

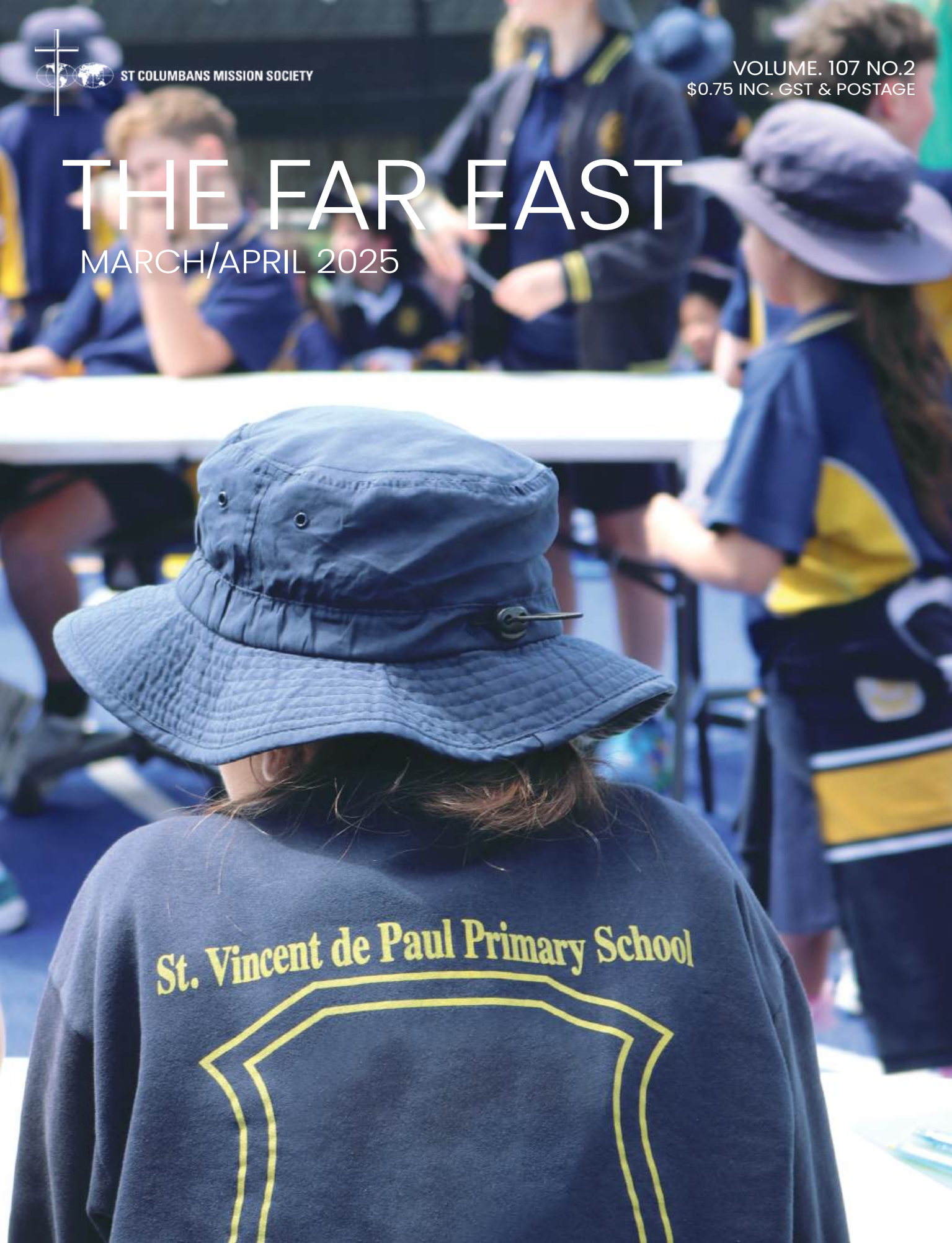


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BIRTH, DEATH, AND NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

Birth and death are often considered opposites. They “bookend” our lives. We are born ... we live ... we die.

Birth opens all sorts of possibilities. Parents, family, and friends rejoice in the birth of a child. They wonder, what will this child become? What will he or she do in life? Will they live long, happy, and successful lives? Will they follow in the footsteps of their parents? Which of the many possible careers will they follow? Will they contribute and make a difference to society and our world? Will they marry and have children and grandchildren? Will their lives be relatively untouched by sickness and sorrow? Will they be blessed with health and happiness?

Death seems to end possibilities. It ends our life on earth. It severs our link with family, friends, and colleagues who are left behind to grieve. Death ends the relationships that have sustained us. It ends our careers. It often leaves unfinished business - plans not carried out, hopes unfulfilled, regrets unaddressed, broken relations not healed. It is a rupture, a break, a closure, a termination, an end. But in Christ, death is not the end. As the First Preface for the Dead states: “Indeed for your faithful, Lord, life is changed not ended, and, when this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven.”

Jesus Christ was born, lived, died - and was raised to life! His life, death, and resurrection have transformed our lives and deaths. Death is no longer simply the end of our lives on Earth, but our continuing journey into eternal life.

Death has become birth. Death is no longer the severing of relationships but of relating in new ways. Death is no longer the end of hope. Even unfinished business and broken relationships can be touched and healed by resurrected life.

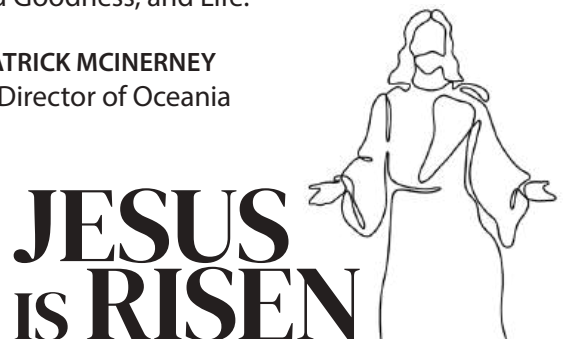
The resurrection of Jesus - born like one of us, died like the least of us as a criminal rejected by the religious and civic leaders of his time, abandoned by nearly

all his followers, and buried in a stranger's grave - has transformed the lives of all peoples, of all religions and world-views, of all times, indeed, of all creatures and the very cosmos itself. He is the fullness of life and grace that God intended for all from the very beginning, the source, the model, the example, the pattern, who has gone before us, and is the Way to follow.

Death has become birth. Death is no longer the severing of relationships but of relating in new ways. Death is no longer the end of hope. Even unfinished business and broken relationships can be touched and healed by resurrected life.

Jesus' resurrected life reaches into our lives, our minds, our hearts, our spirits, our histories, our ancestries, and indeed, into all creation, and there, through his life-giving Spirit, works the slow process of growth and transformation, healing and redeeming, reconciling and uniting, birthing us to become children of God, brothers and sisters to one another, stewards of our common home, supporting and caring for one another on our common pilgrim journey towards the fulness of Truth, and Goodness, and Life.

