

# Columban Mission

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# Missionary Life



# C O N T E N T S

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## Columban Mission

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### HOPE AND LIGHT

12



### FR. VINCENT'S FIRST MASS

14

#### 4 VISIT TO LABASA

A Homecoming Story

#### 7 SPRING IN THE JUNGLE

A Seeds of Hope Project

#### 8 EASTER

The Faithful Celebrate

#### 10 THE LAST WANAURNY

One of a Kind

#### 18 HOPE TO LIFE ANEW

#### 16 MY JOURNEY TO ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION

Take Action!

#### 20 STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Meaningful Moments

#### 21 YOUTH FOR CHANGE

A Time for Healing

#### 22 SURVIVAL OF THOSE DISPLACED

A Deeper Dive

### DEPARTMENTS

#### 3 IN SO MANY WORDS

#### 23 FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Missionary Society of St. Columban was founded in 1918 to proclaim and witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The Society seeks to establish the Catholic Church where the Gospel has not been preached, help local churches evangelize their laity, promote dialogue with other faiths, and foster among all baptized people an awareness of their missionary responsibility.



# In So Many Words

By Fr. Gary Walker

## The Mysteries of Life

**P**alm Sunday commemorates Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem. It is a happy occasion, a planned entry into Jerusalem which gathered disciples and followers to hail Jesus. It might have been the start of something big.

But the liturgy does not dwell on the joyful entrance into Jerusalem of Jesus riding a donkey, fulfilling his destiny according to scripture but goes into a re-telling of the passion of Jesus according to Luke.

We leap over some issues by not dwelling at least for a short time on the entrance of Jesus to Jerusalem and the scripture readings chosen for this Sunday from Isaiah and the letter of Paul to the Philippians.

The Gospel and the letter to the Philippians is written with hindsight, and Luke tells the story of what happened to Jesus. The letter to the Philippians is a profound reflection on what the life, death and resurrection of Jesus mean.

And the reading from Isaiah of the suffering servant whose life given for others gives life to those others. We attempt to place Jesus in a place in salvation history which explains his life, death and subsequent resurrection.

No doubt, the surprise of the resurrection is a fact that needs to be understood and explained to those Christians who followed him then and follow him now.

The entrance into Jerusalem was planned, and followers or supporters hailed Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem. We know He was riding to His death, but those present on that happy day were expecting something of this man: success, liberation from bondage, and who knows what else? In retrospect, we see the crowd's fickleness, or perhaps there were two crowds or more, with their own agenda? Those who were followers of Jesus, those who were followers of the ruling elite, those who followed the Pharisees.



Perhaps this demonstration in Jerusalem of the well-known or talked about preacher from Galilee caused trouble for the powers because it happened in Jerusalem itself? But they were used to demonstrations and trouble and behind the local soldiers stood the legions of Rome.

We know it all went down, fell to pieces. After the Passover meal, we experience nothing but horror and disbelief. Judas hardly features in the Gospel story, but his appearance is crucial for what happens. Perfect timing for betrayal, and abandonment to the powerful authorities who take it from there. Their crowd, it would seem, was different to the welcomers of Jesus. There is a blood lust in the description of the passion of Jesus.

After everything was done – resurrection and ascension, followers with a new power in them from the Spirit of Jesus, proclaiming His kingdom — someone had to make sense of it all and try to understand what these amazing events were all about.

We stop and ponder these mysteries of life, love and sacrifice through the Easter season.

*Columban Fr. Gary Walker currently lives and works in Australia.*

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*No doubt, the surprise of the resurrection is a fact that needs to be understood and explained to those Christians that follow him then and follow him now.*

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# Visit to Labasa

## A Homecoming Story

By Fr. Tim Mulroy

Even though it was my first time to visit to Fiji, my short stay in Holy Family Parish in Labasa felt like a homecoming!

Situated among the sugarcane plantations, I arrived at the small, regional airport on a forty-minute flight from the capital city of Suva. My travel companion was Vida Hequilan, the international coordinator for Columban lay missionaries. Within moments of our plane touching down, we were warmly welcomed by Columban Fr. Carlo Jung Euikyun.

As Fr. Carlo drove us along windy, country roads to Doguro Village, our conversation moved back and forth between his present-day missionary life in the remote countryside of Fiji and memories of the years we had spent together in Chicago. We had encountered one another for the first

time in the Windy City in 2007, when — as a young seminarian — Fr. Carlo came from Korea in order to continue his studies at the Columban international seminary where I had been the rector. During the next four years, we shared the ups and downs of daily life in that multicultural community. While the seminarians studied English and theology, living together and forming friendships with the other members of that community from various countries was considered equally as important as academic achievements.

As I moved around Holy Family Parish during the following days in the company of Fr. Carlo, I could see that both he and the community he now serves are reaping the benefits of those seminary experiences — he was able to engage easily with the indigenous Fijian people and the

Indian Fijian people, whose language and culture differ greatly from one another. Meanwhile, he translated into English for me all that was going on around us!

What a joy to see that Fr. Carlo, who comes from the large city of Incheon in Korea, has found his life's treasure in the sugarcane fields of Labasa, Fiji!

It was in Chicago that I also met Fr. Charlie Duster for the first time. From Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Fr. Charlie had spent more than twenty years on mission in Fiji before coming to live in the Windy City in 2005. Since his last assignment in Fiji had been in Holy Family Parish (where Fr. Carlo is now the pastor), his conversations remained peppered with stories about its people.

