

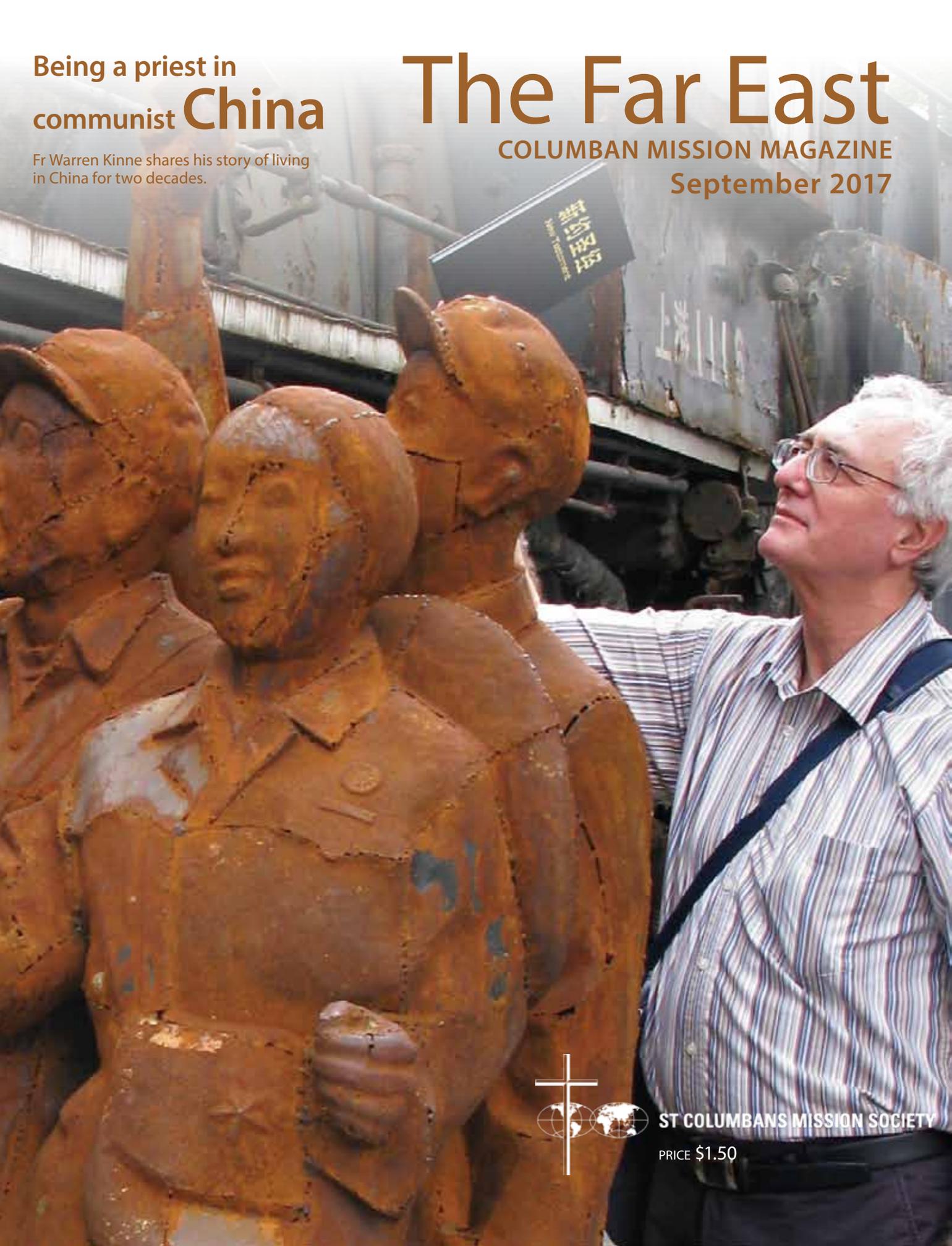
Being a priest in
communist **China**

Fr Warren Kinne shares his story of living
in China for two decades.

The Far East

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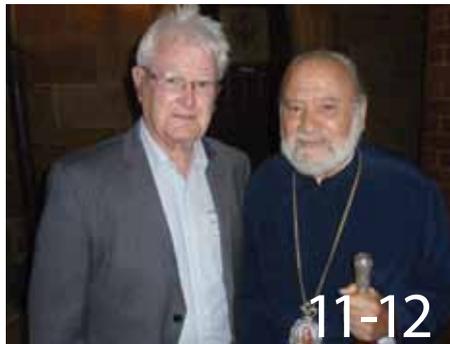
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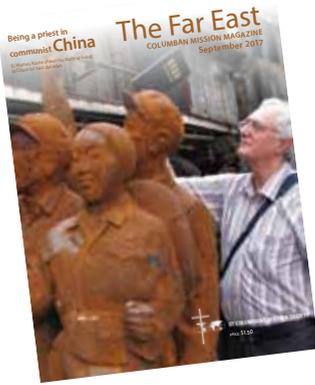
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Fr Warren Kinne - the Bible versus the Little Red Book.
(See story pages 4-7)

Photo: Fr Warren Kinne SSC

From the Editor

For two decades Columban Fr Warren Kinne from Bundaberg, Queensland was a missionary in Communist China. Last year he returned to Australia with a new mission on the Gold Coast, close to his family. Read the interview conducted by the Catholic Leader in Brisbane.

Columban Fr Tim Mulroy reflects on the physical and spiritual need for clean water. He writes of the poor indigenous people in countries like Peru and the Philippines who are often uprooted from their ancestral lands by large-scale mining which poisons their water.

In a series of articles leading up to the Centenary of St Columban's Mission Society, we read about Columban Fr Malcolm Sherrard from New Zealand who was much admired for his steely determination and commitment to mission in the Philippines.

We publish the final articles in a series featuring the works of the Columban Mission Institute, Sydney, before its closure in September. Columban Fr Charles Rue writes about the Pacific Mission Institute where Columbans

made significant contributions to the Australian Missionary Movement. Mission Studies continue today with Columban Frs Noel Connolly and Patrick McInerney still lecturing in the Masters programs at the Catholic Institute of Sydney and the Broken Bay Institute.

St Mary's Primary School in Yarram have knitted a warm connection with St Elizabeth Hospital in Hyderabad and its *Mobile Medical Outreach Programme*. Read about these Mini-Vinnies making blankets to help Pakistani children in need.

