

The Far East

COLUMBAN MISSION MAGAZINE

January/February 2018



*Columban Centenary
1918-2018*

Where are they **now?**

Columban Centenary - Fr Brian Gore



ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY

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Bishop Galvin conducting a Baptism in China in the 1920s.

Photo: Missionary Society of St Columban

Background: SW-Evil/Bigstock.com

From the Editor

When the calendar turns over to another year, many of us reflect on what we did or didn't do in the past year, and what we would like the new year to bring.

In reviewing last year's articles in *The Far East* magazine, there is much to be thankful for in terms of the missionary work carried out during the year. There are many reasons to feel optimistic about 2018 with celebrating our Centenary, a new leadership team for the Australia/New Zealand Region and good news of local and overseas missionary work.

Back from Taiwan after almost 26 years, Columban Fr Peter O'Neill shares his story of working with migrant workers and modern slavery that unbelievably continues today. After spending more than 20 years in Peru, Columban Fr George Hogarty speaks to *Catholic Voice*, Canberra/Goulburn, about mission in an age of diminishment.

The Reflection, 'Close the distance, not the gate' is a sensitive and challenging column written by well-known author, Oblate Fr Ron Rolheiser. It gives us much to think about in a world of

plenty for some and not for others. Columban Fr Brian Gore is featured in our Centenary coverage 'Where are they now?' A lot has happened since *The Negros Nine* were imprisoned in 1983 and sentenced to death on trumped up murder charges.

In the lead up to the 12 day *Trip to China* (see page 22) we are publishing some faith stories gathered by Columban Fr Warren Kinne during his time in Shanghai. Mathilde shares her faith journey with us. Columbans in New Zealand addressed the topic of planning for present and future retirement. Two years on they have completed a cost effective development in subdividing the property and selling off 11 lots to cover the cost.

Two young seminarians from Fiji share very different experiences while on *First Mission Assignments* (FMA) in Peru.

Columban Fr Gary Walker shares his thoughts on the benefits of working with Columban co-workers after Columban Fr Willie Lee, from Fiji, and Assunta Arena from *Columban Mission Centre*, Melbourne, worked together

in September at the *Ignite Youth Conference* in Brisbane.

I would like to thank those benefactors who sent in their 'Columban Stories'. As we go to press a letter has just been placed on my desk from an 87 year old benefactor who said that his mother was a promoter of the *Columban Calendar* and *The Far East* magazine in Tongala in the 1930s. He included a current photo of himself and another one that was published in *The Far East* magazine in August, 1934. He was a cute four year old with his cat and his dog. Where would he be without such loyal benefactors.

Thank you.

Janette Mentha
tfe@columban.org.au



[Click here to listen to](#)

Modern day slavery

MARK BOWLING

Columban missionary priest, Fr Peter O'Neill, knows what modern slavery looks like. For 26 years, Fr O'Neill from Geelong, lived amongst poor and abused migrant workers in Taiwan. He ran migrant shelters, provided pastoral support and advocated for human rights – a task he now describes as a privilege.

"It held my faith in God, a God of justice, a God of compassion," Fr O'Neill said. "And in my prayer every day I asked God for the courage and the strength to continue in the battle."

Fr O'Neill returned to Australia in July, 2017 to spend time with his aging parents and to work at the *Columban Mission Centre* in Melbourne, as the mission society's *Peace, Ecology and Justice Coordinator* - collaborating with organizations that focus on human trafficking and slavery, migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees, ecology and climate change.

He can reflect on his decades abroad and the ongoing struggle to free some of Asia's most vulnerable workers from servitude and poverty.

Fr O'Neill grew up in *Holy Spirit Parish*, Geelong, in a family that has delivered great missionary service. His twin brother, Fr Kevin O'Neill is the Columban's Superior General, based in Hong Kong and his sister Sr Kate O'Neill is a religious sister of the *Our Lady of the Missions Congregation* and their former provincial leader in the Philippines.

Peter's father John O'Neill, played as a fast and skilful wingman for the Geelong Cats from 1954-62, alongside ruckman Polly Farmer, and represented Victoria.

When Peter and Kevin were born (significantly) on the feast of St Columban in 1962, John retired from playing at the relatively young age of 27 to take up a teaching position in Cobden, country Victoria. Three years later the O'Neill family moved back to Geelong as John O'Neill accepted a position at the Cats to coach the Geelong reserve team, ensuring that Peter and Kevin grew up with a keen football interest, played rover and ruck rover and enjoyed a privileged status amongst their peers.

Besides football, the O'Neill family also had a keen interest in social justice. They belonged to an organisation in Geelong that welcomed Vietnamese 'boat people' refugees into their homes. Once a month four young Vietnamese would stay for the weekend.

It was the first time the O'Neill kids had mixed with people from another country and culture and perhaps kindled the missionary spirit in Peter, Kevin and Kate.

Peter was the first to answer God's call to the priesthood. After attending two school retreats with his brother, Kevin, he started thinking about training to be a priest, chose the *Columban Missionaries* and underwent his seminary formation in Turramurra, Sydney.

During his seminary formation, Fr O'Neill spent two years in Japan. After his ordination he went to Taiwan - an island half the size of Tasmania, but with a population of 23 million. He remembers discovering his mission work during long walks through the industrial areas around the city of Taoyuan. "I came across a lot of Filipino and Thai migrant workers," Fr O'Neill said. "I would talk to them about their work. They had a lot of problems – underpayment of salaries, and underpayment of overtime."

