



# Columban Mission

The Magazine of the Missionary Society of St. Columban

November 2021

## Faith Communities

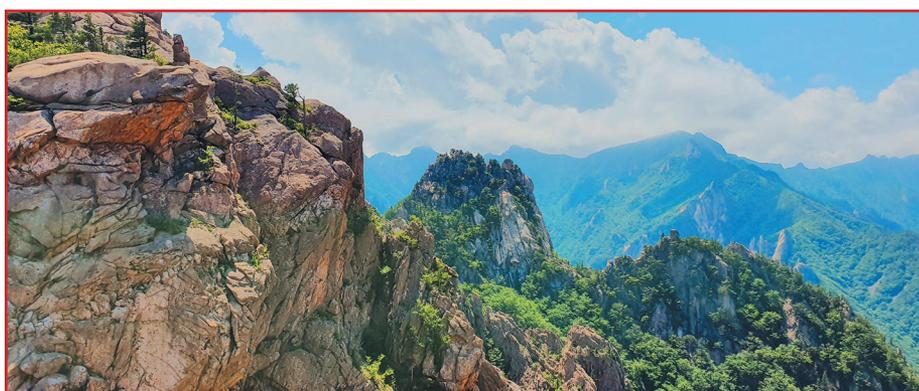
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# Columban Mission

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#### MAILING ADDRESS:

Missionary Society of St. Columban  
1902 N. Calhoun St.  
St. Columbans, NE 68056-2000

**TOLL-FREE PHONE:** 877/299-1920

**WEBSITE:** [WWW.COLUMBAN.ORG](http://WWW.COLUMBAN.ORG)

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#### PUBLISHER

REV. JOHN BURGER, SSC  
[DIRECTORUSA@COLUMBAN.ORG](mailto:DIRECTORUSA@COLUMBAN.ORG)

#### EDITOR

KATE KENNY  
[KKENNY@COLUMBAN.ORG](mailto:KKENNY@COLUMBAN.ORG)

#### EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

MARCI ANDERSON  
[MANDERSON@COLUMBAN.ORG](mailto:MANDERSON@COLUMBAN.ORG)

RENEA STEELE  
[RSTEELE@COLUMBAN.ORG](mailto:RSTEELE@COLUMBAN.ORG)

DYANNE WENDLING  
[DWENDLING@COLUMBAN.ORG](mailto:DWENDLING@COLUMBAN.ORG)

#### GRAPHIC DESIGNER

KRISTIN ASHLEY

#### EDITORIAL BOARD

DAN EMINGER  
KATE KENNY  
ERNIE MAY  
REV. JOHN BURGER, SSC  
JEFF NORTON  
SCOTT WRIGHT

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. John Boles

## Quarantine Adventures, Quarantine Blues

Overseas missionary work brings many surprises, but a 12-day obligatory quarantine period in a secure facility near London Airport was a “first” for me.

Travelling back to Britain during the Covid crisis after many years in Peru was a truly bizarre affair, although I have to admit that in one sense the “special” treatment I was accorded served to boost my self-esteem.

Even before reaching England, I’d been tipped into the surreal by a 10-hour stopover in Madrid’s Atocha Airport – enormous, but seemingly deserted apart from myself. I wandered its silent halls like a character in a science fiction film, the last one left alive after The Bomb has fallen.

Arriving at Heathrow, mention of “South America” prompted a flurry of security activity, with a squad of officials politely but firmly frog-marching me to a waiting minibus, which conveyed me directly to a designated quarantine hotel.

Therein, I achieved instant notoriety when, on being asked for my credit card details and mobile phone number, I informed reception that (in the true spirit of simple Columban lifestyle) I possessed neither of these items. Instead, to cover any incidental expenses I might incur, I offered them a deposit of £60, which was my entire stock of sterling. This occasioned a hurriedly convoked emergency management meeting, at the end of which I was told that my situation was quite “irregular.” Nevertheless, they were prepared to make an exception, given that we were living in “exceptional” circumstances. It was nice to know that, in a way, I was being seen as “exceptional.”

My place of confinement was most comfortable, complete with cable, wi-fi and all the necessary furnishings. What was absent was contact with other human beings. Meals were left outside my door. I deposited my rubbish bags in the same location, to be spirited away by an invisible hand.

From what I could gather, most of my fellow residents (and members of staff) were Muslims. This might explain why, for the first four days of my stay, the kitchen personnel confused me with a Ramadan-observing couple. Hence, I was treated to double portions of exotic dishes, delivered at odd hours of the night and nothing at all during daylight hours. Intriguing.

My main difficulty was lack of fresh air and exercise. The solution was to get up early, don my sports kit, shove the bed against the wall and then spend 30 minutes jogging to and from along the L-shape thus created. I found it to be good preparation for any future stint of solitary confinement that I might have to suffer for the sake of the Gospel.

After twelve days and two negative Covid results, I was released into the custody of fellow Columban Fr. Pat O’Beirne and sped to the safety of our London house, happy in the knowledge that I’d obeyed my travel orders and done my bit to prevent the spread of the virus.

All I can say by way of conclusion is to repeat the words of my old Mum (RIP), “It is all experience, all part of life’s adventure.” Amen.

*Columban Fr. John Boles lives and works in Peru.*

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*It was nice to know that, in a way, I was being seen as “exceptional.”*

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# My Journey into Migrant Ministry

## The Holy Spirit Led the Way

By Fr. Gonzola Diaz



Photo Courtesy of Kristin Ashby

In the early part of 2019 I was living in Mokpo, South Korea, and investigating opportunities in university chaplaincy at Mokpo Catholic University. One day in April, I received a phone call from an unknown number. Thinking it was spam, I ignored the call. However, the caller was persistent, and I eventually answered on the third call. Much to my surprise, there was no market pitch, but rather the gentle voice of Fr. Anselmo, the chaplain for migrants in the Mokpo region, who was ringing me with a request to help with the chaplaincy.

Honest and humble, Fr. Anselmo described how he was struggling with communicating with the diversity of English spoken by people from all around the world. I readily agreed to help, and the following Sunday I went along to the Migrant Center to celebrate Mass.

Little did I know that such a simple thing as this phone call was to become the catalyst for one of the those unexpected and life-changing experiences in my missionary journey. To be honest, when I arrived at the Center, I was shocked and amazed at the number and diversity of people present: it was like being at a United Nations meeting here in Mokpo! Not only was the Holy Spirit leading me to see a part of Korea that is normally hidden from view, but after a few months, I began to realize that I would love to be more actively involved in this ministry. Something new was stirring in my heart.

