

October 2020

SINCE 1920

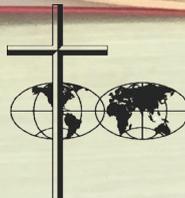
100 YEARS

THE FAR EAST



THE FAR EAST

A PERIODICAL
DEVOTED TO THE CONVERSION OF CHINA



ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY

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The Far East

October 2020

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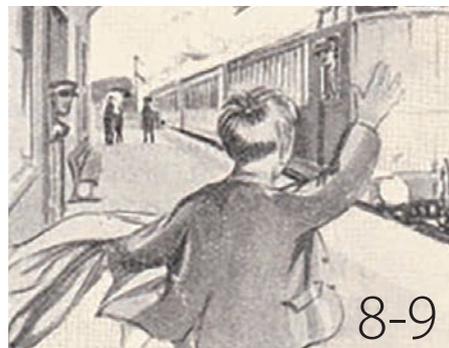
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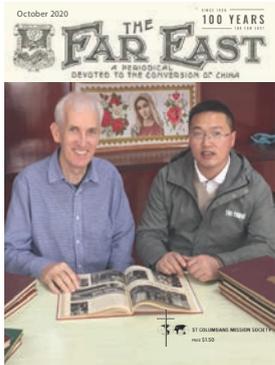
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Perspective of a century

Columban Fr Dan Troy and the parish priest of Xiantao, Fr Joseph Li, examining the collection of bound copies of *The Far East* magazine that are a proud possession of the parish.

Photo: Fr Dan Troy SSC



From the Editor

For the past two weeks, I have spent many hours looking through the archived copies of *The Far East* magazine in preparation for the 100th anniversary since it was launched in October 1920. What a joy it was to look through the many years of the selfless work of Columban priests, lay missionaries, sisters and others who gave up their time to travel to other countries as volunteers.

I came across advertisements that included the *Advocate*, a publication of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, Saint Christopher medals, Preservene soap and many others. *Mickie Daly's diaries* took much of my time as I found myself hooked into his witty accounts of his daily activities and his atrocious spelling.

This issue begins with a copy of page one from the first issue of *The Far East*. Today we would consider it as an inside page. More stylised covers developed over the years. On the facing page, you will see a range of Columban personnel, historical Columban events and more. We feature an interview with New Zealand born, Sr Sue Cosgrove, who has been an avid reader of *The Far East* for 65 years.

From New Zealand, Columban Fr Pat O'Shea writes a reflection on the controversy of *Mickie Daly*. This is a fascinating read that demonstrates the impact Mickie Daly had on his readership. From Queensland, Mr Gilbert Alison, another avid reader of *The Far East*, tells us about his long association with the Columbans.

Columban Fr Jim Mulroney writes about the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the first Columbans in Hanyang, China. The strong link between Columbans and the people of China was demonstrated in 2018 when a group of pilgrims from Australia and New Zealand were welcomed into the parish of Holy Trinity in Xiantao where a recent Mass was celebrated to mark the anniversary.

From Myanmar, Columban Fr Eamon Sheridan tells us about the lack of support for women who are suffering from drug addiction.

In Rome, Pope Francis sends his message for World Mission Day in October. He has asked us to remember that during the pandemic we are all in the same boat, all of us frail and disorientated. He asks us to remember that we need to row together.

In his column Columban Fr Trevor Trotter challenges us to think about the role of the Holy Trinity and how the Society was called into being by the Trinity.

Migrant workers in Taiwan continue to struggle with hardship and injustice. Columban Lay Missionary Joan Yap tells the sad story of a father and son whose lives were tragically changed by the greed of others.

Parishioners from a poor parish in Chile relate how happy they are to meet new friends while distributing food parcels to those in need.

On a sad note, we hear from Columban Frs John Hegerty and Ed O'Connell on the life of recently deceased Fr Paul Prendergast. From New Zealand and better known as 'Prendy', Fr Paul will be sadly missed. May he rest in peace.

We give thanks that *The Far East* magazine has reached its centenary and thank you, our Columban benefactors, for your extraordinary support that has ensured its longevity.

Let us pray that we can continue to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ into the future.

Janette Mentha
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The Far East 1920 - 2020

A reprint of the first ever page printed in *The Far East* magazine in October of 1920.



THE FAR EAST

A PERIODICAL
DEVOTED TO THE CONVERSION OF CHINA

Vol. I.: No. 1.

OCTOBER, 1920.

5/- a year.

"The Far East"

Subscription rate to any address in Australia or New Zealand, 5/- a year. Single copy, Sixpence.

Editorial Notes

Lift Up Your Eyes. A publication devoted to the conversion of China does not need to apologise for appearing just now in any Christian country. The present is China's acceptable time, her day of salvation. Her vast fields are white to harvest. Four hundred millions of her children—half the pagan population of the whole world—call to the Catholics of other countries to send them missionaries. The time is singularly opportune. Nine years ago the old Imperial Government of China was overthrown, and a Republic established which guarantees to all its subjects perfect freedom of worship. Missionaries are now at liberty to preach wherever they please throughout the country. The civil authorities are friendly.

Ex-Premier's Notable Words.

Addressing a gathering of his fellow-countrymen at Peking, about eighteen months ago, Mr. Hsiing-hsi-ling, the ex-

Premier, eulogised the Catholic religion in the following remarkable terms: "Without the true religion," he said, "there is no sal-



Very Rev. John Blowick,
Superior-General of the Irish Mission
to China.

vation for China, for true religion is the soul of the State. Separated from the soul, the body dies; without the true religion, the State likewise perishes. Now, which is the true religion? An earnest and unprejudiced study of Chinese and foreign history of all periods has led me to conclude that, among all the religions at present to be found in the world, Catholicism is the one which combines at once the purest faith, the highest morality, and the most perfect unity."

Correspondence

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Signing Up. The missionary finds the Chinese easy of approach, and quick to embrace the Faith. Christianity does not repel them as it does other pagan peoples. China's sons and daughters have no vicious past to break with. As pagans, the vast majority of them are clean-living, upright, sober. One is not surprised, therefore, to find that they are not only willing, but eager, to be baptized. In some districts they actually meet and send representatives to the Christian centres, asking that missionaries be sent to them. They "sign up" for instruction. Last year, during the two weeks ending May 23rd, three such delegations reached the Maryknoll Fathers at Yeungkong. One delegate presented a list of 227 pagan families that had expressed a wish to be prepared for baptism.

The *Far East* magazine – a periodical devoted to the conversion of China was first published in October, 1920. Cost 6d per copy or 5/- p.a. The Editor was Irish Columban, Fr Edward Maguire.

The first edition of *The Far East* reported on the first batch of Columbans, led by the founders, Frs Edward Galvin and John Blowick, setting sail for China. With the blessing of the Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Daniel Mannix, the magazine appealed to Australians to support this new missionary initiative. On page 6 it ran a story entitled *Our Volunteers* and featured two young priests of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, Frs Romuald Hayes and Luke Mullany, who had volunteered to join the mission to China.