Fr O'Neill asked to be assigned to the *Hope Workers Centre* - one of two Columban centres set up to help local and migrant workers. He spent 12 years at the centre working with foreign workers – many of them who arrived traumatised and damaged. He uncovered systematic labour trafficking. Fr O'Neill found that many migrant workers were undocumented. They arrived in Taiwan from poorer Asian countries on tourist visas and simply overstayed so they could work. "I read media reports that there were roughly between 100,000 and 200,000 undocumented migrant workers," he said.

Today, Fr O'Neill said the number of migrant workers in Taiwan had ballooned to 660,000. They provide cheap labour for a booming economy, with Taiwanese companies encouraged to employ 30 per cent of their worker force from poorer countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam.

"Those working in the manufacturing sector, as fishermen, and in construction are covered by labour laws, but receive no more than the minimum wage," he said. "Often they live in dormitories with night curfews. No matter how long they work for the same company their salary will never go above a minimum wage. They are looked down upon by the majority of Taiwanese."

Fr O'Neill said about 250,000 migrant workers are young women – the largest number from Indonesia - taking care of elderly Taiwanese in their homes or in nursing facilities. They work for 16-18 hours a day, receive less than a minimum wage and are vulnerable to abuse. *"Many of them are locked in the house of their Taiwanese employers, never allowed to have a day off, and virtually under the control of their employer,"* Fr O'Neill said.

"Some are also victims of sexual abuse – raped by the husband who is their employer. They run away and become undocumented workers, then they are lured by the illegal brokers to find work. Some of them end up in brothels and become victims of sex trafficking. I would describe it as modern slavery."

Although Fr O'Neill has witnessed many improvements in workers' conditions many inequities remain. Workers in poor Asian countries are still forced to pay placement agencies as much as \$4,000 (USD) to get a job. When they arrive in Taiwan, a broker takes a monthly service fee totalling \$2,000 (USD) to cover their three year contract.

"The majority of migrant worker passports are confiscated by either the employer or the broker - which violates Taiwan law - and then when they work in Taiwan they don't have the freedom to change employers," Fr O'Neill said. *"According to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to free choice of employment."*

In 2007, the local Bishop asked Fr O'Neill to be the diocesan co-ordinator for social and pastoral services for migrants, immigrants and victims of human trafficking. The diocese has five shelters (three for women and two for men) for up to 150 migrant workers. Fr O'Neill supervised one of the shelters for 40 men.

By day, he would organise court cases against traffickers, and lobby authorities for migrant rights. In the evenings



Fr Peter O'Neill at a migrant worker demonstration in front of the Presidential Palace in Taipei, Taiwan, advocating to stop the criminalization of undocumented migrant workers.



he worked in the migrant shelter, creating a family-friendly atmosphere for the victims of labour trafficking far from home and who struggled to speak Chinese.

"Eating with the migrant men every day, listening to their stories gave me the passion and energy to keep going with the lobbying, knowing that I was their voice – a voice for the voiceless," Fr O'Neill said. *"Sometimes it was horrific for them to retell their story of abuse. It was a privilege to be trusted by the migrant workers."*

Fr O'Neill encouraged migrants to practice their own religion. Catholics were encouraged to go to Mass, Muslims to the local mosque and Buddhists to the local temple. The shelter had a special prayer room for Christians and another for Muslims.

Taiwanese authorities and police came to trust and respect Fr O'Neill's advocacy for the most downtrodden.

Over more than 20 years Columban missionaries were a part of a movement to convince the Taiwanese government to drop requirements for migrant workers to leave the country and return home after three years. This allowed migrant workers to stay, without having to pay further fees to placement agencies, and to choose who they could work for.

"That was a big victory for those of us lobbying for migrant workers," Fr O'Neill said. *"Unless there's advocacy done by civil society and faith based organizations, very few governments are willing to change the laws to protect migrant workers. We were in for the long haul and had to keep knocking on the door of the government."*

In 2015, Fr O'Neill received an official hero award from Taiwan's Hsinchu City for his service to migrant workers and immigrants. In stark contrast to when Fr O'Neill started his work with Taiwan's migrant workers, now only seven percent are undocumented.

Now back in Melbourne, Fr O'Neill said he would like to use his expertise learnt in Taiwan to work with ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans) - examining labour trafficking in Australia.

"From what I am reading there's a lot of exploitation going on," he said. *"A lot of workers are coming in to Australia as seasonal workers to pick fruit, and some of those workers are victims of labour trafficking."*

As for his beloved Geelong Cats – Fr O'Neill was in the crowd to watch his team play in the finals this year – only to be eliminated before the grand final. He'll be hoping for a Cats victory next year.

Photo: Fr Peter O'Neill SSC

Promoting foreign mission in an 'age of diminishment'

PERU
AUSTRALIA

FIONA VAN DER PLAAT



In what he calls an “age of diminishment” for the Church, promoting foreign mission to congregations is not getting easier for Columban priest Fr George Hogarty.

While the numbers he is preaching to are shrinking, the pleas for their charity are ballooning and he wouldn't blame parishioners for feeling “somewhat beleaguered”.

As he has travelled throughout the Archdiocese of Canberra/Goulburn this year, talking about the work of the Missionary Society of St Columban, Fr Hogarty has faced the challenge of cutting through the “noise” of an increasingly secular society to create an awareness of communities far less privileged than our own.

Having worked with the poor and disconnected in Chile and Peru, Fr Hogarty says Australians don't realise how privileged they are.

