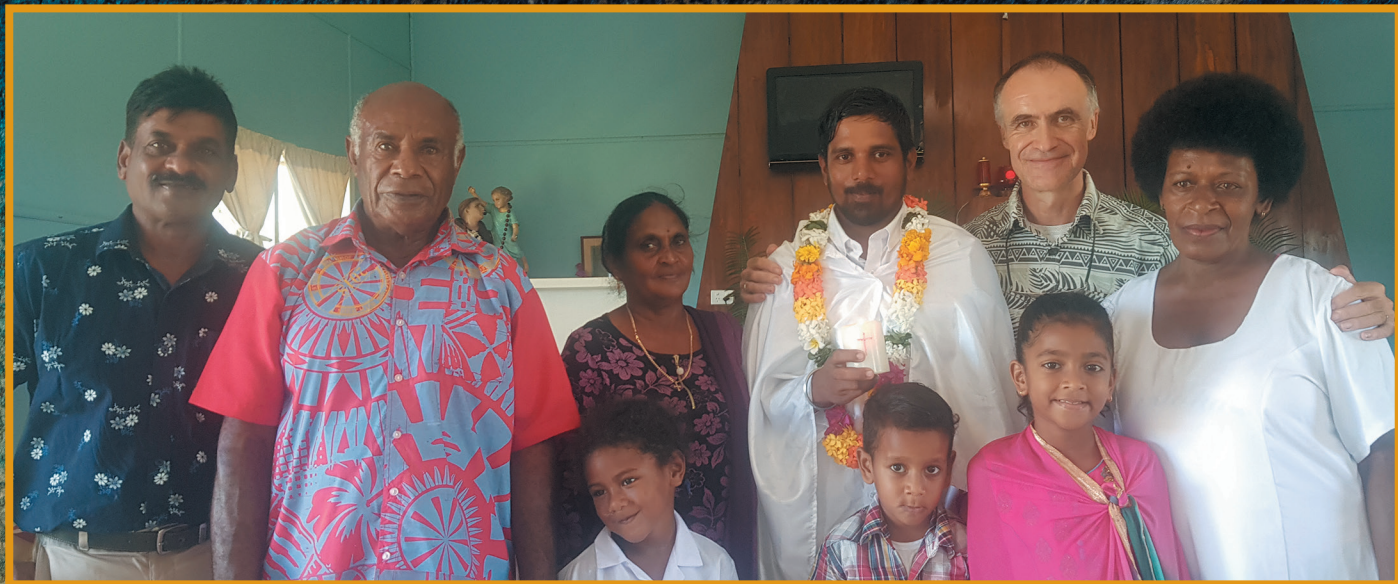


# Columban Mission

The Magazine of the Missionary Society of St. Columban

March/April 2023



## Invitation to Mission





# C O N T E N T S

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## Columban Mission

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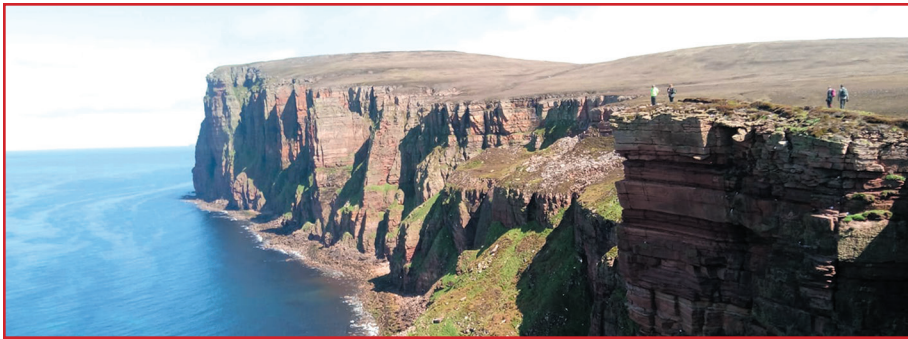
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The Missionary Society of St. Columban was founded in 1918 to proclaim and witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

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.



# In So Many Words

By Fr. Frank McKay

## My Mission

During my sixth year in the Columban seminary in Sydney, Australia, my classmates and I were asked where we would like to work after ordination. Up to that time, the Columban seminarians were not asked that question. Rather it was the custom that the new priests be sent to the country where they were most needed. So, for the first time I started to think and pray about where God wanted me to go. And very soon I felt God's reply: "Your mission is in Japan." I knew nothing about Japan but I felt one thing: my character or spirit was similar to that of Japan. So, I asked to go to Japan. We knew that if the place we asked for was not possible, we would be sent to another country. As regards Japan, at that time the Columbans had not sent anyone to Japan from Australia for fifteen years, but I felt deeply that I would certainly go to Japan. A few months later we were informed that myself and one classmate were appointed to Japan. In May of the following year we were ordained and left the seminary in December. As the language school in Tokyo did not start till September, I worked for six months in parishes in Melbourne.

My classmate and I arrived at Tokyo Airport on September 3, 1973. By coincidence it was my mother's birthday. Arriving at the Columban headquarters in Tokyo, I

immediately felt "at home" in Japan. I knew this was where I was supposed to be. Except for one year of study in Sydney, I have been in Japan since then, working in twelve parishes of five dioceses. Although the language is still quite difficult, I experience God always helping me. I have learnt that all our problems are God's problems.

Sometimes, like everyone else, I have had times of suffering, but I always experience Jesus' joy. To me, suffering is God's gift that helps us surrender trust in God, grow more quickly, and helps God save others. It is one of God's graces to understand and accept that mystery. I have experienced all different kinds of suffering, and so I can help people who have

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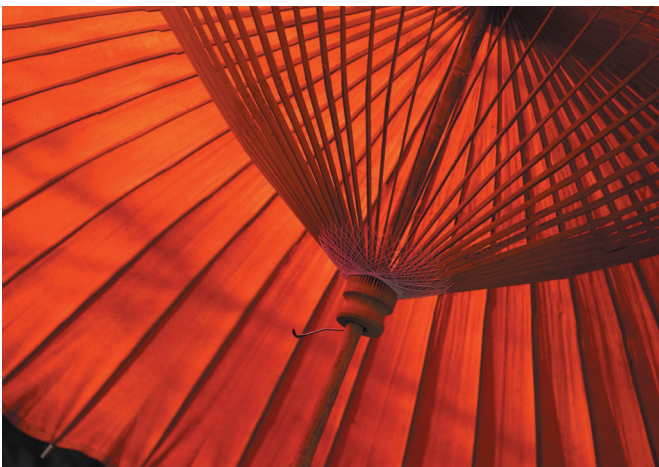
*So, for the first time I started to think and pray about where God wanted me to go. And very soon I felt God's reply: "Your mission is in Japan."*

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the same suffering. St. Paul explained one of the purposes of suffering when he said, "God helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help those who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God." (2 Cor 1:4)

A few months before coming to Japan, I had a tremendous experience of God's love through the prayer called "the Baptism in the Holy Spirit." Since then I have been blessed to help others experience God's love in the same way. I always ask God for the grace to be where He wants me to be. And if it is His will, I pray that my mission will be here in Japan until I go to meet Him.

