

Columbans Send Message of Mercy and Solidarity to Fiji

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Hong Kong—With a week since Cyclone Winston hit and devastated the island nation of Fiji, reports continue to reveal the depth and breadth of the tragedy.

Columban Superior General, Fr. Kevin O’Neill, offers prayers for the people and land of Fiji saying, *"Our hearts ache for the suffering caused by Cyclone Winston. The images of human and environmental devastation urge responses of aid, mercy, compassion, love, and solidarity. On behalf of Columbans around the world, we extend our deepest condolences for all who have lost their lives, and for strength and courage in the rescue and recovery ahead."*

Columban Fr. John McEvoy writes from Fiji, *"Never before did I find it so hard to write a few lines about a given situation. It was a category 5 cyclone – never before experienced in Fiji and the strongest recorded winds in the Southern Hemisphere. The nation is numb, shell-shocked and overwhelmed, so are we. The situation has emotionally affected us all and like the nation we are somewhat paralyzed, crying within and unable to get up and move into action."*

Fr. Nilton of Peru, now serving in Fiji with Columbans as a Priest Associate, was in one of the hardest hit areas said this, *"I am not able to give anything at the moment, but I want to invite you to come and give thanks to the Lord for saving our lives from this terrible storm."*

Pope Francis in his encyclical Laudato Si’ reminds us that, *"large-scale natural disasters... cannot be analyzed or explained in isolation."* He goes on to say, *"I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all."*

"Our first and primary concern is for the people of Fiji and the land and sea on which they live and hold so dear. In a spirit of unity and communion, we invite people of faith and goodwill to join us in solidarity with the people and Creation of Fiji; to not be indifferent to the tragedy of this cyclone and so many others; to live in ever deeper communion with each other and with Creation so that all may have life to the fullest," said **Columban International Coordinator for Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation, Amy Woolam Echeverria.**

Columban missionaries have been present in Fiji for more than sixty years. As in all countries where Columbans serve, in Fiji Columbans are dedicated to pastorally accompanying people in their daily joys and struggles, lifting up the dignity of all life, working for justice, and

inviting dialogue among people of different faiths and cultures. Columbans are currently present in the cities of Suva, Ba, and Labasa.

Columbans and all in the Columban family of friends and supporters are encouraged to **pray in a special way for Fiji on March 5, 2016** as a way to be in communion with the people and all of Creation that has suffered from Cyclone Winston. The **Global Catholic Climate Movement** has launched a solidarity campaign for people to send messages to Fiji which will be delivered on March 4, 2016. [#FastwithFiji](#)