Later, Fr. Charlie and I lived in the same Columban community outside



Mother and son with Frs. Carlo and Tim





Celebrating Mass



Parishioners with Frs. Carlos and Tim



Fr. Tim with Fr. Charlie's bag and parishioners

Omaha, Nebraska. After his death there in 2017, another colleague who oversaw the disposal of his personal belongings gave me his travel bag, saying, "You will be able to put this to good use!" Since Fr. Charlie loved to travel and made new friends quickly wherever he went, I continue to remember him fondly when I take that same travel bag on my visits to various Columban missions. When I told the history of my travel bag to the people of Holy Family Parish, they recalled many stories about Fr. Charlie, and we sensed that he was united in love and laughter with us within the communion of the saints.

It had also been in Chicago that I first met Fr. Willie Lee almost twenty years ago when he had come as a seminarian from Fiji to continue his preparations for Columban missionary priesthood. Since he had grown

up in Holy Family Parish, he knew many Columban missionaries. As a seminarian, he had spoken frequently about them, as well as about their close friendship with his family. What a pleasant surprise, then, for me to meet his father, Joe Lee, during my stay in Holy Family Parish.

Now in his mid-eighties and widowed, Joe shared with me stories about the first group of Columbans who arrived in that district seventy years ago. As an adventurous teenager, he had accompanied them through a maze of dirt tracks and had ferried them by boat from one mission station to another. He recalled jovially their individual gifts and eccentricities, as well as their creativity and commitment to his own people.

Despite the limitations of age, Joe remains deeply committed to supporting Columban missionaries.

During our initial meeting, he told me, "Since I first heard some weeks ago about your visit to Fiji, I have prayed every day for you." Then, on the day before I left Holy Family Parish, he visited the rectory to say goodbye and to reassure me that he would continue to include me in his prayers.

Even though my stay in Holy Family Parish in Labasa had been just four days, I felt blessed to meet Fr. Carlo in his mission field; to share memories of Fr. Charlie Duster with his former parishioners; and to have the assurance of being prayed for by a faithful Columban friend of seventy years, Joe Lee. In some mysterious way, those three experiences made my first visit to Fiji feel like a homecoming! 🇨🇲

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Columban Fr. Tim Mulroy lives and works in Hong Kong.





# Help Future Generations with a Donation Today

Your gift helps people break the chains of addiction through Columban programs like the Rebirth Rehabilitation Center in Myanmar (formerly Burma).



***Thanks to the generosity of the Columban donors we were able to complete and open the first residential center in the country for women suffering from addiction. In addition, the program provides vocational education training to help young men obtain jobs. We hope to expand this program and offer the men and women who come here a path productive employment and ongoing recovery.***

By making a gift from your IRA, you can provide long-lasting support for the Missionary Society of St. Columban while enjoying financial benefits for yourself.

If you want to make help the Missionary Society of St. Columban spread the Light of Christ around the world, a gift from your IRA will make a tremendous impact on our mission. If you are 70½ or older you may also be interested in a way to lower the income and taxes from your IRA withdrawals.

An IRA charitable rollover is a way you can help continue our work and benefit this year.

- Avoid taxes on transfers of up to \$100,000 from your IRA to our organization
- May satisfy your required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year
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- Make a gift that is not subject to the deduction limits on charitable gifts
- Help further the work and mission of our organization

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For more information, please contact us at [donorrelations@columban.org](mailto:donorrelations@columban.org), call us toll-free at (877) 299-1920, or visit [www.columban.org](http://www.columban.org). The Missionary Society of St. Columban treasures your support and is committed to the stewardship of your gifts.





# Spring in the Jungle

## A Seeds of Hope Project

By Fr. Leo Schumacher

In 2020, Fr. M was looking forward to celebrating his 25<sup>th</sup> ordination anniversary. Ordained in 1995, he was one of the first priests from Myanmar (formerly Burma) to volunteer to work with the Columban missionaries and went to Peru. Always with a missionary mindset, on his return to his own diocese he took on difficult assignments. And so, in 2020 he found himself in a remote jungle parish not far from the Thai border, and making plans for his 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. That was not to be. First came the global coronavirus pandemic in that year followed by political disturbances in 2021.

His remote parish became a conflict zone, and the local people could no longer stay safely in their villages. The people had to flee their homes and went further into the jungle. Thanks to assistance from the church and to the leadership of Fr. M, they were able to put up temporary accommodation


and receive food. And even in these terrible conditions, the parents were determined that their children would receive an education.

Using bamboo, wood and plastic sheeting, they were able to put up some rough buildings to use as classrooms sufficient for preschoolers all the way up to teenagers. The name they settled on for this new education center was “Spring.” As Fr. M explained to me, Spring is a time of new life, when seeds begin to grow and people plant crops to feed their families. The villagers want their children to not lose hope and through study to grow, even if they are living as refugees in the jungle.

The dedication and courage shown by so many people in such difficult situations is the inspiration behind the project Seeds of Hope. Several Catholic groups who have been supporting the church in Myanmar are raising funds for over 400 community education centers that have been set

up in conflict zones throughout the country. With few resources they are educating their children, planting seeds of hope for the future.

Now Fr. M has moved to a new location, where once again he is encouraging the people to build a new community center, a place to educate not only children but adults as well. For Fr. M, Spring is not so much a time of year but a belief in the new life that Christ promises each one of us.

By the way, Fr. M was not able to celebrate his 25<sup>th</sup> ordination anniversary, but he did celebrate his 55<sup>th</sup> birthday at the end of 2022 with the children of Spring Education Center. Their smiling faces no doubt being the best present of all! 

Fr. Leo Schumacher provided this update.

*Editor’s Note: Due to security concerns, full names have not been used, and photos have been adjusted.*





# Easter

## The Faithful Celebrate

By Fr. Robert McCulloch

**A** holy memory from my childhood remains with me. I was five years old, and I remember going with my father through the mud and slush of early 1950's suburban, Melbourne, Australia, to St. Patrick's Church in Mentone. It was a long morning ceremony. Much later on, I realized that I was attending the Easter Vigil ceremonies that were then celebrated in the morning of Holy Saturday. Was I as a small child experiencing what the Russians felt when they came to Constantinople in 988AD searching for faith and found it in the celebration of the Divine liturgy? Who says children don't know?