Over the next 100 years as the Society expanded its missionary activities into 15 countries, *The Far East* subscribers read about religious conversions, spiritual and material support for the poor and sick, ordinations, floods, famines, epidemics, wars, fires, books, and many good

news stories as a result of the generosity of Columban benefactors. In later editions, the magazine promoted new initiatives such as the *Columban Art Calendar*, the *Jackie Mite Box* and *Mickie Daly's Diary*, all still iconic in their own right today.

We pay tribute to the past editors of *The Far East*, Columban Frs Edward Maguire, Hugh Donnelly, William Kehoe, Tom O'Brien, Donal O'Mahony, John Colgan, Gary Walker and Daniel Harding whose commitment to the magazine has resulted in it being one of our flagships even today.

We say thank you to our benefactors for supporting *The Far East* and ensuring its longevity in sharing the Good News of mission for so long.

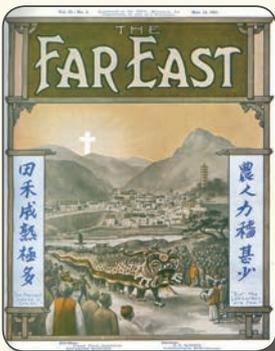
See below reference to some memorable events during 100 years of *The Far East*. Due to limited space, we have only been able to reference some of those moments. They are not in any order of importance or significance.



Founder, Fr Edward Galvin conducting a baptism in China magazine in October of 1920.



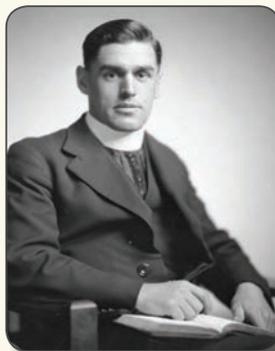
Columban Fr Brian Gore in prison for various allegations (with no solid evidence) in 1982.



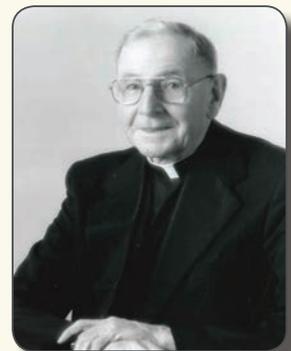
The Far East first front cover, October 1920.



'Our Volunteers' Frs Romuald Hayes and Luke Mullany.



Columban Fr Vernon Francis Douglas, a martyr for faith, 1943 in the Philippines.



Columban Fr Edward Sherry, Manager of *The Far East* office, Melbourne in the 1970s.

From his red leather chair

MARK BOWLING

At 87, Gilbert Alison likes nothing better than the comfort of his red leather chair, a morning coffee and the latest edition of *The Far East*.



The former Queensland Member of Parliament is an avid reader of *The Far East* magazine and has been a Columban supporter for 60 years, beginning when he bought his first iconic *Columban Art Calendar*.

"I never fail to get inspired by what they do, these missionary men and women, and what they give up to go elsewhere," Mr Alison, who lives at Tewantin on the Sunshine Coast, said. *"How do they do it - upheaval, moving to another country,*

learning another language, to live among the people? And they don't write much about their personal discomfort."

Mr Alison's fascination for the travels and challenges of Columban priests and Lay Missionaries has helped lay a foundation in his own life, including his political career. Raised in a strong Protestant family in Maryborough, Queensland, he converted after meeting a Catholic nurse named Florence at the local general hospital. Florence

"We need the same missionary zeal of the Columbans to get amongst the people who are vulnerable and need help, and need somebody to speak up for them."

became Gilbert's wife and they raised a family of five boys and two girls and now have six grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Early in their marriage, and as a newly-converted Catholic, Gilbert recalls buying his first *Columban Calendar*. "It was the first inkling I had of an organization called the Columbans. Their calendars were very beautiful - full of reproductions of religious art," he said.

Mr Alison has been a donor ever since, contributing to the Columban's annual fundraising efforts, and subscribing to *The Far East* for the last decade. As a chartered accountant, he spent most of his early married years in the one spot, Maryborough. The "humdrum" routine of daily life there contrasted with the precarious, travelling, life of Columban missionaries

He dabbled in local politics and became the city's deputy mayor. Then in 1971, as a city alderman, he successfully ran for state parliament, unseating Maryborough's Labor member. He sat as a Liberal MP for six years, was defeated, and was later re-elected as a National MP for another six-year term.

Joh Bjelke Petersen was his Party Leader and Premier, and he served for several months as Minister for Main Roads and Racing before his retirement. He remembers Mr Bjelke Petersen as a shrewd and unbending premier. "He used to have a saying in parliament: 'If you give me trouble, I'll give you two'," Mr Gilbert said. "I liked him. I had no evidence of corruption from him. And that's how I take people - as I find them."

During those years in politics he managed to undertake a number of overseas study trips, for instance, visiting Iraq and Beirut, experiences that he believes opened his eyes and made him a better MP. "I got to see what the rest of the world was doing. It made me think," he said. "My wife and I have travelled through parts of Europe and Asia. We've been blessed that way."

As his travel experiences grew, Mr Alison said it helped him appreciate the missionary work of the Columbans and their faith in difficult situations. Five years ago he suffered his own family loss and his own faith was tested when his second son, Bradley, died of cerebral malaria while working in Papua New Guinea.

"You can call on God to help you, and I believe He is around you all the time," Mr Alison said. "And we need help. We may not get the help we want or how we want it, but He's still there."

Over the years, reading *The Far East*, Mr Gilbert has enjoyed the down-to earth storytelling of Columbans like the late Fr Noel Connolly - a fellow Queenslander from Gympie - with narratives that delved into the mysteries of the spirit. "He always seemed to have an empathy for the ordinary man. That's how he wrote," Mr Gilbert said.

And he recalls the stories that have touched him - inspiring tales of Columbans establishing faith communities within the local church in countries where there is a gulf between rich and poor, dealing with inter-faith relations and seeking justice and dignity for those denied their rights.

"I do a fair bit of reading and I'm still interested in politics and I'm interested in how humans can muck a country up, no trouble at all," Mr Gilbert said. "Take Venezuela for instance: Oil rich, but who mucks it up - the people in charge! It's really sad when you see it and there's really no need for it."

