



Columban Mission

The Magazine of the Missionary Society of St. Columban

October 2024

Mind/Body/Spirit

C O N T E N T S

Issue Theme – Mind/Body/Spirit



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Columban Mission

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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.



We Are Challenged

We are challenged to forgive those who hurt us and to forgive them seventy times seven.

I used to take this challenge in my stride. Then some years ago I was seriously betrayed by someone close to me. This time it wasn't easy to forgive because I was hurt in a way that could never be undone.

After some months of feeling bitter I slowly came to realize that the bitterness was hurting me more than anyone else. It certainly wasn't hurting the person I wanted to hurt. He was blithely ignorant of my rage. Then I read in the *Book of Sirach* that only "the sinner holds on to anger and wrath, and the Lord heals us only when we stop nourishing anger towards another."

Later I read a parable about a Native American grandfather who told his grandson how he felt about a tragedy that had befallen him. He said, "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart.

One is the vengeful, angry, violent one. The other wolf is the loving, compassionate one." The grandson asked him, "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart, Grandad?" The grandfather answered, "The one I feed."

It is true there is often a fight going on inside our hearts between our vengeful, angry righteous side and our loving, forgiving side. And if we keep running over the hurt in our minds and keep planning how we can get even then we will feed the vengeful side of ourselves and we will live bitter, unhappy, self-preoccupied lives.

It is this preoccupation with ourselves and what has happened to us which keeps us from seeing life from other peoples' point of view, which prevents us from forgiving and which isolates us in our misery.

But I think the words about not feeding our anger apply not only personally but socially. Our society and especially our politics are becoming increasingly angry. There is real venom in our national debates about all the major issues. Too many of us are feeding the vengeful, righteous, angry, violent wolf. So that constructive debate, openness and respect for the other's point of view is near impossible. This kind of anger will only polarize us more, make everyone miserable and prevent the

Too many of us are feeding the vengeful, righteous, angry wolf.

constructive dialogue we need to solve our problems.

We must try not to contain our anger no matter how justified it seems. We must not feed the vengeful side of ourselves but encourage the compassionate, reasonable, respectful and open side. This is the way to happiness. There is only bitterness and a narrow world in front of the person who cannot forgive and cannot respect others.

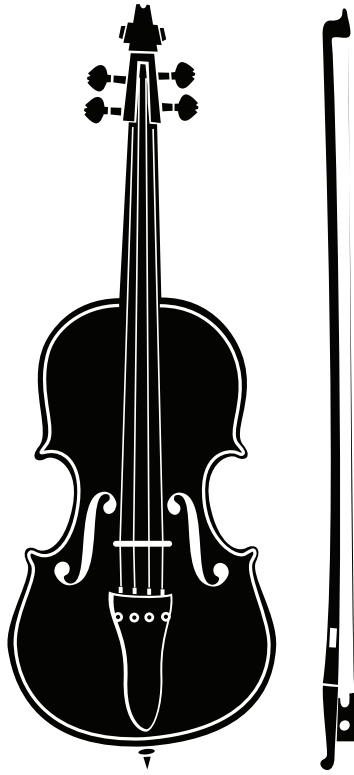
The Columban Missionary who provided this reflection requested anonymity.



Many Strings to His Bow

The Journey Continues

By Fr. Frank Hoare



Our newest Columban missionary priest has already lived many different lives. He speaks five languages and has lived in five different cultures and will soon add to that number. But his roots are in Namau Settlement about six miles from Ba town on the western side of Viti Levu, Fiji.

When he was in class three, the Indo-Fijian farmer, for whom his father was cutting cane, asked for Iowane to live with them. Iowane didn't know why his parents agreed but didn't ask them. He found it hard to adjust, but the farmer and his wife were very loving to him. He enjoyed playing soccer and learning to read and write Hindi. He used to participate in a Fijian dance *meke* and in Hindi drama for the school concerts.

Iowane returned to his Fijian family after finishing class eight because that was the deal, although no one had told him beforehand. The extended Indo-Fijian family brought him back and, using Fijian ritual,

An IQ test and seminary English test revealed his intelligence. So, after some preparation, he was accepted as a Columban seminarian.

apologized for any hurt they caused him and thanked his Fijian family for him. They in turn thanked the Indo-Fijian family for caring for him. Then they all had a party and Iowane

felt good about the way things were concluded.

Three years later his Indian father died suddenly. His widow asked for Iowane to live with them again and take her two young children daily to the bus stop. Iowane was upset to be separated again from his twin brother, but his Fijian mother persuaded him to help out. He lived happily again with the Indian family for the next four years until they emigrated. Unfortunately, in Form 6, he lost focus and failed the Fiji School Leaving Certificate Exam. He lost hope, feeling that there was nothing for him now but sugarcane farming.

A sugarcane farmer, Hari, promised dishonestly to give him some land if he and his two brothers cut his cane for a few years. In 2009 another farmer,

Prakash, who was emigrating, made a written contract with Iowane to give him his farm after five years of cane-cutting. The transfer went through, and it was the happiest moment of Iowane's working life when he gave the farm to his family.

In 2010, while potato farming in the highlands, an Assembly of God pastor taught him to match his lifestyle with the Word of God and wanted him to become a minister. He refused, but began to think of becoming a priest. He began to pray for this intention, and he told a Columban lay missionary about his desire. An IQ test and seminary English test revealed his intelligence. So, after some preparation, he was accepted as a Columban seminarian.

He studied for three years at Pacific Regional Seminary in Suva and was then sent to study theology in Manila. He felt challenged there at first but afterwards he was grateful to have studied theology at Loyola University in Manila. Columban formation there broadened his understanding of mission and stretched him to discover his potential. Pastoral work with the third generation of people living in a cemetery shocked him to the core.