*Columban Fr. Frank McKay lives and works in Japan.*





# Good Friday

## The Hills of Ba

By Fr. Patrick Colgan

It has always struck me that the Fijian translation of Good Friday is simply and literally, “Day of Death.” No massaging, no theological euphemisms, just saying is “as it is.” In turn, preparations for this day are taken very seriously, and the crosswalks or the dramas with which they mark the day are often long, physically challenging, and emotional.

Such was the case with the five “highland” villages of Ba today, where 40 of whose youth had started carrying the cross in silence on Wednesday morning along the almost 20-mile stretch on the tough and parched roads linking their villages. They were accompanied by the parish catechists of each village (and often by youth of other Christian denominations) who gave teachings each night on the meaning of Holy Week.

Having bid goodbye to the parishioners of Ba Town at 6 a.m. as they boarded a bus to begin their own cross walk, and knowing that the other section of the parish (the four coastal villages) had also been on the road since 5 a.m., I headed up the hills to Navala, to first conduct five baptisms and the admission of twelve

young people into our Sacrament of Confirmation Program.

By 9 a.m., we were ready to witness the highland youths’ rendering of the Passion of St. John, which was interwoven with the fourteen traditional Stations of the Cross. The lifelike shouts of the soldiers and physical mistreatment of Jesus abruptly brought us back to that day in Jerusalem some 2000 years ago.

Dressed in uniforms culled from

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*In turn, preparations for this day are taken very seriously, and the crosswalks or the dramas with which they mark the day are often long, physically challenging, and emotional.*

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cardboard boxes, except for the few wearing Fiji army fatigues, they pushed Jesus up the hill of the village, where he met his mother and the weeping women, fell and stood up again three times, was helped briefly by Simon of Cyrene, and was finally divested of his clothes right down to his

undergarment, at which point he was hoisted over the village on a cross.

At one point, I had to make sure that the nail hammering was not an actual crucifixion, but a way of squeezing his legs between two narrow slats, which is of course very painful. After death, he was taken down from the Cross into the arms of his mother after which the soldiers carried him into the sacristy for burial.

Rather than all adjourn to wait for the liturgical 3 p.m. Service of the Passion, I asked that we keep going. In place of individual confessions, a service of communal repentance was led by the catechists, with villages having written down their sins, seeing them go up in flames before the altar.

The Liturgy of the Word followed, and I also decided to let the youth who had learned their parts by heart in their drama also conduct the proclamation of the Gospel — the same Jesus, Peter, Pilate, crowd, etc. This was a powerful “retake” of what we had already seen, my homily noting that while the Stations of the Cross (and the other three Gospel writers) emphasises Jesus’ physical suffering on Good Friday, the Gospel



The congregation



Kava drinking in a traditional bure after the liturgy





"Jesus" stripped of his clothes



"Jesus" hoisted on the cross



Burning of the congregation's sins



"Jesus" in the arms of his mother

of John rather poses a number of awkward questions to us such as Who is Jesus for you?; Do you (like Peter and the others) also deny knowing him when the chips are down?; Who is really on trial here — Jesus, Pilate or you?; What king (meaning power structure) do you choose in your life? Is it that based on violence, patronage and the size of one's army, or it one whose only weapons are integrity and truth?

The same youth then held up two crosses for the rite of veneration, and we ended with Communion being brought up (and returned) to the house in the village where it had "slept" last night.

After the Liturgy, we retired for the drinking of kava which lasted until exactly 3 p.m., at which time the village fell silent to mark the hour of Jesus' death. We then had lunch and I left.

I will say that this "Day of the Dead," this "Good Day" will remain in my memory for many days, and I continue to marvel at the ingenuity of the Fijian people, particularly the young people, in their taking this story to themselves and presenting in a way that shakes one's liturgical niceties, returning it to the physical, messy and ultimately loving day that it was. **CM**

Fr. Patrick Colgan lives and works in Fiji.



# Theresa

## Companion for a Hermit

By Fr. Frank Hoare



### A Late Vocation

“Sister, this is the call of God that I have been waiting for. I had a sense of having a call and not knowing what it was.” This was Mrs. Theresa Nath’s reaction, at the age of 54 years, to a request to leave home in Fiji’s capital, Suva, to become a companion for Mother Canisius.

Mother Canisius had come from New Zealand to Fiji ten years previously in 1977 to live a life of prayer as a hermit. She lived at the Ashram, a rural retreat center about 150 miles from Suva. She was growing old and weak. She needed a companion.

Mother Canisius, on meeting Theresa, asked her all sorts of questions. She wanted to test Theresa’s commitment. Would she remain with her in her good days and her bad days? “Luckily I passed all her examinations,” said Theresa smiling.

### Unexpected Adversity

Theresa was born in Suva in June 1933. Her father owned his own small bus service. Theresa attended a Catholic

primary school to class three, when the schools in Fiji closed during World War II to be used as billets for soldiers.

After the war Theresa boarded at a Catholic primary school. She was baptized and received First Communion there. When she finished class eight her father brought her home to the rudimentary dwelling he built on land he had bought.

Theresa had an arranged marriage with a Catholic convert in 1952. They were both 19 years old and lived with her parents. Theresa began working in a cigarette factory in 1957. By 1960 she had five daughters.

Theresa’s husband went to England in 1962 to stay with her relatives, find work and bring the family over. He sent money home for three months. Then he disappeared and all communication with Theresa ceased.

### Caring for Her Children

When Theresa’s adopted brother married, the dwelling became too small for the extended family. Theresa bought a small shack and became

a tenant at will in an informal settlement. Two of her older daughters were married by then.

Sometime later Rup Chand, a seaman, asked her to look after his own mother and his two very small children, whose mother had deserted them. He promised to send money regularly to her. Theresa agreed, partly because she worried about her three adolescent daughters. Rup Chand was honest and treated her daughters with respect and care. She warned him never to criticize her Church or try to stop her from going to Mass on Sundays.