REV DR PATRICK MCINERNEY
Regional Director of Oceania





CHILDREN WALK FOR MISSION

Fun coloured socks were in style during the Walkathon. Photos: Adi Mariana Waqa

SELFLESS CHARITY

What do you get when you have colourful socks, runners, music, bubbles, and children pacing around their school block? A Fundraising WALKATHON!

On Friday, October 11, 2024, children at St Vincent de Paul's Primary School, Strathmore, participated in a Walkathon that raised \$2,656.00 in donations towards the work of the Columbans in countries like Pakistan, Peru, and the Philippines.

The school grounds buzzed with energy as Columban Frs Bernie Lane and John Hegerty eagerly joined teachers and students on their round-the-block conquests!

Deputy Principal, Mrs Laura Petrie, explained that students had fundraised through bazaars and stalls in previous years. However, this time, the school decided on a fundraising activity that instilled the value of selfless charity whereby students were required to give without expecting anything tangible in return, besides knowing that their walk around the school would raise money for people in need.

MINNIE VINNIES

Demonstrating student agency to create change, the Walkathon was organised by the "Minnie Vinnies," a group of grade 6 students, who with the help of their teachers, facilitated the Walkathon successfully. Minnie Vinnie member, Chloe, shared that it took them only one week of planning to organise the Walkathon due to their fundraising experience from previous years. She also shared that organising the event helped her learn that children like her could help people in need by giving to Catholic charity groups.

"A lot of people are less fortunate than us and, as children we can't really go out there doing charity work. But something we can do is donate to a group like the Columbans who then use the money to help the poor."

PARENTS SET EXAMPLES

Parents who supported the Walkathon in numbers volunteered at stationed key points or participated in the walk with babies in strollers and dogs on leashes. One mother advocated the importance of incorporating physical education with charity work, while another spoke about setting a good example for children to come together and raise funds for those in need. Parents participating in the event demonstrated the school's vibrant community spirit! They walked alongside the children, supervised checkpoints, and chatted with teachers who proudly watched their students complete multiple laps around the school block.

THE PRINCIPAL AND THE SAINT

The event was well organised, and teachers safely escorted students from prep to grade six around the block before being greeted with loud cheers, music, and bubbles from the Minnie Vinnies team. School Principal, Shane Byrnes, joined in on the fun, sharing that the Walkathon aimed for students to understand the role of St Vincent de Paul's mission to help people experiencing poverty. "We wanted them as children to learn that the work of St Vincent de Paul also includes supporting organisations like the Columbans who live and work with the poor and vulnerable both in Australia and overseas."

"We tried to instill the principles and values of St Vincent de Paul, such as compassion, empathy, courage, and respect. This way the students can practice Vincentian virtues in community and put their faith to action by positively impacting the lives of people through charity work."

St Columbans Mission Society would like to thank the students, teaching staff, and parents for their effort and generous donation.

GIVING THANKS

Columban Frs John Hegerty and Bernie Lane were impressed with the enthusiasm and school spirit shown at the Walkathon, so much so that the two priests kept up with the students and completed eight straight laps around the school! They demonstrated that age was no barrier for two seasoned missionaries whose ministry amongst the poor and vulnerable has been made possible through the generosity of kind donors like those at St Vincent de Paul's Primary School.

St Columbans Mission Society would like to thank the students, teaching staff, and parents for their effort and generous donation. The students of St Vincent de Paul's Primary School have shown what is possible when children are encouraged to act on behalf of people less fortunate than themselves while being supported by teachers and parents who invest their time and resources to develop good leaders of the future. Together, we can make a difference!

"A lot of people are less fortunate than us and, as children, we can't really go out there doing charity work. But something we can do is donate to a group like the Columbans who then use the money to help the poor."

ADI MARIANA WAQA

Adi Mariana Waqa is the Partnership Coordinator at the Columban Mission Centre in Essendon.





Migrant mothers and daughters doing artwork. Photo: Christina Lee Kyungja

MIGRANTS VISIT MY HOMETOWN

Recently, I had the privilege of inviting three Filipina mothers and their three children to my hometown of Jeonju for a three-day trip. These families had become close to me through my work with migrants and refugees. Each of these women carries a story of remarkable resilience to hardship.

One of the mothers is married to a Korean man and raising a seven-year-old daughter. Despite her dedication to her family, she struggles emotionally due to the cultural and age differences in her marriage. The other two women are undocumented immigrants and single mothers raising their three-year-old daughters on their own. They live under challenging circumstances, working tirelessly to support themselves while also sending money to their families in the Philippines.

Unfortunately, their situations are not uncommon in Korea. Many migrant workers enter relationships only to find themselves abandoned and left to raise their children alone. A part of my work is to help women in these situations' secure child support from the fathers of their children, but the emotional and financial burdens they carry remain immense.

With the hope of giving these mothers a brief escape from their struggles, I planned a trip to Jeonju. The women were excited, especially since this would be their first-time riding Korea's high-speed train. However, their exhaustion from daily life quickly caught up with them, and they soon fell asleep during the journey. Meanwhile, the children, full of energy, entertained themselves with snacks and playful antics, filling the train car with laughter.

We stayed at a cosy guest house near Hanok Village, an area known for its traditional Korean-style houses. Nestled within an arts village, the guest house had two bedrooms and a living room, making it the perfect space for our group. A kind friend from Jeonju had

This trip was a powerful reminder of how small acts of kindness can bring light to the lives of others. In the smiles of these mothers and their children, I saw hope - a hope that, despite life's difficulties, there is always room for joy, love, and connection.

MIGRANTS

KOREA

arranged for us to stay for two nights for the price of one, a gesture of generosity that I deeply appreciated.

The following morning, we enjoyed a delightful brunch at the guest house cafe. The mothers were overjoyed by the experience, eagerly capturing photos, and sharing them on social media. They described it as a once-in-a-lifetime moment, and seeing their happiness filled my heart with gratitude.

Our first destination was Jeondong Cathedral, a historic martyrdom site within Hanok Village. Together, we offered prayers of gratitude. As I watched the mothers bow their heads in prayer, I silently wished for God to hear their heartfelt pleas and grant them comfort and peace.

Exploring Jeonju with young children was not without its challenges. The mothers worked tirelessly to calm tantrums, negotiate demands, and carry the little ones who refused to walk. But despite these moments, their spirits lifted as they sampled local street food, shared laughter, and took in the vibrant sights of the village.

One particularly heart-warming moment occurred when three-year-old Maria, after painting a fan with her mother and popping balloons, exclaimed with a radiant smile, "I'm so happy".

By evening, the night market was alive with energy, bustling with families and young people enjoying street food. The mothers were excited to try sundae-guk (blood sausage soup). As we waited in line, we chatted and laughed, savouring the warm atmosphere. When it was finally our turn, they found the soup delicious and even asked for seconds. Watching them enjoy the moment brought me so much joy.