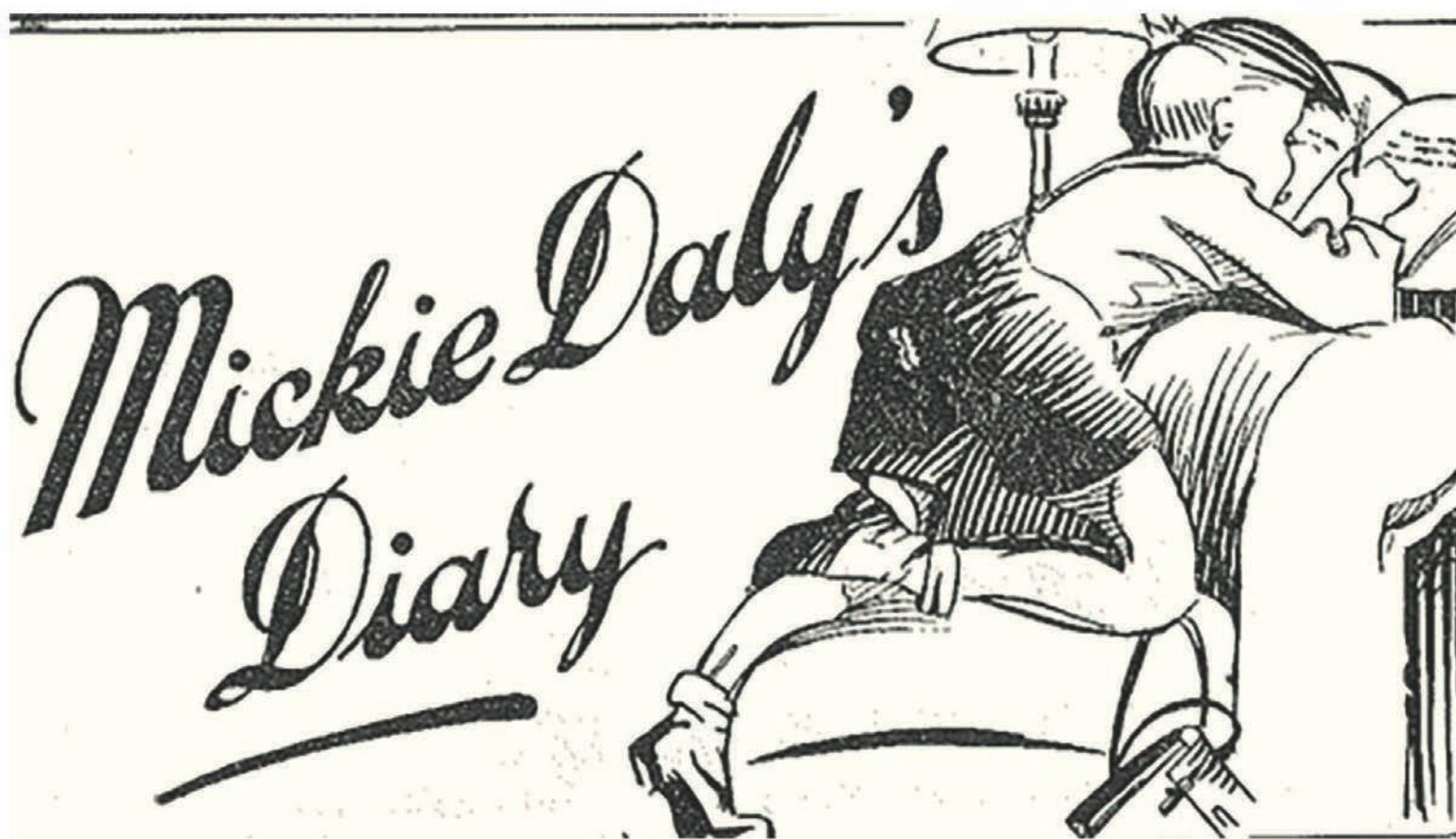
"The Columban Missionaries approach from a different angle - they are religious men and women living with people in the poor areas. That always amazes me and in The Far East you are getting their viewpoint with an emphasis on the people they attend to."

As a former politician, Mr Gilbert said the magazine's articles had given him valuable insights into where Australian society should be headed. "We've become very soft people in my view," he said. "There is need for greater consideration of our fellow men and women in our community."

"I can't understand why we have tens of thousands of people sleeping rough at the moment and we can spend billions of dollars on fancy infrastructure". "What are we thinking? Can't we work out how to help those people who need it into accommodation instead of having to sleep rough?"

"We need the same missionary zeal of the Columbans to get amongst the people who are vulnerable and need help, and need somebody to speak up for them."

Mark Bowling, Multimedia Journalist, *The Catholic Leader*, Brisbane.



The controversy of Mickie Daly

FR PAT O'SHEA

Doing parish appeals for *The Far East* here in New Zealand I was amazed at the number of times that people told me of their fond memories of *Mickie Daly's Diary*. In its 100 years of existence our magazine would have covered many important historical moments like the founding of the Society and the early days in China. It charted the opening of new missions in Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Burma, Fiji, Chile, Peru, Taiwan, and Pakistan as well as Belize, Brazil and Jamaica. It told of the expulsion of Columbans from China and later from Burma and more recently a return of *Columban Missionaries* to both countries.

It would have reflected the theological developments in the understanding and practice of mission that have happened since the foundation of the Society, expanding from the conversion of "pagans" in the early days in China to interreligious dialogue, care for the poor, and for the exploited earth that are part of mission today. It reported the many different activities and projects that were and are expressions of what it means to live and witness to the Gospel of Jesus. Yet, people remembered Mickie Daly.

I was surprised to discover that *Mickie Daly's Diary* was also a source of controversy. In July 1933, a decision was made

to cease publication of the *Diary*. This was in response to a letter which called for it to be banned for three reasons:

1. Mickie corrupts the King's English with his ungovernable spelling.
2. He is the worst possible example for our children.
3. It is hard to imagine that such a boy aspires to be a priest in China. He will probably end up in jail.

The editor decided to put this question to *The Far East* readers: "Do you believe *The Far East* would be better without *Mickie Daly*?" In the months that followed there was a flood of support from younger readers (and a few older people also) for Mickie to resume his *Diary*. Typical of the type of response was what Doris Blackledger wrote in the November 1933 edition: "The *Diary* was most beloved by the children of New Zealand. Every child used to wait most longingly for the postman in order to read the *Diary*". So the editor conducted a poll and in November 1933 by a count of 25,748 votes to 9,313 it was decided to continue with the *Diary*.

So I am wondering what it was about the *Diary* that made it so popular and memorable. Another letter of support

in August of 1933 from a Mrs Harty captures one reason when she says *"Spelling and English do not feed a child's imagination and do not give him a little hero, who, for all his faults, is a real flesh and blood boy having a big fight to be good"*. A constant theme in the *Diary* are his battles to beat the devil.

