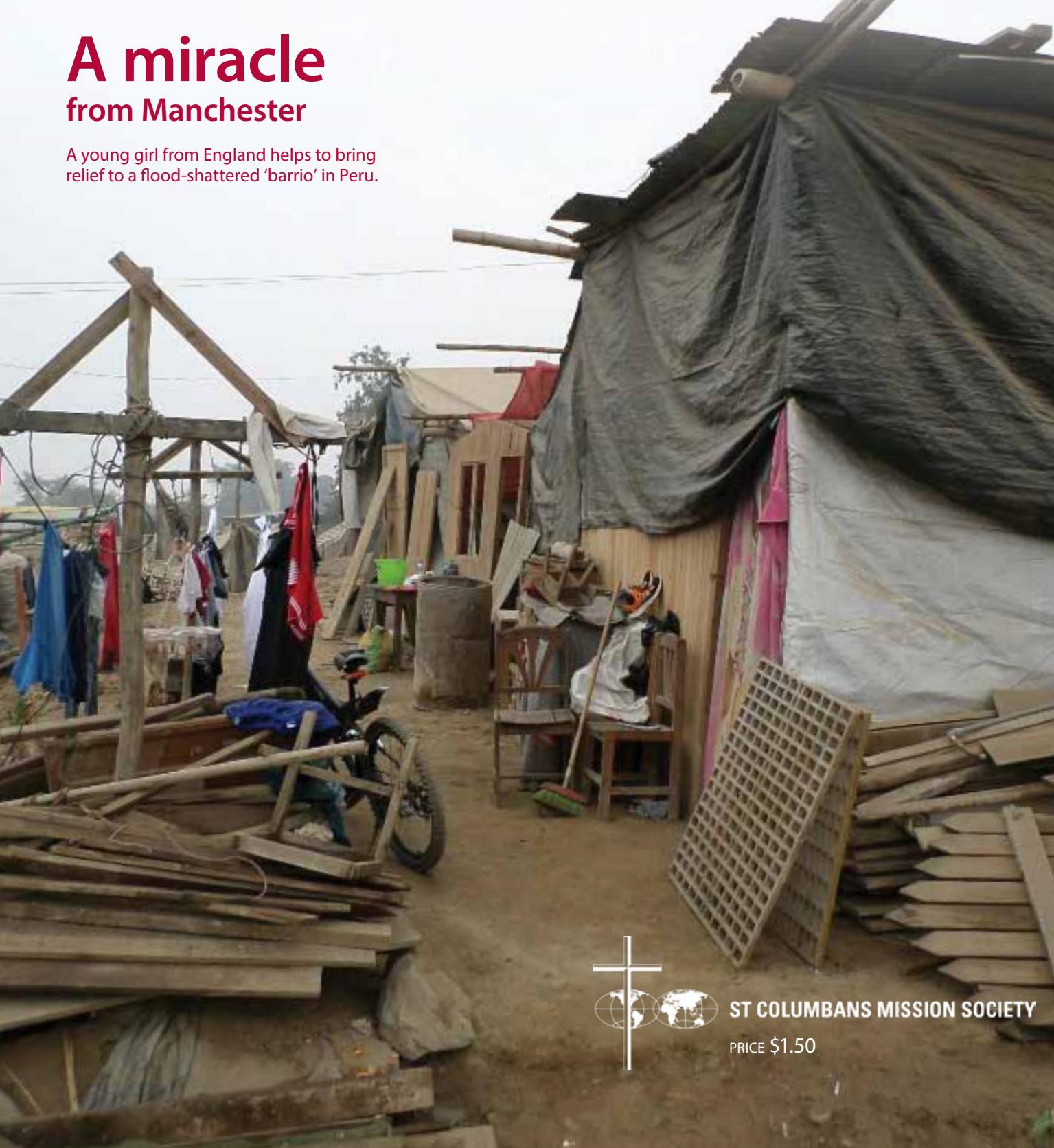


The Far East

COLUMBAN MISSION MAGAZINE
September 2018

A miracle from Manchester

A young girl from England helps to bring relief to a flood-shattered 'barrio' in Peru.



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Damaged properties along main 'street' of Riberas de Cajamarquilla in Peru. (See story pages 12-13)

Photo: Fr John Boles SSC

From the Editor

The September issue of *The Far East* magazine highlights many good news stories from countries where there seems to be little hope for those living in poverty.

From Pakistan Columban Fr Dan O'Connor tells us how a health and tuberculosis Clinic in Badin, managed by Columbans, assists those who live in the most primitive of conditions.

The introduction of *Preda Fair Trade* in the Philippines, an initiative of Columban Fr Shay Cullen, is making a difference to many mango farmers who have been exploited for most of their lives.

Sr Redempta Twomey's reflection will resonate with many of us who struggle with prayer and at times wonder why it is so tough. It is a short reflection but it gives us much to think about.

In the 'Where are they now?' section we feature Columban Fr Chris Baker who has returned from Peru to live in the *Columban House* in Essendon where he intends to catch up with family and friends and settle into retirement.

We have two contributions to '*Your Columban Story*', one of which sent

me searching through 1960s issues of *The Far East* magazine looking for photos of two young girls on their first communion day. It was a long shot but I think I have located them and will have much pleasure in scanning and forwarding them to their mother.

From Manchester, a 12 year old girl with Peruvian parents shows incredible compassion and concern for flood victims in Peru. She set about raising funds and publicising the plight of those affected by the floods. When asked what inspired her, she said, "I only wanted to help."

It took some time, but when Fr Joe Ruy, a Melbourne Diocesan Priest, returned to Peru for his second term as a Columban Associate Priest he was met with some very good news. During his first assignment in Peru Fr Joe established a well needed medical centre that the *Ministry for Health* has now taken ownership of, ensuring its longevity.