On our final morning, the owners of the guest house prepared sandwiches for us and gave small gifts to the children. Their kindness was truly touching, and we expressed our heartfelt gratitude before boarding the train back to Seoul.

Although the trip was brief, and we couldn't see everything Jeonju had to offer, it was filled with meaningful moments. Sharing meals, resting together, and experiencing new activities deepened the trust

and friendship between us. I hope this journey gave these mothers a chance to recharge, even if only for a short while, and to create joyful memories with their children.

One particularly heart-warming moment occurred when three-year-old Maria, after painting a fan with her mother and popping balloons, exclaimed with a radiant smile, "I'm so happy".

Beyond the laughter and shared meals, my prayer is that these women feel less alone. I hope they understand that there are people who care for them and want to support them through their struggles. May the bond between them and their children grow stronger, and may they find courage and strength in the knowledge that they are not walking this path alone.

This trip was a powerful reminder of how small acts of kindness can bring light to the lives of others. In the smiles of these mothers and their children, I saw hope - a hope that, despite life's difficulties, there is always room for joy, love, and connection.

As I reflect on the time we spent together, I am reminded of the importance of being present for one another. Whether through offering a listening ear, sharing a meal, or simply providing companionship, we can help lighten someone's burden. I hope to continue creating moments like these where those facing hardship can feel supported, valued, and loved.

May God bless these mothers and their children and provide them with comfort, strength, and the courage to face each new day.

CHRISTINA LEE KYUNGJA

Columban lay missionary Christina Lee Kyungja lives and works in Korea

PLAYFULNESS

Playfulness is something we expect to see in a child. Yet, it truly is a source for healthy living and relating for all of us, offering joy and creativity to every aspect of life. Unfortunately, this innate sense of playfulness can be destroyed by the stresses of life and work, often from an early age.

School examinations, grind classes, and societal pressures rob children of the freedom to "waste time". They are told to focus on achievement rather than simply being. Consequently, the element of living in the present moment is undervalued, and this essential quality gradually fades. Slowly but surely, playfulness can disappear from our lives, replaced by a seriousness that blinds us to the potential for joyful and creative living.

When we are relaxed, our potential for playfulness and creativity flows more freely. In this state, we can enjoy each other's company without pretence or the need to control or force others to conform to our expectations. Playfulness enables us to interact authentically, valuing people for who they are rather than what they achieve.

In many ways, playfulness is like a wellspring, allowing the life force to flow freely, much like a fresh stream. It rejuvenates not just the individual but everyone around them. It draws people into an authentic connection, one that comes from the very centre of their being.

Playfulness has intrinsic value, distinct from any utilitarian purpose. It keeps alive the awareness that we are valuable in and of ourselves - not for what we produce, achieve, or accomplish, but simply because we exist.

We all need to waste time occasionally, engaging in activities that don't serve a specific purpose beyond the joy of the moment. Can we stop and marvel at the beauty of a sunrise or sunset, immerse ourselves in a piece of music, or relish the simple act of being? Too often, even our leisure activities come with goals - losing weight, winning a race, or achieving some measurable success. Yet the healthiest approach to exercise, for example, is to revel in the sheer sense of well-being it provides. Unfortunately, this joy is often lost. We push ourselves to win at all costs, sometimes incurring injuries or even resorting to harmful practices like performance-enhancing drugs. Many sports today are laden with stress rather than fostering the relaxation and joy that could lead to a true spirit of playfulness.

Playfulness has intrinsic value, distinct from any utilitarian purpose. It keeps alive the awareness that we are valuable in and of ourselves - not for what we produce, achieve, or accomplish, but simply because we exist.

Even our holidays, which should be a time of rest and renewal, are often packed with activities designed to achieve something. We fill our schedules to the brim, chasing experiences or ticking off destinations on a list. In doing so, we lose the pearls of joyful living along the way and often return home more tired than when we left.

In truth, when we are fully relaxed and enjoying ourselves, our truest selves emerge. Playfulness fosters



Playfulness is not just for children. It is a wellspring of life, an invitation to be fully alive, and a reminder that joy and creativity are as essential to our well-being as air and water.



genuine laughter and joy, drawing us out of our overly self-focused tendencies. It breaks down the walls we build to keep others at a distance - the defences meant to shield us from judgment or vulnerability. These barriers often prevent us from truly welcoming others into our lives or even from being at home with ourselves.

Without playfulness, life can become stagnant. Competition, fear of failure, and the relentless pursuit of success stifle the spirit of joy. Without that light-hearted spirit, we risk becoming like zombies, only half-living, going through the motions of life without truly engaging with it.

Playfulness allows us to see the humour and absurdity of life, including our own missteps. It invites us to laugh at ourselves and approach others with openness and generosity. When we embrace playfulness, we free ourselves from the constant barrage of expectations to perform, produce, and achieve, which is especially prevalent in a fast-paced city like Hong Kong.

People who are playful and joy-filled know that their worth is not tied to success or failure. They recognise themselves as whole and complete, made in the image and likeness of God. This foundational truth - that God does not make mistakes - anchors them, enabling them to live with freedom, creativity, and a deep sense of contentment.

Playfulness is not just for children. It is a wellspring of life, an invitation to be fully alive, and a reminder that joy and creativity are as essential to our well-being as air and water.

People who are playful and joy-filled know that their worth is not tied to success or failure.

FR MICHAEL CUDDIGAN

Columban Fr Michael Cuddigan lives and works in Hong Kong.

WELCOMING CHRIST IN EVERY STRANGER



Ushers at Hope Workers' Center welcoming parishioners. Photo: Reins Mosqueda

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you invited me in; I needed clothes and you clothed me; I was sick and you looked after me; I was in prison and you came to visit me." – Matthew 25:35-36

These words were written in Chinese characters on the wall outside the building where I served for 11 years in my ministry with mentally and physically challenged adult Taiwanese students. They served as a daily reminder of my call to show compassion and love in every aspect of my work. Little did I know that this same message would resonate with me again as I transitioned into my new ministry with migrants.

In my new role, I quickly learned that hospitality - offering kindness and care to those in need - is crucial for building a welcoming and inclusive community. Just as Christ extended His love to all who came to Him, we are called to open our hearts to everyone, including the hungry, the thirsty, the struggler, and the stranger.

Hospitality is not just about offering food, drink, or shelter; it's about creating a safe space, showing kindness without expectations, and offering warmth to those who may feel unseen or unwanted.

In the church, ushers exemplify this spirit of hospitality. Their warmth and friendliness ensure that everyone feels welcomed and valued as they enter. Their role goes far beyond simply directing people to their seats. They help create a sacred space where individuals can open their hearts and prepare to receive God's presence in the Eucharist. The ushers' selfless

dedication to hospitality has taught me that this practice isn't just about actions; it's a posture of love and care that transforms the entire environment.