Like everyone, they had their ups and downs. If she was annoyed with him she would go to a film after Mass on a Sunday morning. Worried about her, he would guess where she was and would wait for her to come out (Hindi films are quite long) and accompany her home.

When her father later moved house, he signed over his land to Theresa. The Housing Authority, to whom she mortgaged the land, built a standard house there. She paid a





Left: KJ Ashram nestling among the hills. Inset: Mother Canisius' grave at K J Ashram, Namata, Fiji Above: Theresa Nath with Fr. Frank Hoare

large deposit and a weekly sum. She sold food parcels and did some sewing to make some extra money. Rup contributed too. Her three younger daughters married and emigrated to North America. Theresa had now fulfilled her family responsibilities and was open to another call.

### Caring for Mother Canisius

By 1997 Mother Canisius was becoming weaker. When she was in hospital for surgery Theresa stayed with her. "I would sleep on the floor beside her bed. Two years later she was admitted again, and I stayed with her day and night."

Theresa's daughter Angeline had returned from the U.S. She used to bring their food to the hospital on the 8:00 a.m. morning bus, stay all day and return to the Ashram on the evening bus to wash their clothes. After two months Mother Canisius died in Theresa's arms.

Angeline wondered why her U.S. permanent residence permit was taking so long. A day or two after Mother

Canisius' burial she received a phone call from the American Embassy. The message was, "Why haven't you collected your residence permit? It has been here for the last three months!"

Theresa is now 89 years old and has lived for almost 35 years at the Ashram. There she has a regular program of prayer which includes reciting the Divine Office morning and evening and attending Mass, when available. She used to help cook for groups that came there.

### Caring for the People


Theresa has been an angel of mercy to many people around the Ashram. She bought the materials and had a small house built for a young mother with small children who was thrown out by her mother-in-law. She paid school fees for many children. She bought hampers for poor families in the settlement before Christmas and Easter each year.

She helped two part-time Ashram cooks, when there was no priest in residence. She paid one from her own

pocket and had wiring and electricity installed in the other's house. She paid the seminary fees of a young man in India and was thrilled to attend his ordination.

### Like Ruth with Naomi

Her daughter Annie recalls visiting the Ashram once and being woken by her mother and told to shower and to be in the church by 7:00 a.m. As she was walking up the hill she heard her mother singing a hymn by herself inside the church. She stood outside and cried. Her mother seemed to have a glow of happiness.

When Theresa heard God's call to become Mother Canisius' companion she gave her house and land to Rup Chand and his son. The then Archbishop gave her permission in writing to live as long as she wished at the Ashram and be buried beside Mother Canisius. She would remain a companion to her in life and in death. 

Columban Fr. Frank Hoare lives and works in Fiji.





# Help Future Generations with a Donation Today

Your gift helps make possible livelihood programs like the Embroidery Project started by Columban Fr. Bill Morton and Columban lay missionaries in Mexico to help female migrants provide for their families.



***The Embroidery Project goes beyond a business, it is a humanitarian project. It serves as a network of support and solidarity. It is a space to weave the pain, the memories of their country of origin and to be able to express their emotions, feelings and stories through art, and to be able to weave a hopeful future.***

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

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

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

- Avoid taxes on transfers of up to \$100,000 from your IRA to our organization
- May satisfy your required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year
- Reduce your taxable income, even if you do not itemize deductions
- Make a gift that is not subject to the deduction limits on charitable gifts
- 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](mailto:donorrelations@columban.org), call us toll-free at (877) 299-1920, or visit [www.columban.org](http://www.columban.org). The Missionary Society of St. Columban treasures your support and is committed to the stewardship of your gifts.



# Come and See

## Reaching Out in Person and Via Zoom

By Fr. Frank Hoare

**O**n Saturday July 23, 2022, Columban seminarians and their formator held two Come and See programs together in Fiji. The day long face-to-face program was conducted at the Columban Formation House and was attended by sixteen young men. Two of these young men came all the way from Labasa for the program. The other program was a two-hour ZOOM program which reached out to nine young men on Tarawa Island in Kiribati and at least four young men in Ba.

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*Everyone was very happy with the program of prayer, sharing, videos, and information which was held on a beautiful day in Suva.*

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It was possible to hold these program simultaneously, because we had the participation of two Columban PRS students as well as two Columban Manila students and three young Columban students finishing their holidays before going to Loyola School of Theology in Manila on Monday. Fr. Martin Koroiciri, who is on holidays from mission in Chile, also made himself available to give a talk.

We thank Mr. Birati, the president of the Kiribati Columban Companions in Mission, who invited the students in Kiribati to the Ministry of Education offices in Tarawa to



Saula Seeto and Iowane Naio at July 2022 Come and See



Participants listening during Columban Come and See



Kiribati students listening to Paula Suka on ZOOM

participate by ZOOM. We are grateful also to two ladies from the Raiwaqa branch of the Columban Companions in Mission who catered for the large group in Suva. We thank Fr. Carlo Jung for encouraging the two students from Labasa to come, to Fr. Pat Colgan who made arrangements in Ba Presbytery for three of the Ba students to participate and to Fr. John McEvoy for allowing us to use his ZOOM subscription.

Everyone was very happy with the program of prayer, sharing, videos, and information which was held on a beautiful day in Suva. We will miss the Columban students who leave soon for Manila, and we wish them every blessing in their studies and in the remainder of the Columban formation. **CM**

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Columban Fr. Frank Hoare lives and works in Fiji.





# The Color Palette of Way of the Cross

## Lenten Art Recollection

By Fr. Jason Antiquera

**A**fter a two-year hiatus due to COVID, face-to-face Art Recollection was back in 2022! The first communities that got to pray and reflect on their faith life through visual arts were the migrants; they were Filipino Catholics of the Diocese of Daejeon. Through the initiative of Columban Fr. Jude Genovia who works full time in Migrants Ministry, the Lenten season was once again experienced face-to-face yet in a safe space. The whole recollection focused on the meditation on the passion, suffering and death of Jesus Christ through the Way (Stations) of the Cross. However, the praying through this five-century-old Christian devotion was done in a method none had ever done before: through a coloring page.