This edition runs two stories on Myanmar. We see a positive step forward with Pope Francis meeting with Myanmar's State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi, resulting in a rumoured visit to Myanmar later this year. Sr Mary Dillon writes about the Columban Sisters' work in Myanmar with those suffering from drug addiction.

A Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist gives a moving and honest account of how his family treated his *yaya* (nana), the family's house-help, like a slave. The story uncovers the culture

of exploitation of domestic workers rampant in many countries.

Once again the Subanen Crafters (the Philippines) are hard at work making their beautiful hand-made Christmas cards. Evangelyn Gawason, a Subanen crafter, shares how she has been able to assist her family with food and education costs and the construction of an inside kitchen area for her family home.

As we celebrate 'Father's Day' in September I would like to wish all fathers, including Columban Fathers, a happy Father's Day. It is a special day for me as my twin sister and I were born on Father's Day. My father said that he had his present for life. How true!

Janette Mentha
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Being a priest in communist China

MARK BOWLING

Listen to: Being a priest in communist China

Columban Fr Warren Kinne knows first hand the art of 'playing the game'.

For two decades, Fr Kinne, 71, born and bred in Bundaberg, Queensland, was a missionary in communist China, learning to tread lightly, sometimes testing the boundaries of authority and control, and eventually watching his mission flourish in unimagined ways.

Now returned to Australia, with a new mission and living on the Gold Coast, close to his family, Fr Kinne can reflect on the challenges of the sometimes thriving, sometimes repressed Catholic Church in China.

He chuckles as he considers his own journey to China where he was officially registered first as a student, then a teacher and finally a businessman, but never a priest.

After graduating as *dux* of Christian Brothers' College, Bundaberg, Fr Kinne studied to become a Columban priest.

His missionary path led to the Philippines in the early 1970s, and then to positions within the society in Australia and Ireland and doctoral studies in England.

None of this, Fr Kinne said, prepared him for his mission in China.

"I arrived not knowing a soul," he said of his move to Beijing in 1997, *"where there was no Columban mission, no blueprint, no guideline of how to proceed."*

"So I went in as a student – I was already 50 – and started learning the language."

After acquiring some Mandarin skills, Fr Kinne moved to Shanghai to work with a publishing company, Guang Xi Press. There he taught sisters and priests English, and helped with translations.

He started teaching philosophy at Fudan University, making connections with students and the wider community, and slowly introducing students accustomed to Karl Marx and Chairman Mao to the teachings of Church doctors like St Thomas Aquinas and St Augustine.

Fr Kinne said students were open to learn the historical Christian underpinnings of the West.

"Some of the students would recognise me away from the university, because I was helping celebrate English Mass in Shanghai's cathedral and St Peter's church."

In Shanghai, a thriving metropolis of 23 million, Fr Kinne found he was the only native English-speaking priest.

His services were in high demand for celebrating Mass and his humour and wit greatly appreciated by parishioners.

The Columban Missionary Society, which sent its first missionaries to China in 1920, was expelled along with all western missionaries after the Communist Party came to power in 1949.

It wasn't until the 1990s that the Columbans returned – Fr Kinne among them. *"I stood out like a sore thumb,"* he said of his early experiences.





I found it was all part of playing the game, testing the boundaries and getting accustomed to the place," he said.

Fr Kinne soon made friends in all walks of life – the noodle maker in the shop he regularly visited for a bowl of steaming Hunan noodles; his Chinese 'mother' Zhou Rui Lan, an elderly woman who got to know him passing her house each day; as well as countless students who remained firm friends long after they graduated, married and started families of their own.

He also became known for riding his 'electric donkey' – a small battery-operated electric bike, which enabled him to navigate the huge city.

"The taxi is slow, but on the 'electric donkey' you can nip in and out," he said.

Through his many experiences, Fr Kinne came to learn China's complex balance of state control, which allowed the Church to openly grow and flourish in some regions, while elsewhere it was driven underground, and any sign of challenge to authority was met by a swift crackdown by communist officials and police.

Fr Kinne said he had little contact with the underground Church – to do so could have been dangerous for its members.

Instead, his missionary work developed in another direction.

As Shanghai grew into a global financial hub and a showpiece of the booming Chinese economy, Fr Kinne witnessed the growth of the city's underclass – migrant workers brought in from the countryside as cheap labour to build the gleaming skyscrapers and tower blocks.

Described as Shanghai's 'floating population', these rural migrants now number about 10 million.

Even today they lack residential status and are relegated to the worst, lowest-paid jobs.

Fr Kinne saw a deep need amongst Shanghai's migrant workers.

"The government wanted the workers, but it didn't want the consequences of the workers," he said.

"I saw them living rough and working on building sites and in the restaurants. I thought if the Church is for the marginalised, these guys certainly fit the category.

"What could we do, even though the contribution to such an enormous issue might be miniscule?"



With a group of like-minded friends, particularly amongst the Catholic expatriate community, Fr Kinne set up the *You Dao Foundation* – a charity business to help provide migrant worker children, barred from attending Shanghai schools, with places to learn, and supplied them with books and other needs.

As *You Dao* chairman, 'businessman' Fr Kinne found innovative ways to help the poor learn – by partnering migrant children with some of the rich foreign schools set up for a large expatriate community.

He found ex-pats willing to fundraise to provide scholarships that would pay for expensive school tuition fees for migrant children to attend private schools, and provide clothing, books and computers.

International business corporations based in Shanghai also started to help in various ways.

The *You Dao* Foundation has operated for more than a decade, providing education opportunities for Shanghai's poorest.

This has included giving out hundreds of scholarships.

Through charity work and donations, it also delivers other, practical help for migrant worker families – health checks, food, clothing and home goods.

You Dao is now firmly established.

While it was originally registered in Hong Kong as a foundation, it recently became registered as a 'service organisation' on the Chinese mainland.

Fr Kinne said the Church in the city was *"healthy and alive, moving ahead quietly"* with about 140,000 Catholics practising their faith.

At the start of this year Fr Kinne was sad to leave Shanghai as a 'businessman' and return to Queensland.

Brisbane Archbishop Mark Coleridge, who Fr Kinne met in Rome while studying many years ago, was quick to enlist his skills by appointing him as a chaplain at Griffith University.