However, the role of an usher is not without its difficulties. Some parishioners may disregard or disrespect them, yet these volunteers go on greeting everyone with grace and kindness. Their actions reflect Christ's love, even when faced with rudeness. I've learned that to offer true hospitality, one must be willing to endure rejection and show love. The ushers' resilience and their ability to remain composed and loving despite difficulties have deeply inspired me. They embody the very spirit of hospitality that I strive to practise in my own ministry.

As I step into my role at the migrant Hope Workers Center, I am reminded of the importance of hospitality in creating a community where every person feels valued. Many of the migrants I work with have left behind their homes, families, and cultures in search of a better life. They arrive with little more than hopes and dreams. Though many have faced great hardship, they continue to open their hearts to others.

The ushers themselves are migrants, so they deeply understand the challenges fellow migrant workers face. Even when they are tired or have personal concerns, these volunteers still dedicate their time and energy to serving God and the parishioners.

Hospitality is not just about offering food, drink, or shelter; it's about creating a safe space, showing kindness without expectations, and offering warmth to those who may feel unseen or unwanted.

Despite lacking sleep or having Sundays as their only day off, they show up with friendly smiles and warm attitudes, welcoming everyone into the church. Their selfless commitment is an inspiration to me as a missionary. Through their example, I have learned that true hospitality is not about perfection or comfort - it's about selflessness, sacrifice, and a willingness to serve even in difficult circumstances. Truly, they are

embracing the call of Jesus to be hospitable to all kinds of people, which encourages me to do the same in my own ministry.

Reflecting on my journey with the migrants for several months now, I've been deeply touched by their hospitality, which has drawn me closer to God. As I adjusted to my new role, their support and encouragement became a constant source of inspiration, making my work more meaningful. Though the work has been challenging at times, the warmth and care of the migrants around me have made the journey more fulfilling. Their kindness has fuelled my passion for mission.

As I reflect on the passage from Matthew 25, I realise that every act of hospitality is an opportunity to welcome Jesus Himself. As a missionary, I am called not only to serve others but also to see Christ in every person I encounter - whether they are hungry, thirsty, a stranger, or in need. The example set by the ushers has deeply inspired me, reminding me that true hospitality goes beyond meeting physical needs; it is about embracing others with the love and grace of Christ. In offering care and warmth to those I serve, I am not just extending kindness. I am welcoming Jesus into my life and ministry.

This passage challenges me to continually reflect on how I can embody this hospitality in my daily work. Every person I meet, especially the marginalised and struggling, is a chance to practise the love Christ has shown me. By welcoming them with open arms, I am fulfilling His call to love others as He has loved us. In my role as a missionary, I must always strive to welcome others as though I were welcoming Christ Himself. In this way, each encounter becomes a moment of transformation, not only for those I serve but also for myself as I grow in my faith and understanding of God's love.

REINS MOSQUEDA

Columban lay missionary Reins Mosqueda lives and works in Taiwan.

For more information on the Hope Workers' Center in Taiwan visit:
www.hopeworkerscenter.wordpress.com

GOOD FRIDAY

IN THE HILLS OF BA

The Fijian translation of Good Friday has always struck me; it is literally “Day of Death”. No massaging, no theological euphemisms, just saying it as it is. Preparations for this day are taken very seriously in Fiji, and the Way of the Cross or the dramas through which people mark the day are often long, physically challenging, and emotional.

That was the case last year in the five highland villages of Ba. On Wednesday morning, about forty young people started carrying the cross in silence along a 20-mile stretch of tough, parched roads linking their villages. They were accompanied by parish catechists from each village who gave teachings each night on the meaning of Holy Week. Some young people from other Christian denominations also took part.

Having “farewelled” the parishioners of Ba at 6am as they began their own Way of the Cross and knowing that the other section of the parish - the four coastal villages - had also been on the road since 5am, I headed up the hills to Navala to conduct five baptisms and to admit 12 young people into our Sacrament of Confirmation Programme.

By 9am, we were ready to witness the Highland Youths’ rendering of the Passion of St John, which interwove the 14 traditional Stations of the Cross. The life-like shouts of the soldiers and the physical mistreatment of Jesus abruptly brought us back to that day in Jerusalem some 2,000 years ago.

Dressed in uniforms culled from cardboard boxes, with a few wearing Fijian Army fatigues, they pushed Jesus up the hill of the village, where he met his mother and the weeping women, fell down 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.

So realistic was it that at one point, I had to make sure the nail hammering was not an actual crucifixion. Nevertheless, the young man portraying Jesus had to squeeze his legs between two narrow slats, which was very painful for him, but he did it. After “death”, he was taken down from the Cross into the arms of his mother, from whom the soldiers took the body and carried it into the sacristy for “burial”.



A post Passion hymn to Mary by the young people.



Young parishioners carry the cross along a 20-mile stretch of rough and parched roads linking their villages as part of a Way of the Cross drama.

Rather than all adjourn to wait for the liturgical Service of the Passion at three o'clock, I asked that we keep going. In place of individual confessions, a service of communal repentance was led by the catechists. Villagers had written down their sins and watched as they went up in flames before the altar.

The Liturgy of the Word followed, and I decided to let the young people, who had learned their parts off by heart in their drama, also conduct the proclamation of the Gospel - through the same Jesus, Peter, Pilate, crowd, etc.

This was a powerful "retake" of what we had already seen. My homily noted that while the Stations of the Cross (and the other three Gospel writers) emphasise Jesus' physical suffering on Good Friday, the Gospel of John poses some awkward questions for us: 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 to follow in your life? Is it based on violence, patronage, and the size of one's army, or is it one whose only weapons are integrity and truth?

Two young men then held up two crosses for the rite of veneration, and we ended with Communion, which was returned to the house in the village where it had "slept" the previous night. After the Liturgy, we retired to drink kava, which lasted until exactly 3pm, at which time the village fell silent to mark the hour of Jesus' death. Afterwards, we had lunch together.

So realistic was it that at one point, I had to make sure the nail hammering was not an actual crucifixion.

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

FR PAT COLGAN

Columban Fr Pat Colgan, former parish priest in Ba, Fiji.



Jesus (Waisake Maseituba). Photos: Fr Pat Colgan SSC



PILGRIMS OF HOPE AND FIDELITY TO LAUDATO SI'

In 2025, Christians are called to embrace hope throughout the Jubilee Year and the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, highlighting the need for urgent ecological action and faith-driven transformation explains Columban Fr Kevin McDonagh.



Columban and FCJ missionaries at a London climate march during the UN's COP29 Climate Conference in November 2024. Photo: Fr Kevin McDonagh SSC

The Jubilee Year is a time of celebration and renewal for the Catholic Church. Pope Francis

The New Year poses a unique and critical challenge to all who profess the Christian faith and who strive to live, work, and pray in hope for the establishment of God's reign of Life. In 2025, we Christians – and others who wish to join in – are invited to celebrate two important events: the Jubilee Year convened by Pope Francis, and the tenth anniversary in May of the papal encyclical *Laudato Si' – On the Care of our Common Home*.