Shortly before my upcoming home vacation, I approached the Regional Director requesting that I might be appointed to migrant ministry. My request met with a positive response so shortly after returning to Korea, I began the formal process of being

appointed to migrant ministry in the Gwangju diocese. Naturally, with the Holy Spirit involved, there are always a few more twists, turns and unexpected results. Unbeknownst to be me, another priest had, in the interim, been appointed to the chaplaincy in Mokpo, but the Bishop suggest I might consider the Suncheon area, a place where no Columban has worked for the last 60 years. Thus, after a few days of thinking and consulting, I decided to take up the offer and that is how I ended up in Suncheon.

The first weeks in my new ministry were particularly busy, but one event really stands out. One day, the Sister who leads the migrant chaplaincy here in Suncheon, called me and asked me to assist getting a Vietnamese woman who was in labor into a hospital. Despite driving a van rather than leading a donkey, I felt like St. Joseph taking Mary to Nazareth! There was something very special in being part of the birth of her twins, two beautiful and angelic babies. However, this most natural of human events comes with an enormous cost for migrant workers. More often than not, a migrant woman in this position will be fired from her job because of complications with their visas and immigration status. This event, which has been such a rich part of my prayer, puts new meaning into the Prophet Isaiah's famous words, "For unto us a child is born." (Isaiah 9:6)

I am also responsible for celebrating the Eucharist and preparing migrant children for the reception of the Sacraments. This proves to be very interesting because of the diversity

of people participating in the chaplaincy. We have people from the Philippines, Vietnam, East Timor, Eastern Europe, South Africa, the United States, England, and Ireland. It is a tremendous privilege to minister to this diversity of people, and I am so grateful for the commitment of Gwangju Diocese and the local parish for sustaining this work.

Like everyone else, the advent of COVID-19 has added a whole new dimension to my ministry. My “normal” duties have been curtailed and meeting people – the heart of this ministry – is a lot more difficult:

for example, taking Sacraments to the sick in hospital is not possible. As I contemplate the present moment, I cannot wonder how we are to practice our faith as a participation in communion and become a revelation of the real presence of Christ in the world? I am not sure what the impact of COVID-19 will mean for my present ministry, but I do believe that the Holy Spirit is involved and pushing us, as the Church, in new directions. Or maybe, it is the same direction it always was: sharing food and drink, and witnessing to the presence of God in the world by reaching out to those who are pushed

to the periphery. At this moment I draw inspiration from Pope Francis’ words: “A Church which ‘goes forth’ is a Church whose doors are open.

Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world. Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way.”  
*(Evangelii Gaudium)* 

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Columban Fr. Gonzalo German Borquez Diaz lives and works in South Korea.

# 2021 Jubilarians

The Missionary Society of St. Columban congratulates the 2021 Jubilarians on their years of mission service and prays they be blessed with health and joy.

**50 Years**

Mark Mengel

**60 Years**

Dennis O'Mara

Thomas Reynolds





L-R: Anna and Columba

# A Life I Never Even Dreamt Possible

## My Faith Journey as a Lay Missionary

By Chang Eun-Yeal Columba as told to Noel Mackey

**C**olumba Chang was a Missionary Society of St. Columban lay missionary. In June 1990 she was a member of the first Korean regions lay mission team appointed to the Philippines where she worked for eighteen years. She served as a member of the lay missionary's central leadership team for three years

in Hong Kong, and served in Myanmar for six years. After celebrating 30 years of missionary life she retired in May 2021. She shared her story with me.

### **Thirty Years as a Columban Missionary**

It seems like only yesterday I became a Columban lay missionary and was

appointed to the Philippines but some thirty years have flown by. I had no idea that I would work as a lay missionary for such a long time. When I was three years old my parents took me in their arms, and I was baptized with the parish priest deciding that I take Columba as my baptismal name. I am not sure if he had the foresight to



Signing her first contract



Columba Chang



Dancing at community festival in Kachin State, Myanmar



Payaytas rubbish dump



Visiting children with special needs in the Philippines

know that I would one day become a Columban Lay Missionary.

### The “House of Love” That Overflows with Human Kindness

I got a glimpse of what a missionary’s life was like when during my working days I attended Mass at the House of Love in a shantytown, or what is affectionately referred to as “Moon District” in Korea where Columban priests were establishing a small community. The atmosphere there was mysterious and strange to me since I had been reared in a patriarchal culture where the church was centered on priests. These foreign priests spoke our language extremely well, had adopted a Korean lifestyle and in particular lived poorly like the rest of the people in the shantytown. When these missionaries met their neighbors, they

patiently listened to their sad stories and attempted to console them. I had a lively faith experience as I observed these missionaries living lives of active service and came to realize that “Jesus had not come to be served but to serve.” As a result I like to believe I choose a missionary life rather than a married life that society was demanding at that time.

### Both a Korean Woman and a Lay Missionary

While the life of a lay missionary is not all roses, it is a fulfilling life.

“Do not forget your own identity as Korean woman and a lay missionary.” This was the advice we received from a Missionary Sister of St. Columban (Columban Sisters) during our orientation to mission program that took place before we were assigned

to our first mission area. These words always occupied a special place in my faith journey as a lay missionary.

The life of a lay missionary is not all plain sailing. Unlike priests or religious that have a certain image and role in the church, the role of the lay missionary is not defined and so they must walk a road that has not yet been traveled. The lay missionaries have to carefully fill in the dots on a blank canvas while often experiencing times of confusion and fear.

One of the questions that I received most and that caused me to become flustered was, “what do lay missionaries actually do?” I think that lay missionaries are people, who in attempting to follow Jesus, leave their native countries and become one with and share friendship with people of a different culture, especially with the

poor and abandoned. As members of our missionary community we are friends, sisters to each other, and sometimes we are students learning as we go, while at other times, we are teachers teaching and at times we inevitably take on leadership roles.

Living in a village in the greatest rubbish dump in Manila, Philippines, where rag pickers eke out an existence; accompanying victims of AIDS dying of complicated diseases; working with children with special needs that have been abandoned by their own families and forced to live in special institutions; visiting those confined to prison and those who due to civil war have lost their homes living lives of pain and sorrow in Myanmar...as I reflect on my life I think that as a lay missionary I have lived a blessed life while sharing the joys and sorrows of these people and becoming their friends.