Fast forward to Talisayan in 1972, a smallish but mountainous rural parish of 25,000 Catholics in the southern Philippines. After the 3 p.m. liturgy on Good Friday the statues of the

Passion were outside the Church on small carriages waiting to be drawn in a procession in sadness and tears of mourning through the town.

Each statue was surrounded by its devotees ready to push the carriage, especially the statue of the Virgin Mary draped in black and with her heart pierced by a sword. The carriage with the statue of the Dead Christ was left alone. But, as the procession moved off, several black-clothed men with bowed heads came and began to push this carriage. They were the thugs, the social trespassers, the havoc-makers of the town. The age-old traditional custom drew them to push the carriage and to publicly ask forgiveness from their Crucified Christ and the townspeople. No one in the procession said anything, but everyone knew that this was the time of soul-healing and forgiveness. I began hearing

confessions in the Church immediately after the procession.

After about 9 p.m. when the church seemed to be empty and was mostly dark, I am sure that it was these same violent social trespassers who came for the Sacrament of reconciliation. The town had already forgiven them as they pushed the Dead Christ through the town, and now they came to the church to confess and be forgiven by their Christ.

Fast forward again to Easter 1980 in Narowal, a big rural parish in northern Pakistan, up where Punjab meets with India and Kashmir. After three celebrations of the Easter Vigil ceremonies on Holy Saturday night and Masses all through Easter morning, it was then out on a motorcycle for the next eight days of the Easter Octave. I said three or four Masses each day, for a few Catholic



families in one place and for 100 families in another place. “Thank you, Father, for coming. How could we celebrate Easter without Holy Mass?”

Fast forward again to Easter in the Sindh at Badin in southeast Pakistan in 1985. Most Catholics were agricultural laborers whom the Muslim landlords would allow only one day for an Easter holiday. They were able to come to the Church on Holy Saturday evening and they came in their hundreds with catechumens who would be received into the Church that night and with many seekers and inquirers.

All through the evening and night of Holy Saturday the ceremonies and events from Holy Thursday until Easter were celebrated in one continuous rite, together with catechesis, film, rest periods (we provided everyone with a thin mattress and a quilt as the night weather was always cold at Easter time in Badin on the fringes of the Thar Desert), and a good meal, as was shared by Our Lord with His apostles on Holy Thursday night, and tea.

Everyone’s feet were washed during the commemoration of the events of Holy Thursday, women by the Sisters and catechists’ wives, men by the priests and the catechists. There was profound silence with tubs of muddy water continually replaced as most people had walked in bare feet. And later, the lighting of the Easter fire and the Easter Candle with drums beating and fireworks exploding and shouts of joy. And then the catechumens received into the Church with their commitment and promise to present someone else for instruction during the coming year and reception at the next Easter.

Now fast forward to Rome, Italy, since 2011. Although I have never much cared to go to St. Peter’s for the Holy Week and Easter Vigil ceremonies, coming on Easter Sunday to St. Peter’s square at noon with hundreds of thousands of cheering

Romans and fervent pilgrims to receive the Urbi et Orbi blessing from the Holy Father is not to be missed.

I much prefer to go to the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore and join with the ordinary Romans as they celebrate the Holy Days and Easter in “their basilica.” The organ seems to play more loudly, the trumpets seem to blast more joyously, and the choir seems to sing with more gusto and verve at Santa Maria Maggiore to celebrate Easter with the people of Rome.

As a consultor since 2016 to the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments at the Vatican, I think this is about the *sensus fidelium*, the mind of the faithful, how the people of God in many places and conditions know instinctively that these Holy Days and Easter should be celebrated and know how to celebrate them, even a little five-year-old boy, many years ago. **EW**

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Columban Fr. Robert McCulloch lives and works in Rome.





# The Last Wanaurny

One of a Kind



Fr. John Wanaurny

By Fr. Tim Mulroy

I “I’m the last of the Wanaurnys in the USA” .... a chuckle .... “and maybe the last in the entire world!” This was how Fr. John Wanaurny mused from time to time during the last twenty years of his life. On several occasions he had searched telephone directories and the internet in the hope of finding another person with the Wanaurny family name, but to no avail. With Fr. Wanaurny’s death in August 2023, it seems that his family name also died with him.

However, Fr. Wanaurny was unique not just because of his family name, but more importantly because of the kind of person he was. He has been the only person I have ever met who readily recognized his own experience of memory loss, accepted it gracefully, and embraced its implications for his own life.

I can still clearly recall a Monday morning phone call from Fr. Wanaurny many years ago. At that time, as a physically fit 80-year-old, he was ministering in a Columban parish in California. However, after we exchanged pleasantries, he said, “We have a problem” which he followed with his trademark chuckle. He then proceeded to tell me that, the previous day, as he lifted the Host for the Lamb of God refrain during Sunday Mass, his mind had gone blank. While he had remained calm and, after a few moments, was able to resume the celebration of the Mass, he realized that this was a clear sign that he was beginning to lose his memory. He concluded our conversation by saying, “I think you need to start looking for my replacement here in the parish.” ... a

chuckle ... “It’s not urgent, but it seems best that I move into the Columban community with you there in Omaha.”

After our conversation finished, I felt a mixture of disbelief and sadness. As a Columban missionary priest for 55 years, Fr. Wanaurny was well known for his talents and commitment to mission. Throughout those decades he had ministered in the Philippines, Brazil and Mexico, as well as in various places across the USA. He had learned Cebuano, Portuguese and Spanish and had been close to the people he served. However, he now recognized that it was time to leave those “glory days” behind and set out on a new stage of his missionary journey.