The reality and imperative of Hope in the present time is at the heart of both. From a Christian standpoint they ought to be seen as intertwined and inseparable. It would surely be incoherent to proclaim Christian hope in this time of ecological emergency and not engage with the *Laudato Si'* core invitation to hear the *Cry of the Poor* and the *Cry of the Earth*. And there is the contingent issue of finding a new paradigm through which humanity, the planet, and all living species can

live with dignity and hope in a new mutuality. Any honest quest for a hope-filled future must face the ecological threats outlined by Pope Francis.

THE VIRTUE OF CHRISTIAN HOPE

We need to understand hope from a dual perspective. Firstly, viewed as a theological virtue, hope emanates from God's love. God is both the source and end of our hope. Ultimately, hope is a gift, a 'grace' mediated to us through the relationship of faith.

Secondly, hope both draws us and impels us to witness in explicit and radical ways to God's ongoing action and promise revealed throughout history and the promise of new and abundant life (Jn 10:10).

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." John 10:10

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." John 10:10

We are called to act with hope in situations of life even when human hope seems absent. As the Gospels remind us, when we act in a life-giving way, then we find life. When we act in hope, with and for others, we find hope. In this sense, hope is a faith-inspired action and not merely a spiritual desire.

Christian hope and human optimism cannot be equated. Optimism is largely a temporal sentiment, assuming that things will work out in a positive manner. In contrast, Christian hope is grounded in our relationship with the divine and requires to be integrated in our lives and acted upon.

When we act in hope, with and for others, we find hope. In this sense, hope is a faith-inspired action and not merely a spiritual desire.

LAUDATO SI' A 'CALL' AND A 'PILGRIMAGE OF HOPE'

The promulgation of *Laudato Si'* and its incorporation into the Church's Social Teaching is a sign and a source of Christian hope. We find a profound clamour of Hope, an urgent call to assess, analyse and seek to resolve society's multi-layered crises, which are visiting so much calamity on the Earth and upon the poor.

Pope Francis lays out in a studied and scientific manner the dramatic and deadly dimensions of the ecological and social crisis facing us all. And he invites us to find hope and spiritual resolve in the ultimate connectedness and communion of all life forms in and through our Creator God, who does not abandon us. Pope Francis presents a 'route-map' towards renewed hope, to be achieved through a comprehensive reordering of our relationships with respect to God, as source and origin of our biodiverse reality; to the Earth as our common home; and to the varied expressions of human culture.

This reordering, in the mind of the Pope, requires a paradigm shift away from an anthropocentric mindset



with regard to all life on Earth. It involves developing a culture of 'integral ecology', an embracing of 'ecological conversion' and an openness to an ongoing inter-disciplinary dialogue.

PILGRIMS OF HOPE

Laudato Si' is a hope-filled and inspiring reflection on the ecological emergency facing us all. To be Pilgrims of Hope we must seek and act with others, relying upon all our faith and creativity, implementing the spirit and programme of *Laudato Si'*. There can be no ecological hope without ecological action.

Prophetic reflection, such as we find in the encyclical, articulates the 'call' and sets out the task, but the urgent action needed is down to each one of us as faithful pilgrims. James the Apostle, in his epistle, reminds us that faith without works is totally dead.

And so too with hope. To be true Pilgrims of Hope we need to be activists for ecological hope!

FR KEVIN MCDONAGH

Columban Fr Kevin McDonagh lives and works in Britain.

BARE START IN A BARE VINEYARD

PAKISTAN

Elated at completing my Urdu refresher course, I felt ready to jump-start my ministry. It is true that the more knowledge one gains about something, the more one realises how limited one's knowledge is about the matter. It's as though one has landed on the tip of an iceberg, with the rest yet to be discovered and explored.

This is the same when learning Urdu, Pakistan's national language. It is a hybrid of Hindi, Persian and Arabic languages and speaks volumes about civilization, history, anthropology, religion, and culture as social fabrics embedded in the hearts and souls of the people.

I have always known that learning the *mater lingua* (mother tongue) of the people is imperative for missionaries. I liken it to a bridge spanning two

worlds, with these two worlds taking a leap-of-faith journey. Although I was born and raised in Northern Mindanao, in the Philippines, my native language is Cebuano Bisaya since my parents are from Cebu Island. It was only later that I learned to speak Filipino, our national language, and still later English.



Learning a new language is tedious, yet it pays off by making adapting to new people and environments easier and more fun. However, with my newly assigned parish this year, which comprises 13 purely Parkari Kohli tribal communities, I find myself in "a bare start" (in a good and positive way, I must add). Only a small percentage of Parkari Kohli people speak Urdu and most of them are men. The dialect is generally learned orally, which means there is little literature for learning. This just makes learning my second language in this country more interesting. I must add that it will make an enormous difference when the language barrier is cleared up.

With the length of time I see myself working in this "bare vineyard", where potable drinking water is scarce, the education of most of the children very poor, health services from the government yet to arrive, many children malnourished and living in a "survival state" and most people with no electricity, I hope I won't grow weary and become burned out.

I am reminded of the first Parkari Kohli who was baptised a Catholic in 1943, exactly 80 years ago. I liken the believing communities here to an infant who requires much attention and care to grow in stature and wisdom.

With so much work needing to be done in terms of laying down the foundations that are crucial to faith formation and human development, I hope that alongside them, I may also grow as a missionary and a shepherd, a keeper and a guest, a teacher and a learner, an evangelist and the one being evangelised. After all, I am just a worker in this vineyard, not the Messiah.

FR JERRY LOHERA

Columban Fr Jerry Lohera lives and works in Pakistan.



Children from the Parkari Kohli communities in Pakistan.
Photos: Jerry Lohera SSC

ANSWERING THE CALL

PHILIPPINES

My name is Letawa, and my parents are Naaiti and Raakai. I'm 25 years old, born on the island of Aranuka in the Republic of Kiribati - a nation of 33 small islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

Growing up in Kiribati, I witnessed both the joys and challenges of life on a remote island. The country is small, and the lifestyle is far from the modern conveniences of Asia or Europe. Life is hard, yet despite our poverty, the people of Kiribati are remarkably happy, always finding ways to smile and stay positive.

A CALLING TO BE A COLUMBAN SEMINARIAN

How I came to be a Columban seminarian still surprises me, but I've always believed in God's unending love. Back in Kiribati, the Catholic Church was present, and the diocesan priests, but the only religious order was the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. There were no Columban missionaries.

From a young age, I felt a strong desire to become a priest. After finishing secondary school, I considered joining the Diocese, but my attempts to enter didn't work out. Then, unexpectedly, I met Columban Fr William Lee. Through him, I learned about the Columban missionaries and was inspired by their mission. In 2019, I joined the Columban formation program. I studied for two years at the Pacific Regional Seminary in Suva, Fiji, before relocating to the formation house in Manila, Philippines, in August 2022. Moving from a small island to a bustling city was a life-changing experience. I never imagined I could leave my home country, let alone adapt to a completely new way of living. Yet, I see this journey as an opportunity God has given me to grow in faith and experience life beyond what I thought was possible.