### **Gospel Conversion and Letting Go of My Own Will**

While living in an unfamiliar land with a different culture and language, adapting to a new way of living, becoming familiar with English and the process of learning a new language for each missionary region was of course very difficult. But I discovered fighting with my own self was more difficult than any of that. Before I started living as a lay missionary, I regarded myself to be a good person and therefore I believed that I could live well as a lay missionary. However I discovered that I was not as good a person as I had thought. I felt a sense



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*I think that lay missionaries are people, who in attempting to follow Jesus, leave their native countries and become one with and share friendship with people of a different culture, especially with the poor and abandoned.*

---

of shame when I realized that when I experienced situations that were not to my liking I actually choose to hide away and make excuses. In my desire to receive approval I competed with others and when I was afraid of becoming a failure I suppressed myself.

Before preaching the Gospel to others, I myself should have first been converted. I learned that it is only when I accept that I am loved as I am that I can be generous in accepting others as they are. When I think about it, I tried too hard to look good and made many mistakes when I tried to do things my way. I could have achieved

results far beyond my expectations had I been able to let go of my will and discovered God's will. It's just like rainwater naturally seeps into the ground, then flows down the streams into the river to become river water which in turn flows into the ocean to become ocean water...by letting go of one's own will and going with the flow one can become a source of life.

### **Retirement and Preparing for a New Journey**

As I face retirement and take a look back on the days gone by, I merely give thanks to the Lord for giving me graceful times. The Columban missionary society reflected on the signs of the times and responded positively. A missionary society, mainly comprised of priest missionaries, invited us lay missionaries to be their companions. I regard it a great honor to have been able to join in the mission that works in solidarity with other religions, works for justice and peace as well as the protection of the earth and has the poor and abandoned as its priority. I hope that in the future more young people will be inspired by the mission of the Columban society and participate in God's work as priest and lay missionaries. I also thank our benefactors and friends who continuously pray for and accompany us by the interest they take in our mission and their charitable contributions. I pray that you may be blessed by the Lord. ☩

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Noel Mackey provided the English translation of this article.

# Stations of the Resurrection



**Station 1**  
Jesus Rises from the Dead



**Station 2**  
The Disciples Discover the Empty Tomb



**Station 3**  
The Risen Lord Appears to Mary Magdalen, Apostle to the Apostles



**Station 4**  
The Risen Lord Appears on the Road to Emmaus



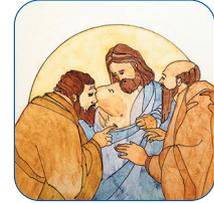
**Station 5**  
The Risen Lord is Recognized in the Breaking of the Bread



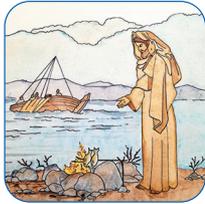
**Station 6**  
The Risen Lord Appears to the Community of Disciples



**Station 7**  
The Risen Lord Breathes Peace and Gives the Power to Forgive



**Station 8**  
The Risen Lord Strengthens the Faith of Thomas



**Station 9**  
The Risen Lord Eats with the Disciples on the Shore of Tiberias



**Station 10**  
The Risen Lord Forgives Peter and Entrusts Him to Feed His Sheep



**Station 11**  
The Risen Lord Sends the Disciples into the World



**Station 12**  
The Risen Lord Ascends into Heaven



**Station 13**  
Mary and the Disciples Keep Vigil in the Upper Room for the Spirit's Advent



**Station 14**  
The Risen Lord Sends the Holy Spirit

## A heartfelt apology to our faithful benefactors...

While we do our best to avoid mistakes in all of our print materials, occasionally one gets past us. Clearly, our failing to correctly label many of the Stations of the Resurrection in our 2022 Columban Mission Calendar was just such an error. And one that should have been caught by both us and our proofreader(s). It is actually reassuring that many benefactors took the time to let us know about our mistake!

I sincerely apologize for any distress this has caused, as we would never want any such error to distract from our intended purpose – sharing the glorious events in the life of Jesus through these Stations. To help clear up any confusion, pictures of the individual Stations and their respective captions are shown on this page.

Thank you very much – for sharing your proofreading skills, your gentle honesty and for your boundless generosity. Be assured of our constant prayers for you and yours now and throughout 2022.

The revised, corrected calendar can be viewed at [www.columban.org](http://www.columban.org), and a new calendar may be ordered by emailing us at [mission@columban.org](mailto:mission@columban.org) or calling us at 877.299.1920.



Gratefully yours in Christ,

*Fr. John*

Fr. John Burger, Director, U.S. Region



Charlie O'Rourke

# A Lifelong Thirst for God

## Duty and Delight

By Fr. Timothy Mulroy

**T**he spacious and peaceful grounds of St. Columbans in Nebraska are greatly favored by many species of wildlife. However, the whitetail deer that roam freely there get the most attention and admiration. In summer, does with their fawns graze serenely on the lawns during the day and then doze contentedly in the shadow of the buildings at night. Throughout the winter months, the wooded slopes and hollows provide them with shelter from the piercing winds.

What a heavenly setting St. Columbans would be for the deer community were it not for the fact that the long, harsh winters result in the natural sources of water remaining frozen for several days, or sometimes for a few weeks at a time! However, a few years ago, upon seeing that all was not well in this deer paradise, Fr. Charlie O'Rourke set out to rectify it. Placing a large plastic tub on the lawn outside his office, he attached a simple heating device to it, and then with the aid of a hosepipe, filled it with water once a day.

News of that tub must have spread like wildfire among the members of the deer community, because it quickly became their favorite watering hole, both in winter and in summer. Sensing the satisfaction that their parched throats got from his simple act of kindness, Fr. Charlie was determined not to disappoint them: therefore, refilling that tub twice a day became both a duty and a delight for him.

Seeing Fr. Charlie's sensitivity towards, concern for, and commitment to the deer at St. Columbans made me realize that these were traits that he had nurtured throughout his long life and which greatly enhanced his vocation as a Columban missionary priest.