Instead of a loud reading of Scripture and accompanying prayers, recollection participants just prayerfully gazed upon the image in each station. Then they applied colors slowly in a contemplative manner. While colors have their own collective cultural and religious meaning, participants were encouraged to choose a color that reflected their personal experience

and life. Also, each one was personally guided on how to apply the colors. The fruit was coming up with their own color palette applied to a moment in Christ's passion and death that resonated with their own feelings and thoughts. Each one followed their own pace, pulse and strokes in coloring. Two people may have worked not only on the same image but also on identical color combination but the outputs were totally distinguishable by its uniqueness of touch and stroke. Such was its beauty that the reflection sharing, which followed coloring, was rich and diverse yet each one resonated.

Through contemplative coloring, we were able to immerse into the passion and death of Christ and into our experience of suffering and dealing with death. Therefore, it couldn't be helped that other participants burst into tears as they shared. However, they did not feel alone as a community was there to listen and hold them as they connected with figures like Simon of Cyrene, Veronica, the Women of Jerusalem, Mary mother of Jesus, the beloved disciple, and Joseph of Arimathea. Likewise, we also got in touch with the part of ourselves that

is like that of Pontius Pilate, Pharisees and the High Priests, the crowd and the soldiers. One of the most obvious effects the art recollection to participants were a sense of relief from and release of heavy emotions they kept inside. As I look back, I realized that our lives have its own color palette as expressed in the colors applied to the Way of the Cross during the Lenten Recollection.

### In Lenten Workshop and Individual Prayers

While I created the coloring page with the thought of Lenten Art Recollection, I got to think also of other groups and individual people who may find the material helpful. So, I turned it into full self-guided coloring book titled "Way of the Cross: Color and Contemplation" with a digital version for easy distribution. One of those to whom I shared the material was Columban Fr. Noel O'Neill, founder of Emmaus Rainbow Community that assists people of special needs in many ways.

On Holy Thursday, Fr. Noel gathered the community and together colored their Way of the Cross. Later,





Dr. Chun Yung Hui, a director of a school of art, judged the colorings. And on Easter Sunday during the Mass, there was a presentation and awarding ceremony of artworks that were carefully evaluated and chosen. For our Emmaus friends, the activity was a real experience of labor followed by celebration with the resurrected Christ. The reflection of bright and warm colors reflected the colors in the rainbow that symbolizes the community.

Apart from distributing it to those who work with group facilitation, the digital copy was also shared to individual people. They may reproduce it freely appropriate to their needs as long as they have the digital copy. It was also designed in a way that it can be easily printed on any A4 paper so it is practically available.

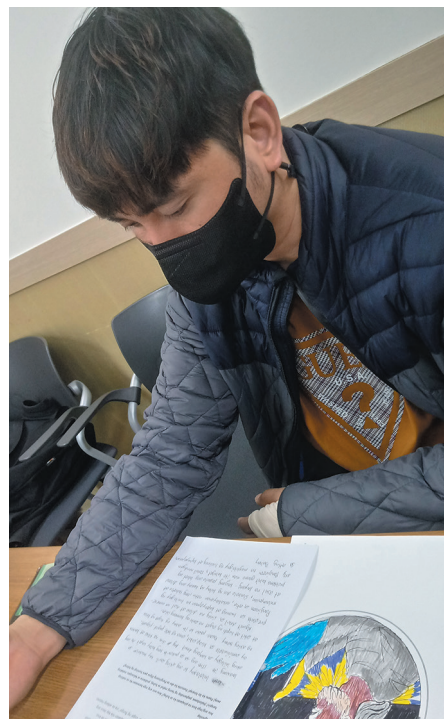
Likewise, though they may not be able to use it immediately, they may do so in some other time when the need arises. Any person who is not able to do it with a group can do it alone in one's preferred space while playing one's desired background music in one's convenient time. In this

way, there is also no pressure to finish the entire stations in one time. Such is the flexibility and beauty of the material.

### **The Making of "Coloring the Way of the Cross"**

The idea of coloring pages for reflection was a response to questions, what can I do for our Lenten Art Recollection? Since Catholic faithful are drawn to devotion, I decided to work on the Stations of the Cross. However, the prayer is often too wordy so I asked, "How do we meditate on it with less words and rather immerse ourselves in image and colors?"

Likewise, thinking about individual people, is there any other way people can pray the devotion in a safer space in the midst of covid19 pandemic? Is there a way where people can reflect on Christ's suffering and also of their own where, though overwhelmed, they can ground themselves to something like beauty that can hold them in their vulnerability? How can I facilitate people to do the devotion in their own time, space and, to a certain extent, their own way? These were significant questions that led to the making of



the coloring pages. The works that followed were also demanding: from drawing works of fourteen different yet harmonized templates to drafting guidelines for coloring procedure and reflection questions as I wanted it available as a self-guided activity. I have chosen the mandala shape due to its spiritual character and universal meaning of wholeness.

Every part of the making of "Way of the Cross: Coloring and Contemplation," was driven by a pastoral response to God's desire for humans to experience wholeness and renewal of life beyond the cross. The color palette we choose to fill the Way of the Cross is the color of our life and of our very selves united with that of Jesus of Nazareth. Our passion and suffering have become one with that of Christ our redeemer. In this sense, even in difficulties, hardship and darkness become a way to God who saves us.

I have hope that more people will get to meditate the Way of the Cross using this coloring book and through many other creative ways. **CM**

Columban Fr. Jason Antiquera lives and works in Korea.



# The Poet and the Saint

## Inspiration and Conversion on the Island of Orkney

By Fr. John Boles



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*Always his inspiration was Orkney — its stark and windswept scenery, its millennial history, its people, legends and folklore.*

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*"In the fire of images,  
I put my hand."*

These are the words inscribed on a plaque in Edinburgh's Royal Mile. They come from the pen of George Mackay Brown (1921-96), regarded by many as Scotland's greatest writer of the twentieth century. Honored by various universities, awarded the Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth in 1974, shortlisted for the Booker Prize for "Beside the Ocean of Time" in 1994, he became known internationally as "The Poet of Orkney." What few people realize is that he achieved nearly all this while living as a reclusive semi-invalid within the confines of the tiny

Orcadian port of Stromness. Even fewer are aware that in 1961 he created a stir in the staunchly Calvinist islands by becoming a Catholic—and that this conversion drew inspiration from another son of Orkney, the Viking earl known to history as Saint Magnus the Martyr.

While visiting Columban supporters on Orkney, local parishioners granted me the privilege of sharing their recollections of George, and even showed me some of his own memoirs. They remember a quiet, humble, unassuming member of the Catholic community. Columban benefactor Chris Taylor knew him

well. "We never thought of him as this world-famous writer. For us he was just, well, George."

