One hundred years ago the founders of the *Missionary Society of St Columban* had eyes only for China but they soon had to learn to let go of many of their major plans when their priests were expelled from that country within a few decades. The Society had arrived in China with a missionary fervour but soon had to find new places where God was calling them. Many of us have had to move to new places for work and set up house in an unfamiliar place which can be challenging. Later in life we may also sense a call to a new place where God is calling us and while sometimes that may mean leaving a familiar town or house, more often that journey is an inner rather than outer journey.

Parker J. Palmer quotes an old Quaker saying: "Let your life speak." He says by that they mean before you tell your life what you intend to do first listen to what it intends to do with you, what truths you embody and what values you represent. In the Southern Hemisphere we are coming through winter which for the natural world around us is a time of hibernation, of going inside or underground. Indigenous peoples remind us that the land does not belong to us but we belong to the land. This can be a time to discover where we really belong. My life is not about me. I am not my own but part of a larger thing called Life. Life is living itself in me.



Fr Brian Vale
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A fitting end to a joyful feast

FR COLIN MCLEAN

Columban Fr Colin McLean shares with us the background of why São Jorge (St George) is venerated on Tide island where there are no cars and transport is predominantly by horseback.



Missionaries of Charity (Mother Teresa's order).

*S*t George is always depicted on a horse and Norte's island community that has many horses naturally saw St George as the forerunner of their own numerous horsemen, hence he became their patron saint.

Norte is situated on the other side of Tide island and geographically is closest to the mainland. At low tide horses can pass quite easily from the mainland to Tide island, so that part of the community is called "Passa Cavallo" (Where the Horse Passes).

There are no cars on Tide island, nor any real space to carve out roads. However, all seven communities that I visit have many horses, and more recently, a growing number of motor bikes.

On the Feast of St George some friends and I boarded a launch that accommodated about 50 people, since the feast attracts people from the main parish Church in Paripe.

With us on the launch were four men who comprised the band that was going to play during the procession. I was principal celebrant at the open-air Mass in the local square.

On arrival, a good number of horsemen and women, mounted on their horses, accompanied us to the Mass site. Among the large crowd were five *Missionaries of Charity* (Mother Teresa's order).

When Mass concluded the procession began, carrying a statue of St George with the band playing vigorously. The

trumpeter's cheeks were so distended from blowing that they looked like they would burst. He was used to it, of course, and he really could play that trumpet.

This was the first religious procession I have accompanied that included about 35 horsemen and women.

A friend and fellow Columban, Fr Warren Kinne, made a very truthful comment on a visit to Brazil, *"In Brazil, expect the unexpected... it usually happens!"* I often reflect on Warren's words, as Brazil, and especially Salvador da Bahia, is always full of surprises, even after the 32 years I have lived and worked here.

The boat ride back to *São Tomé* was a really joyful occasion. The band, especially the trumpeter, began to play and everyone entered the moment. It was totally infectious. A conga line formed, and before long almost everyone on board was dancing in the line around the deck.

