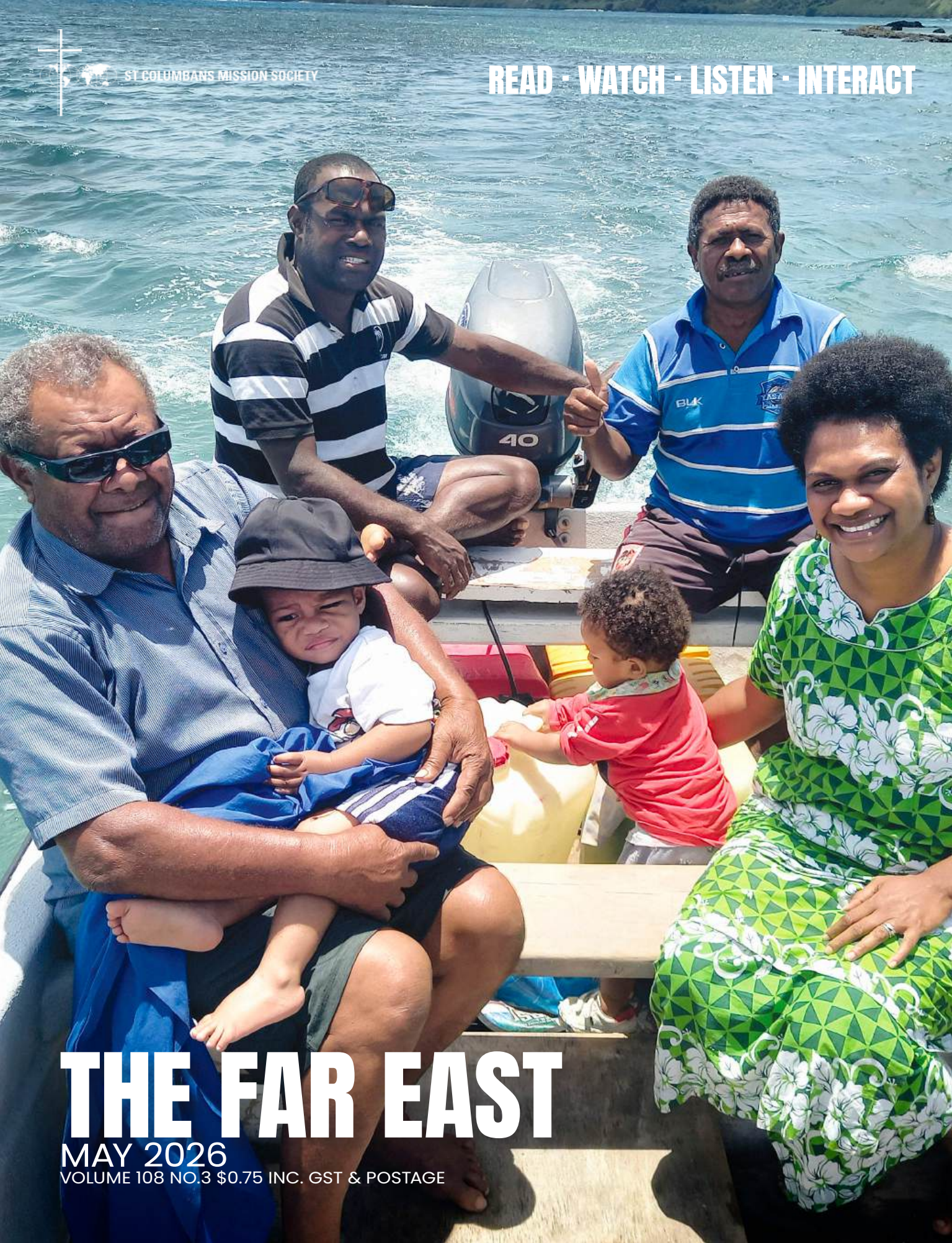




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"I AM HERE"

I attended Mass in a parish recently. I was wearing casual dress. I did not preside or concelebrate but sat in the pews among the congregation.

As I was walking out after Mass, one of the parishioners approached me and said sociably, "I just wanted to let you know that you have a double. He looks exactly like you. He's a priest. A Columban. Fr McNerney. No. Rev Dr McNerney. He's the spitting image of you."

Before he could say anything else, I replied, "I am he." Recognition dawned. We both laughed. He said we had met before and recalled the occasion, which I also remembered. I told him it was lucky he hadn't said anything derogatory about me before I identified myself! We both laughed some more, chatted briefly and parted amicably.