A NEW CHAPTER IN FORMATION

Living in Manila has been a blessing. It's a city full of diversity, where I've observed and experienced different lifestyles. I am currently in my first year of formation here and find joy in being part of this learning community. One of my favourite areas

of study is Scripture. I'm fascinated by the Bible and how its teachings relate to life today. Through Scripture, I feel closer to God and gain deeper insights into my journey of faith. I trust that God has a plan for me as I continue this path of discernment. Each day, I'm reminded of His constant goodness and unwavering love. I look forward to what lies ahead in my formation, knowing that He will guide me every step of the way.



MOVING FORWARD IN FAITH

Becoming a Columban seminarian has been an unexpected but transformative experience. It has taken me far from the familiar shores of Aranuka to a vibrant and challenging new life in the Philippines. Yet, I know that wherever this journey leads, God is always with me, shaping my heart and calling me closer to His mission.

LETAWA NAAITI

Columban seminarian Letawa Naaiti lives at the Columban formation house in the Philippines. Photo: Letawa Naaiti

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Columban Fr Kelvin Barrett
Vocations Coordinator
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 ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY

A FUNNY THING ON THE WAY TO THE VALLEYS...



Most weekends, I find myself on the road visiting different parishes throughout the length and breadth of the country, promoting the Columban Mission and raising funds for our work.

Every journey is an adventure. You pass wonderful countryside and fascinating sights. You meet lovely people, and each parish has a tale to tell. The best part is you never know what to expect. There is a surprise around every corner. Let me give you an example ... This year, we've been covering parishes in the Diocese of Wrexham, and I often find myself heading into the gorgeous valleys of North Wales. One such trip took me to a former mining town called Coedpoeth. I was advised it was an isolated Welsh-speaking community with few Catholics, and, in all probability, even fewer of them would have heard of the Columbans.

Not a bit of it! As I was greeting the people before Mass, up comes a man to say his uncle had been a former two-term Superior General of the Columbans, Fr Nick Murray. Almost immediately, another parishioner eagerly informed me that his great-uncle was one of the first Columban priests to go to China. A lady then tells me she'd heard on a BBC Radio Remembrance Day programme the story of Columban Fr Frank McEnnis, the first Catholic chaplain to go ashore in Normandy with Allied forces on D-Day.

Not to be outdone, someone else remembered how the former Columban Regional Director in Britain, Fr Bernie McDermott, had once come to do supply in the church while based in a parish in nearby Chester. (Although it had been years ago, Bernie had left "a lasting impression!")

So much for the Columbans not being known! It was like one of those Shakespearean historical plays where heralds dash in from stage left and stage right to give the king glad tidings. To put the top hat on it, a delightful elderly gentleman presented me with a photograph of me, taken during my days on mission in Peru, that he'd cut out of the *Far East magazine*. Moreover, it transpired that many in the congregation had been unobtrusively supporting the Columbans for years with small but regular donations.

Bang on cue came the gospel of the day- the famous "Widow's Mite" from Mark (12:42-44). Never was a reading timelier and more fitting to the occasion. In a single paragraph, it summed up the history of Columban support - loyal, gentle people like these in a hidden Welsh valley, quietly putting in their "two copper coins" over the years, thus enabling the Society of St Columban to work miracles in the mission fields.

This year, I'll be enjoying more Welsh hospitality as the Columbans undertake mission appeals in the Diocese of Cardiff. Only the Lord knows what fun and graces await me on the way to those valleys!

FR JOHN BOLES

Columban Fr John Boles, Regional Director in Britain.

THE HOLY DOOR OPENS

CHINA

Pleasant winter sunshine lit up the spacious compound of St Joseph's Cathedral in Wuhan as we gathered on the Feast of the Holy Family for the opening of the city's Holy Door for the Jubilee Year. With people arriving from each of the city's parishes, many acquaintances were being renewed as we awaited the beginning of the ceremony.

Floral displays and the presence of the colourful logo for the Jubilee Year were already communicating that we were about to take part in a celebration that links the Church in China with the universal Church in a unique way.

Just five days after Pope Francis had opened the first Holy Door in St Peter's Basilica and a second at Rebibbia New Complex Prison in Rome, many of those who were gathering in Wuhan had already read on social media about those details, the significance of the prison door reminding them of the Pope's closeness to those who live on the margins of society.

As Bishop Francis Cui began to lead the prayers at the side of the cathedral compound, the energetic responses from the hundreds of people indicated that they were delighted to take part in the Jubilee Year.

Within a few minutes, their loud responses were attracting the attention of those walking past the cathedral at that early hour. A pause in the prayers provided the cue to begin the procession in song to the main door of the cathedral - a fine structure that has stood here since it was built by the Italian Franciscans in 1874.

The immense doors of St Joseph's Cathedral were a fitting place for Bishop Francis to stand and face the people as the prayers continued. A few minutes later, as the huge doors were opened, he led the people into the impressive cathedral, a place of prayer that has witnessed so much of China's recent history, including aerial bombing in World War II when one of its bell towers was destroyed; on that same day, Bishop Eugene Massi died because of the bombing.

In his homily during the Sunday morning Mass, Bishop Francis highlighted the importance of the Jubilee Year, which had begun a few days earlier in Rome. He made several references to the hopes of Pope Francis for this special year.

In a country where words are carefully crafted for public occasions at all levels of society and where symbols speak deeply, the opportunity for the Catholic Church in China to take part in the Jubilee Year speaks in a special way about how a new ecclesial pathway is being gradually shaped. The Jubilee Year provides a way for the Church in China to grow in its participation in what is happening in the universal Church. The Jubilee Year may build upon the participation of two Chinese bishops who travelled to Rome to attend the Synod on Synodality in 2023 and 2024, a significant development because their presence in Rome was only possible with the approval of the civil authorities.

As the celebration of Mass continued in St Joseph's Cathedral in Wuhan, I think many of the Catholics experienced great joy as they realised that as people of deep Christian faith, they were participating fully in a Jubilee Year for the universal Church, one that is already bearing fruit and providing them with many reasons to celebrate.

FR DAN TROY

Columban Fr Dan Troy lives and works in China.



The Holy Door opening. Photo: Fr Dan Troy SSC
MARCH - APRIL 2025 | 19

A HALF CENTURY OF MISSIONARY DEDICATION

FR WALLY TUDOR



Columban Fr Wally Tudor, his four brothers and three sisters grew up in the town of Gordon which used to be a junction on the road to Ballarat. His father was a motor mechanic and ran a petrol station there. But the new highway to Ballarat by-passed Gordon and took away much of its significance for travellers.

Fr Wally's primary schooling was at St Patrick's, Gordon, and St Alipius, Ballarat East. His secondary school was the renowned St Patrick's College, Ballarat.