Three years later, Iowane was sent for overseas training to Peru. After studying Spanish in Bolivia, Iowane went to a parish in Lima. He struggled to adapt to the cold in the early months, but the Columban hospitality encouraged him greatly.

He related well with the people and found that they accepted him with his limited Spanish. He enjoyed playing soccer with the neighborhood youth. The COVID 19 lockdown made life



Fr. Iowane

As a deacon, he preached regularly at Mass, celebrated weddings and funerals, brought communion to the sick and participated in community prayer meetings and discussions.

difficult. Religious gatherings were replaced by ZOOM prayer sessions. Iowane had responsibility for shopping for the presbytery household, and he continued to exercise as much as possible. He continued to learn from the people of the parish and from his pastoral advisor. His quiet self-confidence drew respect and trust.

Iowane returned then to Manila, finished his theology course and was

ordained deacon before returning to Fiji. Rev. Iowane then worked as a deacon in Labasa parish on Vanua Levu since November 2023.

As a deacon, he preached regularly at Mass, celebrated weddings and funerals, brought communion to the sick and participated in community prayer meetings and discussions. He emphasizes ministry as self-sacrificing service. He asked a Sister and a teacher to critique his homilies with him. He showed patience in the face of anger from some people in a community far from the parish center.

Iowane's ordination on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, was a memorable occasion. About 500 people attended. Fifteen volunteers spent the whole rainy night preparing two big pigs, dozens of chickens and mountains of root crops for the earth oven in which they were cooked at the Columban Formation House. The generosity, self-sacrifice and community of Pacific culture were on display. "We are honored to be part of this great function," they said.

The ordination was conducted in the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Fijian and with elements of Fijian culture integrated. The reception afterwards was held at the Columban Center House in Suva. Fr. Iowane was accorded a traditional welcome with a *yagona* ceremony. The guests enjoyed the *yagona*, food and social mixing.

Fr. Iowane will take up his mission appointment at the end of this year. Where? In Pakistan. The journey continues. Another language, another culture, another mission. **EM**

Columban Fr. Frank Hoare lives and works in Fiji.



“Go Ye Afar”

A Journey of Mercy

By Sr. Ann Gray

In response to the words of an old song, “Go Ye Afar,” on November 15, 1926, a group of five Columban Sisters arrived in Hanyang, China, and were soon busy with language study, setting up a house and responding to sick people who came to the house for treatment. Hopes and dreams of developing ministries to the poor were soon shattered, however, by the tense political situation between the warlords, nationalists and communists in Hanyang, as well as campaigns against foreigners.

Only a year later, the situation in Central China deteriorated very quickly. When the Japanese massacred several Europeans, including some missionaries, foreigners were leaving on all available boats. As the situation worsened by the hour, the Columban Sisters were also forced to depart for Shanghai, less than five months after their arrival in Hanyang.

In a letter written on the riverboat carrying them to Shanghai, Columban Sr. Mary Patrick described how she felt. “How sad it was to ride down the main street of Hanyang in our rickshaws, to see the busy teeming population all intent on their business: the old banker with his nanny-goat beard and silver scales to weigh the

As the situation worsened by the hour, the Columban Sisters were also forced to depart for Shanghai, less than five months after their arrival in Hanyang.

silver ounces, the quack doctor with his Materia Medica, the tea houses with those quaint figures sitting at little polished lacquer tables sipping their bowls of tea or arguing over

their games of Chinese chess. So many quaint houses and quaint scenes, down to the coffin house with gaily covered sarcophagi and the busy carver decorating these coveted caskets. The fish lay in baskets and boxes by the side of the road, men sat in chairs being shaved, women washing their babies; such a medley of people, in and out, jostling one another on the road. It was just the same as the day we came, and now we were going away.”

Fortunately, by Christmas the Sisters were able to return to Hanyang. They were still without a convent or dispensary. But, as soon as they heard the Sisters were back, the people began to arrive daily in huge numbers and so began the Sisters’ medical ministry — in a makeshift dispensary, serving the sick with whatever medicines could be found.

A few years later, the river Yangtse burst through a vital dyke protecting

Altogether the Columban priests and Sisters sheltered and fed about eight hundred people from early August 1931 until the floods began to abate in mid-October 1931.

the city of Hankow and caused one of the worst natural disasters in history: the Central China Flood of 1931. Thousands of people were drowned and many more were left homeless. The Hanyang area, where the Columban Sisters lived and worked, was one of the places worst affected with the water rising to fifteen feet high. Refugees from the floods kept coming so that very soon the Sisters' newly built convent, in which they had not yet lived, was accommodating more than three hundred refugee women, ranging in age from grandmothers to infants in arms.

The convent was a handsome three-story house fronted by wide verandas, never intended for the purpose to which it was now put, so it took some ingenuity to pack in three hundred people and feed them. At a later stage the building housed over four hundred women and children. Altogether the Columban priests and Sisters sheltered and fed about eight hundred people from early August 1931 until the floods began to abate in mid-October 1931.

In the years that followed, marked as they were by war, floods and epidemics, life in China was never easy for the Columban Sisters and culminated in their being among the foreigners who were expelled from the country in 1951. But our service to and with the Chinese people did not come to an end with this expulsion. Just before their expulsion, while visiting the Sisters in China and the Philippines, Sr. M. Vianney, the Congregational Leader at the time, had



The Central China Flood of 1931 occurred when the river Yangtse burst through a vital dyke protecting the city of Hankow.



Sisters ministering to those affected by the floods.

received an invitation for Columban Sisters to run a hospital for the treatment of patients with tuberculosis in Hong Kong.

In those early days, Sisters from various parts of the world came and gave great service in the Ruttonjee Sanatorium, gradually leading to the pioneering work of Columban Sisters M. Aquinas Monaghan and M. Gabriel O'Mahony. They both became famous for their treatment of tuberculosis which, with the huge influx of refugees from China, was rampant in Hong Kong at the time.