It's a chance for Fr Kinne to keep his China connection alive, with more than 900 Chinese students studying at the university's Gold Coast campus.

He also assists by celebrating Mass in Surfers Paradise and neighbouring parishes.

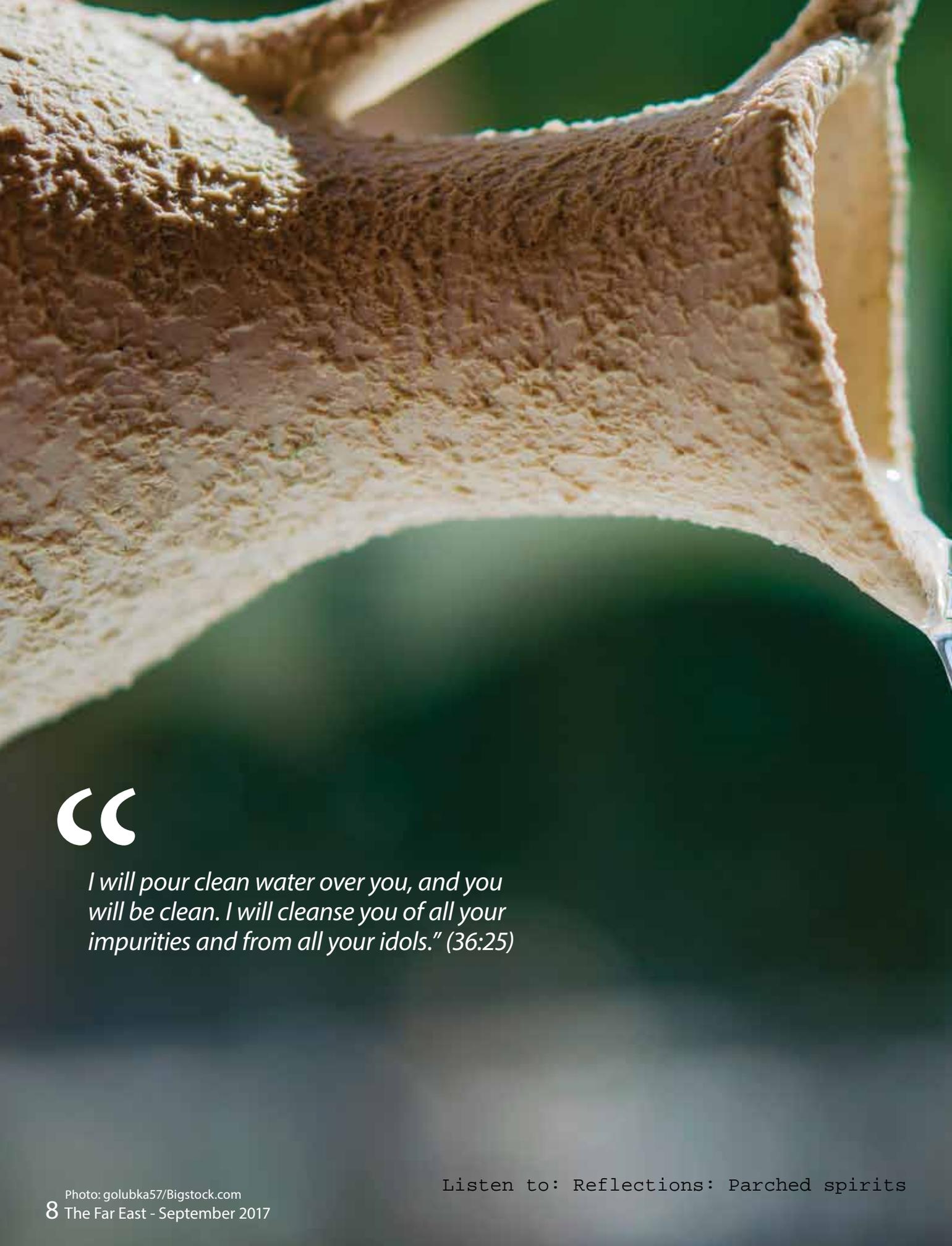
Mark Bowling, Multimedia Journalist, *The Catholic Leader*, Brisbane.





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The taxi is slow, but on the 'electric donkey' you can nip in and out," he said.



“

I will pour clean water over you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you of all your impurities and from all your idols.” (36:25)

Parched spirits

REFLECTION
TIM MULROY

*L*ike the air we breathe, water is essential for our life and well-being. The average person in the west uses more than 300 litres in a variety of ways throughout each day. Indeed, water is so intertwined with our everyday life that we generally take this precious gift for granted, and pause to reflect on it only when we hear a story about the serious consequences that arise from its contamination.

Unfortunately, in recent decades contaminated water has become a serious issue in some of the countries where Columban missionaries minister. This is often a direct result of the environmental effects of mining, when chemicals used in the extraction process or waste materials are allowed to seep into the soil and water with devastating long-term consequences for the health and wellbeing of the local people.

In countries like Peru and the Philippines, poor indigenous people are often uprooted from their ancestral lands by large-scale mining, which also poisons their water, thus completely undermining their way of life. Deprived of their land and of access to clean water, their spirits become parched, their hopes wilt, and their dreams wither.

It is not enough to simply tend the wounds of these suffering people. Rather, the Gospel compels us to address the underlying causes of their anguish. Among them is our craving for new products, which in turn compels mining companies to continually seek out new sources of raw materials. As consumers, frequently we are blissfully unaware that others pay with their tears for our amusements. There is also the issue of outdated laws protecting the environment, which allows international mining companies to place profits before the interests of local people. Besides, many indigenous people lack the education and political influence required to convince a corporate board that their right to maintain access to clean water takes precedence over industrial progress.

Columban missionaries, who understand the way of life of the local people, and who share their concerns and fears, often find themselves thrust into the role of advocates not just on their behalf, but on behalf of God. They understand that for God's promise through the prophet Ezekiel to be fulfilled in the sacrament of baptism, *"I will pour clean water over you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you of all your impurities and from all your idols."* (36:25), then access to clean water is indispensable not only for daily life, but also for new life in Christ.

Columban Fr Tim Mulroy served in Japan for many years and is currently the Columban Director of the United States Region.

Never to be lonely

Preparing for the Columban Centenary

Fr Malcolm Sherrard is remembered for his steely determination and commitment to mission in the Philippines. He had an amazing ability to supervise the building of churches, set up medical clinics, organise emergency relief in times of natural disasters, and be director of a number of schools.