George Mackay Brown was born in a tiny cottage on a wharf in Stromness, the youngest of six children. His father became the village postman; his mother was a native Gaelic speaker. At an early age George contracted tuberculosis, a condition that was to leave him weakened for the rest of his life. Registered as unfit for wartime military service, he took up journalism with a local newspaper and almost immediately discovered he had a flair for writing. Scattered verses gradually merged into books of poems. By the



1960s he was celebrated as a poet of international stature, at which point he embarked on a similarly successful career as a novelist.

Always his inspiration was Orkney — its stark and windswept scenery, its millennial history, its people, legends and folklore.

However, it should also be mentioned that along the way George developed an affinity for the pint as well as the pen. “Stromness voted itself ‘wet’ in 1947,” George wrote. “Thus, I made another joyous discovery: beer.” Wikipedia’s biographer observes laconically that George’s subsequent conversion to Catholicism, “was not marked by any change in his daily habits, including his drinking.”

He’d been contemplating entering the Faith for some years. Parishioner Alison Gray writes how, “his surrender to Catholicism was...resonant in the wild beauty of Orkney,” and in its history, central to which was the figure of Magnus. “St. Magnus was a defining influence on Mackay Brown. His life was framed by St. Magnus.”

Magnus Ellendson (1080-1117) was of Viking stock. This warlike people had settled Orkney around the year 850. He was a Christian nobleman respected for his piety and gentleness.

In 1105 the King of Norway appointed him Earl of Orkney alongside his cousin Haakon. After a while, conflict broke out between the two cousins. Anxious to avoid further bloodshed, Magnus agreed to join Haakon at a peace conference on a neutral island. However, the invitation was a trap and Haakon had him killed. Almost immediately, Magnus was revered as a saint and martyr. His remains were transferred to Orkney’s main town of Kirkwall and placed in the magnificent cathedral begun in 1137 and which bears his name.


In 1973 George published “Magnus,” which some consider to be his masterwork. Into the novel he weaves a traditional belief that Magnus was warned of Haakon’s treachery the night before and urged to flee. Searching for divine guidance, Magnus goes to Mass and realizes that Jesus could also have fled Jerusalem on Maundy Thursday night and saved himself, but didn’t, because if there’d been no Cross there would have been no Resurrection, no triumph of life over death. So, like Jesus, Magnus stays. Like Jesus, Magnus even forgives his executioners before they despatch him. For Mackay Brown, St. Magnus embodies the Jesus story. He might

### Selected works by George Mackay Brown

- “The Storm” (1954)
- “Loaves and Fishes” (1959)
- “Greenvoe” (1972)
- “Magnus” (1973)
- “Vinland” (1992)
- “Beside the Ocean Time” (1994)
- “For the Islands I Sing: An Autobiography” (1996).
- Biography: “George Mackay Brown: No Separation,” by Alison Gray (2016).

also have identified, in the trials of Magnus, struggles with his own “demons,” such as ill-health, alcohol and periods of depression.

At any rate, God appears to have blessed the connection between the two men. When George died in 1996 his funeral was celebrated by Catholics and Protestants alike in the Cathedral of St. Magnus.

Not only that, but George died on April 13, and so the requiem was fixed for April 16—which is the Feast of Saint Magnus the Martyr! 

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Fr. John Boles is Regional Director of the Columban Missionaries in Britain.





# Finding Connections

## Empowering Youth

By Fr. Kurt Zion Pala



**I**t is amazing how things, situations, history and peoples can be so connected and tied with one another.

We moved to the north of Myanmar (formerly Burma) from Yangon to begin the next stage of mission with the Kachin peoples. The bishop laid out different ministries that we the Columban missionaries can be involved with including youth, family ministry, and even looking after a farm. I ended up working with the Diocesan Youth Commission. After observing and looking around, I noticed that there are a number of government educational institutions in the diocese.

There are many Catholic students, but there is no student chaplaincy in the diocese. So, I went to the bishop and spoke about my plan to start a student ministry in the diocese. After a discussion with the youth director, we started to go around the different schools and met the Catholic students and also teachers to organize the Catholic Student Action Myitkyina (CSAM) movement.

The student movement is actually inspired by another student movement that was started by a Columban missionary in the Philippines, the Student Catholic Action (SCA).

Columban Fr. Edward J. McCarthy saw that generations of students did not have religious instruction, and there was growing anti-Catholic sentiment prevalent during that time in the Philippines so started the SCA. The movement flourished in the University of the Philippines and quickly spread to other universities and schools. It was very active during the martial law days. And many of its alumni became prominent individuals including Cardinal Tagle. Since its founding, many Columban priests served as university chaplains including Fr. Clarence R. Beckley.

Fr. Clarence served SCA mostly in the Far Eastern University from 1983-1986. On my ordination day I received a gift from Fr. Clarence's family — his chalice and ciborium. In their letter, Jane, Fr. Clarence's sister wrote, "Clarence and I were very close and we talked about what we were to do with it if he would pass on. This is exactly what he wanted. I'm thrilled to the soul that Father Tom Shaughnessy had mentioned to me that there is a lad coming up for his ordination. This is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring about. I do hope and pray that you will be the servant to carry on Fr. Beckley's work

in the Philippines and wherever your mission will take you."

On my ordination day, Fr. Tom Shaughnessy, a fellow Columban handed me the chalice and the ciborium. Fr. Tom was also one of my very first formators in Cebu City, the Philippines.

But Fr. EJ McCarthy, the founder of the movement spent some time in Myanmar where I am now living and working. At the invitation of the Asian Superior of the Columbans, Fr. McCarthy went to Myanmar (formerly Burma) to carry out the canonical visitation of Columbans on behalf of the Superior General. Because of that visit he escaped the Malate massacre of February 1945 when five Columbans in Malate were killed, but he could not escape the tragedy that fell upon Mandalay, Burma, during his visit. While in Mandalay, as they were saying Mass, a shell burst mortally injuring one Columban, injuring seven others while Fr. McCarthy escaped with a few scratches. And during this trip he also contracted malaria. During the war, he was interned at the St. John's Leper Asylum in Mandalay for 37 months. Yet he would later write that "Looking back now, I can say that those years in Burma were the happiest of my whole life."



According to Fr. Neil Magill, another Columban who was interned in the church of St. John, Columban, Fr. Tom Murphy was killed while saying Mass in the church when the Japanese bombed it. The alternative higher education center is now the occupant of the old leprosarium. Fr. Neil mentioned that when he started the Mandalay Archdiocesan Higher Education Center (HEC) in 2009, many of the old people he met mentioned the names of the Columbans they've met. They told stories of how Columbans made slippers and one even pulled their teeth.