When the arrangements for his replacement in the parish were finalized a few months later, Fr.



Wanaurny joined the Columban community in Omaha. There he delighted in the rhythm of community life, daily prayer, long walks, and novels. From time to time, he drove to his hometown, Chicago, where he visited his brother-in-law and some friends.

However, eighteen months later, after he had returned from one of his weekend trips to Chicago, he asked to have a conversation with me. He proceeded to tell me that, while he had known the streets around his family home like the back of his hand, during his recent visit to that neighborhood he had become disoriented and lost his way on a few occasions. He concluded our conversation by saying, “That means it’s time for me to move into the Columbans retirement home.”

During the next two weeks, Fr. Wanaurny packed his few belongings, cleaned his room and said his goodbyes. He was planning to drive the 1,500-mile journey to the Columban retirement home in Bristol, Rhode Island, stopping along the way in Chicago for a final farewell. However, in light of what he had told me about his previous visit to that city, I felt apprehensive about this plan, and only agreed to it after receiving a reassurance that he would phone me immediately if he experienced any problem along the way.

True to form, Fr. Wanaurny not only arrived safely at the Columban retirement home, but he did so a day ahead of schedule! Moreover, upon arrival, he handed his car keys to the priest in charge, Fr. John Burger, saying “I won’t be needing these again” ... followed by a chuckle. That trip was the last time Fr. Wanaurny sat behind a steering wheel.

During the years that followed, I visited the Columban retirement community from time to time and enjoyed many interesting

conversations with Fr. Wanaurny, even though his memory continued to deteriorate.

He often recalled his boyhood days in Chicago, the thrill of becoming a champion ice skater, and — at the age of fourteen — his first missionary journey of 500 miles by train to the Columban minor seminary in Silver Creek, New York.

During one of our conversations, he recalled that, as a seminarian he had frequently recited the following prayer, which had been composed by St. Ignatius of Loyola:

*Take Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To*

*Thee, O lord, I return it. All is Thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and thy grace, for this is sufficient for me.*

Fr. Wanaurny then explained, “As a young seminarian I had recited that prayer without realizing what it really entailed” ... a chuckle .... “Now, more than sixty years later, I realize that on so many occasions I had offered my memory to the Lord.” ... a chuckle ... “Well, the good Lord is finally taking me at my word!” ... a chuckle.

Fr. John Wanaurny was not just the last of his family line — he was also one of a kind! **EM**

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Columban Fr. Tim Mulroy lives and works in Hong Kong.







# Hope and Light

## Parish Youth Celebrate

By Fr. Kurt Zion Pala

It has been a while since the parish youth ministry prepared for a big event. After arriving back in Myanmar (formerly Burma) from my home vacation, the youth ministry team decided to hold its own celebration of the World Youth Day last August. St. Luke Parish is a new parish. It was established in October 2021, a few months after the coup. Young people these days yearn for hope and light at a time when many of them do not know what to do, where to go. The youth ministry team got so excited in holding the event. They also decided to invite a number of young people from the newly established parishes of Myo Htit Kyi, Njangdung, Palana and Shadau.

With only a few weeks to prepare, the young people started fundraising. On one Saturday, they went house to house to collect garbage for a fee. They

also prepared and sold chicken soup, a popular dish during these rainy days. The night before the event, the venue started to fill up with young people decorating and preparing the venue for the big gathering.

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*Pope Francis reminded the young people about the three most important actions. He said, “to shine, to listen, and to be unafraid.”*

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It had been pouring rain day after day every morning. But by God’s grace, the sun came out on that day. The day began with the opening Mass led by our parish priest, Fr. Bernard. In his homily, he echoed the words of Pope Francis for the young people gathered in Lisbon. Pope Francis

reminded the young people about the three most important actions. He said, “to shine, to listen, and to be unafraid.”

These words resonate so much to young people in Myanmar. Their world, our world has been destroyed by a military regime which does not see any value in life or in young people. Illegal drugs are allowed to spread intoxicating a young population already lost and hopeless. There is very little invested in young peoples’ education, a common tactic of authoritarian regimes to keep the population ignorant and blindly following them without question.

Pope Francis said, “Dear young friends, today we too need something of this burst of light, so that it can fill us with hope as we face the many failures of each day and the darkness that assails us in life, and respond to





Scenes from World Youth Day in Myanmar (formerly Burma)

them with the light of the resurrection of Jesus. For he is the light that never sets, the light that shines even in the dead of night.” Events like this one are a burst of light for young people in Myanmar, a reminder that they are not alone. Then the Pope also reminded the young people to listen to Jesus. That is the secret to life. But lastly Pope Francis reminded the young people that they will encounter difficulties in life but always believe in the words of Jesus, “Do not be afraid.”

The Kachins love to dance. The *Manau* (dance) has been incorporated into the liturgy. The young people carrying their offerings dance their way to the altar. After the Mass, the opening program commenced. A mental health awareness session followed where young people learned to practice meditation and self-awareness exercises. After the very

simple lunch of rice, Indian pea soup and a spicy side dish, I echoed to the young people Pope Francis message and explained the meaning of the logo. The day ended with a very meaningful worship service. Young people processed carrying first the Bible, then the Cross, then the image of Mother Mary. Then the young

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*We hope that this celebration of the World Youth Day brought to young people a “burst of light.”*

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people prayed a decade of the rosary as one young person carried a rose and presented it to Mother Mary. After saying the Rosary, three young persons led the group to worshipping God through songs in Kachin and Burmese.