Fr Malcolm Sherrard

Answering God's call to become a Columban missionary priest, Malcolm Sherrard began his preparation at St Columban's, Lower Hutt, New Zealand in 1948 and later moved to North Essendon, Melbourne, Australia.

His studies were completed at Dalgan Park, Ireland. From the early 1950s he carried a lasting sense of achievement from long holiday cycle tours across Europe. After ordination in 1954 he was assigned to the Philippines as a missionary priest.

His principal missionary experience was in the Diocese of Iba in the Province of Zambales, first in Botolan, and later in the remote town of Poonbato.

Although the tropics were demanding, Malcolm found the stamina to maintain a rugged pace for many years. Mission was the straight-forward task of keeping a parish functioning and reaching out to meet basic social needs in the scattered communities.

Over the years he supervised the building of churches, set up medical clinics, organised emergency relief in times of natural disasters and was the director of a number of schools. Civil authorities acknowledged his deep concern for the welfare of people in the district. His one aim was to see that the projects touched and enriched the lives of the poor.

A Columban movie from that time, *'Never to be Lonely'*, presents him as a tall, confident, active fellow, totally at home in the local situation. He operated with steely determination, some would say a stubborn streak. When interviewed for the film Fr Sherrard was asked if he ever felt isolated and lonely. "No," he says, "people ask me that all the time but I tell them I am at home here. I want to do as much as I can, as long as I can."

On his return to New Zealand in 1991 Fr Malcolm spent a number of years on the road visiting parishes and schools with movies and slides to illustrate his mission message.

For the most part he remained a true product of the pre-Vatican II church, shaped by practices and devotions from earlier years. Colleagues reckon we are not to see the like of him again.

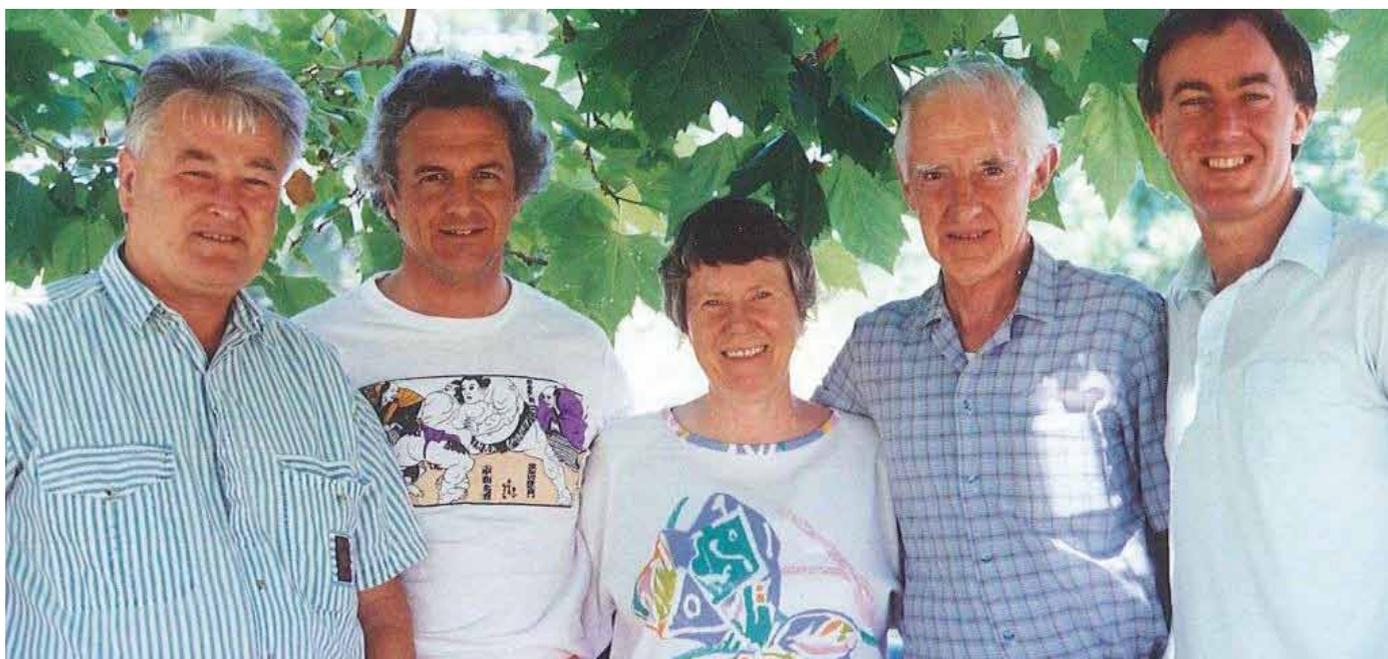
The short film *'Never to be Lonely'* can be viewed on the Columban website www.columban.org.au

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...people ask me that all the time but I tell them I am at home here...

Pacific Mission Institute (PMI)

CHARLES RUE



CMI North Turrumurra - Fr Charles Rue (left), Fr Brian Vale, St Magella Tracey, Fr Charlie O'Mahony & Fr Chris Farrelly (right), 1990.

St Columban's Seminary began in Wahroonga in 1952 and moved to North Turrumurra in 1959. In the 1960s the leadership saw the need for more mission studies for its seminarians. The need for an institute was real as there were no renewal, updating or re-entry courses being offered in Australia for its nearly 1,700 Catholic missionaries. An opportunity arose in 1971 when the Australian Bishops established the *National Missionary Council* (NMC). Dialogue began between the various mission-sending bodies, including female and male religious institutes, diocesan clergy and the lay mission groups.

Ideas around the word 'missology' had only grown slowly in the Church prompted by among other things: the *Divine Word Missionaries* (SVD) with cultural-anthropology studies, the *Protestant Edinburgh Missionary Conference* in 1910, the 1919 *Apostolic Mission Letter of Pope Benedict XV*, 1930s mission studies at Propaganda College, Louis Luzbetak's

1962 publication of *The Church and Cultures* which appealed to a wide English-speaking audience.