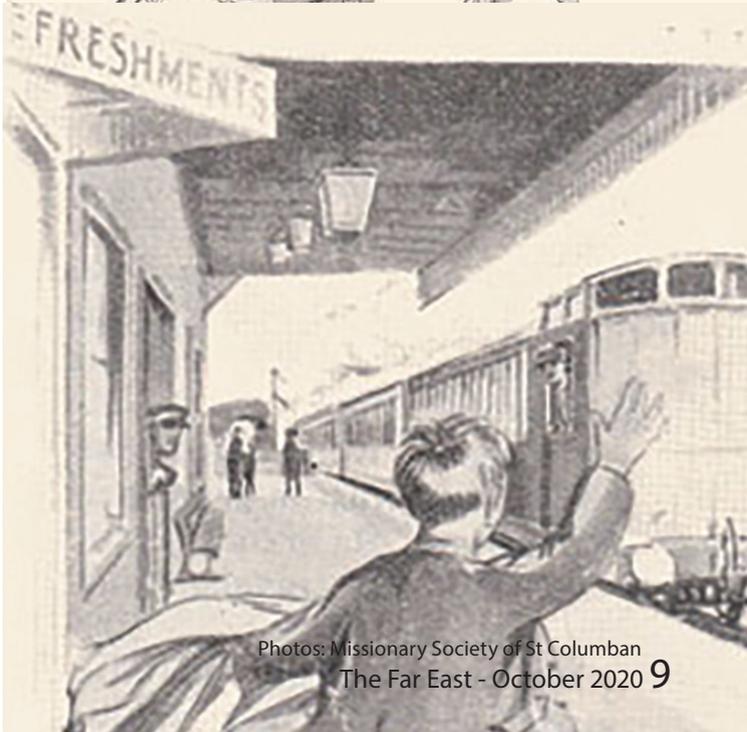
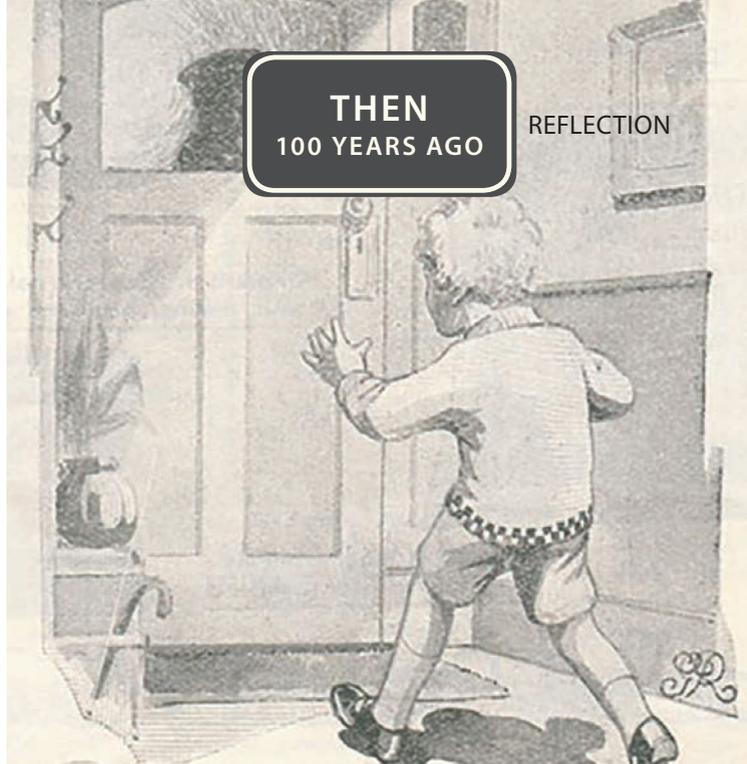
I remember a reflection written about the Irish snooker player, Alex Higgins, that explored why so many people rooted for him, especially in his battles with Steve Davis. Davis, so calm and cool, was the total opposite of Higgins who was so jittery and hurried in his play that he was nicknamed Hurricane Higgins. The writer says that when Higgins got up to play, she was at the edge of her seat, *"desperate for you to beat whatever devil is driving you over the edge and beyond."* People saw in his game *"a gripping illustration of their own lives"*. She concluded that many people wanted Higgins to win because, if he could beat his demons, they could beat their own. Every win for Higgins was a source of hope for other battlers.

Mickie Daly was a battler. He was also a dreamer who aspired one day to be a missionary in China. I think in a very simple and humorous way the *Diary* conveyed something essential about mission to people, namely that mission is open to all, even the Mickie Dalys of this world. Young Dunedin student, Theresa Joyce, remembering Columban Fr Francis Vernon Douglas from Wellington, said: *"The fact that he was from my country, ate fish and chips, saw the Southern Cross and learned the haka in school brought sanctity to a new level. It wasn't something distant, all too glorious and totally unrelatable. It was close to home. It was home!"* (NZ Catholic 2009). As Frank Wheeler from NSW said in support of Mickie: *"Tell him to still pray to be a priest and go to China because I hope to go there also, and then I will see him over there"*. (September 1933)

Mickie Daly brought mission close to people who were engaged in flesh and blood struggles to live the Gospel, people who fall often but continue to get back up and try again. It did so with humour, helping people to laugh at their human foibles, frailties and failures and not be mastered by them. It encouraged big dreams in little people, like the dream that a small missionary society, founded in Ireland in the middle of an Irish rebellion, World War I and a flu pandemic, might bring about the planting of the Gospel in the great missionary frontier that was China.

Long Live Mickie Daly!

Columban Fr Patrick O'Shea resides at St Columban's Lower Hutt, New Zealand.



A fan of The Far East for 65 years

MARK BOWLING

As a child, Sister of Compassion, Sue Cosgrove, remembers reading *The Far East* – and it became a lifelong and inspiring habit.

“I’ve been reading the *Far East* for 65 years, I reckon.” Sr Cosgrove, who grew up in New Zealand’s south island town of Timaru, said. “And probably the earliest memory I have of learning to read would be Mickie Daly’s *Diary in The Far East*”.

*“We always had *The Far East* at home. Always. It was part of our family.”* Just as Mickie and his antics captivated generations of readers of *The Far East* (and the column’s creative spelling confounded many parents and teachers), the missionary tales of adventure inspired young Sue Cosgrove and her siblings.

The Cosgrove household had another strong connection with *St Columbans Missionary Society* - New Zealander Fr John Griffin, was born and raised in Timaru, and was a family friend. “It just so happened he (Fr Griffin) was ordained on July 25, 1950, and that was the day me and my twin were born.” Sr Cosgrove said. “Mum and dad couldn’t go to his ordination ‘because the twins were being born’. “And it’s always been part of the folklore in our family when we were little and Fr John Griffin would come and visit.”

Together, Sue Cosgrove and her brothers and sisters saved their pennies for the Jackie mite box, supporting the *Columban Missions* and thinking of Fr Griffin and a world well beyond their own small circle in Timaru. Fr Griffin’s first Missionary Assignment was to the province of Zambales, north-west of Manila in the Philippines. He spent 20 years there, in poor rural parishes, learning local dialects and cultures and aiding communities in need.

But a medical emergency in 1970 meant he was brought home to New Zealand for the amputation of his right leg due to cancer. The medical specialist spoke of a choice, “Your leg or your life”. However, he later volunteered to serve in Latin America. He learned the Spanish language and worked in Chile. For ten years he assisted the Columban team in the capital, Santiago.

“We always knew about people like Fr Griffin in the Philippines and then in South America,” Sr Cosgrove said. “They stretched not only our imagination, but gave us a world view. Their gospel of life is so inclusive and grounded just with the ordinary people where they were – whether it be in Chile or Pakistan – and that’s what I loved about the Columbans I knew. And they went to darker places at times. So I always think of these men

and the wider Columban family as having a lot of courage and trust in each other, and in people, and in God, of course.”

At the age of just 17, Sue Cosgrove’s own faith journey led her to join New Zealand’s Sisters of Compassion, a congregation founded by the “venerable” Suzanne Aubert at Jerusalem – Hiruhārama on the Whanganui River in 1892. “And that’s when I got tuned in and in touch with the heart of who we are” Sr Cosgrove said.

Sr Cosgrove said the Sisters are dedicated to “ordinariness” - bringing dignity to the lives of the aged, the powerless and the poor - and this is why she “resonates” with the Columbans, admiring their work over many decades. “They pay attention to just the ordinary person and to the most vulnerable,” she said.