We hope that this celebration of the World Youth Day brought to young people a “burst of light.” Pope Francis left the young people in Lisbon these words: “Dear young people, I would like to look into the eyes of each of you and say: Do not be afraid. I will tell you something else, also very beautiful: it is no longer I, but Jesus himself who is now looking at you. He knows each of your hearts, each of your lives; he knows your joys, your sorrows, your successes and failures. He knows your heart. Today, he says to you, here in Lisbon, at this World Youth Day: ‘Have no fear, take heart, do not be afraid!’” CM

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Columban Fr. Kurt Zion Pala has lived and worked in St. Luke Parish since its establishment in 2021 as assistant parish priest. He works with the parish youth ministry team organizing activities for young people in the parish.



# Fr. Vincent's First Mass

## A Columban Missionary Debt of Gratitude

By Fr. Donal McIlraith



On Saturday, August 19, 2023, Deacon Vincent Tawake CM was ordained priest by the Archbishop of Suva, Dr. Peter Loi Chong. Some 30 priests attended the ordination. I had accompanied Fr. Vincent on and off during his eight years of formation at the Pacific Regional seminary in Suva, Fiji. The next day his first Mass was held in his home village of Navatuyaba in the Rewa Delta about twenty miles outside Suva. I was asked to preach at the first Mass and was glad to do so for Vincent's sake but also because I felt a double debt of gratitude that needed to be paid. I felt that as a Columban I could in a tiny way repay some of the Columban debt of gratitude to the Vincentians.

The Gospel was the challenging one of the story of the Canaanite woman who asks Jesus to heal her possessed daughter in Matthew 15. I announced that we had two special guests with us this Sunday, St. Vincent and the Canaanite woman. St. Vincent's

priorities, as I understood them, were threefold, the poor, the education of the clergy and the missions. And, strange as it may seem, Jesus is dealing with all three of St. Vincent's priorities in this Gospel.

Firstly, we are in a missionary situation. Jesus is probably in gentile territory. He is approached by a gentile. Matthew emphasized a lot that Jesus' focus was on His own people, the Jews. The disciples just want Jesus to send the woman away as a nuisance. They get a good education today. This woman can be called poor, maybe not materially, we just don't know, but anyone whose daughter is possessed qualifies for poverty of some sort.

Three times she addresses Jesus as Lord. She even uses a messianic title for Him, Son of David. The first time, Jesus does not even answer her. The second time He explains He has come for the Jews and cannot give the bread of the children (the Eucharist?) to puppies. She is not to be outdone. Even the

puppies eat the crumbs that fall from the table. Jesus' strategy now becomes clear. He has been testing her faith and she has come through with flying colors. "Woman, great is your faith."

This gentile with magnificent faith no doubt prepares the way for Jesus' great commission at the end of Matthew, "Going therefore make disciples of all nations." I then reminded Fr. Vincent of the final question the Archbishop put to him before ordaining him. This is one to which we must all pay attention. "Are you resolved to unite yourself each day more closely to Jesus?"

He now must live two sharings in Christ's priesthood, his baptismal one and the new sharing he just received from the Holy Spirit, this new identification with Jesus whereby Jesus, the bridegroom, will use him to bring the presence and love of Jesus to his beloved wife and bride, the Church.

Fr. Vincent will begin his ministry in the Vincentian parish of Natovi here





Columban Fr. Donal with newly ordained Fr. Vincent Tawake



Fr. Donal



Enjoying fellowship



Columban Fr. Donal with Fr. Vincent and his dad Labert

in Fiji where 90-year-old Fr. Alan Finn, CM, of Australia is part of the team.

In the course of my homily, I briefly mentioned the missionary debt that we Columbans owe the Vincentians. In 1912, Canadian Fr. Fraser brought Fr. Edward Galvin, the Missionary Society of St. Columban co-founder, to China from Holy Rosary Parish in Brooklyn where he was on loan from Cork Diocese. Fr. Fraser took Fr. Galvin to the Vincentian vicariate of Western Chekiang (Zhejiang) in China. Here he was introduced to China. The Vincentian bishop, Paul Albert Faveau, welcomed Fr. Galvin into his diocese and immediately got him studying

Chinese. Some time later, when Bishop Faveau saw that Fr. Galvin has a talent for the language, he sent him down to Shanghai to the Vincentian procure in order to study under a famous Vincentian Chinese scholar, Fr. Luke. Here Fr. Galvin improved his grasp of Chinese and also got very valuable experience on how a procure worked. This proved invaluable to him later as Bishop of Hanyang and to the Columbans.

Back to the village of Navatuyaba. The Tui Tonga, the Chief of the Region, had invited everyone of every faith to attend the Mass of the first priest from their district. A huge

crowd was present and the Mass and subsequent celebrations was truly impressive. I also had a personal debt to pay that day. From 2016 to 2010, I lived in a house in this village for half of every week to improve my Fijian. The first half of the week I taught at the seminary in Suva. The second half, I ministered in Navatuyaba. And Fr. Vincent's father, then a headmaster and now the village catechist, Labert Tawake, was my Fijian teacher —with the rest of the village. Thank you in Fijian is *Vinaka Vaka Levu*. **CM**

Columban Fr. Donal McIlraith lives and works in Fiji.



# My Invitation to Ecological Conversion

## Take Action!

By Hyein Anna Noh

*“God always forgives. We humans sometimes forgive. The earth never forgives. There can be no future if we destroy the very environment that sustains us.”*

~ Pope Francis, *Our Mother Earth*

In Quezon City, a poor neighborhood on the north side of Manila, Philippines, I found a small room where I could live among the locals. At the time, I was focused on living among the “poorest and most marginalized” because I thought that was the way of a missionary. In the late afternoons just before sunset, people began to bring bags of garbage they had collected to the entrance of the neighborhood. By evening, the garbage bags would be piled high, like a mountain. All around, people would rummage through the trash, collecting anything they could sell, such as scrap metal, plastic, and vinyl. These people were called “pickers.” The trash they collected was sent to a huge garbage dump in Payatas,

about a 30-minute ride by *jeepney* (local public transportation) from our neighborhood.