With the backing of the NMC, the Columbans organised the first *Australian National Missionary Conference* at Turrumurra in January 1972. Delegates came from 22 countries. Notable speakers included Alfonso Nebreda SJ from Manila, Herman Janssen MSC and Anglican Canon Peter Robin from PNG, Theodore Van Asten, the Superior General of the Missionaries of Africa, and Bishop Myles McKeon, the NMC president. Columban students followed up with an Open Day for Mission Sunday 1972, repeated the next year with 1,500 people attending. By 1976 it had blossomed into a Mission Exhibition. Then in 1995 they held another *National Mission Consultation* at Strathfield. This conference along with the 1972 conference marked a significant phase in the ANZ Columban Society's contribution to mission theory and practice.

In 1973, a trial ten-week *Mission Studies Program* hosted 19 students from outside the College. Lecturers were contracted from outside the College including overseas experts. Demand increased and a year-long program started. It was called the *Pacific Mission Institute (PMI)*. Fr Brendan Lovett was the first Director followed in 1979 by Fr Cyril Hally. Night classes began for external students in 1985. The PMI's 'holistic' philosophy made personal formation of participants as important as academic studies.

Mission studies opened up issues not often faced in Australian church circles - ecology and justice, dialogue with Islam, liberation theology, the African context and the churches in China. A modern mission library was developed under Fr Fergus Duffy and later Fr Don Wodarz. In 1979 the periodical and documentation collection of the NMC was shifted to Turrumurra.

The role of women both as staff members and students of PMI had a major effect in developing the Australian post 1970 Columban seminary-based mission studies. Sisters Majella Tracey FMM, Pauline Rae SMSM and Kathleen Luchetti RSJ served as co-directors.

Another significant aim of the PMI program was to assist returned missionaries to reflect on their overseas experiences and to go through a period of adjustment before re-entering their home church or returning overseas. Another group using the PMI were the initial members of the *Columban Lay Missionary Program*.

Cooperating with other theological schools made PMI mission programs available to a wider range of students. Turrumurra joined with Marist Fathers to form the Union Theological Institute (UTI). It gained accreditation in 1979 and full accreditation as a founding member of the Sydney College of Divinity (SCD) in 1983. As Rector, Fr Noel Connolly gained recognition for our mission courses and St Columban's became a centre for missology in the new ecumenically based SCD.

The PMI was renamed the *Columban Mission Institute (CMI)* in 1993 when Fr Trevor Trotter was Rector. But demand for residential mission studies fell. In November 1996 all formal academic programs at Turrumurra ended.

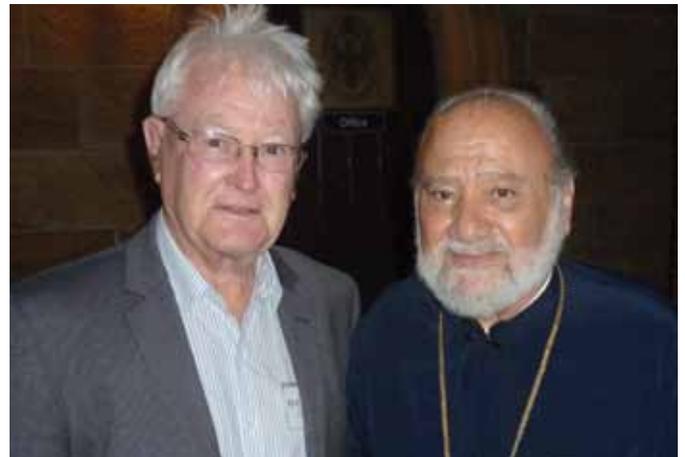
From 1974-1996 over nine hundred men and women participated in residential PMI-CMI mission studies programs at Turrumurra, in addition to the hundreds of non-residential students. When participants and staff



Students & staff at St Columban's, North Turrumurra.

scattered around the world they spread a significant Columban contribution to the Australian missionary movement in every continent.

Since 1997 CMI has functioned more as an animator in the local church in the areas of China, Peace, Ecology and Justice and Christian-Muslim Relations. Mission Studies were reintroduced when Columbans joined the staff of the Catholic Institute of Sydney in 2005 and the Broken Bay Institute shortly afterwards. This time the emphasis has been academic and is not centred around the personal formation of aspiring or returning 'missionaries'.



Fr Charles Rue & Eminence Archbishop Stylianos, at a eco-theology seminar held at the Greek Orthodox Seminary, Redfern, 2015.

Columban Fr Charles Rue resides in Sydney.

Mission Studies

NOEL CONNOLLY

Columbans do not have outstanding personal gifts or genius. Our 'genius' comes from the people we have lived with and grown to love. However, these experiences have also given us questions. In Latin America and the Philippines, the biggest questions revolve around poverty and justice; in China, Korea and Japan around culture and language; in Pakistan and Mindanao around dialogue with Islam.

When I was a seminarian, I was trained to be a parish priest who could work in lonely, difficult places overseas. I don't think the major missiological questions occurred to me. But by the middle seventies mission theology was becoming increasingly important in our College in Turramurra. Studies in culture, religion and interreligious dialogue, justice and eventually ecology began to play an increasing part in the training of our seminarians. We also began the *Pacific Mission Institute* (PMI) to train religious, priests and teachers preparing for or returning from cross-cultural ministry.

Probably the most significant Columban in this shift was Fr Cyril Hally, one of the fathers of missiology in Australia. Cyril was an anthropologist and a voracious reader of history, sociology, anthropology and demography. He was still reading the night before he died at 91. I know because I visited him that night and he told me about what he had just read in *Charles Taylor's The Secular Age*. All this reading gave Cyril a refreshing outlook on theology. Anthropology is the study of cultures and implicit in that outlook is a freedom to look critically at your own culture. He asked questions most theologians did not think of.

More than a decade after the end of the Council, we were also coming to realise the deeper meaning of Vatican II. Pope John XXIII wanted the Council to engage with the world and to take history seriously. ***The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World insisted we could only be faithful to our mission by "scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel."*** (#4) Up till Vatican II we had a more perennial theology found in major classical textbooks. It



Professor Gabrielle McMullen, Deputy Vice-Chancellor ACU (since retired) & Fr Noel Connolly.

was a theology that rarely changed. Now theology had to be historical and to interpret the 'signs of the times'.

This prompted the staff at St Columbans to start teaching the seminarians and the people preparing for mission by studying missiology more scientifically. We also developed an excellent Missiological Library and Resource Centre.