Pope Francis asks us to '*Hear the cry of many brothers and sisters who are criminally trafficked and exploited*'. He says that the problem is not exclusive to developing countries but happening in Rome.

The Encyclical Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home is now three years old. Columban Fr Sean McDonagh, a major contributor to the *Encyclical* reflects on what has happened to the environment during these years.

A volunteer from the United States *Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach* shares his experience of spending time at the *Hope Workers' Centre* in Taiwan with migrant workers who have been exploited.

In our final article a Columban Lay Missionary opens our eyes to the poverty, loneliness and isolation of the elderly in Korea. Her ministry is both challenging and rewarding.

The articles in this issue of *The Far East* magazine are fine examples of listening to Pope Francis' message to hear the cry of our brothers and sisters. Let us pray that the next 100 years of Columban Mission will produce even more Good News stories.



Mission in a Muslim country

FR DANIEL O'CONNOR

Columban Fr Daniel O'Connor writes: "We are a small group of eight in the Hyderabad Diocese, Pakistan, and manage a Health and Tuberculosis clinic in the Badin Parish Church Compound in the interior area of Sindh".



The government allocates a small amount of money in the health budget whereas defence is allocated a major amount of the budget, roughly 38 times the amount spent on health.

Friday is the special day for patients to come to the clinic. Dr Zakir, a Muslim, is the doctor in attendance each Friday assisted by our clinic staff. The patients are poor Muslims, Christians and Hindus from various tribal peoples. Most live primitively in villages with no running water, no toilet facilities and no electricity resulting in pitiable health

conditions. They come with a variety of diseases and sicknesses. The main ones being Hepatitis C, anaemia, malaria, diarrhoea, tuberculosis, chicken pox and skin diseases.

Sadly, and all too often, patients come in too late by which time they have become seriously ill. The reason being that doctors in small towns and villages want the income from the patients' fees and also the commission from the sale of drugs. They are reluctant to refer them to better qualified doctors in Badin City.

When a person returns positive results to tuberculosis they begin a course of treatment for six months. Vitamins and syrup are also given to help build up the patient's strength.

The patient's name, tribe, address, age, weight and, where possible, mobile phone number are recorded and an appointment is made for their next check-up and new supply of medication. They are made aware of the importance of taking the medication, looking after their diet and personal hygiene. Most patients are illiterate, so the information has to be clearly communicated.

At each visit their weight is recorded. Children aged two suffering from tuberculosis can weigh as little as four kilograms. Adult females weigh between 24-25 kilograms and adult males 40-54 kilograms.

Gradually, with treatment and better diet, their weight increases. Empty tablet packets are brought in as proof that the tablets were taken and not sold in the bazaar. Another supply of drugs is issued for the next two weeks. A token fee of fifty cents is paid to the clinic. However, if a patient is too poor, this fee is waived. Sometimes a patient may have to travel a long distance by bus from their village. In this case the fee is waived and a double supply of drugs is given to last a full month.

Sometimes patients do not return to the clinic for follow up checks and discontinue taking the medicines. The clinic staff then go in search of them to find out why they missed their appointment. Some of the reasons are:

"I stopped because I experienced some side effects from the medicines."

"I went to another doctor because after two weeks of drugs I was still weak so I had hope that another doctor would cure me quickly."

"I did not have money to travel to your clinic as my husband would not give me money."

"I did not have money to travel to the clinic as the landlord whose crops I till would not advance me any money."

"I was not quickly improving in health so I went off to see the witch doctor."

"We went eight hours travel away from Badin to labour in the rice harvest to be able to obtain food to eat."

Sometimes when a woman is sick her husband and his family will send her off to her own parents to care for her. When this is the case the health centre staff are occasionally able to reconcile families. **During 2016, 146 tuberculosis**

patients completed their treatment and were fully cured. Twenty three went missing and were unable to be traced. Four were referred to another hospital for further investigation and sadly, four died.

Columbans in Pakistan are grateful for the support, both material and spiritual of our generous benefactors. You share with us in sharing in the Reign of God in this part of the vineyard. Jesus proclaimed, *"When I was hungry you gave me to eat." "When I was poor and sick you cared, helped and cured me."*

Columban Fr Daniel O'Connor from New Zealand has worked in Pakistan for over 30 years.



Patients waiting to see Dr Zakir (left) with Fr Daniel O'Connor (right).



Women and children waiting patiently to be seen by the doctor, Pakistan.

Fair trade brings economic justice

ELLEN TEAGUE

In the Columban bags given out at the Columban Centenary Mass in Southwark Cathedral UK, were packets of dried mangos, a *Preda Fair Trade product. They were provided free of charge by Forest Feast, a company in Northern Ireland committed to responsible sourcing.

At a conference of the *Justice and Peace Network*, founder of *Preda Fair Trade* in the Philippines, Fr Shay Cullen spoke about the role of fair trade in overcoming poverty.

Juan and Maria de la Costa are a poor farmer couple living with three children in the mountains of Zambales, 140 kilometres north of Manila. They have lived in poverty, making a living from planting vegetables, collecting honey and gathering mango fruits to sell in the market many kilometres away. Like millions of impoverished indigenous people they are subsistence farmers, surviving on what they can grow on spare public lands they don't own.

Juan knows nothing of the causes of his poverty. He only knows that the traders in the towns will only give him four or five pesos a kilo for his Pico mangos and he knows they are worth three times that amount. But if he does not sell them for the low price they will quickly rot in the hot tropical climate. It's not worth his hard work and long walk into the town with a heavy sack of mangos. So, much fruit has been left on the ground. Greed and injustice and the total lack of government help is behind his hardship. His children will remain poor and uneducated.