“I always say to people, ‘Just be thankful for the life you have here. Live in peace and don't be pressured by all those other forces challenging their faith.”

At the same time he asks parishioners to “participate” in the lives of poor and exploited people around the world by reading about them in the Columbans' monthly publication, *The Far East* magazine and “helping as you can”.

“It's not just about money,” he says of his work. “It's about making people aware there is such a thing as foreign mission – that, apart from their own parishes, there is another reality they are called to take an interest in”.

The Columbans work as missionaries in more than 16 countries, but Fr Hogarty says they are just part of a wider

“world church ... working together to cross language and cultural barriers”.

Fr Hogarty spent more than 20 years in Chile and Peru, helping poor and isolated populations to build parishes and communities on the foundations of their “natural religiosity”.

“There is already a strong cultural Catholicism and we work with that to give them a fuller picture of their faith. It's not just about religion, but about helping them create a better world for themselves,” he says.

Fr Hogarty, who grew up in Victoria, returned from Peru in late 2014 to take up a four-year role promoting mission around Australian dioceses.

He admits it's a rewarding but “unsettling” gig, which requires him to live off the goodwill of parish priests willing to share lodgings for a few days or, if they need help (as with a recent stint in Yass and an upcoming one in Batemans Bay), a few weeks or months.

The upside of his rolling-stone life is he meets “many marvellous people doing a lot for the Church and the world”.

The downside is he barely has time to get to know those people before moving on. Despite the inherent challenges of his role, Fr Hogarty says the Archdiocese “should hold its head high”.

“We might be in the age of diminishment but the people of this diocese are still showing faith and life, and a lot of good things are being done,” he says.

Fiona van der Plaats, Journalist, Catholic Voice, Canberra/Goulburn.

Photo: Catholic Voice



[Click here to listen to](#)

Close the distance not the gate

FR RON ROLHEISER

*N*obel-prizing winning author, Toni Morrison, assessing the times, asks this question: “*Why should we want to know a stranger when it is easier to estrange another? Why should we want to close the distance when we can close the gate?*” Except this isn’t a question, it’s a judgement.

It’s a negative judgement on both our society and our churches. Where are our hearts really at? Are we trying more to close the distance between us and what’s foreign, or are we into closing gates to keep strangers estranged?

In fairness, it might be pointed out that this has always been a struggle. There hasn’t been a golden age within which people wholeheartedly welcomed the stranger. There have been golden individuals and even golden communities who were welcoming, but never society or church as a whole.

Much as this issue is so front and in our politics today, as countries everywhere struggle with their immigration policies and with what to do with millions of refugees and migrants wanting to enter their country, I want to take Morrison’s challenge, to close the distance rather than close the gate to our churches: Are we inviting in the stranger? Or, are we content to let the estranged remain outside?

There is a challenging motif within Jesus’ parable of the over-generous vineyard owner which can easily be missed because of the overall lesson within the story. It concerns the question that the vineyard owner asks the last group of workers, those who will work for only one hour. Unlike the first group, he doesn’t ask them: “*Do you want to work in my vineyard?*” Rather he asks them: “*Why aren’t you working?*” Their answer: “*Because no one has hired us!*” Notice they don’t answer by saying that their non-employment is because they are lazy, incompetent, or disinterested. Neither does the vineyard owner’s question imply that. They aren’t working simply because no one has given them the invitation to work!

Sadly, I believe this is the case for so many people who are seemingly cold or indifferent to religion and our churches. Nobody has invited them in! And that was true too at the time of Jesus. Whole groups of people were seen as being indifferent and hostile to religion and were deemed simply as sinners. This included prostitutes, tax collectors, foreigners, and criminals. Jesus invited them in and many of them responded with a sincerity, contrition, and devotion that shamed those who considered themselves true believers. For the so-called sinners, all that stood between them and entry into the kingdom was a genuine invitation.



Why aren't you practicing a faith? No one has invited us! Just in my own, admittedly limited, pastoral experience, I have seen a number of individuals who from childhood to early or late mid-life were indifferent to, and even somewhat paranoid about, religion and church. It was a world from which they had always felt excluded. But, thanks to some gracious person or fortunate circumstance, at a moment, they felt invited in and they gave themselves over to their new religious family with a disarming warmth, fervor, and gratitude, often taking a fierce pride in their new identity. Witnessing this several times, I now understand why the prostitutes and tax collectors, more than the church people at the time, believed in Jesus. He was the first religious person to truly invite them in.

Sadly, too, there's a reverse side to this, where, all too often, in all religious sincerity, we not only don't invite certain others in, we positively close the gates on them. We see that, for example, a number of times in the Gospels where those around Jesus block others from having access to him, as is the case in that rather colourful story where some people are trying to bring a paralytic to Jesus but are blocked by the crowds surrounding him and consequently have to make a hole in the roof in order to lower the paralytic into Jesus' presence.

Too frequently, unknowingly, sincerely, but blindly, we are that crowd around Jesus, blocking access to him by our presence. This is an occupational danger especially for all of us who are in ministry. We so easily, in all sincerity, in the name of Christ, in the name of orthodox theology, and in the name of sound pastoral practice set ourselves up as gatekeepers, as guardians of our churches, through whom others must pass in order to have access to God. We need to more clearly remember that Christ is the gatekeeper, and the only gatekeeper, and we need to refresh ourselves on what that means by looking at why Jesus chased the moneychangers out of the temple in John's Gospel. They, the moneychangers, had set themselves up as a medium through which people had to pass in order to offer worship to God. Jesus would have none of it.