As a Columban student I used to do pastoral work in the University of the East (Manila), which is also part of the Student Catholic Action movement with Fr. Bernard Martin, another Columban. Through my encounters with the SCA movement, it inspired me to start a student movement in the diocese (2018), which we call now the Catholic


Student Action Myitkyina (CSAM).

The movement is also a ministry to the Catholic student population in government schools. Like SCA, the ministry provides spiritual and faith formation but also leadership training (self-leadership) and personal development. The highlights of the year are the University Students' Gathering and the Student Leadership Camp.

After months of preparation and a cancellation, we finally hosted our second Student Leadership Camp from June 19- 25, 2022, in the Center for Learning Alternatives for Youth (CLAY), in Pa La Na, Myitkyina. We had 32 participants ranging from 16 to 24 years old. Many came from nearby parishes like Mogawng and Namti.

The camp was divided into three stages of discovery: discovering self and others, discovering the Church and discovering Catholic Student Action Myitkyina (CSAM). The theme of

the camp was "Empowering You, Empowering Youth." The objectives of the camp are to provide training on necessary skills and knowledge to student leaders, to build working-relationship and friendship among students/youth and to introduce the Catholic Student Action Myitkyina (CSAM) spirit.

The pandemic and the on-going political crisis in the country is putting a lot of pressure and stress on the youth. A number have joined the armed movement, but some are lost and do not know what to do. We recently opened the Student Learning Resource Center to prepare young people to be work-ready and ready to face the real world. The center provides different courses and activities. The center will be run with young people for young people. 

Columban Fr. Kurt Zion Pala lives and works in Myanmar (formerly Burma).



Fr. Kurt learning Burmese with Buddhist novices monks



Fr. Kurt with local friends



Fr. Tom with Fr. Kurt at his ordination with Fr. Clarence's chalice



Harvested rice



# A Hopeful Start to Holy Week in Ba

## Palm Sunday

By Fr. Patrick Colgan







Today was Palm Sunday, and a very busy one for me, serving as the lone priest here in Christ the King, Ba, Fiji. We have three Masses each Sunday, one in the main town church followed by two in village churches. Today's liturgies were obviously longer, encompassing both the procession of palms as well as the reading of the Long Passion (this year, according to St. Luke).

Up bright and early, we began the town Mass at the bottom of the field that serves as the playground that serves our adjoining school, St. Teresa's. We processed up the field holding our palms and singing to the church where the liturgy took place in three languages — English, Fijian and Hindi — to cater for our multicultural congregation.

Straight after, I hit the road for the settlement of Ravi Ravi, where Mass is normally conducted in Hindi for our Indo-Fijian community who live there. Today, however, we were joined by the itaukei villagers of Koroqaqa, Sarava and Navau, filling the Church inside and out. It was appropriate to have a large congregation, due to both the solemnity of the day, but also because Ba Parish was about to celebrate its one adult initiation of this year. The young man is called Sunil Kumar Soman. He is from Kerala, India, and has been working in a local engineering company for the past five years. He tried many times in India to become Catholic (he comes from a Hindu family) but the present political climate there is not conducive to conversions. He tried again in Qatar,


where he went on a work contract. He then accepted a contract in Fiji, and for some time joined the Pentecostal Church, where his workmates and friends worshiped. He shared, though, that his heart was never fully at peace there. He has a deep love for both the Holy Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin Mary, and could not find that among the Pentecostals. A chance meeting with me in Ba, where, after trying many other Catholic churches, he eventually was able to purchase a new rosary to replace the broken one he had hung around his neck in India, Qatar, the UAE and now Fiji, led to a larger conversation in which it became clear to me that Sunil was unmistakably ready for baptism, showing me all his prayer books (in Malayalam, which I cannot read) and his own daily example of fasting and works of mercy. He did not know that only one kilometer from where he lodged was the Church of St. Antony, Raviravi, where services were held in Hindi — his third language, but one which he reads and understands. So, the community took him to their heart and prepared him for baptism, confirmation and Holy Communion, which we celebrated today. A Fijian kava ceremony of welcome was performed, as well as the Indian customs of garlanding, touching the feet of his godparents, and feeding everyone with sweets and ice cream.

Finally, it was on to Votua, a large itaukei village on the banks of the Ba Estuary (and site of a big mining operation, about which Columbans,

along with Caritas and Jubilee Australia have been advocating against, as recently as last Friday). The mood there was both exuberant and solemn, with the youth dramatizing the Passion with various shouts of derision against Jesus, as well His confession as an "upright man" by the Roman centurion who crucified Him.

St. Luke's version of the Passion emphasises both Jesus' tireless work of reconciling people, even under His own extreme circumstances (e.g. the reconciliation of Pilate and Herod that day, His prayer from the cross for those "who do not know what they are doing" and His comfort of the sorrowing women) as well as the place of outsiders confessing and believing Jesus, before those within the community (the plea of the condemned thief "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom," the co-opting of Simon — a foreigner from Cyrene, to help Jesus carry the cross and Pilate's three times declaring Jesus' innocence, as did the centurion).

It is my hope that in our own small way—in conducting liturgies that are multilingual, receiving a "foreigner" from India into our hearts, and the youth taking full charge in Votua — that we are trying to follow a Jesus who reached out, in good times and bad, and saw the potential in every person, no matter what society thought or judged to be the case.

May we all have a Holy Week full of other surprises and learnings! 

Columban Fr. Patrick Colgan lives and works in Fiji.



# My Little Life Projects

## Holy Week Activities

By Fr. Jude Genovia



On the night of Palm Sunday, when all my pastoral activities in the Migrant Center were done, I arrived home, got a simple dinner and yet instead of getting myself ready to call it a day, I decided to do one more thing. I call it my little life project. What happened was, sometime in March, the staff of Moyse Catholic Migrant Center had gone to one of the Martyr's Shrines as our bonding activity. The name of the Shrine was "Galmaemot Martyrs' Sacred Place." Since 1925, this place became a sacred place for Korean Catholics as this was confirmed by witnesses as the place where a French Bishop, two French priests and two Korean lay leaders were decapitated on Good Friday, March 30, 1866. 1866 was known as the devastating year of Byeong-in Persecutions where the three French missionaries surrendered themselves to minimize the further arrests and torture of the

Korean Catholics. Their two Korean lay leaders surrendered as well and joined the deliberate act of marching them from Seoul to the small village called Galmayeon to warn every village they passed through the consequence people would get if they joined the Catholic movement. It was said that the soldiers who were ordered to carry out the execution were taking their time to parade the five prisoners. However, the French missionaries insisted to double their pace so their execution could take place on Good Friday. The execution was indeed done on Good Friday. Since then, the sacred place has been constantly visited by Korean Catholics. The three French missionaries and two Korean martyrs were canonized in 1984.