At least that is how it was until *Preda Fair Trade* came to his village and offered to buy his mangos at three times what the traders were paying.

Fair trade is the movement that brings economic justice and livelihood with dignity to hundreds of thousands of poor people around the world. *Preda Fair Trade* is a leader in the movement since 1980. The good people of conscience who want to live out values and principles and put them into practice in meaningful practical ways turn to buying *Preda Fair Trade* dried mangoes in UK super markets. They who believe in reaching out and helping the people who need help most will buy fair trade products like *Preda* dried mangos.

Trying to alleviate poverty keeps children in their villages going to school and away from human traffickers. I have



been actively helping many poor farmers through paying fair prices for their mango fruits. The project helps small farmers, indigenous people, and artisans who meet the criteria of fair trade and fairly-produced products. The benefits and earnings return to help the producers and farmers and a percentage goes to help abused children get shelter, therapy, justice, and care.

Some of those earnings also go to protect and improve the environment by tree planting and helping children who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation and abuse. *Preda Fair Trade* and our partners and supporters oppose the trade in human persons and help survivors.

Preda dried mangos are fairly produced, chemical free with no additives, and naturally sweet and low sugar if so desired. The people are not exploited and the benefits are for the small farmers and victims of exploitation. The customers are partners with us in helping the poor to be poor no more.

Fair trade is one of the best ways to help people overcome injustice, oppression, and poverty and to have a life of dignity.

****Preda: People's Recovery, Empowerment and Development Assistance: www.predafairtrade.net***

Ellen Teague is the Media Coordinator for the Columban Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation (JPIC) team in London.

UNITED KINGDOM PHILIPPINES

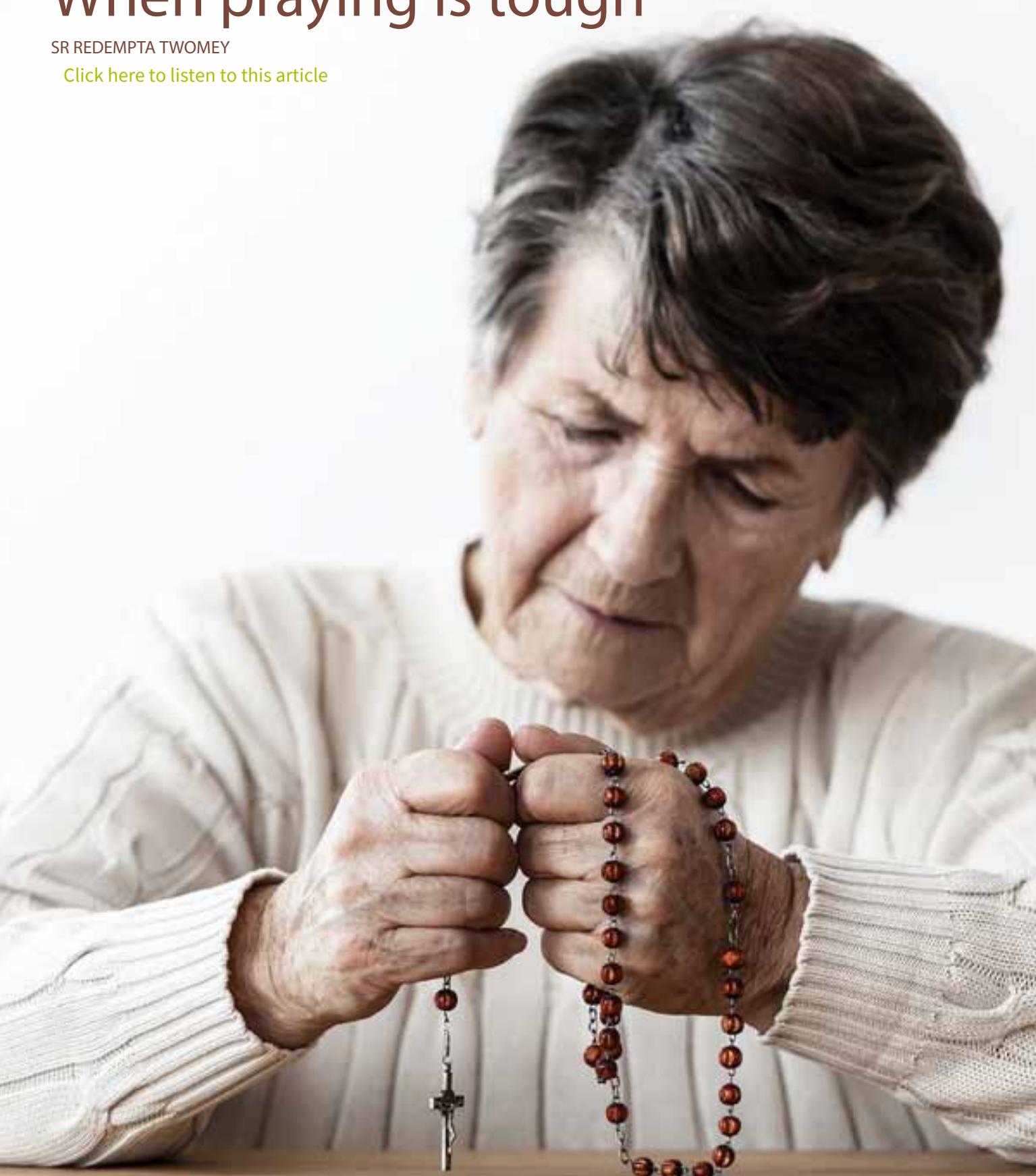
Fr Shay Cullen promoting the Preda Fair Trade products.