The PMI residential course closed in 1996. Its successor the *Columban Mission Institute* (CMI) was built around centres for *China, Peace, Ecology & Justice and Christian Muslim Relations* and did not have its own academic program so, there was a break in formal studies in mission.

Missiology returned as a serious academic discipline in 2005. When Columbans started teaching missiology at the *Catholic Institute of Sydney* (CIS). Some of the early courses offered were *New Models & Images for Mission, Introducing Islam, Justice & the Church's Mission, Evangelisation Today* -

Educational Perspectives, Interreligious Dialogue and Faith, Mission and Culture. Shortly after we also began to teach missiology at the Broken Bay Institute.

Fr Patrick McInerney and I still lecture in the Masters programs at both CIS and BBI (*Broken Bay Institute - The Australian Institute for Theological Education*). This is critical because it enables us to keep mission before the eyes of our theologian colleagues, to encourage them to theologise in the light of the 'signs of the times'. We also have the opportunity to keep mission before the seminarians and teachers of the future.

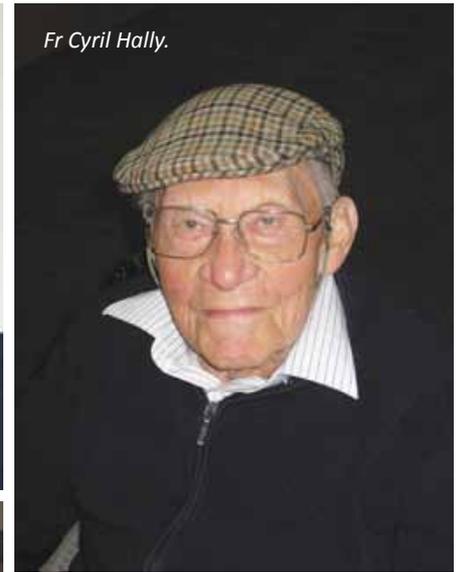
After the CMI closes Patrick and I will continue to lecture in the meaning of mission in our present secular, plural and globalised world, on Islam and interreligious dialogue.

Brian Vale and I will be involved in programs to welcome, integrate and enable overseas trained priests and religious into the Australian church. We feel specially called to

this last cause because this is the 'age of migration' and our Australian Catholic Church is becoming increasingly multiethnic but is not yet fully multicultural. Once again, we are speaking out of our experience. We can speak because we too have been migrants. We know the challenges, confusion and loneliness. We also know the excitement and expansion of our humanity that people can experience in living in another culture.

As you can see, this has been a journey for us Columbans and for the many people who have taught and studied with us. But it has originated in our experience of sharing our lives with people around the Columban world who have shared their lives and questions with us.

Columban Fr Noel Connolly is a member of the Columban Mission Institute in North Sydney and a lecturer in Missiology at both the Broken Bay Institute and the Catholic Institute of Sydney.



Fr Cyril Hally.



Fr Noel Connolly promoting Columban Mission Studies at various events over the years.

Photos: Missionary Society of St Columban



Blanket cover-up

Mini-Vinnies, St Mary's Primary School, Yarram

FR ROBERT MCCULLOCH

Yarram is a small town on the sea in south-east Victoria. Hyderabad is a big provincial town on the edge of the desert in south-east Pakistan.

The Mini-Vinnies conference at St Mary's Primary School in Yarram have knitted a warm connection with St Elizabeth Hospital in Hyderabad and its *Mobile Medical Outreach Programme*.

The Mini-Vinnies at St Mary's was started five years ago by Debra Owens, one of the teachers at the school and now twenty children belong to it. The Mini-Vinnies are primary school-based conferences of the St Vincent de Paul Society and enable the Society's motivation of being compassionate to those in need to be passed on to a younger generation of Australian Catholics.

The St Mary's Mini-Vinnies make blankets which are given to children of utterly poor agricultural labourers in Pakistan. Making the blankets means that the Mini-Vinnies themselves are actually engaged in providing help to Pakistani children in need.

Each year I carry bags of the blankets from Yarram to Hyderabad where they are collected and distributed by

the staff of the Mobile Medical Outreach Programme at St Elizabeth Hospital. The *Mobile Medical Outreach Programme* provides primary health care every year to 50,000 people who live in distant rural and desert areas. Eric Siraj, director of the *Mobile Medical Outreach*, says that children in these areas suffer not only from malnutrition but also from the extreme winter cold and this is a major reason for the very common respiratory sicknesses that the children have. Very few of the settlements where their parents live have electricity but even then no-one can afford heating. Any wood that is available is used for cooking.

The blanket cover that the Yarram Mini-Vinnies is giving makes a huge difference in the basic need for warmth and care that infants and young children near Hyderabad have. The Mini-Vinnies do a 'hand-out' but it is a hand-out of blankets made by their own hands. It's a blanket cover-up of kindness and compassion from children to children.

Columban Fr Robert McCulloch resides in Rome as the Procurator General for St Columbans Mission Society.

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 our parishes, animated by a missionary spirit, may be places where faith is communicated and charity is seen.



Photo: sgame/bigstock.com

Pope Francis to make surprise visit to Myanmar

Pope Francis is expected to focus on improving the troubles of about a million ethnic Muslim Rohingyas when he visits Myanmar in November in the first papal visit to the country after being personally invited by President Htin Kyaw.

News of the visit, which has leaked out of the Vatican but is not expected to be officially announced until next month, has already drawn the ire of hard-line Buddhist groups who have fanned sectarian violence and protest, especially against the Rohingya and other Muslims, over the past five years.

"No, no, don't come," "don't visit if you come to Myanmar for Bengalis," and "we oppose the visit if he uses the word Rohingya," several Buddhists posted on their Facebook pages.

Bishop Raymond Sumlut Gam of Banmaw in Kachin State said a visit by Pope Francis to Myanmar is most likely, although he said he had not officially been informed.

"The Catholic bishops invited Pope Francis before the 500th anniversary of Catholicism in Myanmar in late 2014," Bishop Gam told ucanews.com.

"Some improvements have occurred such as diplomatic relations between Myanmar and Vatican plus the appointment of an Apostolic Nuncio," he said.

The Pope's relatively last minute program change will see him cancel a planned trip to India after prevarication by that nation's strongly pro-Hindu government. The proposed visit to Myanmar will precede the Pope visiting neighbouring Bangladesh.



Pope Francis meets Burmese State Counsellor and Foreign Minister Aung San Suu Kyi on May 4, 2017 in Vatican City, Vatican.