One day, I went inside that village to meet another missionary who lived right across from the dump. Adults and children were picking things out the garbage heaps, then washing and drying the vinyl and plastic. These local people are pickers, who forage for recyclables, and this is their main source of livelihood. When my colleague told me they view this trash as a gift from God to sustain their life, I felt a deep connection to them and hoped to be able to better their lives.

When I was assigned to Korea in 2019, I wondered what I could do as an individual and a lay missionary in the Korean church. In 2020, the world was devastated by Covid-19, and the climate crisis showed absolutely no sign of improving. So, I knew I couldn't just shrug and return to my former way of living, as if nothing were happening. I had to do something. They say, “Where there's a will, there's a way.”

I happened to hear a lecture on the environment and found out about Global Catholic Climate Movement's weekly climate protests on Fridays in Gwangwhamun district of Seoul. I wasn't sure what to write on my protest signs at first, and, although picketing isn't a crime, I felt a bit embarrassed to stand so publicly in front of people with a sign. I was afraid someone would recognize me, but with a mask covering half of my face, I had enough courage to safely finish my first protest. When I go picketing, I think of the pickers who worked for their living at the entrance to my old neighborhood or In Payatas. It seems to me that they are protecting the earth at the forefront of the climate crisis.

It is ironic that the poor, who benefit the least from our planet's resources, struggle for the good of the earth. They are the most vulnerable to the climate crisis. This isn't only true in one geographical area. All around the world, climate change is intensifying droughts, floods, typhoons, heat waves,



“The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures.” (Laudato Sí 240)



and severe cold, all of which first harms our world’s poorest people and destroys ecosystems.

Sooner or later, this will negatively impact food production, leading to wars over food security. Climate wars will not only be a crisis for all of humankind, but for all of creation.

Since “everything is connected” (Laudato Sí, 91), we can understand that nothing in this world is unrelated to us. My temporary comfort today could cause another person on the other side of the world to become a climate refugee or send delicate biodiversity into crisis. I don’t have deep or extensive knowledge like professional climate scientists, but my heart aches as I hear the cries of the earth, cries of the poor” (Laudato Si, 49) day and night.

I’m still at a loss when I hear of the seeming impossibility of achieving climate-neutrality by 2050 and IPCC’s (UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Crisis) report that we’ll reach an average global temperature rise of


1.5 degrees Celsius even faster than predicted.

However small, the act of carrying my picket sign to climate protests at Gwanghwamun changed my life. Now, I grow plants, ride a bike, use less plastic, and sort my waste more carefully. For several months, I cut high-carbon meats out of my diet, until recently I began a vegetarian diet.

As the action team leader for GCCM KOREA I’m inviting more people to get involved in the climate movement, not only through personal practice, but also by standing in solidarity and steadfast support of those raising a united voice to overcome this crisis. If you are wondering what you can do for our planet right now, let me encourage you to start taking action where you are.

As I mentioned at the start, I thought missionary life meant living in poverty among the poor, witnessing God in daily life. However, it is important for missionaries to

pay attention to the demands and needs of our age and generation. I confess to having overlooked this for a long time and reflect on how, even if unconsciously, my consumption is often based on convenience and efficiency. In my ignorance, God reminded me that not only humans, but also everything that exists on earth, our common home, exists in God’s created order. That reminder brought me to my ecological conversion.

So, whenever I am exhausted and the road ahead seems hard, I would like to proceed silently in gratitude to God who waited for me over the last years. “The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures.” (Laudato Sí 240) 

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Columban lay missionary Hyein Anna Noh lives and works in South Korea.





# Hope to Life Anew

By Arlene Villahermosa

A shimmer of light I saw  
Beckoning me to go.... Ah! HOPE  
To freedom I go  
Out of this dark, cold, filthy tunnel  
Where fear, anguish and chaos exist.  
You rescued me, O Lord  
No more of tunnels of hell  
Bring me to thy fold.  
Hope to life anew  
Hope to start something of value  
Hope to freedom with you  
Cringing from past old self no more  
Standing straight and tall  
Walking, not without faltering, but  
Walking incessantly towards the shimmering of light,  
    your love, my hope  
Hold me still that I may continue  
To walk freely the life you unfold before me.





# Help Spread the Light of Christ with a Gift that Costs Nothing During Your Lifetime

You can show your personal compassion and set an example for others by remembering the Missionary Society of St. Columban in your will, trust or other planned gift. No gift has a more lasting impact.



***Recently, a huge influx of thousands of Venezuelan immigrants have entered Chile. Columban parishes have always welcomed the immigrants and tried to provide some material help (school supplies, warm clothing, blankets, and more) for them. We hope to continue providing relief for those who come to this "land of dreams." However, we know that the most important gift we have to share with them is our faith in the Risen Lord.***

A planned gift helps the Missionary Society of St. Columban continue God's mission in the poorest areas of the world. And, financially and prayerfully supporting the Missionary Society of St. Columban is an excellent way to participate in the missionary activity of the Church.

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# Stations of the Cross

## Meaningful Moments

By Fr. Donal O’Keeffe

**O**n Good Friday last year, the Columban formation community in Seoul, Korea, participated in the Good Friday liturgy organised by the Korean branch of the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM). Formally inaugurated in January 2020, GCCM Korea is now a national movement coordinated by a team of lay persons, religious and priests.