Our mission as disciples of Jesus is not to be gatekeepers. We need instead to work at closing the distance rather than closing the gate.

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

Fr Brain Gore in the Philippines, 1984.



MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST. COLUMBAN

Sharing Gospel Joy

Where are they now?

Columban Centenary - Fr Brian Gore

Today Fr Brian Gore lives in Bantollinao in the Philippines, in the mountains of Negros Occidental where he is working with the *Negros Nine Human Development Foundation* (NNHDF).

The *Negros Nine* were three priests, including Fr Brian Gore, and six lay workers who were imprisoned in 1983 during the Marcos regime and sentenced to death on trumped up murder charges.

The NNHDF Inc. was set up in the year of the Great Jubilee (2000) to continue the work of total human development started in the dark years of the Marcos dictatorship and in the memory of all those who suffered and died in the course of justice. ***Their struggle will not be in vain, they will not be forgotten.***

Read more about the work of Fr Brian Gore: www.negrosnine.com

"Subversion" makes a better charge than "Murder"

This was the headline in the April edition of 1983 *The Far East* magazine that featured Fr Brian Gore behind bars in prison in the Philippines on charges of inciting rebellion, illegal possession of arms and ammunition, and the murder of a local mayor.

The trial dominated world headlines for over two years until their case was dismissed due to lack of evidence in 1984.



Fr Brain Gore in the Philippines, 2015.

Your Columban story

Benefactors share with us...

Eileen from Auckland wrote:

We have been receiving the Far East magazine for at least 45 years, I think.

I have 8 children and long ago, in Mairangi Bay a Columban priest visited us. I don't think I knew he was coming as my young son had his blocks spread all over the lounge and didn't want them disturbed!! I was a bit embarrassed. I had hoped that one of my children would become a Columban as I admired them a lot. "Swords and Ploughshares" (Fr Herlihy) and Fr Crobsie's story have been read often. I like the way the Columbans live like the poor in countries in which they live.

Chris from Mt Cotterell wrote:

*I first encountered the Far East in our home and when, as a young schoolboy, I used to deliver the church newspapers to our parishioners. The Far East was a font of information about the world outside Australia. I remember reading accounts of man-eating tigers in India and stories about faraway lands. **Also, being a schoolboy, Mickey Daly's Diary was essential reading.***

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

Columban Mission Centre

P.O. Box 752

Niddrie VIC 3042 **OR**

E: tfe@columban.org.au



[Click here to listen to](#)

Shanghai faith story

MATHILDE

The tsunami effect

Many expats in Shanghai, who were involved in the Catholic communities, grew in their faith while in Shanghai. This fact may seem counter-intuitive. Shanghai is known as a city of tinsel and glitter, of sex and night-clubs, of money making and pollution. It is also a lot more than that. Shanghai is also the place where many have found God in a more intimate way. Fr Warren Kinne.

I am French and come from a family that identifies as Catholic culturally, but my family members have little to no faith in God. I was baptized as a baby and I went to catechism class as a child because it was considered good education and moral teachings, but I cannot remember attending a single Sunday Mass, apart from a few weddings and my First Communion.

I come from the Christian tradition and learned about Jesus Christ as a child, but I was unable to love what I did not understand, let alone have faith in Him. So I put religion up on a shelf and left it there. I cannot say that I was missing it – you cannot miss what you never had, and most of my generation had a similar story: raised with Christian values, but we had no idea what having faith meant or felt like.

In 2012, I moved to Shanghai for work and I met my now-husband Alex. He is Italian and a Christian Catholic, and right from the beginning the way he lived his faith threw me off balance. For the first few years we were together, we had lots of conversations about religion, which often turned to arguments. I would challenge him, and he would challenge me; soon it became clear that we actually agreed on everything – the Christian values, the history, the peace of mind reached in prayer. But there was some fierce resistance on my side. There was doubt. For me, all of this was based on the condition “If God exists” and I was bumping into a wall, unable to go any further.

Watching Alex and his unconditional love for Jesus Christ made me go through a wide range of emotions, from admiration, to envy, to sadness. I felt like I was missing out on something. I was so conflicted internally. I started praying by myself, or at least tried to, shyly

and secretly, but I felt like a hypocrite. I started to accompany Alex to Church on Sundays, occasionally at first, then more regularly.

As you understand by now, my coming back to Church was certainly not a fluid and easy path, but it was a natural one. Two things happened.

First, I never imagined Sunday Mass would give me so much energy. The international community at Saint Peter’s Church in Shanghai straight away welcomed me as a part of the family. During Mass, hymns were what initially got under my skin. I would cry uncontrollably because I couldn’t cope with how they made me feel. I was so moved every time and amazed by the community of faithful, coming from dozens of different countries and backgrounds, yet all united in prayer and love for God. It was beautiful.

I started to let myself be taken and lifted up, I felt in communion with the community.

The second milestone on my faith journey was my encounter with Columban Fr Warren Kinne, who was the Priest in Shanghai at the time. I am so grateful that he always made time for a one-to-one talk with me in times of questions and doubts.

Alex had recently proposed to me. I knew what the sacrament of marriage represented for him in regards to his Christian life and I wanted to be worthy of it and to embark with him on this adventure in a similar state of mind.