As I reflected on this very warm and friendly encounter, I thought about identity. We may have doppelgangers, people who look remarkably like us, but we don't have doubles. Not even identical twins are the same. They begin with the same DNA, but there are slight variations in development, so each twin has his or her own distinct genetic code and besides, each has their own personality. We each have different fingerprints, including identical twins. We are each unique. There is no one else in the world exactly like us - not even throughout all of history. No one is the same. God has made us all different. Our diversity is the fruit of the infinite creativity of God.

And the further wonder is that God loves each of us equally. No one is more loved than another because they have this or that trait. No one is less loved than another because they lack this or that attribute. Each of us is loved exactly as we are, in all our uniqueness. Each of us is loved wholly, completely and infinitely by God.

When we truly appreciate this, then we will have deep respect for all people, Christian, Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Jew, Muslim, Sikh, people of all faiths and worldviews, people of all ethnicities, nationalities

and races, all beloved children of God. We will be motivated to build the sort of fraternal relations that God desires for us, all sisters and brothers, living and journeying together, respecting and accepting each other, learning from and supporting each other, loving one another and working together for the common good and for our planetary home.

As I reflected further, I recalled that my response, "I am he", echoed the words Jesus used to identify himself when he was approached in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Jn 18: 5, 6, 8). And I thought: Yes! It is true. Christ is in me. Christ has made his home in me, in you, in each one of us. We are all temples of the Holy Spirit, members of His body, children of the Father. Christ has identified with us, especially the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, in prison cf. Mt 25:44. This vision of God dwelling in each one of us makes all the more urgent the task of building fraternal relations in our societies, of overcoming injustices, of caring for the poor and the vulnerable, of building the Kingdom of God.

Each of us is loved exactly as we are, in all our uniqueness. Each of us is loved wholly, completely and infinitely by God.

When God the Father looks at us, He sees Christ and He loves us as He loves the only begotten Son who shines in our faces. If only we could see ourselves and others as God sees us, made in the image and likeness of God, icons of God, homes of God, then we and our world would be transformed. Gerard Manley Hopkins captures this vision of Christ-in-us in his poetic account of the just person who:

Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is -
Christ - for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

REV DR PATRICK MCINERNEY

Regional Director of Oceania



GRANDMA'S MITE



Columban Fr Jovito Dales with parishioners during the Mission Appeal in Gusa, Cagayan de Oro City, Misamis Oriental. Photo: Fr Jovito Dales SSC

“Please, Father, accept my little help for your mission. I will be okay.”

On October 2, 2021, during an Opening Mass in Rome for the launching of the two-year synod process, as reported by Christopher White in the *National Catholic Reporter*, the late Pope Francis said: “Every encounter, as we know, calls for openness, courage and a willingness to let ourselves be challenged by the presence and stories of others.”

I am privileged to have had this kind of life-changing encounter.

For years, I have been helping, whenever possible, with mission appeal Masses here in the Philippines, alongside our active and energetic Mission Promotion Coordinator in Mindanao, Bernardo Durangparang. One day, while distributing newsletters outside the Cathedral in Pagadian City, an old woman who was

selling candles approached and asked me: “What is it that you’re doing, Father?”

I looked at her: she was a little bent, with grey hair and a gentle face. “Oh, we are Columban missionaries and we are doing a Mass appeal in your parish to thank you all for your continued support of us through your prayers and financial help.” Apparently satisfied with my reply, she returned to the spot where she displayed her candles.

A few minutes later, she approached me again and gave me 10 pesos (about USD 0.20) as her donation to our mission. I looked at her smiling face. At the back of my mind, I knew she was earning a living not just for herself but for her grandkids, too. So, instead of accepting her money, I offered it back to her. With all sincerity, I told her: “Thank you, *Lola* (‘grandma’), for being so thoughtful, but I think you need it more than we do.”

Photo: Fr Jovito Dales SSC

We cannot give in to hopelessness or be overtaken by the darkness around us. We need to do something. That something could be just like “grandma’s mite”. That’s good enough, I believe.

To my surprise, she begged: “Please, Father, accept my little help for your mission. I will be okay.” Taken aback by her reply, I was speechless for a moment. Then, I hugged and thanked her. What a great display of generosity and kindness! Left alone, I felt both embarrassed and humbled. Nevertheless, my heart was filled with joy and gratitude for such an experience.

Ten years have passed since that encounter, but I still remember it as though it happened yesterday. It was a gift that continues to teach me valuable lessons about divine providence, as revealed by the story of the widow’s mite (Lk. 21:1–4). Like that old woman selling candles, the widow in this pericope gave everything that she had, leaving nothing but her trust and confidence in God’s divine providence. What did she have left to survive on for another day or two? And if she had a child to feed, what then? Instead of finding answers to these questions, I turned to God in my prayer and asked, “How can I repay our generous benefactors?”