The liturgy was organized by the coordinating team of GCCM where one of the key persons is Columban lay missionary, Noh Hyein Anna. In fact, it was Anna’s invitation which spurred the Columbans to participate.

On Good Friday, before noon about 70 people gathered in Seoul city center dividing into teams of seven – the maximum allowed to move as a group in line with the Covid Regulations.

The fourteen Stations of the Cross were set up ahead of time at various places in the financial heart of the city with the final Station on the steps of Myongdong Cathedral. The Way of the Cross highlighted the passion, suffering and death of God’s creatures in our world today.

A mix of young and old, lay, religious and priests came prepared with placards and posters highlighting the suffering world and displayed these while walking the Way of the Cross. For instance, at Station 9: Jesus falls again – we reflected on the plight of organic farmers driven to their knees by competition from industrial sized GMO farming.

At Station 6: Veronica wiping the face of Jesus – we focused on Korean




solidarity with the present challenges of the people of Myanmar, formerly Burma, a nation whose natural resources have been sacrificed to the greed of the military generals. At Station 12: Jesus dies on the Cross – we mourned the loss of diversity and life due to our own greedy culture.

Starting at 11:30 a.m., the stations finished at about 1:30 pm. Walking through the city’s business center at this time we were constantly meeting office workers coming and going to lunch. The placards and posters caught the eyes of the passers by and although engrossed in conversations it was clear that they were glancing at the content and reading the messages. One or two people joined for the short prayer at the difference stations.

Back in the formation house we shared about the event. It certainly was a “Stations of the Cross” with a difference! Some felt that the noise of traffic, people chatting as they went past did not facilitate deep reflection. For others this noisy, chaotic city

center atmosphere was probably closer in reality to the original way of cross than any liturgy in the silence and prayerful atmosphere of a church.

Walking in a public place carrying a placard was a new experience for most of our community and so was a challenge in itself. The action of carrying a poster highlighting the suffering of the earth caused us to question more deeply our own consumer lifestyle which keeps an exploitative system in place. This is a serious challenge and invitation to us as disciples today. All in all, it was one of the most meaningful moments of Holy Week for us in Seoul. 

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Fr. Donal O’Keeffe is from Bantry, Co Cork. Since 1976 he has been on mission in Korea, working with the urban poor and the workers’ apostolate. More recently he has worked as director of formation for the Korean region. In May 2021, Fr. Donal was honored as “Immigrant of the Year” by the Korean State in recognition of his 40 years of dedication to supporting the marginalized in Korean society.



# Youth for Change

## A Time for Healing

By Naanise Mo'unga



“Youth for Change” was the theme that the Youth in Raiwaqa Parish (Fiji) chose for their revival program after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Being with the youth felt like I was filling a gap in my life that I didn't know was there. The connection I felt with them was magnetic. When I was with them, I felt that they were my brothers and sisters reaching out to me, and I never had anything like this before.

Every day I felt caring towards them, and I thought more and more about how I could help these youth. I came to care for them. They were wonderful human beings yearning for attention. We would talk and laugh for hours and hours, and we became friends and cared for each other.

They had their own issues, but they were in a good space for decision-making in their lives. We were successful in being able to assist them

to prepare documents they needed to find a job to help with their family needs. It's a miracle that the care that they provide for each other daily was helping them to see things differently and start a recovery process in their lives. That's the support system that the youth have created.

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*Every day I felt caring towards them, and I thought more and more about how I could help these youth.*

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How is it possible for young people to be so charming and so kind? I felt immediately close to them and wanted to defend them no matter what their families, friends and people said. Sometimes, in the past, I have felt like giving up because of the attitude and behaviors of others, but I felt so cared

for and comfortable with these youth.

We could talk about anything or everything. I couldn't help but want to journey with them. But everyone makes changes, and so they needed time. How could I trust them? Should I believe in them like I believe in myself? Whether it is their way or your way, it doesn't matter.

I was amazed to observe them slowly responding to everyday life situations and making changes, step-by-step. Many needed time to heal and recover from whatever situation they were going through. People watch them doing things like too much grog, smoking, drugs, and other things but when they gather that is the only time for them to hear each other's stories. That's their safe space and it becomes a golden time for healing and change. 

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Columban lay missionary Naanise Mo'unga lives and works with youth in Fiji.





# Survival

## of Those Displaced

### A Deeper Dive

By Ana Flores

**I**t was in June 2021 that I got back to Peru, my own country, and once again had the opportunity to be with people who were displaced and in distress, especially since it was still the peak of the COVID 19 pandemic.

I was able to visit the Columban Fathers' place, where I met a lot of women participating in different activities. There were at least 30 women and men — all young people — engaged in organic vegetable gardening. I was also able to join an opening activity with children who were deprived of attending their regular classes because of the COVID-19 health protocols or restrictions. Also participating in the activity were representatives from different organizations like UNICEF, the Department of Education of the Rimac-Lima region of Peru, and the Warmi Huasi Columbans Project with Fr. Edward O'Connell, the project director.

There, I was offered a teaching job, knowing that I am a teacher by profession. Having not taught for a long period of time and having a

commitment in another Columban mission area that is far from where they wanted me to teach, I begged off. After almost a month, the Warmi Huasi project coordinator called me with the same request. And this time, I accepted the request, however, only for four days so that I could also continue my other commitment.

Interacting with children was a heart-warming experience for four days a week for four months. We kept the rules of keeping distance of at least a meter from each other and of having to wear a mask all the time, but this really was extra challenging as we needed to come close to each other to be able to teach them writing and reading. As our connection with each other developed, they started sharing their snacks with me. I also had time to have lunch with them.


I started teaching children ages 4 through 6 years old. This brought me back to the time I was teaching. With my experience, it was a bit easier, but I needed to be more patient in handling these children of various ages and preparing different kinds

of activities suited for their ages for better learning.