One of the Columbans that Sr Cosgrove has worked closely with over the years is Fr Tom Rouse, a well-known New Zealander who spent 23 years on mission in Fiji, and who later became the *Columban Mission Co-ordinator* for New Zealand. Sr Cosgrove met Fr Rouse in Fiji where the *Sisters of Compassion* have also worked since the 1950s and together they have collaborated on justice and peace issues in New Zealand.

She describes Fr Rouse as “one of the most compassionate people I know”, who, despite a significant hearing impairment, has managed to learn languages with fluency and continue his missionary calling. In Fiji, Fr Rouse helped trade unionists, rural and religious communities to understand why there was a gap between the rich and poor and aided them in standing up for the poor.

He bravely spoke out against the military coup of 1987 and was arrested at a first anniversary gathering along with fellow Columbans, Frs John McEvoy and Paul Tierney. On the final day of a nine-month trial they were all discharged without conviction.

*“The thing I just love about the Columbans these days is that every time I read *The Far East* there is always mention of companions in mission,” she said. “It is this inclusivity, the Columban involvement with their companions, co-workers, who happen to be women and lay people.” “Their spirit will live on. And their charism doesn’t just belong to the Columbans, their charism belongs in the bigger picture.”*

Mark Bowling, Multimedia Journalist, *The Catholic Leader*, Brisbane.

THEN
100 YEARS AGO

NEW ZEALAND



Perspective of a century

FR JIM MULRONEY

August 21 this year marked the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the first band of Columbans in Hanyang, China. In commemoration of the occasion, a Mass was offered at St Columban's Cathedral in the city and at Holy Trinity Church in the rural centre of Xiantao. Despite their expulsion from the country after the establishment of the *People's Republic of China*, a strong connection between the Columbans and the local Church in Hanyang remains.

Memory looks back, while imagination peers forward, but recognition of a centennial is not constrained by either memory or imagination. It marks neither the end, nor the beginning of a road, but rather a moment where 100 years morph into the present.

However, memory and imagination are easily confused. Memory may cast the past as prophetic shadows and imagination glorify it to a level never achieved.

In 1920, the dreams of the founders of the *Missionary Society of St Columban* were audacious: an Irish mission to convert the whole of China.

The accepted yardstick of the age was numbers and, although slightly more nuanced, how many baptisms was the operative question, but while the audacious was always beyond reach, the numbers did stack up pretty well. Nevertheless, measured against their goal, they failed.

It especially seemed so as the few who remained after the declaration of the *People's Republic of China* in 1949 struggled across the Lo Wu Bridge into Hong Kong, battle wearied, humiliated, traumatised and ill from the deprivation of prison life or the agonising search for a way to survive.

But the Columban vision was broader than numbers. The Society wanted Catholicism to have a cultural impact on Chinese society and saw intensive catechesis and high-level education as the way. It saw it as necessary for the message of the gospel to penetrate beyond the confines of chapel walls.

There was a discernible attempt to move beyond the limits of pastoral care of parishes to concentrated and more inclusive ministries that did not discriminate on the grounds of race or creed. The original vision saw an Irish territory in China where Columbans would work to convert in order to form an indigenous Church staffed by local priests, ultimately with a Chinese Bishop.

There was a vision of internationality too and Columbans set out to connect people in China with their brothers and sisters in the United States of America, Ireland, New Zealand and Australia. They tramped these lands telling everyday stories: about family life, public and Church events, the street markets, food production, arts and crafts, transport, literature and politics.

They especially stressed the witness of the dedicated Chinese Catholics, who themselves worked so hard to spread the good news of the gospel among their own people. Magazines, movies and photographs reflected a profound respect for those among whom they evangelised, for their culture, technology and creativity, as well as sheer courage in facing the grind of simple hard work.

The founders' vision was open ended. They foresaw priests, sisters, brothers and lay people working together for the good of all people. The *Loretto Sisters* from the US came to open schools, as did the *Christian Brothers* from Ireland and Australia. Two doctors volunteered to be part of the outreach, working tirelessly alongside local medics and later the *Columban Sisters*.

In the post-World War II years, as the bundles of priests and sisters galore that the founders had dreamed of showed promise of materialising, the Society spread its wings across Asia, South America and the Pacific, and programmes inviting diocesan priests and lay people to an in-depth experience of ministry in a foreign culture were added.

They came from the traditional homelands of the Society and, in more recent days, Korean, Pakistani, Myanmar, Filipino, Latin American and Fijian volunteers emerged. Their charter: to go, to learn, to return.

It was also the beginning of the transformation of the Society into a multi-cultural, multi-lingual group, to the extent that when younger Columbans come together today, those who speak English as their first language are in the minority.



Columban Fr Dan Troy and the parish priest of Xiantao, Fr Joseph Li, examining the collection of bound copies of The Far East magazine that are a proud possession of the parish, along with Srs Agnes Bie (left) and Teresa Wang (right), who made their final profession as members of a local congregation on the following day.

However, China never disappeared from the Columban horizon and in the 1980s an imaginative programme to place Catholic teachers in Chinese universities was launched. Over 500 people have taken the opportunity to experience the challenge of witnessing to their faith simply through the example of their lives in a context where words may not be spoken.

Marking a centennial demands a serious search for appropriate criteria to judge the value of what went before; not just a casting back of memory, but an appreciation that can fire the imagination in a way that has a life-giving impact on the present.

What may have seemed like failure in China can be judged differently today, as the Catholics of Hanyang describe the Diocese begun by those pioneer Columbans as a viable and grace-filled home for people of faith.

After 100 years, the challenge of mission may no longer be solely geographical, but rather lie in highlighting the beauty of the multiplicity in God's creation, in people, in nature and in the economy of a decent life for everyone.

In judging the value of what has gone before, Bishop Edward Galvin, one of the founders of the Society, suggested a credible criteria when he reflected, *"We did not come to convert the Chinese, but to do the will of God."*

The challenge of mission today is the same as yesteryear: to discern the will of God and act upon it. A sentiment summed up in the words of the Society motto, *To Live for Christ, not for ourselves.*

Columban Fr Jim Mulroney resides at the Columban house in Essendon.



A young Burmese woman with an addiction to drugs.

Women and addiction

FR EAMON SHERIDAN

While local, mostly faith-based, groups have tried to respond to the chronic drug addiction problem among men, there is no outreach to women. They are the forgotten people in this unfolding tragedy.

Kachin Land is a remote area of north-east Myanmar. The Kachin people are a warm, generous welcoming people. They are mostly Christian in this predominantly Buddhist country. They are victims of the world's longest civil conflict, almost 70 years, between the *Kachin Independence Army* and the *Burmese Military*. It flared up again in 2011 driving 130,000 people from their homes and villages into camps for internally displaced people. The Kachin land is rich in natural resources that are harvested for others while the local people remain very poor. Most Kachins live in very remote areas and survive on subsistence farming.

This area is the second biggest producer of heroin and the biggest producer of meta-amphetamines in the world. With no prospect of meaningful work, many young people are easy prey for the drug pushers. Heroin, known as No 4 here, is the drug of choice and is easily and cheaply available. Thousands are dying, families are being torn apart and the culture destroyed by addiction. It is of epidemic proportions. It is not an exaggeration to say that every family has at least one or more members addicted to heroin. The majority of our clients also test positive for HIV and/or hepatitis C.