When praying is tough

SR REDEMPTA TWOMEY

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



“

How is it,” a woman asked at a prayer meeting, “that though I really believe in God and pray to Him every day, my family is coming apart? And my neighbor, who never puts a foot inside the church, has everything going for her?”



*S*ome days when it feels that God is far from us we may begin to harbor a real doubt: Is there a God at all? Am I fooling myself giving time day after day to pray and nothing seems to happen?

Others who don't believe at all do well, are happy and live life to the full. Not only that, everything seems to come their way whereas I can be beset with troubles of one kind or another.

“How is it,” a woman asked at a prayer meeting, “that though I really believe in God and pray to Him every day, my family is coming apart? And my neighbor, who never puts a foot inside the church, has everything going for her?”

This is a situation well known to the psalmist. *“I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For they have no pangs, their bodies are sound and sleek. They are not stricken as other people. … People praise them and find no fault in them. And they say ‘How can God know?’ … All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been stricken, and chastened every morning…”* (Ps 73).

We may feel like the psalmist, bitter over our fate especially when we see the pleasant life others have without God. But in the end the man recovered his balance and in an act of great faith he understood that, *“My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”*

We too, deep in our hearts know that this is the truth; like a homing pigeon we keep coming back to God. *“For God alone my soul waits in silence, my hope is from Him.”* (Ps 62).

We will find strength and hope in these psalms, the inspired word of God, in time of bleakness, time of doubt. No matter how dreadful, how painful our situation the Lord really is with us. *“Trust Him and He will act.”* (Ps 37) Leave it to God and in the meantime pay attention to those little moments of grace which come gently throughout your day. The very gentleness of the Holy Spirit in our lives may not be noticed at all unless we make a habit of naming the good things that come our way. Little things mostly, like small brush strokes, but full of blessings. To note these and to give thanks is to deepen our faith and our relationship with God.

God is found, as St Teresa of Avila said, *“among the pots and pans.”* No need to go looking for him in “special” places; He is by your side. We can take each task, no matter how uncongenial, as an opportunity to say “Yes” to God in our lives.

Columban Sr Redempta Twomey is the Congregational Archivist for the Columban Sisters in Ireland.

Where are they now?

Columban Centenary - Fr Chris Baker



Christopher (Chris) was born on March 14, 1928 in Brighton, Victoria, Australia, while the family lived in Tatura. He was the fourth child in a family of eight, four brothers and three sisters. Two of his brothers, Leo and Pat are also Columban Priests.

Chris was educated at *Toolamba West* and *Lemnos State Schools*, then *Shepparton Parish School*, followed by another four years in *Cobden State School*. After a year at *Camperdown High School*, he completed two years at *St Patrick's CBC Ballarat*. In 1944 he joined Leo for a year together in *St Columbans, Essendon*, then later for two years at the diocesan *Corpus Christi College, Werribee*.

On September 23, 1950 with special permission at the age of 22, Chris was ordained by Archbishop Daniel Mannix in *St Patrick's Cathedral Melbourne*. He was sent to Rome in time to be in *St Peter's Basilica* as Pope Pius XII defined the Assumption on November 1, 1950.

For the next five years Chris studied in Rome taking a doctorate in Theology and receiving a Licence in Sacred Scripture. Mid-1955 Chris was appointed to teach Scripture in the Columban seminary at Wahroonga, NSW, then at Turramurra, until 1976. He was appointed Rector of that Seminary from 1961 to 1966.

Appointed to Peru in 1977, he learnt Spanish in Bolivia, then spent eleven years in *Condevilla parish (Lima)* - now three parishes. For two years he also lectured at the *Lima Pontifical and Civil Faculty of Theology* before being appointed to Ireland as editor of the Columban in-house Magazine '*Intercom*'. He also published his major book '*Covenant and Liberation*'.

Returning to Peru in 1999 Chris assisted in the formation of Columban Students and Columban Lay Missionaries in addition to pastoral duties. He also helped to establish the *Association for People with Special Abilities (ASPHAD)* Centre.

In July this year, Chris returned to the Columban House in Essendon where he plans to catch up with family and friends during his retirement.



Fr Chris Baker amongst the people of Peru, 1982.

Your Columban story

Benefactors share with us...

Mrs Martin from New South Wales, Australia wrote:

I am writing to tell you my Columban story. I was a boarder at St Joseph's College, Lochinvar from 1947-1949 until I was 15. Sr Raymond was a promoter of The Far East which I started receiving when I left school at 15.

Two of my girls, Helen and Valmai had their First Communion photos published in The Far East. Helen was born in 1959 and Valmai 1960. We had six children.

We learnt a lot about the missions and the missionary priests from The Far East, and Mickey Daly's diary was a favourite also.

I am 83 now, and still get "The Far East."

Wishing you every blessing and success in the future.

Robert wrote:

After demobilisation from the Navy in 1946 I commenced working at a Navy Office. A fellow employee was a lovely lady called Rose Mullany. Rose used to speak to me about her brother, Luke, a Columban priest whom I note was Regional Director 1932-1944.

When my father was a teacher in Cobden he had lodgings with the Baker family and in due course my parents and I were invited to Leo's ordination and first Mass. Our connection with Fr Leo has continued to this day.

My father was a regular subscriber to the Far East and I enjoyed reading about the exploits of the missionaries in China and, of course, the adventures of Mickey Daly.

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
Niddrie VIC 3042 **OR**
E: tfe@columban.org.au



A miracle from Manchester

FR JOHN BOLES

How a young girl from England helped bring relief to a flood-shattered ‘barrio’ in Peru.