Over the years, our services in Hong Kong expanded to include teaching in two secondary schools as well as pastoral work in parishes and

hospitals. Then, as 1997 approached and Hong Kong prepared to be once again part of China, the Sisters concentrated on preparing lay leaders in our various ministries which had continued to develop to include hospice care, prison visiting, as well as services to people living with HIV/AIDS and to sex workers.

In the 1980s the Columban Sisters once again had the opportunity to serve in China, despite the fact that Chinese law prohibits any missionary involvement in the country. We began with teaching English in universities and medical establishments in various provinces. Gradually, we were able to expand our work to include services for orphans and children with cerebral



Sisters offering shelter during the floods.



Sr. Joan working with a special needs child in China.



Sr. Josephine tending to the injured from an earthquake.



Sr. Nora Mary teaching English to medical students.

palsy who had no hope of going to school.

We have also had the opportunity to help those affected by a devastating earthquake in Sichuan province — tending to those injured and participating in the training of local medical professionals. In this, we experienced a good spirit between international and local volunteers working well together under the umbrella of an international non-government office. With the skills of a qualified occupational therapist, the Columban Sister living there at that time was able to accompany earthquake victims, while witnessing the harshness of peoples' lives.

Today, the Columban Sisters' presence continues in China so that in more recent years, we have been able to offer spiritual and psychological support to local Sisters, priests and seminarians, currently

We experienced a good spirit between international and local volunteers working well together under the umbrella of an international non-government office.

introducing them to Pope Francis' famous encyclicals on the care of our Mother Earth — *Laudato Si'* and *Laudato Deum*. This has awakened a deeper awareness in the local people of the urgent needs of our planet today and has led to parishes in rural areas planting trees in desert places and becoming involved in organic gardening.

Recently, two Sisters were also able to make a pilgrimage to Hanyang, our first mission. Through the years, the

clinic which our first Sisters had set up in the 1930s has been put to various uses — at one point as hostel for local nurses and now part of the laboratory of a large hospital. Both the church, which Bishop Galvin, co-founder of the Missionary Society of St. Columban, had built and our old clinic building now bear plaques with a QR code detailing online the history of the buildings including the Chinese name of our Congregation and our mission.

For us, it is an honor to be included in the heritage of the city, cementing our strong bond with the Chinese people which endures to the present day. **CM**

Sr. Ann Gray is from Scotland. She was a lay missionary in Sierra Leone before she entered the Columban Sisters. She has served on mission in Hong Kong and China. She is now based in Magheramore, Ireland, and is the Assistant Editor of *The Far East* magazine.



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.

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- Help further the work and mission of our organization

If you are 70½ or older, you can use your IRA to fulfill your charitable goals. You can use the "Make a Gift from My IRA" tool to contact your IRA custodian and make a qualified charitable distribution. We will acknowledge your generous gifts as a qualified charitable distribution, which may satisfy your RMD, if applicable.

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

The Simple Joys of a Priest

Unwavering Optimism

By Fr. Elbert Balbastro

Like any other vocation or calling, priestly life is also filled with challenges, difficulties and struggles. Yet, amidst the toils and rough roads on my missionary journey, I always maintain an unwavering optimism. Beyond those lumps and bumps of life lies a profound joy that could only be found in serving God. Each encounter of this joy would mean a fulfilling way of life. This joy can radiate a smile on my face, igniting the fuel and inspiration required to minister in the vineyard of the Lord.

After four months of Urdu language refresher course in the mountains of Pakistan, we were tasked to explore and immerse ourselves in the parishes of Badin, Khipro, and a part of Karachi area to help us in discerning which parish we want to be assigned to. We were instructed to spend a week in each of these three parishes.

My journey started in Badin parish, and it proved to be a meaningful and joyful encounter. Meeting the people and listening to their stories of hardships and perseverance despite their overwhelming poverty was a moving experience. We visited a Sindhi Beel colony where our Christian brothers and sisters reside, lacking many necessities. They live on the land of the landlords with very poor housing conditions. Their house is made of wood straw and mud, and all of them are living together in a very narrow space.

Arriving in this seemingly remote house, we checked on the children who are ready for their first communion. After the catechist gave instructions and



catechesis to the children, we prayed together and bid our farewell. As we prepared to leave, the woman in the house invited us for dinner. She said that they caught lots of fish from the river, and she would like to share it with us.

Hearing her sincere invitation, I felt a pinch in my heart. Despite their simplicity and poverty, and that this could be their only meal for the day, especially for her children, she willingly offered to share it with us. This was the first instance of joy I encountered in the mission. Encountering these generous and authentic people, who despite having little, wholeheartedly share what they have, revealed the joy of serving God.

The second stop where joy awaited me was in Khipro parish where I

served for a year during my FMA (First Mission Assignment). Five years later, upon my return to Pakistan, I decided to reconnect with the people I served during my FMA years. Revisiting the villages and reuniting with the people that I knew and worked with brought back lots of happy memories. Yet, what really gave me a deeper sense of joy was seeing their lives improving and empowered.

Khipro parish is composed of the Parkari Kholi tribe, a community considered to be a lower caste in society. To my surprise, I saw significant progress in their lives. Some of my former students at Fr. Cyprian High School had become teachers, while others are studying to become nurses, and a few of them entered the seminary. Reflecting on our shared journey in the past and observing how they have improved their lives in the present gives immense joy to my heart.

It is indeed evident that the Holy Spirit is guiding them towards embracing their humanity and preserving their dignity. Though being labeled as lower caste persons, they are asserting their rights for self-improvement, proving themselves as dignified individuals in society.