Born on All Saints Day, November 1, 1930, Fr. Charlie was often teased that he had no choice about becoming a holy man! Moreover, since he had



Fr. Charlie and friends



L-R: Columban Frs. Peter Wodoruff, Colm Stanley and Charlie O'Rourke

been baptized a few days after his birth, on the Feast Day of Charles Borromeo, sometimes he was reminded by his friends that his patron saint had set a high standard for him to follow.

While still a child, Fr. Charlie's thirst to know God's will and his desire to follow Jesus led to his decision to become a Columban missionary priest. Back in the 1940s, what a momentous step it must have been for this fourteen-year-old boy to say goodbye to his close-knit family in a small Midwestern town and travel almost a thousand miles by train to the Columban seminary in upstate New York in order to dedicate his life to God!

After his ordination in 1957, Fr. Charlie was assigned to Korea. There, in addition to learning a new language and navigating a different culture, he encountered many people who were still experiencing hardships in the aftermath of the Korean War. The experiences of those early years on mission led him to realize the importance of becoming an attentive listener. Then, as he sought to respond to the various physical needs of those who were suffering around him, he also came to sense their thirst for God. During the next thirty years, while ministering in parishes in Kwangju, Mokpo, Seoul, Cheju Island, Pusan and Chollanamdo, the focus of Fr. Charlie's

mission was not on the construction of church buildings, but rather on the building of faith communities where people could come close to God.

While the next thirty years of Fr. Charlie's life were spent in his home country, he continued to minister to the Korean people in Chicago, Los Angeles and Omaha. Having spent many years as a migrant in Korea, he instinctively understood the frustrations and yearnings, as well as the disappointments and hopes of Korean migrants in the U.S. He also understood that the church community was an invaluable form of support for many of them as they looked to God for guidance and help in the strange and stressful environment of their adopted land.

Fr. Charlie was a man of prayer. Through prayer, he kindled his thirst for God and nurtured his commitment to be of greater service to God's mission in the world. Teaching others how to pray, and encouraging them to be faithful to prayer, was one of his cherished ministries. When he could no longer hold weekly prayer gatherings in the hall at St. Columbans as a consequence of the pandemic, he quickly learned how to facilitate them over the internet. However, soon afterwards he was diagnosed with

terminal cancer and was told that he had only a few more months to live.

Some weeks later, in a message to family and friends, Fr. Charlie wrote, "It is hard to pray when the pain is severe, but I am aware of how God embraces me and helps me when prayer might be difficult...just thinking of God and spending time with God as a friend. You may say that is not prayer, but some days that helps me so much and I do consider that prayer. The Mass brings to mind that I am in the presence all the angels, saints, loved ones ... all are present and jubilant in celebrating the beauty of God and all that God is."

*Like the deer that yearns for  
running streams,  
so my soul is yearning for you, O  
God.*

*My soul thirsts for God, the living  
God.*

*When can I enter and see the face  
of God?*

*(Psalm 42:1-2)*

A few days after his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, on November 6, 2020, Fr. Charlie's lifelong thirst was finally quenched when he left this world in order to meet God face to face. **CM**

---

Columban Fr. Timothy Mulroy serves on the Society's general council in Hong Kong.



# Light the Life Livelihood Project

## Working in Uncertain Times

By SunHee Kim (Sunny)

**A**s a precautionary measure to limit the spread of Covid19 in the Philippines, the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) was set March 17, 2020. Most establishments had stopped their operations except those that provide basic necessities and essential services. People's movements were greatly restricted.

The "Light the Life" (LTL) livelihood project was also affected by the COVID19 pandemic. As a result of the ECQ, our seven mothers who work in the project had to stay at home without income. LTL is a small, livelihood project and is not registered with the government, so the mothers were not qualified for the Covid19 cash aid of the Department of Labor and Employment.

These mothers are the breadwinners of their families since their husbands are non-standard employees working as construction workers and in other similar jobs. They did receive relief packs from the government, but these were not distributed often. The help provided could wet their lips but not quench their thirst. Out of compassion, I proposed helping them to the Columban Society, and thankfully it was approved. The women were able to receive food subsidies for ten months. They were only small amounts, but it was absolutely a big comfort for them.

The work resumed after the quarantine regulation was eased a bit, but the project was faced with cruel reality because we had absolutely

no orders from our customers. For reference, our customers come from churches, religious organizations, and individual clients. At this difficult time of the pandemic, customers have been focused on buying basic essentials, the church was still closed, and gatherings in the church were prohibited.

Although the project has been confronted with financial crisis, I and a project manager decided to resume our work because we cannot let the mothers' difficulties in this trying time pass over in silence. Unfortunately, we had to cut down the mothers working days to two times a week, but it is enough for them to guarantee at least some money to buy food for their families.

A year after the pandemic/ECQ, we still only survive with a few deliveries once or twice a month. The mothers keep making candles to stockpile for rush orders that may come at any time. We always want to be ready to deliver candles. Any opportunities will not be lost.

Along with this, we have tried to find ways to increase our income. Through a series of discussions with the mothers, we agreed to expand our products. They chose items by themselves: dishwashing liquid soap and peanut butter. They make the products and sell it to their neighbors. Secondly, online businesses have been

emerging in the Philippines since the quarantine was implemented. We are planning to meet the challenge in this area in line with the trend. Of course, it is not easy for us. Not only do we have limitations because we are a small business that is not registered, but also we are not familiar with these things relating to online/IT. We do it long-term, step by step.

The project manager said the mothers are worried about “lockdown” which is implemented by the government whenever according to the situation of COVID19; most recently, we were in the ECQ during Holy Week and Easter season. The

mothers are directly affected by these restrictions, especially their financial situation. Despite all these difficulties, the mothers unanimously express their gratitude to God that their beloved family members are safe and healthy.

We have experienced loads of changes through the pandemic, and I think living in uncertainty is the biggest and the hardest part for us. We all hope and pray that this pandemic will come to the end, that everything will come back to normal again. 

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Columban lay missionary SunHee Kim (Sunny) lives and works in the Philippines.



Light the Life program participants hard at work



# Many Mountains to Climb

## The Journey to Independent Living

By Fr. Noel O'Neill

I took the call and an excited voice came over the phone. “Sinbunim, (Father) I have passed the college entrance exam.” It was 22-year-old Kim Youn Cheong on the phone. I think I was even more excited than she when I tried to convey to her how delighted I was on hearing the good news.