My teaching experience became more challenging when I was told to take care of third graders who had yet to learn reading and writing. This situation pushed me to be less observant with the coronavirus protocols, as I needed to come closer to these children, who were mostly Peruvian and Venezuelan.

My heart was elated when one of the Venezuelan children was articulating the word, "chamo." I asked them why they called each other "chamo," and they said it was cool and that it meant a friend, dude, a brother or sister. What I learned from them is that in their situation, their nationality didn't matter; what mattered to them was that they were friends and enjoyed each other's' company. Kindness, mutual understanding, and being part of one big human family are some of the values I learned from them.

As we got closer, I knew that some of my Venezuelan pupils were displaced, that they had traveled to Colombia and then to Peru. Others had even gone to Ecuador. In this displacement situation, they mentioned experiencing hunger and hopelessness, missing their family members, meeting up with relatives or new people whom they considered their own family, and missing the very place where they called home.

Reflecting back, their experience of displacement was like that of Mother Mary and Joseph, who traveled to Bethlehem. They too had difficulties, like the Venezuelan families. And then they found a simple stable where Jesus was born; same with the Venezuelan families who have gotten to different places to seek refuge—as simple as they may be— and food for their beloved family members. 

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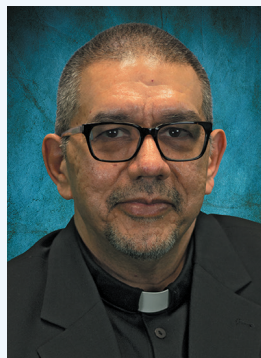
Columban lay missionary Ana Flores lives and works in Peru.



# The Missionary Life

Once, Columban Fr. Bill Morton was reminiscing with me about his seminary days in the early 1980s. At that time, the most popular theologian in the Western world was Karl Rahner. Fr. Bill said, “it was great stuff and I was eager to share Rahner’s theology in my future mission. I felt the people needed to hear it.” After ordination, he was sent to Taiwan and came to a great realization. He said, “the Taiwanese people never heard of Karl Rahner, didn’t know what he taught, and didn’t care!” It was cold water splashed on his face. This was not to say that studying Rahner didn’t have benefits. Fr. Bill would attest that Rahner’s teaching provided him personal growth. However, his missionary experience expanded that growth to a more global view.

As a U.S. citizen, I grew up believing that the matters of the U.S. were the matters of the world. What was important to us was important to the world. Much like Fr. Bill, living some 25 years outside of the United States taught me a sobering lesson in that the U.S. is not the center of the world. Our issues are not the world’s issues, especially in the non-Western world. Case in point was September 11, 2001. On that particular day, I was working in a parish in southern Chile. We had meetings all morning, therefore, we were unaware of what happened in New York. When we broke for lunch around noon time, a phone call from Santiago alerted us to turn on the news. We were horrified and dumbfounded by the images we saw. The two planes crashing into the Twin Towers seemed to be from a movie. I myself



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## FROM THE DIRECTOR

By Fr. Chris Saenz

was questioning, “is this real?” In time we were able to connect the dots. On that day, Chile came to a full stop. Business were closed and public services were shut down. This continued on to the next day. However, by the third day, Chile returned to normal. The Chilean news focused on the issues of the country and their area of the world. In the following days and months, if there was any comments or updates about September 11, it was usually reduced to a one- or two-minute sound bite during the news. Their focus was not September 11, 2001.

This was a stark contrast to experience of the United States. My relatives told me that for months, the news’ main focus was the tragedy of September 11, 2001. Obviously, it was the pain of the nation, but I did not have that experience. I recall the words of my former rector of the seminary, Columban Fr. Vic Gaboury, “this is the price of being a missionary. You’ll become a fish out of water with your own people.” Fr. Vic missioned in the Philippines during the 1960s. For the United States, it was a turbulent area for civil rights, marches, protests, and demonstrations. However, Fr. Vic was in the Philippines dealing with a prelude of a dictatorship,

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***As a U.S. citizen, I grew up believing that the matters of the U.S. were the matters of the world. What was important to us was important to the world.***

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poverty, devastating hurricanes, and earthquakes. When he returned home, he felt like a fish out of water as his family talked about the civil rights era.

What value does a “fish out of water” experience bring to the missionary and to the Church? It wakes us up to another’s reality and history. We cannot presume that our little corner of the ocean is the entire ocean. Much like the prophets of the Old Testament, the missionary stands at the margins of his/her society and offers an expanded view to what is occurring in a specific reality. For instance, I cannot separate the September 11 of 2001 from September 11 of 1973. It is the day when the dictator, General Augusto Pinochet, bombed the presidential palace and overthrew a democratically elected government leading to thousands of people murdered, tortured, and disappeared. As I commemorate the tragedy of the Twin Towers, I feel the sorrow and pain of the people of my mission country, Chile. The fish out of water reminds us that the ocean we belong to has many realities and depths of which we are unaware. Thus, we are the universal Church that strives for solidarity and empathy beyond our own experience.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Chris Saenz".



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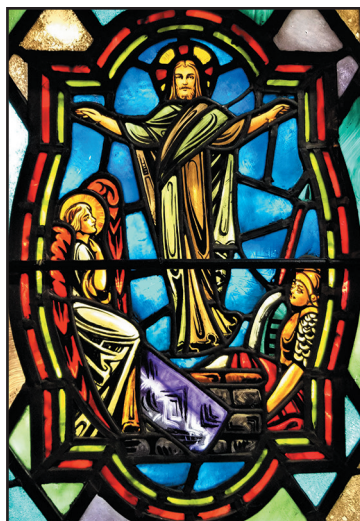
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– St. Luke 24:46-47

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