My last stop was in one of the parishes in Karachi where Columban Fr. Daniel O'Connor and I visited a community known as Ghugir Patik. The Christians in this area are composed of the Parkari Kholi tribe from interior Sindh, who migrated to Karachi city for work. They have rented houses in that area, and most of

I recalled that faith is an “empowered faith” where the deep and profound faith of the people empowers them to find ways in order to reciprocate God’s goodness by offering their praises and talents for the greater glory of God.



them are employed in factories. Every Saturday, Fr. Dan presides a Parkari Mass for them.

In the evening, we gathered in a small house for the Holy Mass at around 8:00 p.m. Despite the cramped space, heat, and multitude of mosquitos, the room felt welcoming due the presence of the people. They were attentive throughout the Mass, participating actively. What really impressed me the most was the choir who came well-prepared, equipped with a complete set of instruments for singing.


After the Mass, I had a chat with one of them. He said, “Father Ji, did you know that we almost did not have someone to play the Tabla because we didn’t expect to have a Mass this

Saturday? However, we managed somehow to find someone to play it because we offer all these to Jesus our God.”

I thought. “Wow! What an amazing faith this man has.” It dawned on me that what he said was so powerful because the community poured their heart out, offering their faith and gratitude to God. A smile not only in my face but also in my heart was so evident at that moment.

Reflecting on this incident, I recalled that faith is an “empowered faith” where the deep and profound faith of the people empowers them to find ways in order to reciprocate God’s goodness by offering their praises and talents for the greater glory of God.

Joy! It is a feeling that is difficult to find, feel or experience sometimes. Yet, I firmly believe that joy lies in every struggle, difficulty, and challenge. While we may not always be aware of it, I discovered that joy is easily found if only our hearts are open to serving God.

For me, joy comes in different forms and shapes in my every encounter with the people I serve and meet. My experiences across these three parishes reminded me that the joy of the Gospel can be experienced in journeying with people. I may face many uncertainties and sorrows in the mission, but I know that joy will unfailingly prevail, revealed to me by God. 

Columban Fr. Elbert Balbastro lives and works in Pakistan.



The Key to My Own Home

Success Stories

By Fr. Noel O'Neill

A phone call from Seoul. It was Pak Hyun Sen wishing me a happy birthday. In the post there was a birthday card from Il Cheong. That same evening Mi Suk dropped by our apartment with her birthday present to me — a kilo of boiled chestnuts. All three were friends of mine. They had something else in common. All three are intellectually disabled and received training at the Emmaus Vocational Training Center. Now all three are in employment.

Hyun Sen had returned to her home in Seoul, where we had got her a job in packaging at a nearby clothes factory. She earns 1,100,000 won a

month (\$820). When asked how she liked it, she said that her greatest joy was going to the local department store to choose a dress in a color of her own liking. Up until this time it was always somebody else who did the buying.

Il Cheong has a job as a watchman at a building site and with his monthly pay of 1,200,000 won (\$892) he is helping to support his widowed mother. Mi Suk is married. Our social worker was instrumental in arranging a marriage for her with a physically disabled man who held down a job. They have one child, a daughter, who graduated as a nurse from one of the leading universities in Seoul.

A few weeks ago, at the Vocational Training Center, during the afternoon 15-minute break, we (trainees and staff) were treated to a snack — tomatoes and bananas. Our benefactors were three former trainees who had got jobs in factory assembly-lines. On receiving their first pay packets, they came back to the center to express their gratitude.

However not all at Emmaus are likely to break down the barriers and make it to open employment. Paulo, a 17-year-old with Down's syndrome, died of congenital heart disease last year. His parents requested that the remains be brought to Emmaus and



Columban Fr. Noel O'Neill with Kim Yoon Cheong

that the burial rites be held there. In the midst of their unbearable sorrow, Paulo's parents and family found much comfort and consolation in the loving hugs and embraces bestowed on them by Paulo's friends at the centre.

Han Seng and Kang Kou, both young men in their late twenties, who had been attending Emmaus for the past five years, are now hospitalised for treatment at a psychiatric hospital. Both were coping well here at the center but lack of understanding and acceptance in their homes by other members of their families, resulted in emotional stress that led to constant outbursts of violence. Our doors always remain open to welcome them back.

Pyong Chul (55) is the oldest man at the center. His limited skills have not improved much over the years. He is able to recognise the number "25" which is the clue for his daily bus ride to the centre. Once or twice in the year he may mistakenly take the number "45" bus, ending up lost in unfamiliar surroundings.

At the center, because he has only the use of one hand, he is engaged in moving up and down the handle of the molding machine for making artificial flowers. To onlookers his work may appear boring and monotonous but for Pyong Chul, it is an occupation which motivates him to get up each morning and run to catch the number "25" bus. Having a job to do enhances the quality of his life.

Kim Yoon Cheong, a 26-year-old lady with an intellectual disability, came from an orphanage to live in one of the Emmaus group homes. While living in the group home, she finished high school. Then as she passed the entrance exam for a two-year college course she remarked, "I want to climb another mountain."

Two years later I attended her graduation. When I posed with her for a graduation photo, I turned to her and asked, "what is the next mountain you would like to climb?" She answered, "independent living."

With the help of the social workers at Emmaus she began a trial period in

experiencing independent living. To the delight of all she passed with flying colors. She is now living in her own little apartment. As she held up the key to the front door of her new home, she asked me to bless the apartment. Joined by many of her close friends and staff from the group home we had a house blessing ceremony followed by refreshments.

As I was leaving, I turned to Kim Yoon Cheong and once again I posed the question to her, "Is there any other mountain you would like to climb," and with a playful giggle on her face she turned to me and said, "I would like to have a boyfriend and eventually marry."

It has been forty-two years since we began our Emmaus journey. Along the way we listened and trusted in the "Stranger" who walked beside us. We learned we were not answering the cry for pity or charity, but a cry for justice. **EM**

Columban Fr. Noel O'Neill was ordained in 1956. He lives and works in Korea where he founded Emmaus Industries and Emmaus Group homes to serve those with special needs.