The new water tanks; Beatriz (left), Fr John Boles and Milagros (centre) doing presentations to local residents.

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

Who says that miracles don't happen?

Milagros Sophia Hampson is twelve years old. She lives with her parents in a block of flats overlooking the River Mersey in the great English conurbation of Greater Manchester.

“Milagros” is a Spanish word which means “miracles”, and Milagros Hampson has certainly proven to be a little miracle as far as a poor, devastated community on the edge of Lima is concerned.

I have known Milagros’s family for over twenty years. Her mother, Beatriz, was born and raised in a Columban parish in Lima, the capital of Peru, and was living there when I started my life as a Columban priest nearby. In a series of coincidences which might also be considered little miracles, Beatriz was invited to visit an Aunt living in England. The Aunt took her to Manchester - specifically to my native parish (for I am from Manchester) - where she met and fell in love with a local lad named Darren. Back at home on leave, I ran into them at church, and soon after I had the honour of celebrating their wedding. Visiting them each

time I was on leave, I witnessed the arrivals of son Edselito and daughter Milagros.

(Later, a friend of Beatriz came to visit her....and fell in love with Darren’s brother. Then, Beatriz’ sister came and the same happened with a friend of Darren’s! I celebrated these weddings as well, and kept in touch with branches of the family on both sides of the world.)

Milagros was conscious of her South American background. “*She was always watching and reading things about Peru*”, her mother explains. “*She was proud of her roots*”. In March 2017, Milagros was very upset to see how a series of massive flash floods had wreaked havoc in parts of her mother’s homeland – and decided to do something about it.

She obtained permission from the head of her school to hold a “pyjama party” and used the proceeds to start her own small relief fund. Inspired by this, her Mum organized a “tea time” for neighbours, and so swelled the coffers. They contacted me in Lima, and through Columban benefactors I was able to double the amount raised. Not to be outdone, Dad Darren – a taxi driver – got together with his mates to

finance a trip to Peru for Milagros and her mother, so that they could bring help directly to the flood victims.

Following the floods, the Columbans in Peru had been working closely with the Loreto Sisters. (Another coincidence – the Mother House of these Loreto Sisters is in Manchester!) These had “adopted” one small community – or “barrio” – on the edge of Lima called, “*Las Liberas de Cajamarquilla*”. Of its 23 families, eleven had seen their homes completely destroyed, and the other houses had been badly damaged. Roads and service lines had been severed.

The Loretos and the Columbans had provided food and medical supplies as a first response. The government had set up tents for the homeless and had installed temporary access bridges. The Sisters had secured financing for eleven pre-fabricated bungalows. What was required next was a supply of water tanks for the new houses. (This was because, with no running water, trucks were going round to deliver water door to door, pouring it into insanitary makeshift cisterns.) The Sisters wanted to buy eleven purpose-made 1,000 litre domestic tanks with filters, to ensure that the affected families had access to clean drinking water.

“How much does a tank cost?” we asked Sr Miros, who was co-ordinating the relief effort. “About \$100.00”, she replied, “making a total of \$1,100.00”. And, how much did we have? “Exactly \$1,100.00”. Another miracle!

The trip to Cajamarquilla was a real adventure as many of the roads and bridges along the route had been washed away. Eventually, after many a twist and turn we reached our destination just in time to meet the lorries coming to

deliver the tanks. The community was there to meet us and we then presented the tanks to each family during a ceremony in which Milagros played a starring role.

You’d think that at this stage Milagros would declare “job done”. Not a bit of it! She used the photos taken during the visit to do more fund-raising back home and a year later returned, this time not just with Mum but with Dad and brother Edselito as well. By then, the Sisters had managed to repair all the damaged properties and had also built a little community centre. Sr Miros asked Milagros and Beatriz to use the second round of donations to buy toys, picture books, tables and chairs for children, so as to equip a kiddies’ play-room within the community hall.

“Milagros just wouldn’t give up”, her mother said. “The sight of all that destruction in my country broke her heart”. “I only wanted to help”, says Milagros. “I like helping people”.

The flood victims of Cajamarquilla know that and are grateful. Grateful for a little miracle – a “Miracle” from Manchester.

Columban Fr John Boles has worked in South America for over 20 years.





Good news for Fr Joe Ruys

FR JOE RUYS

Readers of The Far East magazine will remember that from 2006 to 2012 Fr Joe Ruys, a Melbourne Diocesan priest, served as a Columban Associate in the parish of Los Santos Arcangeles, Lima.

One of its many communities is a place called 'Paraíso', the most distant and smallest community of the parish. People mostly live in houses made of cardboard, planks, and damp, dirt floors. Until recently there was power but no water or waste water system.

The community have very limited access to doctors or medicine. Consequently there is a high rate of undernourishment of children under five years of age. During Fr Joe's time in Peru, a government study in the area found 70 cases of serious malnourishment, children who did not receive their normal infancy inoculations, high rates of intestinal parasites in both adults and children as well as bronchial problems.

Photo: ©iStock.com/turk_stock_photographer

Fr Joe recently shared that, thanks to the support of *Melbourne Overseas Missions* (MOM) and Columban supporters, they opened the first stage of their Medical Centre in September 2009. This gave them a reception/admission office, two consultation rooms for general medicine, an office for a social worker/coordinator of the centre and a small pharmacy. The pharmacy is supplied mainly from *Caritas*, Peru.

In 2011 with the extra support of a group of friends in Melbourne, 'Friends of Paradise', they opened a second stage with the hope of handing the project over to the *Peruvian Ministry of Health* in order to gain better and more consistent medical support for this isolated population.