After graduating from St Patrick's and a year of reflection, Fr Wally headed north to Hayes Park, Turramurra, New South Wales, that is, St Columban's Seminary where he began a Spiritual Year followed by the required years of Philosophy and Theology Studies. He was then ordained in his own parish

church (another St Patrick's) by the Archbishop of Melbourne, Archbishop Francis Little, and on the actual centenary of St Patrick's parish.

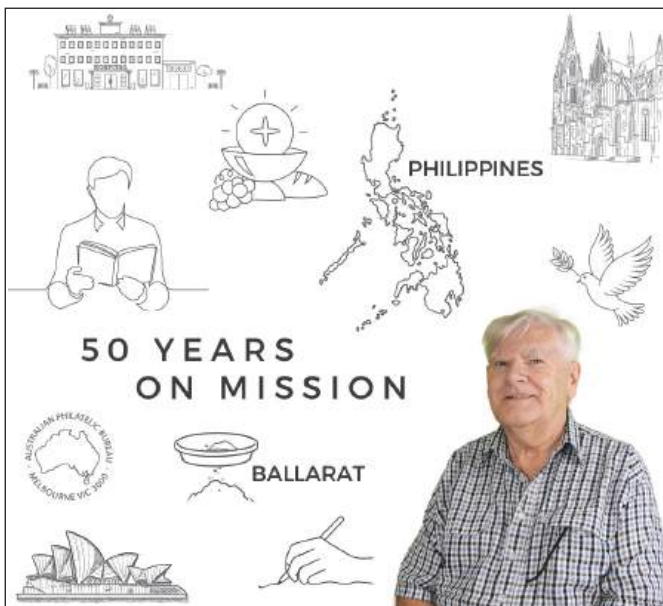
After a few months of pastoral experience at the Ballarat Cathedral parish (also St Patrick's!), Fr Wally received an appointment to the Philippines where he began studies of the Cebuano language in Ozamis City in Mindanao.

On graduation from language school, appointments to the parishes of Iligan and Karomatan followed. Then, while back in Australia for home vacation, Fr Wally availed of the opportunity to develop his pastoral skills with six months of Clinical Pastoral Education at the Peter MacCallum Hospital in Melbourne. This was followed by an appointment back to the Philippines, this time in the parish of Maranding, Lanao del Norte.

An appointment back to the Australia/New Zealand Columban Region followed. A term at the Pacific Mission Institute in Sydney resulted in an appointment to the Mission Education Team at St Columbans, Essendon, and visits to schools and various groups seeking support and interest for the church and the work of the Columban missionaries in the Philippines. A further appointment as Regional Lay Missionary Co-ordinator came next.

In 1986 Fr Wally was appointed to the Diocese of Ballarat to assist at the Cathedral Parish (St Patrick's) and at the parish of St Alipius, Ballarat East. This was followed by 32 years of pastoral ministry in several parishes of the Diocese and at the Catholic Regional College in Camperdown. The final and longest appointment (13 years) was to the prize seaside parish of Apollo Bay.

We congratulate Fr Wally on reaching this incredible milestone. Such an achievement is a testament to his unwavering commitment, faith, and service to the mission of spreading the Gospel and bringing hope to countless lives around the world.



A FAITHFUL COLUMBAN MISSIONARY

FR PAUL TIERNEY

When eighteen-year-old Paul Tierney finished secondary school in Bath, England, his uncle, Columban Fr Arthur, influenced him to join the Columban missionaries.

Ordained on April 6, 1975, Fr Paul was appointed to Fiji where he studied Hindi and gained pastoral and cultural experience in Naleba settlement in Labasa parish. He studied the Fijian language for most of 1981, including a few months immersion in Nacamaki village on Koro Island.

Equipped with two local languages, Fr Paul worked in five parishes: three years in Vatukoula, one year in Lautoka, thirteen years in Ba, seven years back in Labasa and he is now in Raiwaqa for the last five years. He completed a one-year course in formation studies, which prepared him to accompany local Columban seminarians, and diocesan and Columban students during their cross-cultural experience of living with Indo-Fijian families.

As Columban Vocation Director, he visited schools at this time to promote missionary vocations. He spent one period of three years making mission appeals for the Columban Society in Britain.

Fiji suffered a military coup d'état in May 1987. One year later, Fr Paul was one of eighteen people arrested at Sukuna Park, Suva, for participating in a peaceful, prayer protest on the anniversary of the coup. They spent a night in the Central Police Station but were released the next day. They were found guilty of unlawful assembly a year later, but no punishment was handed down.

Fr Paul likes to make a point through symbolic action. When in Naleba, he would leave a house, if the householder was not present for the prayer meeting. In Votua village, upset by the lack of punctuality, he sat

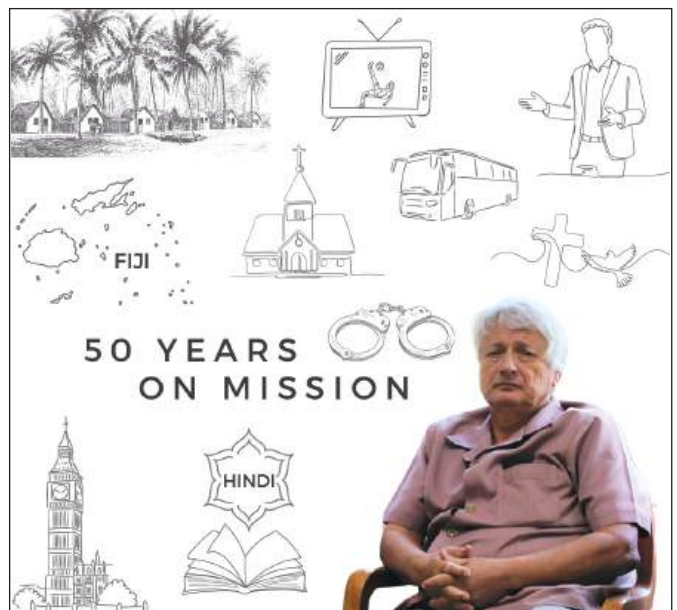


Photo: St Columban Mission Society

down silently after the Sunday Mass entrance hymn until most of the late-comers had arrived. Then he continued the Mass.

Concerning spirituality Fr Paul said, "Being faithful to prayer and believing in the power of the sacraments has been important." Pastorally, he fosters gospel-sharing in prayer groups and encourages inter-cultural dialogue. "For me," he says, "the image of mission is journeying with the people." An avid reader, he prepares his homilies carefully and, being a keen Liverpool fan, he relaxes by watching English soccer on TV.

One parishioner said about him, "Fr Paul is very witty and very straight-forward. If he doesn't like something, he says it straight out. He listens to people too but makes his own decision about what is right and just."

Another parishioner said, "He has a wicked sense of humor. He travels by bus and often pays short visits to parishioners, which is a big thing."

*One parishioner said about him,
"Fr Paul is very witty and very
straight-forward. If he doesn't like
something, he says it straight out."*

Fr Paul is a good priest and a loyal Columban missionary. We wish him a happy and blessed golden jubilee.