Getting involved in facilitating recollections for Columban friends and benefactors has provided me with opportunities to express my gratitude to a multitude of generous friends of the Columbans here in the Philippines.

Meeting them face-to-face, listening to their stories about their first encounters with Columban missionaries, having meals together and praying with and for them have deepened my appreciation of their quiet accompaniment and support for our missions. These are simple, ordinary, kind and generous people, many of whom do not even want to be named, who, in their own little ways, fuel our missionary endeavours. Yet they are there, present like a mist that seeps and creeps into the crevices and under the doorways of our lives, quietly entering and enriching us with their depth of faith and trust in God.

The prayer intentions I read during our regular Mass for Columban supporters demonstrate their deep trust in God and their selfless concern not only for their loved ones and friends, but also for those who suffer calamities in various parts of the world.

One of the challenges in mission today is the overwhelming, seemingly insatiable hunger for power

by those in authority. It creates ripples of misery and hopelessness in many innocent lives. “Grandma’s mite”, as I fondly called that unforgettable encounter, has this to offer us, who, despite the apparently insurmountable difficulties we are facing today, continue to work for a just and peaceful world. We are called to offer to those in need whatever we have, in whatever way we can, no matter how small. The greatness of the grandma’s mite, as well as the widow’s mite in the Gospel of Luke, is not so much what they gave, but their deep trust in the Giver. We are challenged to emulate that same trust.

Meeting them face-to-face, listening to their stories about their first encounters with Columban missionaries, having meals together and praying with and for them have deepened my appreciation of their quiet accompaniment and support for our missions. These are simple, ordinary, kind and generous people, many of whom do not even want to be named, who, in their own little ways, fuel our missionary endeavours. Yet they are there, present like a mist that seeps and creeps into the crevices and under the doorways of our lives, quietly entering and enriching us with their depth of faith and trust in God.

I suppose that one little act of kindness, like one little candle we can all light together, makes this darkened world a little brighter. We cannot give in to hopelessness or be overtaken by the darkness around us. We need to do something. That something could be just like “grandma’s mite”. That’s good enough, I believe.

FR JOVITO DALES

Columban Fr Jovito Dales lives and works in the Philippines.

THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA NEVER LEAVES YOU THE SAME



Columban Fr Alvaro Martinez Ibanez on his pilgrimage.

According to tradition, the Apostle Saint James is buried in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. James was a man chosen by Jesus and a favoured witness to Jesus' public life, death and resurrection. In his apostolic and missionary zeal, he embarked on a pilgrimage to the lands that are now known as Spain and Portugal. His evangelising efforts began to bear fruit, leading some to become disciples and it was they who would carry on the missionary work in these Mediterranean regions.

Tradition also says that before her death, the Virgin Mary appeared to each apostle, inviting him to return to Jerusalem to be with her in his final days. It was in

Jerusalem that the apostle James met his martyrdom, which is not only a painful death but also a testament to a missionary life dedicated to preaching the Gospel. Thus, tradition tells us that his remains were taken back to his missionary lands, where he was buried. His tomb was not discovered until the 9th century. When his remains were found, a church was built on the spot in honour of this missionary apostle. The church sparked pilgrimages to visit his tomb, rekindling his missionary zeal. Over the years, this devotion has brought together thousands of people each year for the journey to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

I was one of this year's pilgrims. It was both an opportunity and a blessing to walk "The Way". I set out from Baiona, situated in the region of Galicia, Spain and walked each day until I reached this missionary apostle.

The route is challenging; every day brings physical struggles and mental pain. However, one of the spiritual graces I experienced along the way was listening to God reveal how my entire life had been

directed towards missionary apostolate. I recognised once again that He exists in the personal history of each individual and in my own history, urging me to follow in the footsteps of this missionary apostle, who witnessed the life of Jesus and his resurrection. I realised that, in some ways, my missionary life has also involved observing and learning from Jesus and discovering the spiritual traces of his resurrection through sharing as a missionary.

Like every journey, it had its tough days. My feet hurt and with each new location, questions arose, almost as if inviting me to stop: *Why continue walking for so many kilometres? Why endure the discomfort?* Without a doubt, these questions, like chairs on the way, urged me to stop. It was hard because I had to answer my questions in every prayer and at daily Mass, which I attended out of love for God and the desire to deepen my experience of the Risen One.

On the other hand, I met many people from diverse countries, languages and cultures along the way. Sharing a fact, a few words of encouragement, or a short or long chat with them transformed the Camino de Santiago into a multicultural and inter-religious experience, as each pilgrim has motivations for walking “*The Way*” that change or deepen along the way. Simply put, no one arrives in Santiago the same.