Earlier this year the *Ministry for Health* adopted a new policy regarding mental health and decided to regionalise their centres but lacked a suitable facility in the Northern area of Lima. They remembered the *Medical Centre* had a standing offer for the *Ministry of Health* to take over the ownership and functions of the facility.

In July 2018 after months of negotiations, an official handover ceremony took place. I attended the ceremony with The *Minister of Health* for the Northern Region of Lima and the parish priest of *Los Santos Arcangeles*, Columban Fr Tavo Palenapa, volunteers and around 20 staff members who will work at the new *Ministry of Health Medical Post*.

Speeches were made by the *Minister for Health*, Fr Napa and Fr Joe recognising the great contribution of MOM, 'Friends of Paradise', Columban supporters and the dedicated efforts of volunteers and professional staff.

Rosa Sialer, the Centre's stalwart volunteer/receptionist and current secretary of the local community management group, said: "**We are all so proud of what we have been able to achieve with the financial help from Australia. While we are sad to close this chapter with Fr Joe and his friends, we look forward with great hope to this new chapter with the involvement of the Ministry of Health. Our dreams have become a reality.**"

The new centre will be a referral centre for all mental health needs for the North of Lima. It will also provide State funded general health services to the local people, State subsidised medicines as well as monthly 'campaigns' which offer specialised consultations for the locals. The Ministry has employed two local women we have skilled up through the project and are looking to employ two or three more as security, maintenance and cleaning.

It has been a very positive outcome for the locals and the State.

This new service, available largely due to your support in an area of Lima that had for so long been neglected by the State, will greatly enhance the quality of life for the needy locals. It is a great example of how the *Columban Missionary Society* works to involve and enable a local community to take control of its own future building a better climate for all.

Congratulations and thanks to all our supporters and co-workers.

Fr Joe Ruys is a Columban Associate priest from the Archdiocese of Melbourne working in Lima, Peru.



Peruvian lady collecting her medication from the Medical Centre.

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 September

That young people in Africa may have access to education and work in their own countries.



People are not merchandise

"Hear the cry of our many brothers and sisters who are criminally trafficked and exploited. They are not merchandise. They are human beings, and they must be treated as such".

This was Pope Francis' heartfelt appeal in a tweet on @Pontifex sent on Monday 30 July, 2018, on the occasion of UN World Day against Trafficking in Persons.

Earlier on Sunday July 29, 2018, the Holy Father had referred to human trafficking at the end of the Angelus in Saint Peter's Square, describing it as a true "plague that reduces many men, women and children to slavery for the purposes of labour and sexual exploitation, begging and forced delinquency". And he pointed out that this did not only occur in developing countries. "Even here in Rome", he added.

Alluding to another phenomenon he follows very closely, the Holy Father said that "migration routes too are often used by traffickers and exploiters to recruit new victims of trafficking". Thus, he warned, "it is the responsibility of all to denounce these injustices and to firmly oppose this shameful crime".

Before the recital of the Marian prayer, as he commented on the Gospel passage of the 18th Sunday in ordinary time (Jn 6:1-15), the Pontiff had offered an original interpretation of the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fish. In it, he spoke sharply against the waste of food in wealthy countries that are too often indifferent to the cry of the starving humanity.



From the Director

Acculturation

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

In his speech at the end of the Columban centenary Mass at *St Patrick's Cathedral* in Melbourne in June this year the Columban Superior General, Fr Kevin O'Neill, said: *"Like St Columban, in our lives as missionaries we have learned the truth of his words: 'A life unlike your own can be your teacher.' The many different nationalities and cultures we have been blessed to serve and to live among have become our teachers."*

In July I helped co-ordinate an Acculturation programme with Sr Anne Bond RSJ in Sydney for 24 priests and women religious who have recently been missioned to work in Australia. All of us are enculturated into the first culture we are born into and acculturation is the process of adapting to a new culture, it could be a second or third culture we have entered or encountered. Speakers addressed topics such as *Aboriginal history and church, Mission Spirituality, Women in the Church, National Professional Standards, World View and Cultural Understandings, Leadership models, Social Justice from an Australian perspective, Transitions and Australian Culture and Church*, including visits to the *Catholic Parramatta* and *Sydney Cathedrals* as well as *St Mary MacKillop Memorial chapel and museum*.

One of the interesting exchanges the participants had was with a panel of lay people who stressed that in today's Australian Church it is very important to listen to lay people and to value their opinions. The lay people were from different generations and spoke with enthusiasm and from experience. They stressed the importance of developing healthy relationships with parishioners, especially the youth, and to offer leadership through those relationships.

Priest participants who are based in offices were encouraged to be present to parishioners through regular visitation to the elderly and seek out places to meet young Catholics. Venturing out into a new cultural environment entails risk and courage. If one is going through culture shock there can be long periods of insecurity. ***Today's church is in a time of major transition and has been humbled by the many cases of clergy sexual abuse. The continual emphasis on this issue has been a major shock for many of the recent arrivals and the criticism of clericalism and the demands for new church models is a challenge for all of us to work through but weighs heavily on the perceptions of the new arrivals.***

One advice we gave to the participants was to find a good mentor from the local parish community to go to for advice and encouragement. Loneliness can be a challenge for ministers in a new environment and a welcoming and hospitable mentor can be invaluable in setting a new arrival off on their journey into the unknown of a new culture and Church. It is often stressed that in today's world we all have to respect difference but it can take some time to appreciate and value difference rather than rail against it. It requires an openness of mind which we all have to work on in our world of rapid change. It is often in times of transition that we are opened to discovering new insights into who God is and a mentor can also learn much from the dialogue and conversations with new missionaries. If you are able to offer yourself as a mentor I would encourage you to begin what could be an invaluable service to these new missionaries in your parish and it may open you up to a new world also.