Youn Cheong has no memory of her mother or father. She was abandoned as a baby and placed in an orphanage. The only memory she has of the orphanage is that it was bitter cold in the winter. She remembers sleeping on the floor with no central heating with only the bodily heat from the other twenty-nine children in the dormitory giving some warmth. The summer months were not much better as there were no air conditioning or electric fans available to fight off the 90F heat. The heat meant opening the windows which resulted in the onslaught of mosquito bites.

At the age of six Youn Cheong was transferred to another orphanage in Gwangju city. This building had central heating and also air

conditioning during the summer months. However it had its own demons, not material demons but human demons. For some unknown reason the ten member staff seemed to be of one mind, make life hell for the residents. Youn Cheong said “We did not have any new clothes. The clothes were always hand-me-downs from the older residents. A hairdresser came in once a week and you did not dare tell her how you wanted your hair cut. All without exception were cut short. You had little or no privacy. If you stepped out of line you were punished by a beating on the shins with a rod or deprived of a meal or even deprived of your sleep. Yes, it was hell on earth.”

It is not certain who it was, a member of the staff or one of the visiting volunteers, who blew the whistle to the press, resulting in a thorough investigation. Almost all the staff got prison sentences or were dismissed. Fortunately they were replaced by a more humane and a more caring staff. At this stage Youn Cheong was attending high school. Since

she was approaching her eighteenth birthday her future in the orphanage was being discussed. According to the regulations after the age of eighteen she could no longer be a resident in the orphanage.

Since Youn Cheong was registered as a person with “special needs” the authorities at the orphanage contacted the Emmaus Group Homes. Youn Cheong joined three other young women in one of the sixteen group homes run by Emmaus. Rhee Gemma, the assistant in the home, was a very caring and loving person. While the other three residents attended Emmaus Industries during the day, Youn Cheong continued her schooling.

There was great excitement and celebrations on her graduation day with plenty of photos and flowers. In the warmth and family like atmosphere Youn Cheong experienced the motherly love of Rhee Gemma and really began to blossom and began to believe in herself. Whenever there were group home functions Youn Cheong would act as the Master of Ceremonies

and perform her task with much gusto, and full of self-confidence. It came as no surprise to Gemma the group home assistant when Youn Cheong confided with her and said she would like to go to college, "I would like to climb another mountain," was the way she put it. Gemma, after consulting with others, decided that it would be good for Youn Cheong to spend a year at one of the learning institutes to prepare for the college exam.

She enrolled for night classes at one of the local learning institutes and in the meantime was fortunate to get a part time job in a high school where she worked in the headmaster's office serving refreshments to visitors and to the headmaster.

Two years ago, Youn Cheong was accepted at a nearby college and

began a two-year course of night classes in social work. She continued with her part time job at the high school and earned her own pocket money and was able to buy her own books. Because of her circumstances, the college authorities generously exempted her from paying college fees.

It was also providential that she became very friendly with a fellow college student who lived in the apartments next door. This student used invite Youn Cheong to her home where she would be welcomed by her friends, parents and siblings. This also helped her grow in self-esteem. The few times I saw both of them walk side by side, carrying their satchel of books, as they headed for the college, were joyful sights.

Due to the restrictions brought on by COVID19, there were no special college graduation celebrations. The President of the College presented the graduation certificate to each individual privately. Others were waiting outside rushing to express our *chukbahamnida* (congratulations).

For me, it was a moment to be cherished forever. As I posed with Youn Cheong for a photo, I turned to her and asked "What is the next mountain you would like to climb?" With a big smile on her face she looked at me and said "independent living." CM

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



Fr. Noel with Emmaus Industries participants



Fr. Noel, Youn and friends



Celebrating the graduation



Fr. Noel and Youn Cheong



Fr. Noel and Youn at Mass

# “Immigrant of the Year” Award

## Honoring Fr. Donal O’Keeffe

By Noel Mackey

For the past fourteen years Korea has been honoring individual immigrants who have made significant contributions to the country declaring them “Immigrants of the Year.” Columban priest missionary Fr. Donal O’Keeffe, a native of Bantry, Cork, Ireland, was the latest recipient of this honor. On May 20, 2021, “People of the World Day,” Fr. Donal was awarded a presidential citation by the Justice Minister for his over forty years of dedicated service to marginalized people in Korean society.

When Fr. Donal first heard that he had received this award, he was rather surprised, believing that there were many other immigrants that had made far greater contributions than he. When Fr. Donal first arrived in Korea in 1976, he spent his first

four years familiarizing himself with the Korean language and customs as well as getting to know its people and their difficulties. When I asked him why he got involved with the workers apostolate, he said that while he was a seminarian in Dalgan he had studied liberation theology. Then at one of the meetings, organized for newly arrived missionaries, he had listened to input from a Maryknoll priest, Sister and lay person working as a team in the workers apostolate. They convinced him that the ministry to factory workers was a necessary and worthwhile one.

In 1980 he moved to Bucheon, in Gyeonggido province, and working in a team with a former justice activist and Sacred Heart Sisters they operated an “open house” where young workers could gather. There

were numerous small factories in the area where teenagers that had come from the country worked. They were only given one day a month to rest. Many of these uneducated workers came to the open house where they were able to share the stories of their lives in a safe environment. They were also invited to participate in courses in self-development, critical thinking, workers’ rights and labor laws. Fr. Donal says that many of the young workers who took those educational courses later became key people in the formation of labor unions in the late 1980s.

Having spent ten years in the young workers apostolate Fr. Donal, together with fellow Columban Fr. Charles [Chuck] Lintz, became involved in Seoul Archdiocese’s Urban Poor Apostolate in 1992. Living in a shanty



Fr. Donal O’Keeffe, far right, with Korean youth

town in Bongcheon, Gwanack District of Seoul, they became aware of the plight of the tenants who live there. At that time the Seoul city authorities were engaged in a process they called “redevelopment.” In essence it involved large construction companies being allowed to appropriate, by fair or foul means, portions of lands on which they would build high rise apartments. To procure the land the construction companies paid as little as possible to the owners of houses in the many shanty towns that surrounded Seoul city. While the house owners were compensated the poor renters were being left on the side of the street with their few belongings. Neither the construction companies nor Seoul city authorities were willing to assist them in any way.