Upon arriving at the Plaza de Santiago, you feel a surge of joy, not only from the company of thousands of pilgrims, the shouts of happiness, the songs of triumph and the ache in your feet, but also from the deepest affirmation that “*The Way*” was worth it. Every step and every refusal of the “chairs” that urged you to stop brought you to the foot of the tomb of Santiago, the apostle, missionary and martyr.

At the end of the journey, I had the blessing of concelebrating Mass in the cathedral and participating in the *Botafumeiro* ceremony in this church.

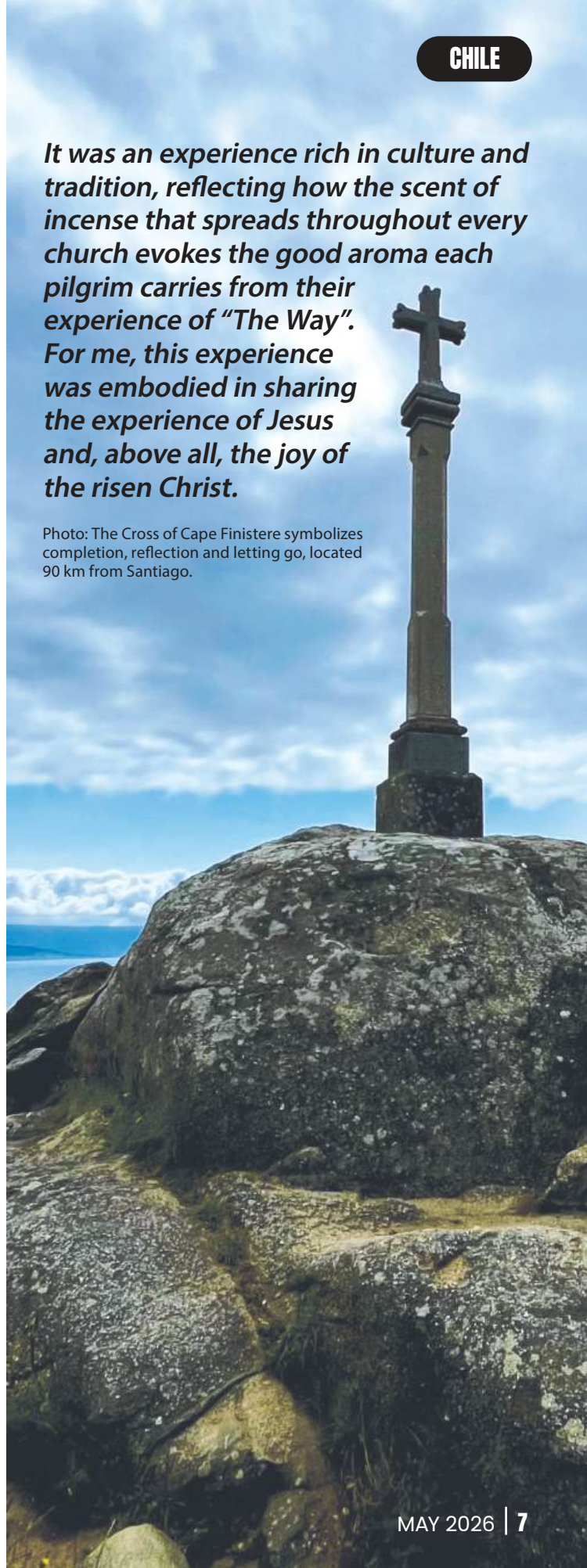
It was an experience rich in culture and tradition, reflecting how the scent of incense that spreads throughout every church evokes the good aroma each pilgrim carries from their experience of “*The Way*”. For me, this experience was embodied in sharing the experience of Jesus and, above all, the joy of the risen Christ.

FR ALVARO MARTINEZ IBANEZ

Fr Alvaro Martinez Ibanez lives and works in the United States.

It was an experience rich in culture and tradition, reflecting how the scent of incense that spreads throughout every church evokes the good aroma each pilgrim carries from their experience of “The Way”. For me, this experience was embodied in sharing the experience of Jesus and, above all, the joy of the risen Christ.

Photo: The Cross of Cape Finistere symbolizes completion, reflection and letting go, located 90 km from Santiago.



REFLECTION

MY PENTECOST IN BIRMINGHAM

The Sunday Feast of Pentecost falls this year on May 24. What is the Feast of Pentecost, some people might ask. As described in John 20:19–23, it is the commemoration of that late Sunday evening, fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, when Jesus himself stood among his disciples and greeted them, "Peace be with you".

Jesus said, "Peace be with you," not once but twice and the second time he added, "As the Father sent me, so I send you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." To me, those words of Jesus are a commemoration and affirmation of my being missioned here to Birmingham.