Einsein Educational Center

A Vision Realized

By Sr. Kathleen Coyle

Einsein village can hardly be called a village. It is a large depressed slum area on the outskirts of the city of Yangon in Myanmar (formerly Burma). People live in abject poverty in hundreds of shanties, with neither water nor electricity. These shanties run along a muddy path that leads to the back wall of an ancient Buddhist monastery.

In 1964 when the military junta took over Myanmar, embassies, industries and factories were closed,

jobs were lost, and families moved to villages like Einsein and set up temporary shelters made of four bamboo rods and a sack covering. These shacks soon became their homes. While men live in hope of casual construction work, the women shift through garbage, collect discarded plastics or sell food in the market place to provide for their children.

The nearest government school to Einsein is a 50-minute walk from the village, and pupils have to provide

their own uniform, text books, and pay a small annual fee. The children of Einsein could not afford this meager expense so they have never gone to school.

Mary Man's Commitment to Einsein

In 2003, Mary Man was in her senior year in college in Yangon when she saw a woman rummaging through a garbage bin. After an initial conversation she accompanied her on the bus to Einsein where she saw



the devastating poverty of the area. When she graduated from college, she committed herself to providing education for these poverty-stricken children. With a generous donation from Combined Services Third World Fund, Dublin, a more durable building of native materials was constructed. A brick foundation was added and the gravel floor was cemented. A picture of the Buddha in the classroom assured the local leaders that we Christians were not building a church.

Einsein Educational Centre 2003

When Mary Man became director of the program she discovered that most of the children survived on only one meal a day. They needed nourishing food as well as education. With a generous donation from the Oblate Fathers we began our Einsein Educational Center. Our goal was a nourishing snack for every child before class and a substantial meal at 3:00 p.m. before they went home. A library with benches, books, and colorful charts was added as well as a

much-needed outdoor kitchen. Soon the numbers increased, and over 300 children between the ages of 3-9 years came every day for class and for food.

A Bowl for Every Gran

Zaw, a six-year-old child held on to his bowl but refused to eat. His grandmother had eaten nothing that

The nearest government school to Einsein is a 50-minute walk from the village, and pupils have to provide their own uniform, text books, and pay a small annual fee.

day and he wanted to share his dinner with her. To his delight, Mary Man gave him another bowl for his grandmother. By the end of the week every gran in Einsein received a nourishing meal. That meant more chickens, more eggs, more rice, and charcoal for the fire so we

went back with our begging bowls to our benefactors who supported us generously for the next number of years. As the school progressed, children's health improved with nourishment, and they spent most of the day in the library with its colorful charts and books or outside playing ball by the side of the school.

As the number of children in the school increased so did the needs of the youth who had graduated. When Indra, a sixteen-year-old girl needed work Mary Man bought her a sewing machine and found a seamstress to teach her to sew. Indra in turn, taught other teenagers so another machine was bought for them.

It was noted that Tera, a 15-year-old girl was missing from class. After many inquiries and home visitation Mary Man learned that Tera had been promised well-paid employment. Mary Man became suspicious and followed the trail of her story until Tera was found in a safe house being groomed for prostitution with other girls. Mary Man secretly rescued Tera and one



Carrying school chairs



A child at home in the village

other girl, but a young officer at the door would not allow them to leave. Mary talked to him briefly and when she placed a 100 kyats (\$15.00) under his collar, he released the latch.

The 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar

In the 2021 military coup, leader Ang San Suu Kyi was sentenced to 33 years in jail. The military carried out a brutal, nationwide crackdown on the millions of people opposed to its rule. The junta security forces have carried out mass killings, arbitrary arrests, torture, sexual violence and other abuses that amount to crimes against humanity. When the military took control, the youth took to the streets, many were killed or ended up in prison. Unfortunately, the situation today continues to worsen, and many have left for Thailand or India. The destruction of churches and schools where people hide or seek shelter from the military continues today.

The Sad Demise of Einsein School

The fear and cruelty of the military was severely felt in Einsein. A few months ago, while Mary Man was preparing for class a number of strong men came in, took her wallet and phone and ransacked the school, taking with them many of the school's


Mary can take comfort in the fact that two generations of children in Einsein can read and write and find employment. Hopefully they in turn will encourage their children to study.

belongings including the kitchen pots and pans. The writing was on the wall. Under the present military regime, classes and meals had to be cancelled; it was too dangerous to come to school or use its building. The first ever Einsein primary school had to close. It

was with great sadness that the parents received the news. How were they now going to educate or feed their children?

There was nothing left now for Mary but to pack her few belongings. It was with a heavy heart that she walked down the muddy path along the local shanties to get a rickshaw to bring her into Yangon city. Her 20-year-old educational program had come to an abrupt end.

However, Mary can take comfort in the fact that two generations of children in Einsein can read and write and find employment. Hopefully they in turn will encourage their children to study.

The commitment of one dedicated teacher supported the education and health programs for children in the remote village of Einsein, on the outskirts of the city of Yangon in Myanmar for 20 years. 

Sr. Kathleen Coyle and the Columban Sisters continue to work with Mary Man as she discerns her future.



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.

With thoughtful planning, you can choose which ways to support work best for you and your loved ones and make sure your gifts are made in a way that will maximize their total value while minimizing their after tax-cost. There are many planned giving options, including some you may not have considered before. Planned gifts provide a major impact in our missions, and we offer the following suggestions to aid selection of the best giving option for your stage of life.

- Donor Advised Fund Gifts
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- Charitable Remainder Unitrust Gifts
- Charitable Bequest Gifts
- Gifts of Life Insurance Policies

The U.S. Treasury Department and Internal Revenue Regulations encourage charitable giving by allowing generous tax savings for individuals who make gifts in accordance with approved giving programs. A planned gift also offers you many potential advantages: the opportunity to increase spendable income, the elimination or reduction of capital gain taxes and possibly federal and state estate tax savings.