I shared these issues with Fr Warren as we walked around a park in Shanghai; I remember the contrast between my agitation and his calm. He told me that faith was a personal journey and that I had to make my



The second milestone on my faith journey was my encounter with Columban Fr Warren Kinne, who was the Priest in Shanghai at the time.

own rather than follow or copy someone else's. Perhaps God was sending me signs every day, but my heart and eyes were closed with skepticism and I didn't see them. I had to stop resisting.

As simple as it may sound to you, this had a tsunami effect on me. That day, in that park, on that bench, my barriers went down. And looking back, I now know that this was the turning point when I finally accepted my faith and let it flow within me.

Being married in front of God and my family is the strongest commitment I have ever made. Alex and I feel so close as husband and wife, and I cherish our special moments. We adopted a habit of praying together, asking for God's blessings, and giving thanks, night after night. I think my personality is evolving towards being less resentful and more selfless, although this is a lifelong learning curve.

This is my personal faith journey; for me God is love and hope. He is the Father who humbles and unites us. I know deep inside that my faith is about to start a new chapter, as I am about to no longer be a daughter, but to become a parent myself.

Mathilde, Shanghai, China.



New neighbourhood for Columbans



One of the new houses at the Columban Mission Centre, Lower Hutt, New Zealand.

What became known as ‘the New Zealand Columban land development project’ began two years ago. At that time Peter McGuinness, a civil engineer, presented us with a report outlining a number of options in relation to our property at 8 St Columbans Grove, Lower Hutt.

In planning for the present and future retirement needs of New Zealand Columbans, the Superior General, the Australia/New Zealand Regional Council as well as the local Columban community believed that a land development project was the best option. It was also the most responsible use of the resources we had available to us.

Selling off 11 lots was designed to pay for the development and have some funds left over to support the work of Columban Mission here in New Zealand. We did not have to use any of the money given to us by our donors for this project.

The end result is that we now have a refurbished office, a new chapel which is small but ideal for our weekday Masses and five new houses that are warm and dry. We have a more confined space than previously and lots of new neighbours.

So, on November 4, 2017, we celebrated the blessing of our new Columban chapel, office and residences as well as the centenary of the Missionary Society of St Columban.

Marquees had been set up in front of the main residence and 160 people were present for the occasion.

When Cardinal John Dew - the Archbishop of Wellington - arrived, there was a Maori welcome which was powerfully touching while evoking respect for the tangata whenua, the people of the land.

When Cardinal John reached the place of gathering, there were a few words of welcome in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

After the welcome, Cardinal John proceeded with the simple ceremony of blessing. In his homily, Cardinal John spoke of the true foundations of the Columban presence

“

The end result is that we now have a refurbished office, a new chapel which is small but ideal for our weekday Masses and five new houses that are warm and dry.

in New Zealand. It is not just cement and steel but, more importantly, faith in Jesus Christ and the call to mission.

Prayers of the Faithful were read by a number of people representing different groups who are closely connected to the Columbans, family, friends and religious.

Returning to the marquee, Cardinal John blessed a plaque on which were written the names of the 26 New Zealand Columbans who have died in the past 100 years.

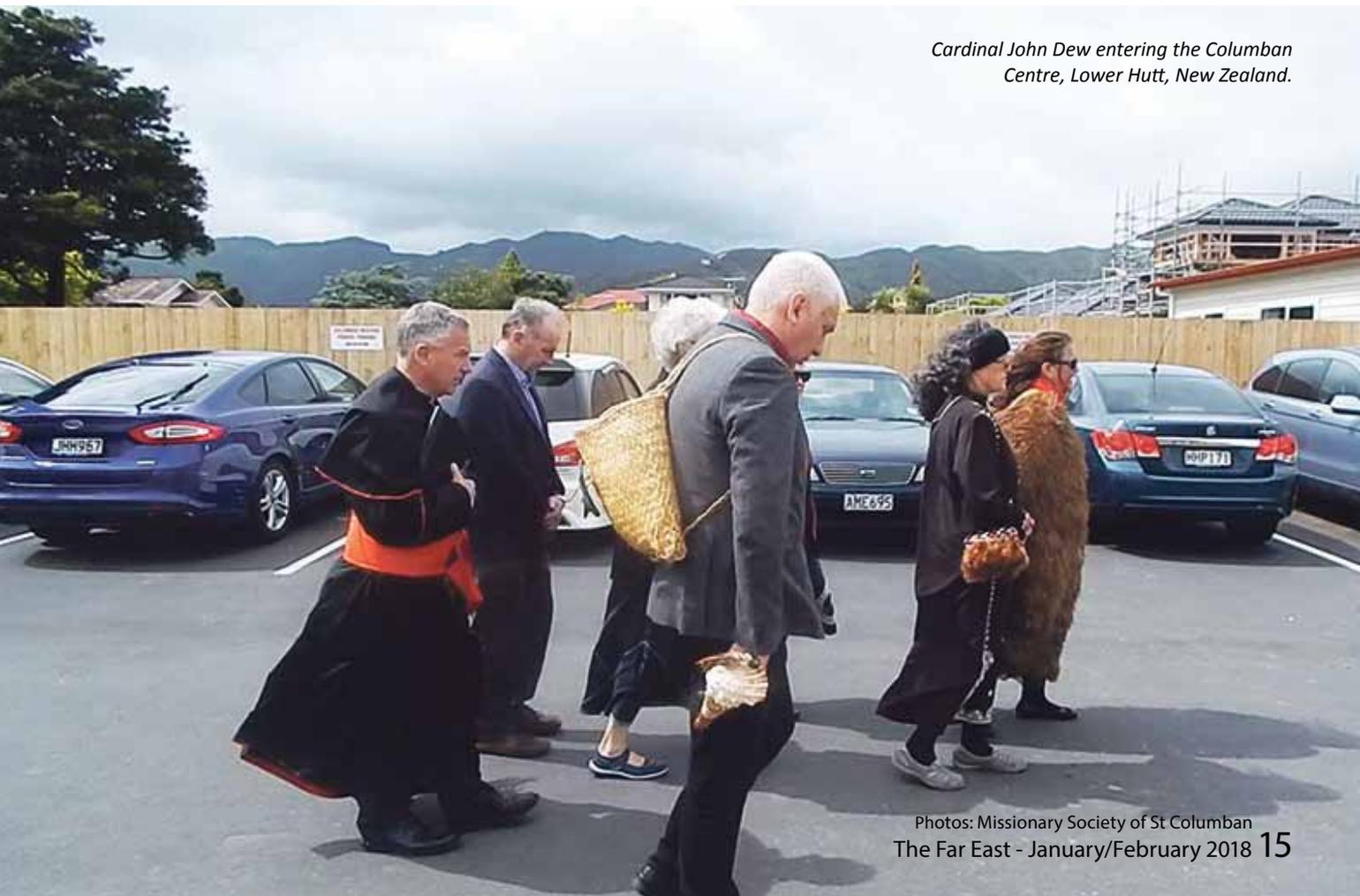
This was followed by four speeches given by Columban Vicar-General, Fr Arturo Aguilar, Regional Director of Australia and New Zealand, Fr Gary Walker, Project Manager, Mrs Kirstyn McKeefry and myself (Fr Tom Rouse, local Columban Co-ordinator).