Senior Catholic sources told ucanews.com that Pope Francis will arrive in Myanmar on November 27 for four nights.

It is expected that he will celebrate at least two Masses before heading to the country's largest city and business capital, Yangon, for a large open-air Mass. It is also expected that he will visit and offer Mass at St Joseph's Catholic Major Seminary in Yangon.

UCA News - www.ucanews.com, August 7, 2017

Photo: Vatican Pool - Corbis/Corbis via Getty Images



From the Director

A father's love

*F*ather's Day is celebrated on the first Sunday in September. It is a day when children give cards and presents to their fathers to show them that they love them.

In the New Testament the relationship between Jesus as Son and the Father is well documented. The baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River is mentioned in all the gospels indicating that it was an important moment in his life. Matthew, Mark and Luke record that the baptism was accompanied by the presence of the Holy Spirit and the words from the Father proclaiming to the world and to Jesus, *"This is my Son, the beloved; my favour rests on him"*. (Mt 3:17, Mk 1:11, Luke 3:22). John mentions the incident but not the words of love and praise from the Father.

In recent years our society has moved from parents not praising their children in case they get a swelled head to praising them to develop healthy self-esteem. The question is often asked, should praise be earned or should praise be given to your child just because you love them?

I clearly remember two incidents where fathers obviously had opposing beliefs on the merit of when and how to give praise.

It was at a sporting carnival that I saw a heavy boy come last in his foot race. He was embarrassed because his father witnessed the defeat. However, his father hugged him and said, *'Never mind son, you can swim better than you can run and beat these kids'*. The boy brightened up immediately and went off confident in his father's approval.

At another sporting event I saw a young boy whose father expected him to win a sprint race. When he was beaten unexpectedly his father turned his back on his son in disapproval.

I often wonder how these two boys turned out as fathers!



The question is often asked, should praise be earned or should praise be given to your child just because you love them?

My own father died of Parkinson's disease when he was only 64 years old and he had years of decline before that. But I have stronger memories of him playing cricket with me in the backyard. When I was in the seminary he wrote me letters. Most students did not get letters from their fathers, more from their mothers.

My father wrote to me when I was in Fiji, wondering in his letter how many times he would see me before he died? As it turned out many times. How lucky was I!

What a blessing it is to have a father who cares and loves in ordinary ways and leaves good and wholesome memories.

Happy Fathers Day.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Gary Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Fr Gary Walker
director@columban.org.au



Photo: Skipper64/Bigstock.com

My family's slave

PHILIPPINES
FR SHAY CULLEN

My family's slave is a personal story written by Filipino journalist Alex Tizon, who grew up in the United States where he migrated with his family. He was a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and the author of Big Little Man: In Search of My Asian Self. He died in March, 2016.

Alex Tizon left behind a moving and conscience-searing true story about his *yaya* (nana), the family's house-help, the woman who cared for him and who worked her whole life for the Tizon family.

Some would praise her devotion and sacrifice - Alex said it was slavery.

Alex wrote about this village girl from the province of Tarlac, Eudocia Tomas Pulido whom we called Lola. She was given as a gift to Alex's mother by his grandfather.

The grandfather was a well-off landowning patriarch. Eudocia was a docile, submissive village girl who was intimidated by the powerful man. She had a vague sense that her family owed something to the old man and she had a 'debt of gratitude' to repay with a life of servitude.

Eudocia Tomas Pulido worked without recompense of any kind in the house of the Tizons in Tarlac. She would take beatings from the grandfather in place of her mistress. She was scolded and blamed even for resting when she was sick. When the family moved to the United States in the 1960s she was brought along as an unpaid 'family helper'. Alex wrote: *"She lived with us for 56 years. She raised me and my siblings without pay. I was 11, a typical American kid, before I realized who she was."*

The Tizons were considered a model family in America, good Catholics with a fragmented, unreflecting hypocritical form of 'Christianity.'

There are millions of upright true honest Filipino families that would never do such a thing or exploit anyone but others sadly do it. Such people today are living a contradictory illusion of being Christian.

The article by Alex Tizon is doing the rounds on social media and is challenging and troubling the consciences of many a family who have had similar 'helpers' or 'domestics', many of whom would have been like Eudocia, and dare we say it, as did Alex, a slave.

How many more helpers are held 'captive' in 'bonded unpaid labor', kept in the house, denied freedom, marriage, a family, pay, and a home of their own.

Eudocia was a property, given as a 'slave' and owned by the family for them to do with her as they liked.

Her few requests in her lifetime were denied. When Alex's mother died (the father deserted the family), Alex took Eudocia in, paid her US\$200 a week, provided her with her own room and all her needs and a free human life.

He took her on a visit to her family in Tarlac after he got her migrant legal

status properly established. But she knew no one and went back to the U.S. with Alex.

This story uncovers the culture of exploitation in various forms of domestic slavery that is rampant in our society. The injustice of such lives of servitude is never considered. It is accepted as a cultural right of a dominant family over the weaker. It reflects a status-conscious society where possessions and wealth determine one's standing and value. It shows how easily the poor, hungry, unemployed and uneducated can easily be exploited by those above them.

The poor are generally considered by the rich as of lesser value as humans and unworthy to improve their lives.

It is a challenge to the kind of Catholic Church teaching that critics have said is too sacramental, theologically abstract, impractical and unrelated to daily life. Teaching the people the values of compassion, justice, human dignity, and freedom, and taking an active principled stand for them is rare.

These values are at the heart and meaning of Christian life. Without living them daily with commitment, we are just church-going Catholics.

Columban Fr Shay Cullen, has spent more than 40 years in the Philippines.



One man's descent into hell

SR MARY DILLON

Columban Sr Mary Dillon recounts one man's descent into hell through heroin addiction and how the Hope Centre in Myitkyina, Myanmar, is helping him get back on his feet.

*M*yint Saung was born in a very small village in middle Myanmar 38 years ago. His primary education came to an abrupt end when he was eleven years old because his father died and his mother was left to provide for eight young children. Life for an uneducated young man in a rural area of Myanmar in the eighties was very harsh and oppressive, with very little or no opportunity for anyone seeking to create a life for himself.