Frs. Donal and Charles gradually got to know people running day care centers and study rooms as well as a number of Christian church leaders in the shanty town. They began to meet and hold events in the area and they finally formed a “Residents’

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*Fr. Donal says that many of the young workers who took those educational courses later became key people in the formation of labor unions in the late 1980s.*

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Association.” Linking up with people active in other similar areas they ran educational programs to help the tenants become aware of their rights and thus enabled them to demand their rightful compensation during the redevelopment process.

During the presidential award ceremony Fr. Donal was to get another unexpected surprise. While the justice minister was congratulating all those that had received different awards he suddenly stopped and politely asked Fr. Donal to stand up and take a bow. He then revealed that he himself had actually lived as a *binmin*, or a poor person, in the very shanty town that Fr. Donal had helped establish a tenants’ association. In another coincidence the

minister added that having qualified as a lawyer he had established a workers counseling center in Bucheon where many years earlier Fr. Donal had operated the “open house” for young factory workers.

The minister said that in the Korean language they use the phrase, “when I walk alone I can go fast, however when I walk with others then I can go further.” That may have been the cue for Fr. Donal to say in an interview with the Korea Times that “if the believers of the different faiths, who together comprise 50% of the Korean population, worked together on ecological issues they could make a huge contribution.” In the same interview he expressed his appreciation of the Missionary Society of St. Columban which sent him to Korea and supported him in all of his missionary endeavors over forty years. CM

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Noel Mackey provided the English translation for this article. Columban Fr. Donal O’Keeffe continues to live and work in Korea. Columban Fr. Charles “Chuck” Lintz lives and works in the United States.



Bongcheondong Area Celebration



Workers Ed. Program Bucheon 1986

# Eucharist in a Time of Lockdown

## What Do You Do?

By Fr. Patrick Colgan

**T**his time last year, I wrote an article entitled “How to be People of the Eucharist, when there is no Eucharist?” It was during the time of Fiji’s first coronavirus lockdown when Mass was not celebrated for three months, and a number of Catholics were asking: “What does it mean to be Catholic at this time?” In that article, I reminded myself — and them — that Christ is present in the Eucharist in ways other than the sacred species: e.g. in the gathering of the community, in the communal listening to the Word of God, and in actions of justice and love in society. This seemed to bring some comfort and light at that time.

This year, we face a potentially new long lockdown, due to the Indian variant of COVID having broken through our international border. A pastoral issue this year has been: what to do with the Eucharist in a climate which is hot and humid, so that it does not go bad in the various village tabernacles where it is stored with such reverence? To simply remove it, and transfer it, for example, to the priests’ house in town, seemed heartless.

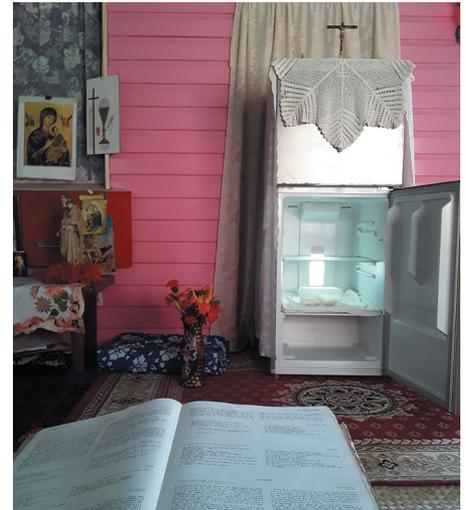
Therefore, with our catechists, we decided on a number of options. In one village, Votua, it was moved to the empty fridge of a senior couple, who spend most of their days in prayer and singing. They adorned the fridge with a picture of the Divine Mercy, and other Fijian traditional cloths, and people are welcome to come spend time in front of the fridge, while a CD plays religious songs from morning to evening. The immediate neighbors, Methodist and Catholic, voluntarily

observe a respectful silence while passing close by that house.

In another village, Navala, the Eucharist had also been transferred to a fridge in a family house, but when an offer of a smaller fridge by the head teacher of the village school came to us, we decided to move it back to the village church. There is a tradition there of weekly adoration which will have to take place according to the government’s 20-person restriction.

Other catechists decided to gradually use up the hosts in weekly distribution of them to the sick. While Mass has been prohibited, it seems to us that lay ministers, provided they are masked and observe hygiene protocols, can surely continue this work of mercy.

So, various “solutions” to a new situation have been found. What hasn’t changed is the devotion of Fijian Catholics to the Body and Blood of Christ, and perhaps, once again, this time of “Eucharistic famine” will serve to strengthen our sense of Christ in His Word, in each other, and in the poor. Let’s hope so. **CM**



The open fridge in Votua with Eucharist stored inside; in the foreground, a Fijian lectionary.



Custodian of the Eucharist in Votua, Mr. Vikatore Rakata



The fridge beside the Navala Church tabernacle



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Columban lay missionary Noh Hyein, better known as Anna (pronounced En-na), a teacher by profession, lives and works in the Philippines. After getting to know the women in her parish, and realizing how desperately poor they were, Anna, with the help of Columban benefactors, launched a candle making livelihood project called “Light the Life.” The women make candles and earn income for their families. The program also helps in the holistic development of the women, making them value their own self-worth. The women in the program make candles that light the homes of others, but they are lighting their own paths as well.

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# The Baptism of Jesus

## Musings on the Road to Emmaus

By Fr. Michael Riordan

*In this article, Columban Fr. Michael Riordan shares about his reflection on two important Gospel events, the baptism of Jesus by John and the disciples encountering the resurrected Christ on the road to Emmaus. The reflection focuses on the illustration art and etching works that serve as support to their sculpture counterpart found in the Hill of Grace in Isidore Farm. The exact pieces from Isidore Farm are not shown.*

### Isidore Baptism Scene

In our Hill of Grace Shrine on Isidore we have a park with a series of sculptures showing some of the events of the life of Christ. One of the events depicted is the Baptism in Jordan. The relevant scripture highlights the

interaction between John the Baptist and Jesus and also how Jesus is affirmed by the Father after His Baptism. For the reasons of monetary constraint, we have just two statues in this scene. I wanted them to see more than this, I wanted to show the context of the Baptism; to look at why Jesus chose to be baptized. In the Catholic Church we learn that Baptism has a number of effects. These include becoming a member of the Church and the removal of original sin from our souls. At the time Jesus was baptized there was no Church and also we believe that Jesus did not have original sin so why did He chose it? Some might claim He was going through the motions so as to provide us with an example of what we

should do. I am not so sure of that!