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



Mugs of Hot Hope

Faces of Warm Smiles

By Fr. Robert Mosher

When I first arrived in Chile, I was still a seminarian, fresh from four months at the Maryknoll language school in Bolivia, which not only introduced me to Spanish grammar and pronunciation, but also to one of the bloodiest military coups in the history of that Andean nation.

This turned out to be well-suited to what I would find in Chile. The whole country seemed traumatized, even in 1980, seven years after its own coup d'état. People were quiet, subdued, and wary of anyone they didn't know. But this stood in stark contrast with the ebullient spirit of the parish church of San Gabriel, where I was assigned, joining the team of three Columban priests.

We lived in a working-class area of Santiago, in the midst of concrete and wood homes that stood where land squatters' huts had once been set up literally overnight, some 20 years earlier — on unused land that was seized by a very large and well-organized band of settlers, availing of a basic right long recognized by successive Chilean governments.

Our mission in this community was to accompany them, just as Jesus showed His own disciples how to do, while on His earthly mission, when He approached the marginalized and poorest of His own people and land — a land that was itself violently occupied by military forces of the Roman Empire, augmenting the similarity to our own situation.

Right away, I found this meant that I had to dismiss any lingering ideas of our mission as one of “educating” or “pacifying” the local population. The local Church, present for hundreds

The mission of Jesus Christ today has meant drawing near to those who are considered first in the Kingdom of God, with eyes, ears and hearts that can attend carefully to what God shows and tells us, in the faces and voices of the poor.

of years before the arrival of the Columban missionaries in 1953, would give us our cues and roles, showing us how this mission had already been lived for centuries, and sharing the lessons of their wise and compassionate presence among the poorest of their society.

One of our priests took me, on a dark and rainy winter evening, to an encampment of land squatters less than a mile away. Seizing land in these circumstances of a brutal military regime was nearly unthinkable, and never successful in the way such initiatives used to be, in normal times, in times of democracy.

It was cold, and the tents of plastic and cardboard, held together by pieces of wood, left the floor muddy, and were full of sick, crying children. But people with smiles welcomed us, so happy to see us visit them, and to hear their stories. Pots of hot water boiling over small fires here and there were used to give us a metal mugful of tea, in cups with bent and battered handles, before we crouched down and sat on small boxes or stools, in circles of conversations.

I heard about what it was like to live in the crowded, unhealthy conditions of the *allegados*, the “have-arriveds.” Young couples and their children seldom left home, but usually stayed with their parents, relatives or in-laws who already had their own houses and lots. Room was always made for growing families over the years, since the dream of saving up enough to buy or rent their own rooms or homes required a stable and minimally-decent income, which was seldom found in the lives of the impoverished.

Chile has many natural riches, especially copper, that was mined for nearly a century in the north of the country, but the money that came in never seemed to trickle down to the workers of the country in sufficient abundance to make a real difference in their lives. Decent living conditions often depended, instead, on land seizures, which had worked for people in the past, but now, as we sat under the wet skies and listened to these families, there was only desperation. Those lacking adequate housing barely survived under an uncaring, violent dictatorship whose only concern was imposing order. Only in desperation did people keep trying what had worked in the past.

The only alternative for so many of the housing-challenged in Chilean society was to continue living cheek by jowl in tense family situations with little privacy and an abundance of resentments boiling over frequently—all the ordinary tensions of family life familiar to most people throughout the world, but multiplied exponentially, for lack of adequate living space.

The mission of Jesus Christ today has meant drawing near to those who are considered first in the Kingdom of God, with eyes, ears and hearts that can attend carefully to what God shows and tells us, in the faces and voices of the poor. We believers discover the Holy Spirit there before us, revealing the path forward for the Church as we become companions to the most vulnerable in society and announce the Good News by living among them, reflecting with them on the meaning of faith in the conditions they experience, and stand by them as they gather to find the kind of community that supports one another.

In their God-given dignity as human beings, they organize themselves to allow each member to become an instrument of greater equality and just treatment, among themselves and acting as a leaven in a society that becomes more responsive to their needs, and learns to create a space at the center of its concerns. Society itself will come to manifest God’s own hand among them, in its growth into something closer to the gift of the New Creation, with New Persons born again in the living Christ present among them, leaving their selfishness and indifference behind, and raised to positions of leadership of the people.

From those first baby steps in the muddy encampment of several hundred families, I grew to learn so much about Christ’s mission in the land of Chile, and our own part in that mission as Columban lay and consecrated missionaries. In the years that followed, the dictatorship fell and democracy returned, economic inequality and justice for the survivors of the terrors of the past were addressed, and the destructive exploitation of Chile’s natural resources came to be denounced — all issues pending resolution, but which the Gospel of Jesus Christ continues to illumine for all who seek the future that God speaks to us of in our hearts, as we pour ourselves battered mugs of tea and avail of the hospitality of those who are grateful for our presence among them. **EM**

Columban Fr. Robert Mosher lived for many years in Chile, and later in El Paso, Texas, before arriving at his present assignment in Bristol, Rhode Island.

The Earth is Our Common Home

Sacred Space

By Sainiana Tamatawale

On one of my home holidays in Fiji, I went to my village to spend time with my family and relatives. In one of the talanoa (a process of inclusive and transparent dialogue) sessions I attended, I heard this phrase from our elders, “*Keda eda vutunijau ka tiko bulabula ena noda dui delanijave ‘Na Vanua’ (The Land) sa solia tu vei ked ana kalou, sa dononu meda taqomada.*” We are wealthy and healthy on this Land that God have given to us, so we need to protect the Land.

I grew up in the city, so I was not as aware of the importance of our connections to the Land and the totem. When my father retired at the age of 55 he went back to the village. He told us if you want to know yourself you must know your roots. My time in the village has helped me to learn the importance of the Land, the totem, what tribe/clan I belong to, and that we have our own dialect. A totem is a spirit being, sacred object, or symbol that serves as an emblem of the group of people, such as a family, clan, lineage or tribe.