As I pondered Pentecost Sunday at the English Martyrs Catholic Church in Birmingham in 2003, I realised I now live the spirit of Pentecost differently in my everyday life. I was sent here on mission to the multicultural and inter-religious community of Birmingham almost 13 years ago, as a Columban lay missionary, to join a team that promotes dialogue and closeness with people of different faiths. Here on my mission in Birmingham, I am now very much at peace in being with people of different faiths to whom God sent me to know, serve and love.

During the period of Ramadan this year, our Columban Inter-religious Dialogue team here in Birmingham was invited to several mosques of different denominations to join them in their "Iftar" meal, which is the Muslim breaking of the fast. People of other faiths have also invited us for other occasions, gatherings, ceremonies, workshops and seminars. At Fatima House – a home for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants – where I serve, this year too, we had a joint celebration of Muslims' Eid al-Fitr, Sikhs' Vaisakhi and the Orthodox Easter. As well as visiting other places of worship, I also bring some friends from other faiths to our Catholic Church.

ONE OF THE SURPRISES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

My fiancé, Kush, who was raised as a Hindu, was at that 2003 Pentecost Sunday Mass, though we did not know each other then. Like me, he does not mind visiting

other places of worship. His mother is the same. I have seen a picture of her lighting a candle inside a Catholic church when she was still able. Kush even queued for a blessing from our parish priest during communion, as he now usually does when he goes to Mass with me. Upon entering the church, he always touches the ground with his hand and touches his hand to his head, like he does when entering any place of worship. He says, "The act of touching the threshold of a place of worship on entering symbolises receiving with humility the dust from the feet of our fellow worshipers so that it may impart the wisdom of their spiritual journey on us too."

This is one of the surprises of the Holy Spirit for me, too. I never thought I would meet my fiancé through the Columban Inter-religious Dialogue ministry.

After that Sunday Mass at the English Martyrs Catholic Church, we both travelled a few steps to another place of worship in Sparkhill, the Sikh Temple Guru Nanak Gurdwara, to join their Community Meal called "Langar". Then, in the afternoon, we went with his mum to the Hindu temple, Shree Laxmi Narayan Mandir, to attend the inauguration of the completed Mandir façade.

Joining people of other faiths in their gatherings and celebrations is now part of my everyday life, both in relation to my ministry with the Columbans and in my personal life with Kush and his family. Kush is a British citizen and grew up in my mission area. His Parmar family, ethnically from Gujarat, India, migrated here when he was seven from Kenya, East Africa, where he was born.

And so, my mission, which is inter-religious dialogue, intercultural living and reaching out to asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, is part of the day-to-day reality of his childhood. Many of his friends are refugees and migrants themselves. In fact, he mentioned to me that his best friend at the primary school was a refugee from the Vietnam War and they are still in touch with each other. In that sense, Kush was immersed in the area where I was assigned far earlier than I.

I AM WELCOMED AND RESPECTED BOTH AS A PERSON AND AS A MISSIONARY

Kush and I are both chaplains. We are both part of the Multi-Faith Chaplaincy of West Midlands Police in Birmingham. For many years, Kush volunteered for



Joining people of other faiths in their gatherings and celebrations is now part of my everyday life, both in relation to my ministry with the Columbans and in my personal life with Kush and his family.

the Samaritans, too. They respond to calls for help and prevent crises or manage them. Wherever we go, people naturally gravitate to us. An example of this is when we went to the Registry Office to inquire about our marriage licence. Suddenly, one of the officials came into our room asking if anyone could speak Urdu. Kush gladly offered to be a translator and help the person in the other room. He also volunteered for the Missionary of Charity Sisters of Mother Teresa when they still had their convent in Birmingham. He and his mother would visit the convent and the Sisters also visited their house. Indeed, his family were familiar with Catholic missionaries in the past, before they even met me and my co-lay missionaries from the Philippines, Rose and Jayjay, who introduced us. I am welcomed and respected both as a person and a missionary by Kush and his family, relatives and friends. He is happy and thankful that I have faith because faith brought us together. Although he now describes himself as non-denominational, with his own Vipassana insight meditation practice, Kush is happy for me to continue as a Columban Lay Missionary. He knows that I love serving God through Columban mission. In fact, he supports me consistently behind the scenes in his own way as I do my work as a Columban missionary in Britain. I am happy too that

he practises Vipassana meditation, because I know it continually helps him to be a better person.