Going back to our visit to the sacred place, we joined the Mass just before noon and had lunch and coffee afterwards. The afternoon was spent exploring the sacred place. Across from

the shrine was the sea facing China. The shrine was located in a fishing village. The sight of fishing boats docked near the shore reminded me of my own birthplace. The staff were enjoying the stroll while the others threw stones to the sea and tried to compete on the number of hops their stones would get. I noticed empty seashells of different shapes and sizes littered on the beach. They were sights of an insatiable appetite of human beings for seafood. Some of the empty shells could have been used again as shelter for sea creatures if returned to the ocean.

The rest were completely left useless and thrown away. I decided to collect the ones with less damaged conditions. I really did not know what to do with them yet. All I knew was their seeming aesthetic value. I came home that day with some seashells.

Days and weeks passed, I completely forgot about the seashells.



The pastoral demands at Moyse Migrant Center took most of my attention and time.

Then came Palm Sunday. It was a long day. I started off by leading a group of Filipino Catholics to do the station of the Cross at the old Church which was 40 minutes' drive from our Migrant Center. Then I had to drive for another hour and a half to another city for the Tagalog Mass in the afternoon. After the Mass, I proceeded to visit a family stricken by Covid19 to deliver some provisions. By the time I got home it was already past 9 p.m. As I was taking my dinner, the succulent plants caught my attention. I noticed they were still planted in a plastic pot. And all of a sudden, I felt a sense of guilt. I remembered I promised these plants to get them a more comfortable and beautiful pot. I realized this promise had been left undone for more than four months. And so, I planned to go to the flower shop the following day to buy some descent pots for my plants.

But my impulsive tendency urged me to do something right away. The option to go and get the pots at the flower shop was out since it was already late in the evening. So, I looked around my room and see if there were descent alternative items I could use for the plants. Bingo!


My attention was brought to the empty seashells. Part of my brain argued that the seashells were created for sea creatures. The other part of my brain (I did not know if it was the right side or left side), had assured me that the seashells could also provide a comfy place for my plants. And so, the little life project began. I began to take the bigger shells and decided to make them the shelter pots for my succulent plants. I admit I kind of stretched the boundary of a land-based plants to live and grow in the seashells. However, asserting my stewardship role on this little life



project, I hoped that the succulent plants would find the seashells as comfortable pots for them.

As a steward, I have learned to always look at the potential aspect of life. As a steward, I have learnt to nurture life. As a steward, I have learnt to learn from others. As a steward, I strive to co-operate and co-exist with other living creatures.

The narrative of Jesus Christ on Good Friday indeed reveals the life project of God. His suffering and death reveal how fragile life is here on

Earth. His suffering and death seem to suggest that life has its limit and end. His suffering and death points to His resurrection. In his resurrection, life is stronger than death. Jesus indeed lives. No Good Friday without Easter. No Easter without Good Friday. My little life project this Holy Week reminds me that the thrown away seashells can still serve life other than sea creatures. May God shower you with blessings, love, and peace this Easter. 

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Fr. Jude Genovia lives and works in Korea.



# Proclaiming “The Way...”

## ...in Another Culture

By Fr. Barry Cairns

I first came to Japan 66 years ago. My appointments after language school were to remote country villages. The people at that time were still in shock after defeat in war. They were desperate, poor, and tuberculosis was prevalent. An atmosphere of discouragement was like a suffocating mist. And society, especially in country districts, was still decidedly feudal. A feudal system is where one man, or an elite group, are at the top, and the people below — as they see them! — do what they are told. The pre-war Emperor system was such.

As a missionary from another country, I needed to tune in to the melody of my adopted people's culture and way of thinking. This now has the technical word inculturation (As the Son incarnated [cf inculturation] into our human world, emptying himself, Jesus became one with us.).

I accept the culture of Japan, and it has influenced me kindly. But there are some aspects of the prevailing way of thinking that I believe need to be challenged.

One major challenge is to influence a prevalent idea of “God.” For many “God” is a somewhat vague presence in nature. So this is a beautiful starting foundation for catechesis. We Christians believe in a personal God who created us and this beautiful world, and gave it to us to live in, and asked us to care for it.

For many others, “God” is a severe, distant, but powerful figure who punishes us when we do wrong. A very commonly used word when things go wrong is *tenbatsu* – literally punishment

from heaven. The Good News tells us that God is love. Our God has a heart full of compassion, who understands and forgives us in our weakness and errors. Yes, our God is love.

Jesus teaches us that God is a loving Father. But here too we meet a stumbling block! Japan has been for long centuries a country where men are dominant. A father is seen so often as a distant, stern man. In an often quoted proverb in Japan there are four things to fear in life: earthquakes, thunder, fire and fathers. This residual fear of a severe father is often concretized in our modern Japan, by the trauma of the myriad single mothers and their children. So often we meet these deserted ones who come to the church seeking encouragement, strength and a meaning to life. So to present our God as Father is definitely a major challenge!

This is where the power of the scriptures starts to work! I present chapter 15 of St. Luke's Gospel to

the class preparing for Baptism. Here we meet the three parables of God's compassion – the lost sheep, the lost valuable coin and the lost son. Yes in this latter parable the second son rejects and insults his father. Then he lives a dissolute, prodigal life, followed by a complete collapse of fortune and a decision to return home asking to be a mere servant. But then in the second act of the parable we meet the most important character of this parable-play. The son's father understands his son's weakness, goes to his door each day gazing down the distant road hoping to see sight of a returning son. When he does see him, he rushes out to meet him. Rushing out is so atypical for a father of the East! This father gives his son a big hug, and says, “Welcome home, my son.”

Jesus tells us that the true God is just such a loving Father! **CM**

Columban Fr. Barry Cairns lives and works in Japan.







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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.