When I heard this phrase of Pope Francis, “How precious is that profoundly genuine sense of family and community among Indigenous Peoples! And how important it is to cultivate properly the bond between young and old, and to maintain a healthy and harmonious relationship with all of creation!” I thanked God the Creator that I still have this genuine sense of family, community and the sacredness of land back home in Fiji and that made me cherish that so much.

The cross-cultural mission experiences that I have had in the Philippines and in El Paso, Texas/ Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, have been a blessing in my life. That’s where I’ve learnt about others’ cultures, history, language, and about the indigenous people and faith traditions.

During the influx of migrants at the U.S./Mexico border in 2018, I met some of the indigenous people from Central America. I learned that one of the reasons they migrated was because of climate change. The droughts, cyclone, floods, and earthquakes that happened in their countries destroyed their farms, crops, animals, and houses. So, they left their families and moved to the U.S. to find jobs so that they could provide for their families and plan to bring them to the U.S.

Listening to what’s happening in the world today and to the indigenous farmers from Central America makes me worried and frightened that what they went through will one day happen to our family and community back home. The islands in the South Pacific are experiencing a rise of sea levels and other natural catastrophes. We must protect the Ocean and the

Mother Earth because it is where we get our daily food, air to breath, water to drink, cooking, washing, bathing, and where we connect with Nature and living creatures. There are many developments and changes in the world today which are destroying the land, culture and communities.

The Land is sacred not only to the indigenous people but to all humanity and living beings in this world. We must protect and care for our mother earth because the earth we live in is our common home.

Pope Francis is always and continues to be a major instrument in addressing the issue of climate crisis, which we are experiencing more than ever now. Let us dedicate ourselves to respond to the Cry of the Poor and the Cry of the Earth. CM

Columban lay missionary Sainiana Tamatawale lives and works in Hong Kong.



Sister in Profile

Sr. Mary Dolores Callan (1894-1947)

By Oscar Bryan

Margaret Callan was born on June 5, 1894, in Corderry, County Louth, Ireland. From her early years, Margaret exhibited remarkable compassion, dedicating hours to nursing sick farm animals back to health. Growing up, Margaret would frequently holiday with her maternal uncle, a parish priest in Armagh, and their warm relationship helped foster a strong connection to her faith.

After completing primary school, Margaret continued her education at St. Louis Convent in Carrickmacross, County Monaghan. At St. Louis, Margaret excelled, frequently emerging top of her class. Recognizing her academic potential, Louth County Council awarded her a scholarship in 1912 to study at University College Dublin, where she obtained both a BA and a Diploma in Education. Following her graduation in 1917, Margaret joined the teaching staff at St. Louis.

While teaching, Margaret felt a certain void in her life, and craved to be a part of something larger than herself. Her fascination with the Columban Fathers in China, inspired by reading the *Far East* magazine, led her to contact the editor, Fr. John Blowick. Unbeknownst to her, plans

to establish a new congregation were already underway, and Fr. Blowick encouraged Margaret to consider joining once the novitiate was up and running.

In 1924, Margaret, now Sr. Mary Dolores, entered Cahiracon on St. Brigid's Day, embracing life in the new community. Her final profession took place on October 13, 1929, and a week later, she embarked on the SS Malawa for China.


Within a few short weeks of arriving in Hanyang, Sr. Mary Dolores was given the task of establishing a presence for the Columban Sisters in Sien Tao Chen. The new arrivals were still settling in when their compound was stormed by Red Army guerrillas in April 1930. Held under armed guard, when an opportunity to flee presented itself, the Sisters managed to escape back to Hanyang.

However, life in Hanyang offered no respite, as floods and famines led to a mass exodus of refugees into the city. Rising to the challenge, Sr. Mary Dolores attended to both the medical and spiritual needs of the refugees, leading one observer to comment that her efforts "fully qualified her for canonization." By 1936, she was promoted as local superior in Hanyang.



L: Sr. Mary Dolores (front row, middle left) and other Columban Sisters
Above: Sr. Mary Dolores

In 1938, Sr. Mary Dolores was transferred to Shanghai, where she served as the local superior and principal of Sancta Sophia, a school for the city's Russian exile community. Working under Japanese occupation, she steadfastly followed the Eastern Orthodox liturgy, and refused to raise tuition fees for the financially strained students. Despite the challenges of the war years, this period proved spiritually enriching for Sr. Mary Dolores, who maintained connections with many of her former pupils following her departure in 1945.

After seventeen years in China, Sr. Mary Dolores returned to Cahiracon for the 1946 General Chapter. Her long years abroad had left her in a fragile state of health, which further deteriorated following a heart attack. Just as the Congregation was having its Constitution approved by Pope Pius XII, Sr. Mary Dolores entered her final decline, passing away gently while surrounded by Sisters on April 16, 1947. Her final words were "I am ready to go." Her motto for her first profession was: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God." She was the first Columban Sister to be summoned to her eternal home. 

Oscar Bryan is the Archivist for the Missionary Sisters of St Columban in Ireland.

Journey Alongside Lay Missionaries

Fostering Community

By Jinwook Antonio

In the Church, the notion of synodality underscores the profound understanding that the mission of the Church is a shared responsibility, involving all its members. Lay people are not merely recipients of pastoral care; they are active participants in the Church's mission. In this context, the Columban Lay Missionaries stand out as a compelling model for fostering a synodal community.

A significant experience that underscores this synodal approach occurred when I accompanied a group of young professionals from Korea visiting Taiwan for the Society Invitation to Mission. This group consisted of one man and four women,

and our Society General Council Member Fr. Kang Seung-Won Joseph. They were all keen to explore the life and work of missionaries in Taiwan.