When I think of why Jesus chose to be baptized I came up with the following (not original) thought. Jesus had left home and was about to begin His public life; He had to chose whether to go it alone or to align Himself with some group. Because of His background and economic status being a lawyer or a Pharisee probably was out of the question. He didn't belong to a priestly family so priesthood was out for Him, unlike His cousin John the Baptist, who could have been a priest but felt called to be a lay prophet instead. Most of the groups at the time were limited to men and possibly the only group which was open to all, rich or poor, well educated or otherwise, young or old, men or women, was the group which followed John the Baptist. Jesus by being baptized by John as He began His public life showed that He was completely "Catholic," that is, universal and in no way exclusive. He aligned



Himself to the one group to which everyone could belong. He could not choose where to be born but in choosing Baptism He affirmed God's choice of being one among the masses; and so, I think God affirms Him in His choice. Because of the limitations of what we could show in the sculpture I asked that our baptism scene be the foundation and to add others to the scene. Therefore, the scene that was created shows many others in the scene among them some who have already been baptized and other in the water waiting their turn for baptism. The scene shows that Jesus is indeed Emmanuel, the one among us in every sense of the word.

### Isidore's The Road to Emmaus

This is one of my favorite resurrection scenes. The experts have failed to find any village called Emmaus near Jerusalem or to identify to which village the disciples could have been walking. I see this scene as an effort by Luke to describe in what ways the disciples experienced the resurrected Christ, rather than a record of a specific, individual event.

Something that each of the Gospel writers has to contend with is how do you put into words an experience which is so deep, so great that no words can satisfactorily describe it?

In artistic representations of this scripture passage usually the scene depicted is either the two disciples walking along the road talking with Jesus or a Eucharistic scene of Jesus being recognized in the breaking of bread. Usually the disciples are depicted as men, although there is no mention of the sex of the disciples in the text. In depicting the scene in Isidore, I chose to have a male and a female disciple in spite of strong resistance from those around me saying I wasn't being faithful to the scripture. In fact, I wasn't unfaithful to the scripture. The scene I chose from the story was



when they arrived at their destination and Jesus went to continue on but the disciples offered hospitality to this stranger, and He stayed with them. Had they not done this they may not have recognized Him later for who He was. Their hospitality was the reason they came to know who He was.

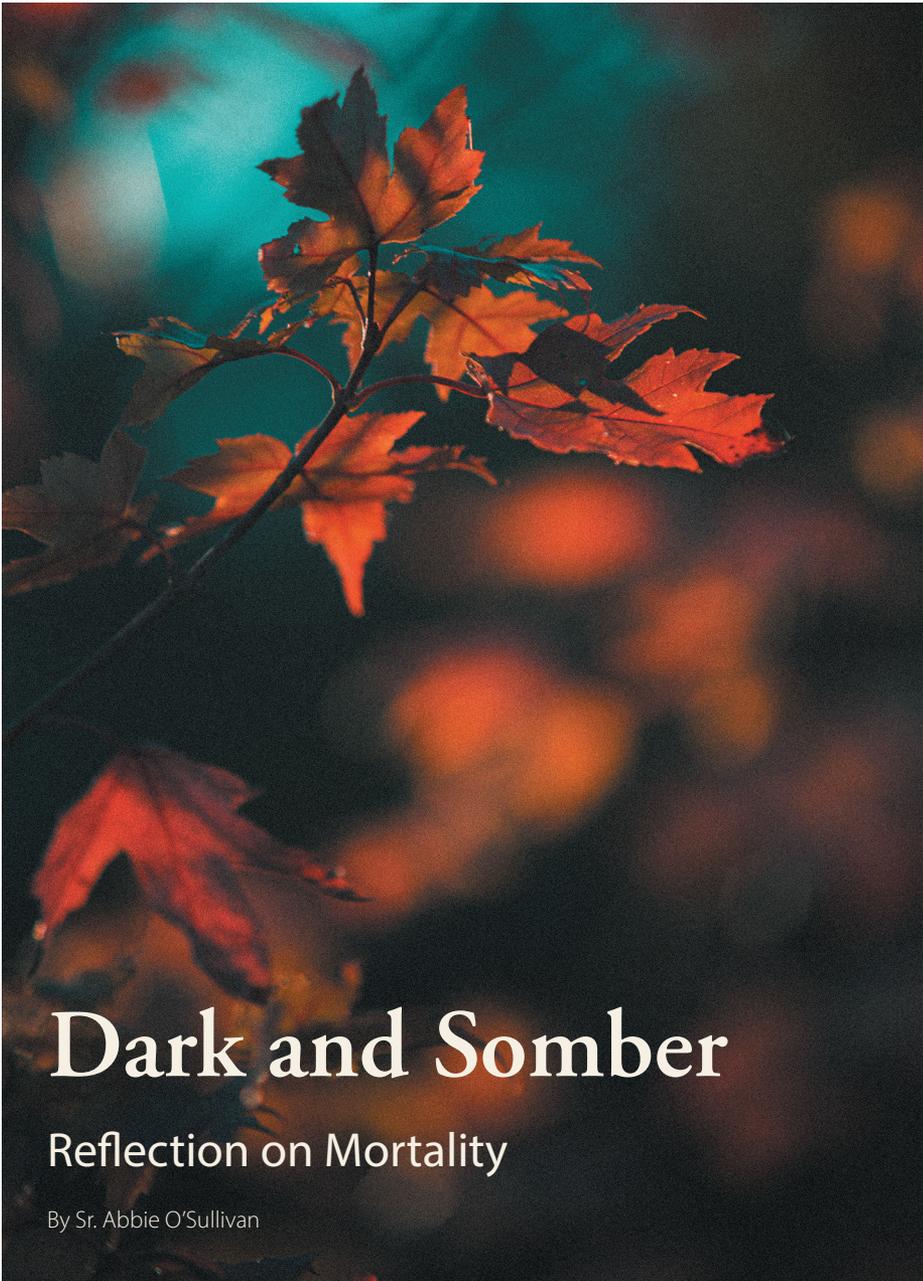
Our faith is not static, and we refer to salvation history and to ourselves as a pilgrim people. In the sculpture we had to freeze one moment of the story but I wanted to show that this scene while important was part of the longer journey so there are four different scenes depicted. The first is of the disciples walking with Jesus; the second is of them offering hospitality;

the third is the recognizing of Jesus in the sharing of bread and the fourth but not the last is the return of disciples to Jerusalem to share the good news of the resurrection with the other disciples. Each of the stages involves sharing and so in Korean at the center of the drawing we wrote "Sharing: the way of being with Jesus!"