Sometimes I also visit and join him at the Buddhist Temple Edgbaston Vihara Sangha, where Kush leads the meditation on Thursday nights. I now integrate meditation into my own practice each day, too. After I pray and read Our Daily Bread, a Christian devotional booklet containing scripture readings, contemporary stories and explanations, I meditate as a Christian. For me, it is like being still in the presence of the Lord, seated with my eyes closed, just focusing on the breath of life that God gave me going in and out of my nose for at least 15 minutes. It helps me to calm down, think more clearly and carry on, especially when the going is tough in my life as a missionary.

THE SPIRIT ENABLED THEM TO SPEAK

The first reading on the Feast of Pentecost describes what happened: "When the day of Pentecost came, when all the believers were gathered in one place. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak." (Acts 2:1–11) It also describes what happened to the people who witnessed it. They could understand what they were speaking. They were "in amazement and wonder". Many times, I am also

“in amazement and wonder” at how inter-religious dialogue has become a normal part of our everyday conversation. Kush and I share stories from our faith or practice that have moral lessons we can both draw on for inspiration. We are from different backgrounds, but we understand what we are sharing. These stories are life-giving to us and help us grow and be better people. I can see the Holy Spirit at work in his life too and hear the voice of the Holy Spirit through him.

There are times when I face challenges as a missionary, so when he asked me one time how I was and I responded with the words, “I feel like I am falling and floating and I do not know if I will continue to float or hit the ground and shatter to pieces,” Kush offered me words of wisdom, saying, “You know why you feel like you are floating? It is because Jesus is holding you.” What he said lifted my spirit that day.

There was a time when all the difficulties in my life seemed too much and did not make sense. As a response, Kush shared with me, “Ger, there is a story about a bookmark inserted inside a Bible. The person looking at it thought it was a mess of threads that did not make sense, but then he flipped it onto the other side and saw the words ‘God is love.’” I suddenly remembered that, indeed, God loves me and was working behind the scenes all the time, preparing something beautiful in my life.

There was another time when Kush knew I was so down that he suddenly recited the lines of my favourite poem, “Do It Anyway” by Mother Teresa. My tears fell. I could clearly hear the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking out of the mouth of someone raised in another faith, uplifting my spirit.

Kush offered me words of wisdom, saying, “You know why you feel like you are floating? It is because Jesus is holding you.” What he said lifted my spirit that day.

NOSTRA AETATE (IN OUR TIME)

When Fr Tim Mulroy, the Columban Superior General, visited Birmingham in 2022, he congratulated me on my engagement with Kush. I said to him, “Father, he grew up in Birmingham, but he is not a Catholic.” Fr Tim said, “Surely, he is a good man; otherwise, you would not choose him.” I said to him, “Yes indeed,

Father, he is a good man,” and I told him a little about Kush’s background. When Fr Tim returned to Hong Kong, I sent him a greeting on October 28, “Happy Nostra Aetate Day”. He sent me a message in reply, “Wishing you and Kush abundant blessings as you pursue the inter-religious dialogue journey together in daily life - and make real the spirit of Nostra Aetate in our broken world.”

That message really touched my heart. Truly indeed, that was the wish of Kush and me when we entered into a committed relationship, that in some ways our relationship would be part of a testimony that people, though from different faiths, can also love each other and even marry each other, make it work and live in peace.

The Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate (In Our Time)* paved the way for the inter-religious dialogue we are doing today. It is the Latin name by which the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions is known and it formalised an expanded attitude of dialogue and respect towards the major non-Christian religions of the world: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.” <https://www1.villanova.edu>

STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO

At this point, Kush and I still have a long way to go to fulfil the requirements for getting married in the UK. As we wait for God’s time, I believe the Holy Spirit is facilitating our dialogue in daily life and strengthening our relationship and love day by day. We do not know yet when it will be - only God knows.

I also still need to apply for British Residency soon this year and am encouraged by my colleagues and friends who have also got married but continue to fulfil, in their own way, the mission Jesus sent them to do.

Kush and I may have a long journey ahead, so please keep us in your prayers. May the Holy Spirit continue to journey with us, guiding and helping us. Amen!

GERTRUDES C. SAMSON

Columban lay missionary Gertrudes C. Samson lives and works in Britain.



A CHILD'S ROSARY, A MISSION RENEWED

Hi! My name is Sherryl Lou Capili. I am a Columban lay missionary from the Philippines. Currently, I serve as the Coordinator of the Columban Lay Missionaries Central Leadership Team and am based in Hong Kong.

My first assignment was in Taiwan, where I served for 13 years. One story from my mission that I will always treasure is my encounter with the daughter of a Filipino immigrant. She was one of our Sunday school students. This happened eight years ago.

One Sunday, while the immigrant mothers were having their monthly meeting, this girl, named Chou Ting-Yu, was left in my care in the office because there were no other children for her to play with. She was seven years old at the time. She sat beside my desk and began browsing through the books on my table. One book that caught her attention was a guide to praying the Rosary.