Thousands are dying, families are being torn apart and the culture destroyed by addiction. It is of epidemic proportions. It is not an exaggeration to say that every family has at least one or more members addicted to heroin.

While local, mostly faith-based, groups have tried to respond to the chronic drug addiction problem among men there is no outreach to women. They are the forgotten people in this unfolding tragedy.

One of our clients, Peter (not his real name) told me the story of Mary (not her real name). Mary comes from a very poor family. Her father died when she was very young and her mother, who had no regular income, raised her and her younger brother. She finished school in fourth grade when she was just ten years of age. In her late teens, Mary with her friends began to experiment with drugs, drinking what is called formula, a mixture of alcohol and opium. Mary quickly became addicted.

To feed her habit she began singing in restaurants and bars and sold her body for sex to the patrons. On at least three occasions, she became pregnant and was forced to have an abortion each time. By her early twenties, she was a broken young woman. It was at this time that Peter met her and introduced her and her friends to heroin. She became addicted to it and earned money through prostitution and transporting and selling heroin for a drug dealer. Eventually she was caught and spent three years in prison.

During this time, Peter came to our Centre, the *Rebirth Rehabilitation Centre (RRC)* and found the key to recovery. He is now three years sober and is married with a child.

Recently he met Mary in the market after her release from prison. She looked very thin and sick. She was using heroin again and asked if she could come to our rehabilitation centre. He told her that we had no places for women but that we were planning to build a dormitory for them. He felt bad that he had introduced her to heroin and promised to inform her when the dormitory was finished so that she can come and find recovery.

There are many women like Mary, hidden in the shadows with nowhere to go. While a stigma attaches to male drug addicts, it is doubly so for female addicts. Some women addicts are trafficked to different parts of Myanmar and to neighboring countries, especially China, to work in the sex industry.

Rebirth Rehabilitation Center (RRC) was founded in 2015 by the *Catholic Diocese of Myitkyina*. This Diocese was founded and staffed by Columbans from 1936 until 1978 when Columbans had to leave due to civil unrest. *RRC* offers a program that treats addiction as a disease and not a moral failing. We have a holistic, client-centered approach that treats the physical, spiritual and mental nature of the disease. We are the only drug rehabilitation centre with this approach.

We introduce our clients to the 12 step spirituality of *Narcotics Anonymous* and *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Following the example of Catholic social teaching, we recognize the dignity of each human being made in the image and likeness of God and loved unconditionally. Thank God, we have a growing number of people who are finding long term sobriety. As each new group of clients arrives for the 15-week program we offer, I cannot stop thinking of Mary and the other women who are suffering in silence and who have nowhere to go for help.

At the *RRC*, we talked about how we could help women and in consultation with Bishop Francis Daw Tang, we decided to fundraise to build a dormitory for women. The Bishop has donated land beside the main centre. This means the women who come will be able to attend the sessions in the main centre. However, they will also need their own classroom so that they can have classes that are specific to women.

The total cost of the building, to accommodate 30 female clients, with a living area and bathroom facilities along with a classroom and fencing around the site, will be \$70,500. It will not be easy to raise this money in these difficult times, but I believe that God wants these women to come out of the shadows and to find recovery, and so, a way will be found.

Columban Fr Eamon Sheridan is the Columban Mission Unit Coordinator in Myanmar and Chaplain to the Rebirth Rehabilitation Centre in Myitkyina.

Mission World

We ask your prayers: *The prayers of our readers are requested for the repose of the souls of friends and benefactors of the Missionary Society of St Columban who died recently and for the spiritual and the temporal welfare of all our readers, their families and friends.*

Mission Intention for October

We pray that by the virtue of baptism, the laity, especially women, may participate more in areas of responsibility in the Church.



Message of his Holiness Pope Francis for World Mission Day 2020

Here am I, send me (Is 6:8)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
In this year marked by the suffering and challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the missionary journey of the whole Church continues in light of the words found in the account of the calling of the prophet Isaiah: *"Here am I, send me"* (6:8).

This is the ever-new response to the Lord's question: *"Whom shall I send?"* This invitation from God's merciful heart challenges both the Church and humanity as a whole in the current world crisis.

"Like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other."

The mission, the *'Church on the move'*, is not a programme, an enterprise to be carried out by sheer force of will. It is Christ who makes the Church go out of herself. In the mission of evangelization, you move because the Holy Spirit pushes you, and carries you.

God always loves us first and with this love comes to us and calls us. Our personal vocation comes from the fact that we are sons and daughters of God in the Church, his family, brothers and sisters in that love that Jesus has shown us.

All, however, have a human dignity founded on the divine invitation to be children of God and to become, in the sacrament of Baptism and in the freedom of faith, what they have always been in the heart of God.

Understanding what God is saying to us at this time of pandemic also represents a challenge for the Church's mission. Illness, suffering, fear and isolation challenge us.

The poverty of those who die alone, the abandoned, those who have lost their jobs and income, the homeless and those who lack food challenge us.

Being forced to observe social distancing and to stay at home invites us to rediscover that we need social relationships as well as our communal relationship with God.

Far from increasing mistrust and indifference, this situation should make us even more attentive to our way of relating to others. And prayer, in which God touches and moves our hearts, should make us ever more open to the need of our brothers and sisters for dignity and freedom, as well as our responsibility to care for all creation.

The celebration of *World Mission Day* is also an occasion for reaffirming how prayer, reflection and the material help of your offerings are so many opportunities to participate actively in the mission of Jesus in his Church.

May the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of Evangelization and Comforter of the Afflicted, missionary disciple of her Son Jesus, continue to intercede for us and sustain us.

Franciscus

Vatican, vatican.va, May 31, 2020



From the Director

The meeting of the Holy Trinity

I have been struggling to work out how to describe the importance of *The Far East* magazine. The following fantasy is the result of my imagination at work.

The celebration of the 100 years since the first issue of *The Far East* came up in a recent meeting of the Holy Trinity. These meetings always start with a short time of quiet reflection when they remember why they created the universe. The mission of the Trinity is easily stated: "They want to share the love". Their love for all that has come to be, particularly their love for their sons and daughters, is strong and constant.

When Father, Son and Holy Spirit thought about how they used some young Columban priests to start *The Far East* back in 1920, they remembered that they had set up this *Columban Society* a few years before. They had seen an opportunity to push along their project of bringing together the whole human race, the whole universe, into a unity. Yes, everything and everyone was in God, but they wanted all their sons and daughters to know that this is true.

The Trinity could see a new opportunity for their mission. There were Irish men and women, good Catholics who knew the story of Jesus, across many countries like the United Kingdom, the USA, Australia and New Zealand. On the other hand, they were concerned about China. There had been Christian missionaries working in that country for a long time but there were still millions of good people there who had not heard the story about the Trinity – the Jesus story. So why not inspire the Irish to work for the Chinese?

This was behind their decision to start up *The Far East* in Melbourne. For the story to be told in China, the Columbans needed priests, money and moral support. Without moral support, from the basically Irish-Catholic community in Australia, there would not be any priests nor would there be any money.