After the speeches, guests had the opportunity to wander around and look at the new Columban houses and the display in the office.

It was a great way to remember the past and look forward in hope to the next 100 years of the Columbans in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

Columban Fr Tom Rouse was a missionary in Fiji from 1976-2014. He is now Mission Coordinator of St Columbans, Lower Hutt, New Zealand.

Cardinal John Dew entering the Columban Centre, Lower Hutt, New Zealand.



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 January

That Christians, and other religious minorities in Asian countries, may be able to practise their faith in full freedom.

Mission Intention for February

That those who have material, political or spiritual power may resist any lure of corruption.



Photo: sgame/bigstock.com

Pope sends telegram of condolence following terror attacks in Egypt

Officials called it the deadliest terrorist attack in Egypt's modern history.

*P*ope Francis expressed his "profound" grief November 24, 2017, at the "great loss of life" caused by the terrorist attackers on the Rawda mosque in North Sinai on November 24.

Militants detonated a bomb inside a crowded mosque in the Sinai Peninsula, and then sprayed gunfire on panicked worshippers as they fled, killing at least 305 people and wounding at least 128 others. Officials called it the deadliest terrorist attack in Egypt's modern history.

The scale and ruthlessness of the assault, in an area racked by an Islamist insurgency, sent shock waves across the nation - not just for the number of deaths but also for the choice of target.

The Holy Father's sentiments were expressed in a telegram sent by Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

The Telegram

His Holiness Pope Francis was profoundly grieved to learn of the great loss of life caused by the terrorist attacks on the Rawda mosque in North Sinai. In expressing his solidarity with the Egyptian people at this hour of national mourning, he commends the victims to the mercy of the Most High God and invokes divine blessings of consolation and peace upon their families. In renewing his firm condemnation of this wanton act of brutality directed at innocent civilians gathered in prayer,



His Holiness joins all people of good will in imploring that hearts hardened by hatred will learn to renounce the way of violence that leads to such great suffering and embrace the way of peace.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin Secretary of State © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Photo: AAP image/AFP Photo/Osservatore Romano

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From the Director

The biggest changes are ahead of us

"There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every purpose under the heavens." (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

As I begin to appreciate that I am entering a new year I am reminded that time is a constantly evolving backdrop to my life. Some things within me and around me remind me that this is indeed a "new" year and other things hardly seem to change. On November 23, 2017 Pope Francis sent a video message for the 7th Festival of Social Doctrine of the Church in which he said: *"Being faithful involves the capacity for change."*

Pope Francis said: *"The Word of God helps us to distinguish between the two "faces" of change: the first is trust, hope, openness to the new; the second is the difficulty of leaving certainties to head for the unknown."* He also noted that if we stay in our enclosure we feel calmer and it is more secure but encouraged us to *"go out, to depart and start up new processes."*

In 2018 St Columbans Mission Society is celebrating 100 years since our founders, Fr Edward Galvin and Fr John Blowick, were given the official permission from Rome to answer the call of our Missionary God to "go out, to depart" and to begin a new mission to the people of China. 100 years later that initial fervour and excitement has changed and the number of our priest members is diminishing. The energy and style of being a missionary, the style of missionary presence is also evolving.

The "new processes" of mission today demand a more measured, more honest and transparent living out of the missionary charism. The Word of God is speaking to us through a different situation. The recent findings in Australia of the *Royal Commission on Institutional Sexual Abuse of Children* is calling the Church to a much more humble, more transparent style of presence which values dialogue.

It may be a little scary but there is a sense that the biggest changes for our Church and for St Columbans Mission Society are ahead of us. Yet we are all still called to dream and not stay in the security of our enclosures. Dreams set the framework of our thinking and our style of living is framed by how we see our future. At my stage in life I am grappling with how to be patient, adjusting to a new rhythm of waiting in our rapidly changing world. I am used to waiting for the

Word of God, the Resurrected Jesus in my prayer life. I seem to live on small shifts or hints from God. I try to live in the present, in the now and live in hope. Hope is an experience of enduring, persevering, which has meaning and gives me a sense of mission.