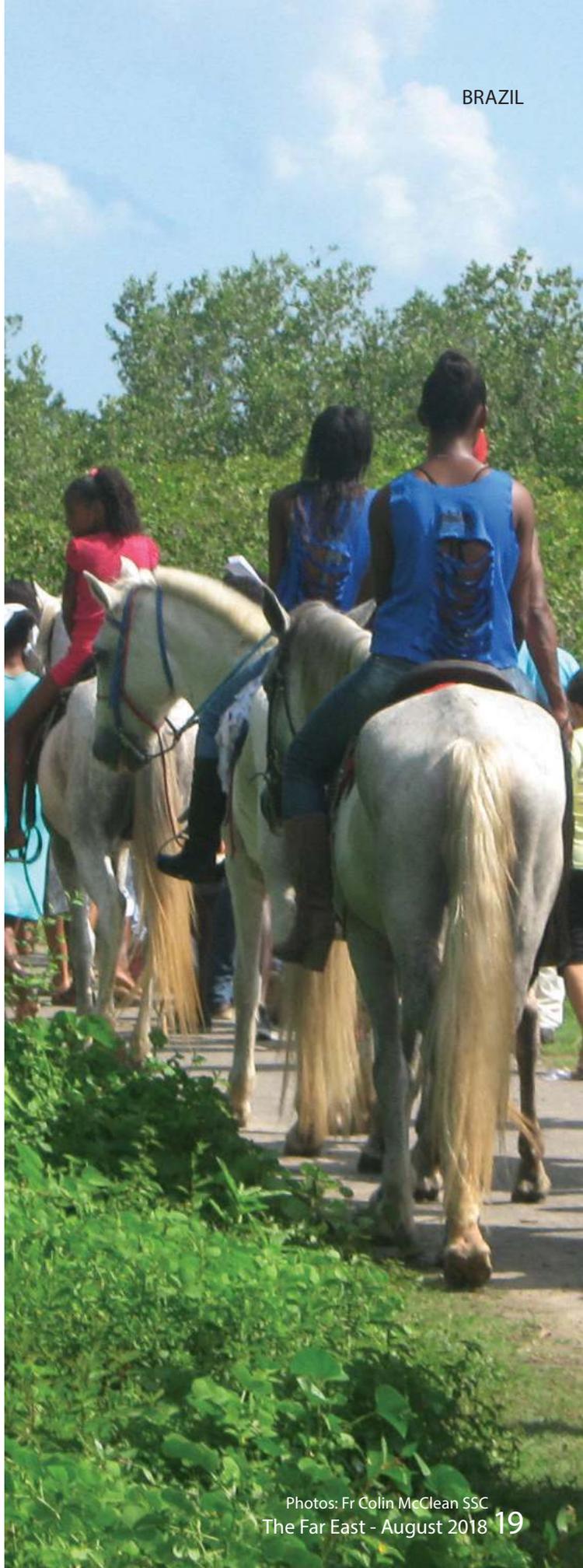
Thank the Lord that the weather was kind to us and the sea fairly calm. When the conga slowly petered out individuals began to dance the samba. The 45 minute crossing ended in no time, because everyone was thoroughly enjoying themselves.

A fitting end to a joyful feast.

Columban Fr Colin McLean has worked in Brazil since 1986. Today he is the priest in charge of Tide Island and other island communities off Salvador in north east Brazil.



A friend and fellow Columban, Fr Warren Kinne, made a very truthful comment on a visit to Brazil, "In Brazil, expect the unexpected... it usually happens!"



Housing and water equals dignity

To have nothing and now to own. To be without for 3000 years and now to have. To have lived nowhere and now to have a home and an address. To be threatened and now to be secure. This is how it now is for 86 Hindu families from the *Parkari Koli semi-nomadic tribal community* in Sindh province of south-east Pakistan.

These 86 families live at Jhirruk. Jhirruk is a barren place of nothingness about 45 kilometres from Hyderabad, near nothing except a canal from the Indus River which was four kilometres away. During the major flooding of the Indus in 2011, hundreds of thousands of people in southern Pakistan lost everything. International aid agencies came for several weeks. Then they went. The Catholic Church stayed.

St Elizabeth Hospital in the *Catholic diocese of Hyderabad* organized its *Mobile Medical Outreach Programme* into three teams that provided round-the-clock free medical care for months and more after the floods had receded and the other organizations had gone.

It became obvious that people who had lost everything needed homes as well as medical care. What most had lost was nothing more than a grass and mud shack. But what else can you have if you are treated as despised outcasts with no real civil or legal rights, if you are slave labourers

working for wealthy land owners to whom your young sons and daughters and wives are mere objects for easy sexual gratification?

In this crisis situation, *St Elizabeth Hospital* Hyderabad and the Catholic Church have made a difference. More than 860 homes for desperately poor Hindus, Christians and Muslims have either been built completely or essential building materials been provided. ***With the help of many donors, including the generosity of Columban donors, we have enabled many marginalized people to assume their national identity with pride.***

The story of Jhirruk is a special one in this wide panorama of kindness and compassion and identity-reclaiming.

In 2012, after the floods, the *St Vincent de Paul Society, Victoria* donated money to buy four acres of land at Jhirruk to build homes for homeless Parkari Koli people. The people and especially the women chose the land because it was close, just four kilometres away from a canal of the Indus River. It wasn't too far, the women said, for them to walk twice a day to get water which they with their daughters would carry back on their heads in earthenware pots for bathing and drinking and cooking.



The house-building began. Two-roomed houses firmly constructed of brick with good roofs and raised well above flood level. At a ceremony at *Governors House* Karachi in 2014, the far-sighted Governor of Sindh, Dr. Isharat ul-Ibad, handed out the deeds of possession to the first thirty families and entertained everyone to afternoon tea in the *State Dining Room*. In one afternoon, from the top, the barriers of cultural exclusion and religious and social discrimination were knocked down.