EARLY CHRISTIANITY LESSONS



At the heart of Christianity's rapid spread has been the movement of migrants.

On January 15, 2024, Columnist Philip Bump published a disturbing article for *The Washington Post* wherein he highlighted the results of a survey conducted by CBS-News – YouGov. It showed that over 50 per cent of people in the United States “agreed with Trump that immigrants entering the United States illegally had the effect of ‘poisoning the blood’ of the country”. This article prompted Peter C. Phan, a Vietnamese-born US Catholic theologian, to write an essay for *America: The Jesuit Review* (June 2024 issue) entitled “Migration has always been at the heart of Christianity”.

Phan starts off by arguing that a sizeable proportion of those people who supported this racist pronouncement about immigrants to the United States are Christian. He then set about exploring, with the help of biblical texts, the beginnings of Christianity and argued that many of the early Christians were migrants. In doing so, Phan arrived at what he calls two axioms. “First, Christian mission induces migration, and, conversely, migration fulfills Christian mission. Second, there is a reciprocal cause-and-effect relationship between Christian mission and migration. The more Christian mission expands, the more migration of Christians occurs, and the more migration of Christians occurs, the more Christian mission expands.”

This raises the question of how the history of Christian Mission has been written. There was a tendency to believe that the work of mission was largely carried out by popes and bishops, and monks and saints. We read about a team being sent to a particular part of Europe with the blessing of a pope and under the direction of

a bishop. But, as Peter Phan maintains, this top-down view of history “ignores the indispensable on-the-ground contributions of rank-and-file Christian migrants, male and female, whose work has not been recorded in the official annals of missions. Without these mostly anonymous migrants, Christian missions would not have borne permanent fruit”. Next, Phan looks at the remarkable expansion of early Christianity. “By the beginning of the third century, Christians were estimated at 0.35 percent of the population of the empire; by the year 250, about 2 percent; by 300, 10.5 percent; and by 350, 56.5 percent.”

Again, historians tended to emphasise the role of Church leaders in bringing about this expansion. However, it cannot be denied that a key factor in this growth was the work of migrant Christians who made their way around the Mediterranean world and far beyond. Phan quotes David W. Kling who, in his book *A History of Christian Conversion* (2020, Oxford University Press), argues that “the faith spread primarily through personal contact among family members and friends, between slaves, at social events, in the army, in the workplace, through travel and trade, and even during war.”

Phan concludes his essay with these two telling statements: “To be a migrant was to be a missionary, and migration promoted conversion.” Finally, he writes, “We Christians eat Christ’s body and drink his blood sacrilegiously, to our damnation, if we allow the bacteria of anti-immigrant rhetoric to introduce poison into that body and blood. Left untreated, that racist poison will be fatal to Christ’s body, the church”.

FR TOM ROUSE

Columban Fr Tom Rouse is the Regional Councillor for New Zealand.

MISSION INTENTIONS

POPE FRANCIS

March - For families in crisis: Let us pray that broken families might discover the cure for their wounds through forgiveness, rediscovering each other’s gifts, even in their differences.

April - For the use of the new technologies: Let us pray that the use of the new technologies will not replace human relationships, will respect the dignity of the person, and will help us face the crises of our times.

COLUMBAN ACTIVITIES Crossword puzzle

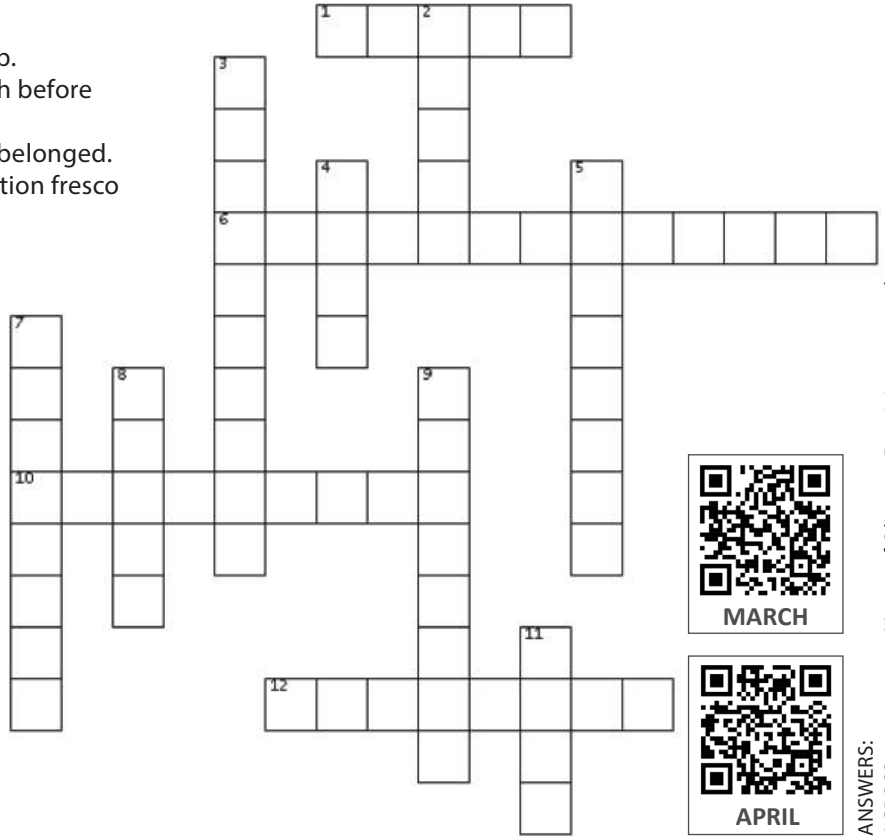
SCAN QR CODE to read the March and April 2025 Columban Calendar Art Guides and complete the crossword puzzle.

ACROSS

1. The first people to discover the empty tomb.
6. The location where Christ prayed in anguish before his arrest (3 words).
10. The religious order to which Fra Angelico belonged.
12. The symbol on Christ's flag in the resurrection fresco (two words).

DOWN

2. The elevated place where Jesus prayed before being taken away.
3. The French artist who painted Christ in the Garden of Olives.
4. The Gospel writer whose account includes divine assistance for Jesus.
5. The full moon illuminated this ancient city's skyline in the painting (two words).
7. The radiant shape surrounding the risen Christ in Fra Angelico's fresco.
8. One of the three disciples present with Jesus but overcome by sleep.
9. The monastery where Fra Angelico's fresco is located.
11. The number of biblical accounts describing Jesus' suffering before his arrest.



ANSWERS:
ACROSS: 1. women, 6. Mount of Olives, 5. Dominican, 12. red cross
DOWN: 2. mount, 3. Champaigne, 4. Luke, 5. Holy City, 7. mandorla, 8. James, 9. San Marco, 11. four

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'Do what you can' Bishop Edward J Galvin



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small to God, if we have given what we could.'

St Gregory Nazianzus



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