How to build this awareness of the mission to China and to help people to see in it the work of God? A magazine, *The Far East*, seemed to be the best way to do this. The Holy Spirit, who had done most of this work, seemed pleased with the success of this project!

Looking back over the 100 years, the Trinity recognised that for *The Far East* to tell the story of Jesus in a place like Latin

America, it had provided many articles and photos about the poverty of the people and the injustices they suffered. The Columbans had discovered, as had many others in the Church, that the story of Jesus was the story of God.

The Father's love of his family meant that he did not want any of them to suffer but to thrive. That some of his children oppressed, robbed, and persecuted others was a terrible pain to bear. He had inspired men and women across the centuries to struggle for justice and peace. Now in these times, Columbans too were urged by the Spirit to do the same and *The Far East* told the stories.

There were plenty of other stories too. God had inspired men and women, including Columbans, to try to build bridges between the various large religious traditions across the world. Given all the conflicts involving religion, there still are many obstacles to fulfilling this dream. The desire of the Trinity for a world united in God is not easily achieved. It is the story of Jesus which is the basis of our hope that God's desire will be realised.

Of course, the Trinity had seen many technological changes over the past 100 years. At the meeting, it was noted that, besides the magazine, the Columbans are now using many of these new technologies to let people know the Jesus story.

We Columbans believe that our Society was called into being by the Trinity and that each of us was also so called. God has worked in the hearts and minds of all of our friends and supporters who read *The Far East*. We are all engaged in God's love for the whole of creation. God has blessed us and the work of *The Far East* for 100 years. Let us give thanks.



Fr Trevor Trotter
Regional Director of Oceania
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Bailon ill in bed with his son Natthapong at the Hope Workers' Centre in Taiwan.

Hope for Workers in Taiwan

JOAN YAP

Founded in 1986 by *Columban Missionaries*, the *Hope Workers' Centre* has supported migrant workers in Taiwan for over 30 years. It is a non-Government and interfaith organisation that happily serves people of all faith backgrounds. It is the mission of the Centre to reflect the compassion of Jesus in accompanying local and migrant workers and supporting them in their struggle to enjoy safe working conditions and to receive just recompense for their labour.

Early this year, Bailon and his son, Natthapong, arrived at the *Hope Workers' Centre* in Taiwan. Bailon was connected to an IV drip, was obviously very malnourished and suffering from a number of other medical complications. He was very dependent on his son who seemed to have no knowledge of the local language.

My supervisor recounted to me the story that Bailon was a migrant worker from Thailand who arrived in Taiwan about 12 years ago. He was a single parent with two children living in Thailand and was 43 years old when he came to Taiwan

and began to work in a steel factory. Then around the middle of last year a heavy steel girder fell on him, hitting him in the abdominal area.

His employer at first decided not to take him to the hospital but just leave him to 'rest' in his quarters. Later that evening he experienced severe pain. But he was ignored when he tried to inform his employment broker about his condition. The following day his employer finally decided to take him to the hospital with the intention of simply abandoning him there.

The diagnosis was internal bleeding and severe abdominal injuries, specifically in the intestines and bile duct. For six months he received very little care until a concerned social worker in the hospital contacted our office and informed us about this abandoned patient. The *Hope Workers' Centre* where I work assists all kinds of migrant workers who have been abused by their employers or brokers. But this story of Bailon is particularly heart-breaking, being abandoned in a hospital by his employer who claimed that Bailon's injury was in no way work-related.

The *Hope Workers' Centre* has always reminded companies to honestly follow the labour laws and give serious importance to the health of their workers. But sadly, the majority of the companies fail to follow basic safety measures or provide appropriate safety gear, work uniforms and other needs for their workers. Saving money is always a higher priority than the safety of their workers.

Bailon's son, Natthapong, is 30 years of age, married with two children. Because of his father's accident, he resigned from his own work in Thailand and left his family there to come to Taiwan and take care of his father. He remained daily at his father's side trying to assist him anyway he could despite having no knowledge of the Mandarin language.

We discovered however that these tragic circumstances somehow became an opportunity for this father and son to form a new relationship of love and mutual respect, something that they were never able to establish when they were back home. This is often the case when a father or another family member goes abroad to seek employment to provide for the family members remaining at home.

We at the *Hope Workers' Centre* were encouraged by the attention and care that Natthapong was giving to his father and also by the help and concern provided by others who became aware of Bailon's situation. Among them were the hospital social worker, a nurse who volunteered some time to attend to Bailon and another good Samaritan who loaned us a hospital bed and a wheel chair. The *Hope Workers' Centre* staff continued their efforts to obtain for Bailon justice from his former employer.

But then one day all of our hopes and encouragement were shattered by the news that someone had jumped to his death from the window of his room at the Centre. Yes, it was Bailon! I and all of the Centre staff were deep in shock. What had brought him to this decision?

I could only surmise that Bailon could see no end to the suffering from his chronic condition, no likelihood that he

would ever be compensated for the accident, that he would ever be able to pay his hospital expenses and could see no other way to put an end to the sacrifices his son was making for him. Surely his son needed to return to his wife and family and his own life back in Thailand!

Of course we do not know what Bailon was thinking or what desperation brought him to the decision to end his life. But I believe he was thinking of others and their troubles and their future rather than his own and it was his concern and love for them that brought him to this decision.

This of course was a very tragic event for us all at the *Hope Workers' Centre*. Despite the name of our centre, this is a story of the loss of hope for Bailon. His son had sacrificed so much for his father and did everything he could to help him. The staff of the *Centre* and many others had been generous with their efforts. But in the end, we could only entrust Bailon to God's love and compassion.

We ask for the faith and strength to continue to reach out with hope and love to all we encounter in this ministry.

Columban Lay Missionary Joan Yap from the Philippines works at the Hope Workers' Centre in Taiwan.



Bailon doing physio with Columban Lay Missionary Joan Yap at the Hope Workers' Centre in Taiwan.



Useless for God's sake

FR GEORGE HOGARTY

The Coronavirus pandemic crept up on us like a lion through tall grass. Nobody saw it coming and nor could we have foreseen what a change it would make to our lives.

In August 2019, I had just arrived in Chile, in the parish of Saint Matthias, in the suburb of Puente Alto, Santiago. I was beginning to get to know the parishioners and familiarize myself with the layout of the parish when the first curfew, and then, a hard lockdown, was imposed upon us all.

Being in quarantine meant we could not celebrate Mass or any of the Sacraments except in very limited circumstances. As well as this, all catechetical programmes and missionary outreach efforts were effectively halted while the Chilean Government tried to control the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic. However, as the number of Coronavirus cases spiralled throughout Chile and Puente Alto became recognised as the foremost suburb in Santiago and leading Municipality in Chile with the highest number of cases of Coronavirus, it became less and less likely that we would be ending our time of quarantine any time soon. Nobody could have imagined that we would still be in lockdown six months later!

Columban Associate Priest, Fr John Greene, the parish priest of Saint Matthias, and I were obliged to curtail all pastoral activity in these early stages of lockdown though we did try to explore how we might continue celebrating Masses in some of the chapels in a limited way. However, in the end, even this was not feasible. We had to resign ourselves to being housebound.