There was a good spirit and camaraderie amongst the Acculturation programme's participants and they continue to keep in touch with each other through social media. That support could be invaluable. I am always learning about the world of social media for young people and their ease in communicating in that medium. It brings a different sense of presence. Different cultural understandings and different models of church presented challenges to the participants but there was a strong sense that the same Spirit was alive in the group across many different ethnic backgrounds. Our final liturgy was a wonderful expression of Eucharist through song, dance and prayer from many different cultural expressions of Church. It is not always comfortable being a learner but at different times in our lives God offers us all a life unlike our own which can be our teacher.



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Laudato Si' turns three

FR SEAN MCDONAGH

Fr Sean McDonagh reflects on a Vatican conference on *Laudato Si'*.

Nearly three years after the publication of the encyclical Laudato Si': On Care For Our Common Home, some of Pope Francis' prophetic words are continuing to ring in our ears. In Laudato Si', number 160, the Pope asks, "what kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to the children who are now growing up?"



Fr Sean McDonagh speaking of *Laudato Si'* at seminars around the world.

Flickr Photo: ©Anthony Jalandoni/www.flickr.com/photos/jalandoni/25377370405

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

*O*n July 5 and 6, 2018, the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development organised a conference to reflect on what has happened to the environment during the last three years and how to plan for the future. During the two days, many of the speakers, including Professor Nicholas Stern of the London School of Economics, reminded the audience of the urgency of

dealing with climate change. If we do not adopt carbon-neutral lifestyles and seriously invest in non-carbon energy technologies, we will not be able to keep the global average increase in temperature below the two degrees Celsius which was agreed at COP 21 in Paris in 2015. Unless we change our lifestyles, we will be passing on to the next generation a world which will be much more difficult to live in.

“

However, on June 30, 2018, the lawnmowers moved in and cut that area of the lawn so that the whole place would look neat and tidy! The tragedy is that in Ireland and Britain we are on course to cause the extinction of 30 percent of our pollinators because their food sources are being destroyed. This will also affect our food production.

The conference followed the *See-Judge-Act* methodology which is central to Catholic social teaching. It attempted to look at the challenges in the area of justice and the environment in a holistic way, so that we could hear “*both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*” (LS, 49). Some of the speakers focused on the crisis in food production, especially for the poor. Others called attention to the plight of migrants and refugees and the lack of understanding and empathy among those living in rich countries. The anti-migration stance of populist politicians in Europe and the United States is not helpful, given the magnitude of what we are facing.

Indigenous groups from Latin America and Greenland also reminded us of what neo-liberal economic policies and climate change are doing to their homelands. As someone who spent over a decade working with the T’boli people on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines, I realised how much indigenous people have to teach those of us who live in Northern countries. Indigenous communities are much more sensitive to what is happening in the natural world than many well-educated people in Europe.

On July 1, 2018 just before I travelled to Rome to attend the conference in the Vatican, we Columbans celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of our founding in 1918. I had asked the people who tend our grounds here in Dalgan, Navan, not to mow a small section of the lawns so that we could see and experience the beauty of our wild flowers. Since March 2018, we had named about thirty species of wildflowers, including an orchid on that particular patch. However, on June 30, 2018, the lawnmowers moved in and cut that area of the lawn so that the whole place would look neat and tidy! The tragedy is that in Ireland and Britain we are on course to cause the extinction of 30 percent of our pollinators because their food sources are being destroyed. This will also affect our food production.

One of my criticisms of the two-day conference on *Laudato Si’* in the Vatican is that the importance of biodiversity was not adequately treated.

*Columban Fr Sean McDonagh was a missionary in the Philippines for many years, he has worked tirelessly in the area to improve the care of the earth and has published numerous books. He was an advisor to Pope Francis on preparing his encyclical, *Laudato Si’*.*



A migrant lesson on sacrifice

*W*hen I boarded Cathay Pacific in 2017, I thought my touchdown in Taipei would mark the beginning of five months of complete sacrifice. As a short-term volunteer with the *Hope Workers' Centre*, I planned to devote myself fully for a time to helping people. Over the past months, however, the stories of a hundred migrant workers have taught me to value sacrifice in a greater way.

The *Hope Workers' Centre*, in Zhongli, Taiwan was founded in 1986 by Columban priests. It exists today to support the migrant workers in Taiwan - more than half-a-million migrants worked in Taiwan in 2016. I lived in the Centre's shelter with people from Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines, sheltered because they are either victims of workplace abuse or human trafficking.

For five days a week I worked alongside a staff of caseworkers in the *Centre*, helping migrants to learn and access their rights as workers.

In speaking with workers during my first weeks at the *Centre*, I was awestruck by the true sacrifice many of these men and women had faced and continue to endure. They've told me about how much they miss their spouses, children and siblings as they work away from home for up to 12 years. Many of the workers send almost their entire pay-cheques home to their loved ones every month.

In response to these compelling accounts, one of my first tasks at the *Hope Workers' Centre* was to document their stories for a documentary called '*The Migrant Worker's Face*'.

This is one woman's story that I edited:

"Let me set the scene: 50 Filipina workers and I had been working 12 hours per day, seven days a week- even without holidays like Christmas and New Year and we had been paid regular wages only, with no overtime. Many of my co-workers suffered injuries from the machines they operated, and had to pay their own medical expenses and received no income during their period of medical leave.

My co-workers and I didn't know our rights.