For many of us in this part of the world this is a time for vacation and hopefully some rest. I plan to use some of this time to appreciate that our Creator God is the God of space and time who is offering these moments to me as a gift. Hopefully I will come to a deeper sense that God is present, is caring for all of us and watching over us at the beginning of this new year.



Pope Francis said: "The Word of God helps us to distinguish between the two "faces" of change: the first is trust, hope, openness to the new; the second is the difficulty of leaving certainties to head for the unknown."

Fr Brian Vale
director@columban.org.au



Aminiasi (center) enjoying recess with the students from Manuel Duato special school in Lima, Peru.



[Click here to listen to](#)

I got this one in the bag

AMINIASI RAVUWAI

An unsuspected learning for Columban seminarian on First Mission Assignment (FMA) in Peru.

*I*t started out like any other normal evening meal in the Formation House in Fiji, when we were informed we would be going to Peru for our FMA. Two days after our arrival in Lima, Tex, another seminarian, and I were called to a meeting with our FMA Director where he outlined the programme. He mentioned there was a possibility of doing pastoral work in a school. Having the experience of being a teacher before going to the seminary, I told myself “*I got this one in the bag*”. It’s either Maths or Basic English. I did not even bother to ask what school it was or what was involved in the pastoral work.

After Language School, I was informed of my pastoral placement in the school next door to the Columban Central House. Indeed, it was the school next door but not the one I had anticipated. There were two schools beside the Columban House, one a Diocesan secondary school and the other a special needs school. So, it was welcome to *Manuel Duato*, a school catering for the needs of special students. Without any formal training prior to this, I experienced a bit of confusion and a surge of anxiety.

The first day came and it was like reliving my first day in elementary school where it literally took me

seconds to exit through the other door. My fears became a reality as there were screams, parents chasing their kids around, a kid chewing on some crayons and another throwing stuff at other students. The class was chaotic and in a mess but as I would later find out, there was a certain beauty and fulfilling joy hidden within that mess. One simply needs time to adjust to unfamiliar situations and adapt.

The assigned class comprised of ten severely intellectually challenged students, a teacher and myself as assistant. As weeks turned into months the unfamiliar gradually became familiar. Each student had a different way of being approached and assisted in class. Activities involved some simple art work in class and physical exercises outside. At other times it would involve feeding some of the students during lunch. Language was a challenge for me and luckily it was of minimal use since the students had speech impairments. Communication was kept at one-word commands accompanied by simple hand gestures, anything more would confuse both the students and myself.

Regular or traditional classrooms gauge students' progress generally through exam results and are most rewarding to any teacher who puts in effort and sees the results. In our class at *Manuel Duato*, the completion of art work or physical activity, however small, is an achievement in itself. The means of getting there may be difficult but it is worthwhile when one sees the joy expressed on these student's faces upon completion of a simple task.

As a Columban seminarian I am also reminded of the possibility of working for and alongside special needs people in the future. Truly there have been areas of growth in my own person, such as gaining a great deal of patience, accepting them for who they are and having tolerance for special needs students. One could easily define these areas of growth, but to live them out is a different ball game.

Spending time with these students made me realise my own disabilities and provided the opportunity to identify them, acknowledge them and build-on them.

The experience reminded me of a Columban priest's sharing in the Formation House in Fiji in which he said *"The formation years are about going around with your tool-box and collecting tools for the journey ahead"*. The FMA programme has thus far provided me tools, some new while the old ones need a bit of oiling.

Finally I wish to convey my sincere gratitude to all benefactors of the Society. It is through their prayers and support that such institutions and projects undertaken by the Society manifest themselves in the lives of these children, their families and your seminarians.

God bless you.

Mini.

Aminiasi (Mini) Ravuwai is currently on FMA in Peru.



Juan a student from the Manuel Duato special school in Lima, Peru.

I am a Catholic in my own way

MARTIN KOROICIRI



Martin Koroiciri (left) alongside Fr Gonzalo Bórquez and parishioners in Chile.

In my last two years with the Columbans in Chile, I realized there is more to learn about mission than just going out and preaching the gospel to the people.

In our formation program we learn that missionaries must learn to cross boundaries. One of the first ones is an attempt to cross the boundary of language. Spanish is the official language in Chile and it took me five months to overcome this boundary.

The Columbans helped me in this challenge by giving me an opportunity to live with a Chilean family, to not only learn the language but to learn their culture as well. I was billeted with a family of four generations, all living under the same roof. It wasn't an easy road as I had to overcome the embarrassment of making mistakes, getting to know the do's and don'ts in a new environment while still not having a proper grip of the language.

During that time I worked in the parish of *San Columbano* with Columban Fr Tom Hanley and Fr Pablo Park, a Korean Associate priest. This work gave me more opportunities to get to know and understand the people, not just within the Church, but also with those who did not participate much in Church activities.

I was invited to lunches and dinners with these families. It was on these visitations that I learnt more about the saying "*Yo soy Catolico en mi mismo manera*" which means "*I am a*

Catholic in my own way" a phrase I often heard from non-active Catholics who preferred not to participate.

I also travelled to other Columban mission sites for different experiences of mission. I looked forward to these new experiences, mainly because I wanted to gain everything I could from the experience, and at the same time, I liked to travel. It was a win-win situation for me.