She asked me, "Can I borrow this?" I was surprised because I thought children might find praying the Rosary boring. But she insisted, so I said, "OK, it's up to you." She then asked what the book was about. I explained and took out a Rosary from my bag, slowly teaching her step by step how to pray it.

To my surprise, she already knew the basic prayers, so it wasn't difficult for her. She was already on the second mystery when she stopped, apparently tired and catching her breath. She asked me, "Do I have to finish all five mysteries?" I told her, "Since you're new to this, it's up to you. You can stop and continue later."

But I was amazed at her enthusiasm - she kept praying the Rosary. People entering the office noticed her. As her teacher, I felt so proud and moved. Seeing her like that inspired me to find creative ways to help children become more interested in prayer.

From that day on, during the following Sundays, our main activity became praying the Rosary. I tried various methods to teach them and we would pray together every Sunday. If it weren't part of the plan, the children would ask, "Are we not praying the Rosary today?" So, I would adjust my lesson plan and we would pray the Rosary. We continued this for several months.



Chou Ting-Yu proudly shows the gift she made for her father on Father's Day.

Looking back, that simple moment with Chou Ting-Yu became a turning point in my mission. It reminded me that even the smallest gestures - like sharing a prayer guide or teaching a child to pray - can spark something profound. Her quiet determination and genuine curiosity deepened my own faith and reaffirmed the importance of nurturing spirituality in young hearts.

That experience continues to inspire me today, reminding me that mission work is not just about programs or plans, but about being present, listening and allowing God to work through the unexpected encounters that shape our journey.

SHERRYL LOU CAPILI

Columban lay missionary Sherryl Lou Capili lives and works in Hong Kong.

Photo: Sherryl Lou Capili

LIVING AMONG MIGRANTS: A JOURNEY OF HOSPITALITY AND GRACE



Columban lay missionary Lee Kyung-Ja Christina on an outing on Nami Island with migrant mothers and their children.

I live in a neighbourhood where migrants and asylum seekers dwell side by side. One section has already been vacated due to redevelopment and all access routes have been sealed off. These changes weigh heavily on the hearts of our migrant neighbours, stirring anxiety about relocation and the burden of higher rent in an uncertain future.

In this unsettled place, I've been visiting my neighbours - migrants and asylum seekers - and slowly becoming part of their lives. People from various countries in Africa and Asia with different religions live here. While the area may seem quiet and ordinary, stepping into their lives reveals a rich tapestry of cultures. Living among such diversity, learning from one another and respecting different traditions is deeply meaningful.

Yet, as a fragile human being, I also face challenges. Differences can bring discomfort and understanding takes time. I've rented a two-bedroom unit here to offer temporary shelter - up to six months - for asylum seekers in urgent need. I remember one Arab woman who lived with me. We shared all common spaces outside our rooms. Navigating our differences in lifestyle, food and worldview wasn't always easy. Even grocery shopping required thoughtful consideration to respect her preferences.

Our backgrounds were vastly different and learning to understand each other took time, patience and grace. Yet through that shared experience, I witnessed the quiet beauty of hospitality, where love is expressed not just in words, but in the willingness to make space for someone else's story.

She had fled her country after threats to her life for defying conservative Islamic norms. Rejected by her family, she arrived in Korea - not by choice, but by circumstance. Three years had passed and the only official documents she held were a passport and a deportation deferral notice stamped "not permitted to work". Despite these limitations, she had to survive. She worked illegally in a factory until a back injury forced her to quit.

Later, while washing dishes at a restaurant, she slipped and severely injured her shoulder. Unable to do physical labour, she struggled even more to find work. Still, she remained determined to live independently, searching tirelessly for any opportunity. On fortunate days, she secured a few hours of part-time work. She longed to leave Korea, but no country would accept her. Returning home was not an option - her life would be at risk.

Pope Francis once said, "Migrants and refugees must be welcomed with love." To me, this means we must not remain passive observers. We must actively reach out and extend our hands. Love must be lived.

Watching her struggle filled me with sorrow and helplessness. Sharing space and daily life often led to tension. When promises were broken or responsibilities neglected, I felt disappointed and angry. One day, I heard Jesus' whisper: "Lower your expectations. Empty yourself. Only then will peace enter your heart." His words humbled me. I saw my own limitations and brokenness. Yet I continued to pray for her happiness, hoping she would see God's love and care through me and find comfort in her journey.

As a missionary, I've received abundant blessings and love over the years. I'm deeply grateful for this life and remain committed to sharing the love I've received. I hope those I meet can escape loneliness and isolation. I want them to live free from prejudice and injustice. For that to happen, we must look at them with the heart of Jesus - welcoming them as fellow members of our communities.