***Columban Fr. John Boles was very distressed and worried when the coronavirus pandemic struck Peru. For the already poor, the pandemic was a dual catastrophe. With Peru's vaccination program being painfully slow, they were the ones most at risk from infection and the ones with the greatest responsibility to self-isolate when necessary. However, this meant they couldn't go out onto the streets and earn their meagre living resulting in hunger for them and their families. For many, the reality became "Die from Covid or die from hunger. Not much of a choice." However, with the support of Columban benefactors, miracles like the "kitchens in the sky," communal kitchens serving the poor and hungry, happened to help those most in need.***

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# The Spring of a New Church

## A New Society

By Nathalie Marytsch



Last January, the newly elected Chilean president, a 35-year-old former leader of the students movement, announced who would be accompanying him to govern the country in the next four years. Swiftly after that in social media appeared two images comparing presidents and their respective cabinets. The first image dated back to 1990, featuring President Patricio Aylwin and his ministers. Aylwin was the first democratically elected president after the horrific 16 years of dictatorship in the country. The second picture captures Gabriel Boric and his recently nominated cabinet. Boric, who last December defeated his opponent, right-wing Kast, with the greatest majority ever of 56 percent, is the youngest elected president in Chilean history. He is also among the young ones in the current global picture like Macron, who at the age of 39 became the youngest president in the history of France.

Social media commentators highlighted the stark differences between the photographs alluding to the predominant dress code, age and gender. The cabinet of the 1990s with president Aylwin and his men in dark suits contrasts with Gabriel Boric's cabinet with a more relaxed colorful dress-code. It was emphasized that for the first time in Chilean history there is a majority-female cabinet. The newly

elected cabinet features some of the working women accompanied by their children, while there is a complete absence of females or any children in Aylwin's first cabinet in 1990. Other remarks mentioned the age of the ministers, with the new cabinet including men and women in their 30s, contrasting the picture of the 1990's, when most of the men would have been in their 50s and above.

These comparative exercises made me think and reflect on how decision making can be affected when younger generations are allowed to take over.

Pope Francis in *The Joy of the Gospel* speaks about the young people of today. He reminds us that, without neglecting and side-lining the wisdom and the experience of the elderly, "young people call us to renewed and expansive hope, for they represent new directions for humanity and open us to the future, lest we cling to a nostalgia for structures and customs which are no longer life-giving in today's world." It is in this context that I'd like to see and understand the new government of Chile, a new cabinet which hopefully will bring a definitive end to Pinochet's neoliberal legacy which has caused so much poverty, division and exclusion to so many in Chile for the past decades.

My hope is that this new generation will serve all Chileans rather than the few powerful elites and with that

in mind and the current reflections on synodality in the church, it makes me wonder about the little or absent participation of young people in the decision making in the church.

Working with young faith in action volunteers here in Britain, I have felt blessed and humbled by their contributions to mission. Their faith, energy, new ideas, new ways of doing things — which at times are alien to me — bring that renewed and expansive hope that the Pope talks about. In today's world I feel there is a need to let go of conventional ways and be open to where the Spirit leads. We are invited to trust in the younger generations, trust that what's been sown and nurtured will ripen and bear fruit, trusting that their ideas can also be good ideas. It is important to be willing to accompany them, walk with them and learn their codes. Young people are bound to make mistakes — like anyone — and it is at that moment that it is crucial to offer support rather than a default position of blame and accusation.

May we, as missionaries, as people of faith listen up and welcome the spring of a new church and a new society in which the energy of the young finds welcome and is nurtured and encouraged. **CM**

Columban lay missionary Nathalie Marytsch lives and works in Britain.

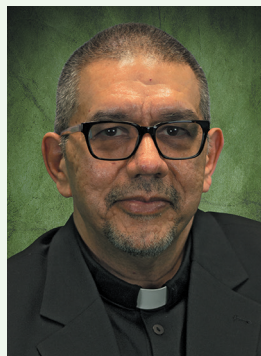


# Invitation to Mission

**M**y vocational road to missionary priesthood had many invitations, but one of the most important invitations to mission occurred near the end of my first year in the seminary. As a freshman seminarian, the desire to be a missionary priest was there but doubts still remained if this was truly what I wanted to do. As the year was coming to an end, I had to contemplate on what I was going to do in the summer. Our summers were free, and we were encouraged to take temporary jobs and/or get involved in a ministry of some type. I had heard of some seminarians doing a mission exposure on the Pine Ridge Native American reservation in South Dakota. I was curious about this and decided to approach the persons organizing the experience. What we agreed to was a five-week immersion experience.

During the immersion experience we participated in Sun Dances, cultural festivities, painted houses, visited with families, etc. I spent time with the Jesuits and listened to their missionary history. I spent time with Lakota people who were Christian but still identified with their Native American roots. I spent time with Lakota people who spoke about their painful history with Christianity. I was told of a small town who had to have two Catholic churches, one for Anglos, the other for Native Americans. They couldn't mix. It was an eye opener for me.

The experience had a powerful impact on my missionary vocation. It made me look at the world with new



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## FROM THE DIRECTOR

By Fr. Chris Saenz

eyes. When I returned to studies after the summer, I was sharing my experience with a faith-sharing group in Chicago. After, a young university student asked me how the experience changed me. I told her that as a child I was a fan of the old western movies, especially of John Wayne. After the experience, I couldn't watch any such movies knowing the reality. The young woman looked at me with awe but painfully said, "That is why I could never do such an experience! I would love to, but I feel it would ask a conversion of me that I can't make! I



would rather be ignorant than know!" I was shocked by her answer but admired her honesty. Then I realized the reality of invitation to mission. As Jesus said, "For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22: 14)

I don't know what happened to the young woman after, I never saw her again. I know she was a good person and wished no harm on anyone. Yet, I realized

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*Obviously, my journey was filled with not accepting the invitations until I was ready. A seed can be planted to bloom later. It is not for all, but we are all invited.*

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that she was at a moment in her life where she couldn't make that leap to mission. However, I do hope the seeds were planted for the future when she was ready to do so. In my personal journey, I had received many invitations to mission prior to my commitment to be a missionary priest. Obviously, my journey was filled with not accepting the invitations until I was ready. A seed can be planted to bloom later. It is not for all, but we are all invited.

*Fr. Chris Saenz*



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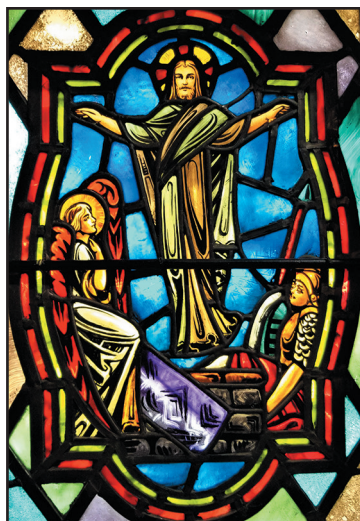
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