86 families are now happily settled in Jhirruk, each with their own permanent home. After 3000 years of being dispossessed and pushed to the margins by the Aryan people who invaded the Indian sub-continent, some of the original peoples have now something about which they can say for the first time *"this is ours", "this is mine"*.

The settlement at Jhirruk is called *Bethlehem*. The house settlement, really a new village, is legally registered with the Sindh provincial government as *Bethlehem Shelter Society*. Half the members of the governing body are from Bethlehem. None are literate but all know how to act well for one another. Their leader and the vice-president of the *Bethlehem Shelter Society* is a woman, Reshma, which may confound those who wish to insist that women in Pakistan have no role in society. The *Bethlehem Shelter Society* has enabled the people living at Jhirruk to take responsibility for their lives and collective well-being.

The four acres of land at Jhirruk has been divided into four quarters, three for the houses and the fourth for the construction of a clinic, a fenced area for cattle and animals, and intense tree-planting.

The houses are all built. Work is now underway to build connected verandahs in front of all the houses. This will double the living area of each house, provide shelter from the intense summer sun, and give protection from the monsoon rains.

A 20,000 gallon water-tank and five 500 gallon feeder-tanks have been built throughout the village with a secure water supply piped in from the canal from the Indus River. It is not



hard to imagine how this immediate accessibility to water has enabled the women and girls to reclaim space for their own lives instead of spending hours walking long distances several times a day to get water.

Bathing areas and toilets with septic systems have been built behind each row of houses. A perimeter wall is being built around the village for security. Trees have been planted and the greening of Jhirruk is a high priority for the *Bethlehem Shelter Society Council* in developing their community.

Construction of a satellite clinic is underway. The *Mobile Medical Outreach team* from *St Elizabeth Hospital* in Hyderabad will come each week for primary healthcare for all people in the area. The provincial government has agreed that it will see to education and schools in the area if the Catholic Church will see to healthcare. It is a good partnership.

Much has been done in just seven years, after 3000 long years.

Columban Fr Robert McCulloch works as the Procurator-General in Rome, Italy.



Photo: Fr Barry Cairns SSC

'Dohansha'

FR BARRY CAIRNS

One who travels with us

Columban history in the Japan mission is behind this stained glass window of the Risen Christ. In 1979 the architect of the new headquarters for the then almost 100 Columbans in Japan commissioned a stained glass artist, Hideo Matsuda, to create *Stations of the Cross* for the new chapel.

Hideo Matsuda had just returned from France and this was his first work in Japan. He has become well known since. The 14 depictions of Jesus' painful journey were simple, full of meaning and colour. They concluded with a 15th scene - the Risen Lord.

Our Columban numbers in Japan have decreased from a peak of 99 to 11 in 2017. Our central house was too large and demanded costly repairs. So we shifted to new Tokyo headquarters using an unused rectory which we renovated. The stained glass works are now incorporated into the converted house and its small chapel.

But there was a problem. The square window shape of the Risen Christ station was too difficult to insert. So now it graces the entrance to *Shinkoyasu Church* in Yokohama where I am pastor. At dusk an automatic inside spotlight comes on and those passing by in the street can see it clearly.

Let us look at the artist's work (see page 22). The central figure is the Risen Lord. But notice well the outline figures of a woman (left) and man (right). Jesus grips their hands and is walking with them. Those unfilled outlines are you and

me. The Resurrection means that Jesus is alive and with us now. Jesus grips our hands and walks the path of life with us. We are never alone. In a living voice the Risen Lord says to each one of us: *"Fear not! I am with you."* These living, encouraging words of Jesus always have an eternal present tense.

Jesus being with us as our companion on life's journey is a major emphasis on Shusaku Endo's three books on the Life of Jesus. ***Over and over again Endo used the Japanese word 'dohansha' – one who travels a journey with us. This aspect especially appeals to Japanese Christians.***

May it flavour the lives of all of us wherever we live.

Columban Fr Barry Cairns works in a small parish in Yokohama City, Japan.



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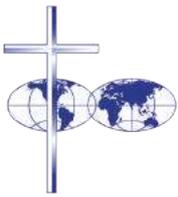
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Housing and water equals dignity - Pakistan

Families who have only ever lived in straw shacks have moved into new houses in Jhirruk, Pakistan. House deeds were handed over to residents who have never owned anything in their lives.

Work has begun on verandas that will double the size of the houses and provide protection from the intense heat and rain. Plumbing, wiring and upgrading the medical clinic is in the planning.

With your help we can continue to bring the Good News to the poor both spiritually and materially.



Photo: Fr Robert McCulloch SSC



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