*The situation reached a breaking point when one of my friends at work was injured on the job and recognized that the company was treating her unfairly by not providing health coverage during her leave. It was then that a friend's sister told us to go to the *Hope Workers' Center*.*

*After a 12 hour shift at work from 7.00 pm to 7.00 am we went to the *Hope Workers' Center* and met with a caseworker, Santos*

Lim. He interviewed us and we discussed what could be done. Mr Lim encouraged us to file a case against Tachen Textile Company, suggesting that we could do so confidentially so that the company wouldn't find out and retaliate. We encouraged other co-workers to join our fight against the labour conditions but fearful of retaliation by our employers, they demurred.

The company threatened us that unless we withdrew our cases against them, they would terminate our contracts and send us home to the Philippines. Only two of us opted to fight for our rights and Mr Lim stood by us.

Fighting the company for our rights was not easy as they watched us closely, waiting for a mistake that would justify termination of our contracts.

*Conditions at work had worsened to such a point that we ran away from work one morning and went directly to the *Hope Workers' Center* which took us in. We stayed in the shelter for almost a month, free of charge.*

I remember meeting Fr James, an Irish priest who encouraged us not to give up our case and to persevere. Our caseworker, Mr Lim, never gave up either, and we met with him every Sunday.

*One day while we were staying at the *Hope Workers' Center*, the police came and tried to arrest us to send us back to the Philippines. Mr Lim came to our defence and told the police that they didn't have the right to arrest us, because their jurisdiction extended only to New Taipei County and not to Taoyuan. The police relented for the time being, and we were scheduled a court appearance in Taoyuan, with Mr Lim supporting us.*

It was there for the first time that we faced our previous broker and employer since having run away. They were seeking our deportation.

*We are grateful to God for the support we received in court that day. Mr Lim, Fr James and the director of the *Hope Workers' Center* at the time, Fr Peter O'Neill, a Columban priest, each came to court in support of us and won the case on our behalf. Thanks to the help from them, we were able to answer the questions in the briefings.*

We won the right to stay and work in Taiwan, and the right to recover our lost wages at Tachen Textile Company. The result of the case even helped the other workers at the factory to regain their lost wages as well, and many of them filed cases that allowed them to receive proper amounts for holiday

and overtime hours that they should have received over their working histories.

We are all thankful to the Hope Workers' Center for their help, especially people like Fr O'Neill for his help to the migrants in Taiwan. Thank you for an unforgettable experience.

May God bless you all and, once again, thank you Hope Workers' Center."

Through this project, we hope to appreciate the unique beauty of migrant workers' lives and foster recognition among a wider audience the profound struggles migrants often encounter.

You can read more stories at:

www.hopeworkerscenter.org/migrantworkersface

What was my ultimate sacrifice here in Taiwan working alongside the Columbans? Nominal to non-existent.

But with each account of *The Migrant Worker's Face*, I've felt myself forming a deeper understanding of what it means to sacrifice oneself for another, the ultimate message of Easter.

Hannes Zetzsche was a Columban volunteer for the international program in Taiwan in 2017.

“

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Hannes Zetzsche (centre) at the Hope Worker's Center, Taiwan in 2017.



A photograph of an elderly woman with dark hair, wearing a bright pink jacket over a patterned top, sitting alone on a bench. She is leaning against a tree trunk on the left and resting her chin on her hand. In the background, there are shelves filled with various fruits like oranges and strawberries. In the foreground, there are several potted plants with colorful flowers (red, yellow, pink) in the foreground.

Ministry with the elderly

JENANYDEL NOLA

When I was first sent to Bongcheon dong in South Korea as a Columban Lay Missionary I had doubts and uncertainty as to why I was here.

I roamed around the city and hoped that just seeing the place might help me understand my presence there.

During that time, I noticed many elderly people sitting in the street. One night I saw an elderly lady standing alone. I greeted her with a smile and she invited me to her house. Inside we sat on the floor while she shared her life story with me. As I was leaving to go home at 9.00 pm she asked me to visit her again as she lived alone and rarely had company. I promised that I would return.

For more than a year I spent most of my time visiting the elderly. The work is enjoyable but takes a lot of energy, and a peaceful mind and heart to be able to listen to them.

Among the people I have engaged with are:

- A woman who was left by her own family and is now living alone.
- A woman who shares the same stories every time I visit her because she is suffering from Alzheimer's disease.
- A woman with whom I have to converse through writing because she can't hear.
- A woman who can hear but can't see me because she is blind.
- At least two who are sick.
- At least two from North Korea.

As time passed, my face became familiar to them and I would meet up with some of them in the church and after Mass I would walk with them on their way home. Often I was invited to visit them in their homes.

After more than a year in Bongcheon dong mission parish I decided to spend some of my time at GuRyong village which is known as the last shanty town in Gangnam, Seoul's wealthiest district. Most of the residents in the village are elderly.

With the help of Fr Lim Yong-Hwan (the Chief of the *Urban Poor Apostolate Committee*), I met Sr Lucia who lives in the village. She introduced me to the residents, many of whom I now spend time with playing the guitar and singing and

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learning Korean songs. I massage their shoulders, back or aching legs and hold their hands to let them feel they are not alone. I listen to their stories and complaints and share my own, despite my imperfect language which makes them laugh. I sit with them silently while we watch their favourite TV program.

In reaching out to comfort those in need it is I who feel comforted and loved by them. By God's grace and mercy I finished my first mission term in Korea.

Jenanydel Nola is Columban Lay Missionary from the Philippines.



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Ministry with the elderly - Korea



Photo: ©iStock.com/tanukiphoto

In Korea, Columban Lay Missionary, Jenanydel Nola, spends her time with the elderly who have little contact with other people.

Most of these people are from the last shanty town in Gangnam, Seoul's wealthiest district. They look forward to her visits where she listens, sings, watches TV and practices her Korean with them.

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