Throughout their week-long stay, Lee Jiyoung Tina, one of our Korean lay missionaries, accompanied our group as we took them to various ministries where Columban missionaries were engaged. Language barriers did not deter the participants' interaction with the local people; simple gestures and smiles bridged the gap. Despite the tightly packed schedule, they enthusiastically participated and cherished every moment of their visit.

As their time in Taiwan drew to a close, we gathered for a simple

sharing session after completing all our scheduled activities. The majority of the feedback was positive, but one particular comment left a lasting impression on me. One participant expressed how impressed she was by the way I addressed Tina. I affectionately referred to her as "Nuna," which means "elder sister" in Korean. In contrast, Tina occasionally addressed me by my name, rather than the formal "Sinbunim," which means "Father" in Korean.

In Korean culture, it is uncommon for priests to refer to elder lay persons as "Nuna" or "Hyung" (elder brother). This small yet significant departure from tradition is a shift away from hierarchical approach within the Church.

Even though Pope Francis has emphasized the need to empower laypeople within the Church and has recognized their vital role, a priest-centered culture still prevails. This becomes evident when examining the language and dynamics within the Church. While fostering friendships between priests and laypeople may not resolve all the Church's issues, it is a step toward reducing the impact of priest-centeredness.

In the Taiwan Mission Unit, I recently joined the Lay Missionary Leadership Team (LMLT). This marked my second term in this capacity. I firmly believe that, working as part of this team alongside lay missionaries is a tangible manifestation of God's grace. This offers many opportunities for us to effectively practice synodality within the Church. **CM**

Jinwook Antonio serves on the lay missionary leadership team in Taiwan.

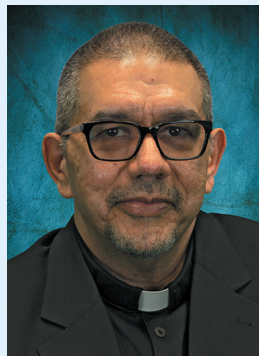


Mind, Body, Spirit

Bodily issues are an interesting culture shock in Latin America because people are more upfront about bodily issues than the United States. For instance, in the United States, we wouldn't comment on the person's weight gain to the person directly. If we do, it is done in a very sensitive way. In Chile, it's upfront. I could visit a person who I hadn't seen for some time and that person could look at me and say directly, "Wow! You really gained weight! Look at how big you are!" Furthermore, people will call one *el gordito/la gordita* meaning fatty. In the U.S. culture this would be interpreted as taunts. In Chile, it often was an expression of cariño or endearment.

Like many people, I struggle with my weight. At one point in my life, I weighed over 400 pounds. I had lost weight before in the past and knew I could do so again. Yet, I always put it back on. After much reflection, I realized that the question was not, "How do I lose weight," but, "Why do I keep gaining weight?" Thus, I concluded that I had to look deeper within myself. A person suggested that I see a therapist who specializes in food disorders such as obesity. I was reluctant but eventually went. It proved to be very insightful. Much of what I learned about myself was that I used food as a stress-reliever. I had to change my dynamics of thinking and create new inner-structures that would help.

My therapist advised me to consult a dietitian who can help me create this new inner-structure with more knowledge about my body and food. His advice proved to be a life changer. Eighty percent of



FROM THE DIRECTOR

By Fr. Chris Saenz

weight loss is nutrition. One can work out like a beast, but if their nutrition is not in line with the workout, no gains will be made. As one saying says, you can't outwork a bad diet. The dietitian helped me to realize that all bodies are different and we have to learn which foods respond better to our bodies. For instance, a cousin of mine loves the Keto diet. Works for her. It doesn't for me. It takes time to listen to our bodies and learn what our bodies need. And, as our body ages, nutrition changes. We don't metabolize food the same way at 56 years than at 25 years. In time, I



came to a new awareness of myself.

I began experimenting with different forms of exercise. Just like diets and food, what works for one person, won't for another. I know many people like jogging. I don't. I can force myself to jog but in time, I'll give it up. Yet, I was open to other forms and exercise and discovered a passion for jump rope and weight training. Unfortunately, after some time, I had to give up jump rope due to arthritis in the knees. However, I discovered other exercises. The point is, if you like it, stick with it. Don't let anyone else discourage you from doing what you love. And, don't be afraid to try something new. You might discover a new passion.

What does this have to do with the spiritual life, or mission? Self-care is essential for any minister. If a minister cannot care for him/herself, they won't be able

Self-care is essential for any minister. If a minister cannot care for him/herself, they won't be able to care for the community.

to care for the community. In my case, I came to realize that my self-care requires building up a support group of accountabilities. I have a dietitian, personal trainer, and spiritual director to help me keep on track. I have been able to lose over 100 pounds and continue to work at it. My daily exercise routines and nutritional plan help me to keep on track. I gained new insights about myself: mind, body, and spirit. The spirituality is summed up in the well-known AA prayer: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."



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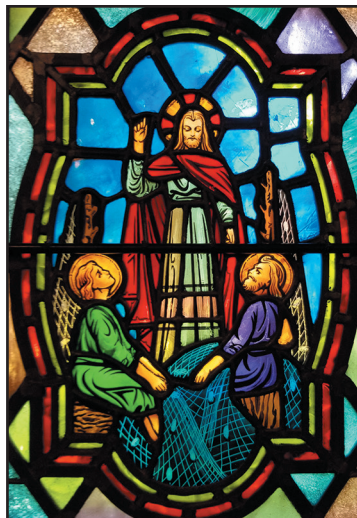
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*"Come after me, and I will make
you fishers of men."
- Matthew 4:19*

*At once they left their nets and
followed him.*

The Lord calls and invites a new generation to take on His mission. We invite you to contact us if you feel called to put aside your own nets.

We invite you to join this new generation by becoming
a Columban Father or Columban Sister.

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