On my first mission in a countryside community called *Ria Chuelo*, in the Zone of *Ozorno*, we visited many poor families in the community. I heard their simple but struggling life stories and how they loved the Lord, even though they had very little in the way of material possessions.

I felt that after each mission experience I had something to bring back to the parish where part of my work was visiting families. I realized that in Chile you can ask the family if you want to visit them, whereas in Fiji it would be considered intruding, because normally you need to be invited. So you could say I had my share of culture shocks that continued throughout my mission journey over the last two years.

In many cases I learnt to see the Columban motto "*Christi simus non nostri*" (We belong to Christ and not to ourselves) being personified by the humble members of this beautiful region, and for that I am truly grateful to God.

Martin Koroiciri is currently studying Theology at the Columban Formation House in Suva, Fiji

Working with co-workers

FIJI
AUSTRALIA

FR GARY WALKER

In September 2017, Assunta Arena from the Columban Mission Centre (CMC) in Essendon and Columban Fr Willie Lee from Fiji staffed a stall at the *Ignite Youth Conference* in Brisbane. Their aim was to promote Columban Vocations and raise awareness of Columban works.

Over 1000 young people, mainly from Brisbane, attended. It is promoted as the largest youth conference held in Australia each year and this year was held at Mueller College, Rothwell. The event was co-sponsored by the Emmanuel Covenant Community and the Archdiocese of Brisbane.

Fr Willie Lee was invited to attend the conference as there was no youthful Columban priest available in the Australia/New Zealand Region.

Columban Fr Dan Harding, a previous Vocations Director, and Assunta Arena had attended youth conferences over the last three years and had built up a relationship with many of the young people who attend the conferences. As there are few opportunities of connecting with young people it was important to have Assunta and a Columban priest continuing to build on those relationships.

Fr Willie was asked to speak personally about his experience as a Columban at the conference. An innovative interactive spinning wheel and having a vibrant young Columban present attracted many young people to the stand.

The cost of an international airfare and some minor living expenses were outweighed by the positive attention that Fr Willie brought to the Columban stall. Assunta had prepared the marketing material including posters and brochures and set up a stall with an interactive spinning wheel and Columban show bags as prizes.



Fr Willie Lee amongst the youth at the Ignite Conference, Brisbane.



Columban stand at the Ignite Youth Conference, Brisbane.

The three days led to an opportunity for Assunta and Fr Willie to collaborate on a similar conference in Fiji next year. Collaboration between the Regions of Australia/New Zealand and Fiji mean that some or most of the promotional material can be developed at CMC in Essendon. There is also an opportunity for Columban Vocations material to be shared between the Regions as well as other new marketing initiatives.

The event was an excellent example of how Columban members and Columban co-workers can work together to maximise their strengths for the good of the Columban Society.

What Assunta wrote in her report is worth repeating: ***Having Fr Willie Lee with us this year was a great success. As a team, we were able to share the workload and he was able to share his Columban story of joining the seminary, working in Chile and his current role as Vocations Director in Fiji.***

He said the Ignite concept was something he could look at hosting in Fiji. He invited me to Fiji to assist and be part of this initiative.

Fr Willie is keen to tap into our promotional resources which can be made readily available with minor edits to contact details. I believe that our collaboration with Fiji was strengthened as a result of spending the time together. Thank you Fr Willie.

Columban Fr Gary Walker now resides at the Columban House in Brisbane.

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The year 2018 commemorates 100 years since the Missionary Society of St Columban was officially founded on 29 June, 1918. The first Columban missionaries were sent to China in 1920 and were expelled in 1949 after a brief period of bitter persecution.

In the 1990s Columbans returned to China and today, the worldwide leadership of the Missionary Society of St Columban is based in Hong Kong.

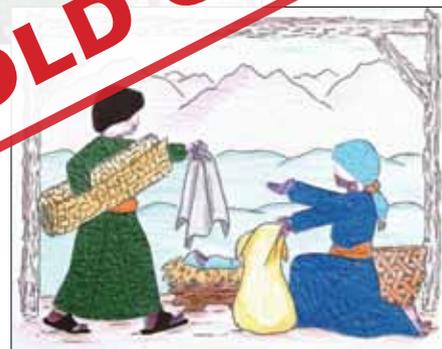
Visit the Columban headquarters in Hong Kong. Travel to historical sites in Wuhan, Shanghai and Beijing and meet Columban Priests, Sisters and Lay Missionaries. The tour will be hosted by former Columban Superior General Fr Tommy Murphy who is currently the Vice Co-ordinator of the China Mission.

An apology and a thank you

Subanen Christmas cards

Due to an overwhelming support for Subanen workers after the recent terrorist attack in Mindanao the Christmas cards were sold out. As the cards are all hand-made, there was not enough time to replenish our stocks. We will ensure that next year we have plenty of Christmas cards.

Columban Fr Vinnie Busch, who developed the Subanen livelihood project, sends his thanks for your care and concern.



COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES

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"Do what you can" Bishop Edward J Galvin

Remember Columbans in your Will

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Modern day slavery - Taiwan

Greed continues to drive employers to abuse, traumatize and underpay migrant workers not only in Taiwan, but in many other countries.

Fr Peter O'Neill spent 12 years at the *Hope Workers Centre* in Taiwan working with foreign workers, many of whom arrived traumatized and damaged.

With your help, migrant workers can continue to be supported while the work of uncovering systematic labour trafficking continues.



Photo: Hope Workers Centre, Taiwan.



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