In my own case, this feeling of being useless was exacerbated by the fact that I had damaged my left knee climbing up a steep slope to get closer to the foot of a glacier on a trip down to the South of Chile in January. When the knee specialist recommended I rest my injured knee for a period of three to six months to cure it I gasped in shock. How was I going to bear such a long period of forced inactivity?

Nevertheless, just when we were feeling incapable of responding to our people's pastoral needs, the parish came to life in an unexpected way! As the lockdown dragged on, our concerned parishioners began to take action when they realised that many families in the poorer parts of the parish were going hungry. Feeding the hungry soon became the major priority.

First, everyone involved had to get a special pass from the police to be able to work in the seven soup kitchens which now feed 700 people daily throughout the parish. Next, pastoral agents, who were normally catechists and active parishioners, not only found themselves helping in the soup kitchens but were urged to visit their neighbours to find others who might be going hungry.

Help in the form of food parcels began to arrive in the parish through the auspices of Caritas and the Archdiocese of Santiago. Good-hearted donors from abroad and the Columban Lay Supporters in Chile helped with money and food parcels. Fr John soon found himself being called upon to collect copious boxes of foodstuffs that were channelled through the local Episcopal Vicar of Maipo, Fr Rodrigo.

The Coordinators of the nine chapels in the parish were charged with the responsibility of giving Fr John a list of the names of needy families so that help could be directed to those most in need. With the help of an enthusiastic couple, Luis and Maggie, Fr John was able to redirect countless food parcels and other goods to the different chapels for the needy without attracting too much attention from opportunistic people seeking an easy handout.

What has been the effect of all this effort on the lives of our lay people here in the parish of Saint Matthias? Jessica, a committed parishioner in the chapel of Saint Joseph the Worker, spoke of her joy in being able to give to those in need. She explained how she felt in these words: *"I just feel so happy meeting people, whom we don't normally see, coming to our chapel, and seeing them learn that through us Jesus is at work among them."*

Another parishioner, named Sonia, who belongs to the community of Saint Andrew Kim, relates her experience of serving the hungry in the chapel's soup kitchen in this way: *"At first they all came in sheepishly, embarrassed at having to come because they couldn't feed themselves. However, little by little, as we've got to know each other, they've come alive and now we're the best of friends".*

In my own case, I am still limited in what I can do to help because of the need to rest my injured knee. However, it is obvious to me that God allowed our apparent uselessness to open the door for the lay people of the parish to take action in a way neither of us could have anticipated before the Coronavirus pandemic began.

Columban Fr George Hogarty has recently returned to missionary work in Chile.

Giving out hot meals to those living in the neighbourhood of Bajos de Mena in front of the Chapel of Saint Andrew Kim, Chile.



Prendy was a blessing to us

PERU
FR ED O'CONNELL

Paul Prendergast, better known as Prendy, was born in 1935 in the town of Akaroa on the east coast of the South Island of New Zealand. He was the youngest of six children. It was there that he enjoyed a very carefree upbringing, including primary and secondary education.

After four years working in a bank in his hometown, Paul went to *St Kevin's College* for two years to study Latin, by way of preparation for going to the seminary. He also managed to fit in a lot of cricket, rugby and tennis. In 1958 he went to Sydney and entered the Columban Seminary at Wahroonga. Within a couple of years the program moved into the newly constructed seminary in North Turramurra.

In 1963 he was ordained a missionary priest in Christchurch Cathedral. The following year he returned to Sydney for two more years of study at the diocesan seminary at Manly.

In 1966 Paul arrived in Peru and studied Spanish in Cieneguilla. Later that year he was assigned to the parish of San Mateo on the northern side of the city of Lima. Here, he ministered and missioned for 18 years, especially in the chapel of "La Virgen del Carmen". During that time he made frequent visits to villages in the Andes at the request of his parishioners. There he came to appreciate both the culture and the needs of the largely abandoned communities, indeed parishes, of the Sierra.

In 1984 he offered himself full time to the Prelature of Sicuani and to their bishop, Albano Quinn. His first appointment was to the parish of St Tomas, in the south-west corner of the Prelature. Next stop was Checacupe and Pitumarca, followed by Tinta where he also formed part of the Prelature seminary team. Finally Paul went to Yanaoca which is 4,000 metres above sea level and the provincial capital and serves what used to be three other parishes, all now part of Yanaoca.

There were many small settlements where Paul helped the communities to rebuild their chapels with the people putting in the labour and the costs of the mud brick walls, whilst Paul found the funding for the tin roofs. He trained a large number of catechists from the communities and a number of teachers helped Paul develop a pastoral plan that included lay-led liturgies for when it was not possible for the priest to be there.

During his time in the Sierra, Paul put much effort into promoting and defending the local language, Quechua. He celebrated Masses in Quechua rather than Spanish and

published song and hymn books and translated books of the Old Testament into Quechua.

His final visit home to New Zealand was in 2019. He returned to Yanaoca but had to come down to the *Columban Centre House* in Lima after a few months for health reasons. He was fighting cancer, hoping to get better and doing his best to be with us at Mass in the morning, for lunch and the afternoon meditation. He just wanted to be with the lads.

During the last month he gradually accepted the inevitable and carried it well in the last few days. He was 85 years old on Saturday, August 22, and was determined to get there which he did in style. After a long siesta he woke at 5pm and wanted a piece of his birthday cake. He ate a couple of pieces and was happy. At 1.10 pm on the following day, his body gave out and he went in peace.

Paul's wish, and that of the people of Yanaoca, is that he be laid to rest among them and to the sound of his beloved Quechua language.



Fr Paul Prendergast

Columban Fr Ed O'Connell lives and works in Peru.

Fr John Hegerty adds:

Prendy was a blessing to us from the beginning. When it was not fashionable to go to work in the Sierra, Paul heard and responded to the cries of abandoned villagers high up in the Andes mountains. He alone saw the value and need for the Quechua language and set about mastering it. For 36 years he challenged and inspired us fellow Columbans.

In the last 10 months while Paul was confined to the Centre House with cancer, we also became confined by the pandemic and he was a blessing again. He brought the best out in each of us. Rather than feel sorry for ourselves and complain, we had to adjust and care for our battling brother. It wasn't always easy with a head strong missionary used to living on his own. But it was a blessing.

NOW
100 YEARS ON

Whenever his condition allowed, he made valiant efforts to be an integral part of the community. He made it to Mass most mornings, even presiding from his wheelchair when he was up to it. He enjoyed the conversation over lunch and joined in evening prayer with the rest of us. He frequently offered a prayer. With such courage, effort and presence, he blessed us.

Thanks Prendy for being a blessing to us in a time of pandemic.

Columban Fr John Hegerty has been in Peru since 1971.

70
ANNIVERSARY

Fr Chris Baker

70th Anniversary of ordination

Congratulations to Columban Fr Chris Baker, who celebrated his 70th Anniversary of ordination to the priesthood on September 23, 2020. Chris spent over 40 years working on mission in Peru and now resides at the Columban House in Essendon.



Photo (70): bigstockphoto.com/Soolnce



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