Myint Saung worked as a casual labourer out in the fields in the scorching sun hoping to be able to provide some rice and basic nutrition for himself and his family, but this was next to impossible. As time wore on he became disillusioned and in 2007 followed some of his friends to where 'easy money' could be made. The amber mines of Tanai (northern Kachin State) were promising. He did earn some money, some months \$100 or more.

Not long after he began to work at the mines he was introduced to heroin by his friends. At first it was an activity that gave him pleasure but with the passing of time he could not live without a fix every day. He tells how once he was able to spend \$1,400 on what he called a rice-bowl quantity of heroin; this lasted only ten days as his craving was so intense. Like the majority of people there who inject drugs, he shared needles with friends, unconcerned about the possibility of contracting HIV and Hepatitis C. *"My body was asking for the drug, I could not think about the possibility of disease."* In Kachin State, 38% of intravenous drug users are HIV positive, seven out of every ten drug users have Hepatitis C and about 50% will develop tuberculosis.

By December 2015, Myint Saung had serious health difficulties and could only sit around, have his fix and sleep. He had lost his job and was homeless and penniless. He stayed close to his buddies and they provided the heroin. One day as he was 'shooting up' he was attacked by four men who beat him up and dragged him away to a Pat Jasan detention shelter. The shelter was launched by Communities in Kachin State.

They have taken the law into their own hands and arrest and beat drug users and put them into forced treatment camps. It was into one of these overcrowded bamboo camps that Myint Saung was taken that night; he shared space with thirty other drug-dependent men like himself.

Myint Saung's stay at the camp was short-lived; he suffered excruciating pain from heroin withdrawal symptoms including diarrhoea, fever and extreme weakness. He was so emaciated that he could not walk. After about ten days there, two men took him and left him on the side of a public road to die. Luckily some of his friends heard and, at a risk to their lives, brought him to a small clinic run by the KIO (*Kachin Independence Organisation*). He was treated there and one week later was referred to the MSF (*Médecins Sans Frontières*) clinic in the town of Myitkyina.

Myint Saung arrived at the door of the *Hope Centre* in December 2015 and he is still in residence today. Physically and mentally he was exhausted, bewildered and felt completely alone and lost. His face was that of an old man. For many weeks his life hung in the balance. He hardly spoke but I could sense that he felt himself in a very dark and frightening place. Like many of our residents, he slowly, after many setbacks, turned a corner. He began to interact with the others and share in the daily life at the home.

He has many regrets. Worst of all, he has lost contact with his family, he doesn't know where they are. But he hopes that with time he will have the courage to reconnect with them. *"Heroin is like a curse,"* he says. *"Society treats drug-users like scum."* He knows his drug-habit has permanently damaged him physically as he now has liver problems and will be on HIV medication for the rest of his life. But still, that small flame of hope carries

Myint Saung forward; we pray that one day he will be reconciled with his people and find his home again.

Columban Sr Mary Dillon has worked in Myanmar (Burma) since 2002. She has developed a home care health program for people with HIV/AIDS and established a respite house, Hope Centre to enable people from distant places to avail of medical care.

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For many weeks his life hung in the balance. He hardly spoke but I could sense that he felt himself in a very dark and frightening place.

Honouring culture and habitat

PHILIPPINES

EVANGELYN GAWASON

*M*y name is Evangelyn Gawason. My friends call me Vangie. I'm a Subanen. The Subanens are an indigenous people whose ancestral homeland covers most of the mountainous Zamboanga Peninsula in the Philippines. For the past six years I have been involved in a livelihood project called Subanen Crafts. Columban Fr Vincent Busch started our craft project in 2001 with the help of the Columban Sisters who have been working with the Subanen people since 1984.

Making hand-crafted items including the Christmas cards is part of the Subanen culture. Through this work I have learnt to celebrate our bond with the natural world.

Over the past 15 years Subanen Crafts has provided dignified livelihoods for 76 full time and part time crafters.

I would like to share how the project and other Columban ministries have helped my family, my people and our habitat.

Being the oldest in our family I try to help my younger brother Roniel and sisters Lalay and Jen who board in the distant town of Midsalip to go to high school. I am able to use my earnings as a crafter to pay for their living expenses, their school supplies and project fees.

A basic education is becoming essential for Subanens as more and more land-hungry settlers and resource-seeking industries occupy our ancestral land. Many illiterate Subanens have been fooled into signing or endorsing official documents that authorize outsiders to take possession of our land and its resources.

Attending school is difficult for Subanen students whose families find it hard to meet the educational costs. Students often have to travel long distances over rough terrain to schools where teachers are often late or do not show up at all. Many teachers do not speak our tribal language or understand our customs. The children began to feel that their language and culture were not important; they felt ashamed and left out. Sadly, many stopped attending school altogether.

The Columban Sisters recognized the need to help and began a pre-school program with Subanen-speaking teachers. Over the years the Sisters and the staff of their Subanen Ministry have built nine pre-schools with an



Subanen woman working on the crafts.

enrolment of more than two hundred. The pre-schools are happy places for our little ones where teachers listen with wonder when the children tell stories about snakes that fly, about eagles that eat monkeys, about the shy tarsiers (small leaping tree-dwelling primate) that appear only at night, and about the wild pigs that try to eat our crops.

The teachers appreciate the sheltering mountains, the forested hills, and the cool streams of our ancestral habitat. They understand how rituals of thanksgiving to God are part of Subanen life. They encourage learning through play, song, dance, and drama and affirm our culture, traditions and respect our spirituality.

Through my employment with Subanen Crafts I have been able to pay for the construction of a new kitchen area for our home to replace the old cooking area which was outside. This is a welcome improvement.

This year our Christmas card designs show Mary and Joseph's 'Flight into Egypt'. Like Mary and Joseph, many Subanens have also fled their homes because mining companies have ravaged their land.

I would like to thank Columban benefactors who have helped to improve our lives through the support of Subanen Crafts Christmas cards. May God bless you.

Evangelyn Gawason is a Subanen woman living and working in the Philippines.



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Honouring culture and habitat - Philippines

Over the past 15 years Subanen Crafts, in the Philippines have provided dignified livelihoods for 76 full time and part time crafters.

Through sales of the handmade Christmas cards, crafters are able to meet basic educational costs, upgrade their living conditions and be proud of their culture and traditions.

With your help, the Subanen Crafters can continue to support their families and culture. (See pages 22-23)



Photo: Fr Vinnie Busch



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