The drawing has the road in the circle which is to show that these events are not one off but are continuous. The disciples continue to experience Jesus on the way in their sharing. 

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Columban Fr. Michael Riordan lives and works in South Korea.



# Dark and Somber

## Reflection on Mortality

By Sr. Abbie O'Sullivan

**A**t the waning of the year November comes dark and somber. The days shorten, and the nights grow long. All the abundance and richness of Autumn are stored in our barns. The fields lie bare, and the trees stand skeletal and gaunt against a bleak sky. The wintry rain spills down and at times floods the earth. The days grow colder, and the hills are wrapped in a lonely hue. With the falling leaves we remember the Holy Souls – those who toiled amongst us and whom we reluctantly let go, wondering

how we would endure without them. We realize too that in the not too distant future we too will be remembered in the same way.

In today's world we don't feel comfortable thinking or talking about our own death. We try not to articulate the word death at all. When someone dies we say she or he has "passed away." And for a moment we may wonder where she or he has gone. But we know in our hearts that our loved one has died. For her or him life has changed and is not taken away. The physical body has completed its purpose on

earth. The spiritual soul has gone to an eternal resting place "which eye hasn't seen nor ear heard nor has it entered into the mind to understand what God has in store for the one who believes in Him."

How engrossed we can become at times with reading articles and advertisements on television and online which lures us into thinking that we can look and feel younger! How many lotions do we buy in the vain hope of thinking our wrinkles will smooth out or a facelift will enhance our craggy facial expression? We are encouraged to nourish our bodies and overcome our aging process. The intention is to pretend that we will live longer.

But November cries "STOP." This month is a precious gift, a time of grace. It's an opportunity to turn from passing things and to open our hearts as we remember that the only thing we are sure of is that we will die. It is a somber thought, and for some it may be frightening. But there is no need to fear. We will return to our loving Father who has taken care of us all through our lives.

How radical is the Way of Jesus! He showed us that the way to God is to embrace our humanity with all its fragility and vulnerability. November is a very sacred month. It brings us an abundance of spiritual energies and meaning. It reminds us not to fear the winter season as spring will soon follow. It helps us to cast away our blindness and doubt. On the Cross Jesus said to the man dying beside Him, "This day you are with me in Paradise."

"This is My gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid." So, in peace let us embrace the grace of November and await our death and Resurrection. 

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Sr. Abbie O'Sullivan lives and works in Ireland.

# Our Messy House

Thanksgiving, my favorite American holiday, will arrive on November 25 this year.

Recently I came across a list of ten things to be grateful for. At first glance they didn't seem too appealing: early wakeups, housecleaning, laundry, dishes to wash, crumbs on the floor, grocery shopping, toilets to clean, noise, kids' endless questions, and tiredness. Somehow, I am guessing the list was composed by a harried mom, but I am sure there are dads out there who share some or all of these. Tell me I am right, dads.

Each of these complaints, however, has a silver lining: early wakeups can mean there are children to love. Cleaning the house means you have a safe place to live. Laundry implies clothes to wear. Dishes mean food to eat. Those pesky crumbs on the floor can be a sign of family meals. Carrying groceries home means you were able to buy them. Even toilets to clean are a sure sign of indoor plumbing! A noisy house means you have people in your life. Kids with endless questions are growing intellectually. And when you go to bed feeling sore and tired, at least you are still alive.

These last two years have been difficult for everyone: the loss of people we knew who died, the virus mutating, the mask wearing, the isolation, price inflation. There are not many silver linings on that list.

But yet, as we in the United States move closer to Thanksgiving weekend, we do have plenty of scope to offer prayers of thanks. But at the same time, our concern should extend beyond our own domestic preoccupations. The virus that hit our country so

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR

By Fr. John Burger



hard and so quickly last year has not disappeared. Those little round critters have more recently moved on to other countries with less medical infrastructure and fewer ways to help members of the public maintain their health.

I think one of the silliest things one person can say to another is, "your half of the boat is sinking." But in one sense, that is the way we have been trying to run our world for the last few centuries.

People with access to the most advanced vaccines

have not tended to care much about how the poor are going to access them. Pope Francis has pressed for global equity regarding COVID-19 vaccines, asking countries and companies to temporarily lift the property rights they hold to speed up distribution. Lamenting what he called the "virus of individualism," Pope Francis argued it doesn't lead to freedom or equality but indifference to the suffering of others.

Much like the coronavirus that has reshaped many industries throughout the world, Pope Francis argued the virus of individualism has many variants. "A variant of this virus is closed nationalism, which prevents, for

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*Lamenting what he called the "virus of individualism," Pope Francis argued it doesn't lead to freedom or equality but indifference to the suffering of others.*

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example, an internationalism of vaccines," the Pope said, in the wake of a decision by the Biden administration to waive intellectual property rights for the COVID-19 vaccines.

Likewise, people in areas not suffering the worst effects of climate change have not shown sufficient concern about the carbon being pumped into the atmosphere.

In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis is clear about the connection between the health of the natural world and the health of its people. "The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. At the global level, it is a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life." He calls for a rethinking of our relationship with technology, remarking that: "We have to accept that technological products are not neutral, for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups."

We can be grateful for so much, but there is much work to be done in the messy house that is our world.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. John".

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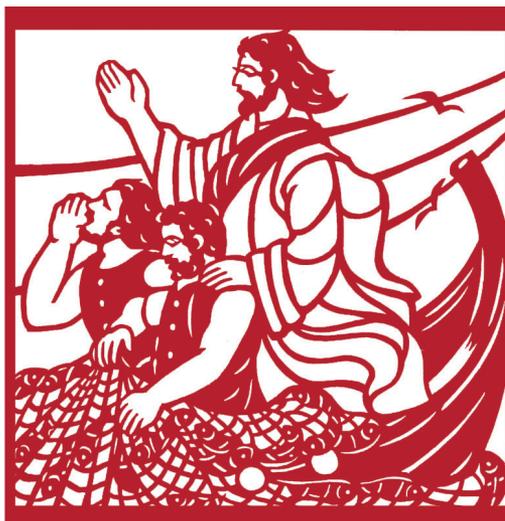
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