Pope Francis once said, "Migrants and refugees must be welcomed with love." To me, this means we must not remain passive observers. We must actively reach out and extend our hands. Love must be lived.

Beyond discomfort and indifference, our willingness to carry our own crosses and offer hospitality to the poor, the powerless and the marginalised becomes a beacon of hope - a light sent by the Lord to guide them towards new life. The love and welcome we show can restore dignity, empower them to live and allow them to experience the Kingdom of God. We must not discriminate but embrace them as fellow human beings - our brothers, sisters and neighbours - worthy of love and respect. This is how we live out Jesus' command: "Love your neighbour as yourself."

LEE KYUNG-JA CHRISTINA

Columban lay missionary Lee Kyung-Ja Christina lives and works in Korea.



Columban lay missionary Lee Kyung-Ja Christina making Kimbap with migrant mothers.



Columban Fr Pat Colgan travels by boat with two parishioners in Fiji.



A May Rosary procession in Yasawa parish, Fiji.



A Fijian village plantation is washed away.

TROUBLE IN PARADISE

The Columbans have been ministering in the Pacific Islands since 1952, after the Society's expulsion from newly communist China. A very large feature of life there is the climate, which attracts sunshine deprived tourists, but can also wreak havoc through hurricanes, floods and droughts, the incidence and unpredictability of which have recently increased.

In a recent feature article of the respected journal *New Scientist*, we learn that rising seas and intensifying storms in Tonga, Fiji and Samoa are already "having a devastating effect on people's livelihoods, health and well-being and that in some cases, the threat is truly existential. Tuvalu, comprising nine low-lying islands halfway between Hawaii and Australia, could be almost completely submerged at high tide by the end of the century."¹

Pacific Island nations, which account for less than 1% of global emissions, have an average elevation of 1–2 metres above sea level, with 90% of their population living within 5 kilometres of the coast and half the infrastructure (roads, bridges, schools) located within 500 metres. A "perfect storm" for the uniquely exposed 10 million people who call the islands their "vanua", their home.

In my own time in Fiji (1995 to 2023), I never lived more than a kilometre from the sea and in some cases, was right up at the coast. I have seen coastal erosion, one home or garden plot at a time. In the Formation House in Suva, we regularly ate the coastal crabs we caught in our garden, while root crops generally could not survive the increasingly saline soil. There were many days when sea-swimming was more akin to taking a sauna! On the macro-level, rising ocean temperatures are killing off coral reefs and depleting fish stocks, while higher land temperatures are sending mosquitoes further inland, with many Fijians succumbing to the dengue fever that the insects often bring. Some of my saddest funerals in the coastal parish of Ba were of school children who died from dengue, as well as young farmers or fishermen

Photos: Fr Pat Colgan SSC

perishing from leptospirosis, particularly following the floods and heavy rain Fiji gets annually from November to April.

Conversely, more frequent and severe dry spells (from May to October) have intensified the pressure on freshwater supplies, food and public health. Ironically, the country continues to export millions of gallons of premium bottled water (“FIJI Water”²), extracted from a high-quality aquifer in the Yaqara Valley (near Ba) for global export, often creating a stark contrast with local water shortages. With ocean warming, food security becomes a huge issue; there is a lack of reef fish and an increasing reliance on ultra-processed food (the iconic example being the low-grade, i.e. high-fat, tinned mutton or beef, unsold in Australian/New Zealand shops and “repackaged” as a cheap staple, or “aid” in times of natural disaster). All these problems overlap and inevitably, climate migration is underway. On Abiang Atoll in Kiribati, for example, the village of Tebunginako has been fully relocated inland and 280 Tuvaluans are to be granted Australian citizenship each year through a ballot system. Nearly half the country’s 10,000 residents have applied.³

Many of the islands are experiencing surges in seasonal workers leaving their shores, due to the economic pressures of all the above. Fiji has become the largest supplier of workers to the PALM scheme (Pacific Australia Labour Mobility), with over 6,379 workers as of mid-2024, a dramatic rise from only 266 in 2019. Combined with New Zealand’s Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme, total Fijian seasonal worker numbers have surpassed 15,000 as of late 2025. This is quite stunning, given an overall population of just over 900,000. Many teachers, social workers and pastoral agents in the islands describe the destabilising effect of the absence of young parents in villages and towns, with children often unsupervised, vulnerable to online or peer recruitment as drug couriers to locals and tourists and the loss of culture, language and faith that nature intended be transmitted through parents and older siblings.

There are, of course, some signs of hope. Many villages, unable to afford large-scale coastal engineering, are turning to nature-based interventions, such as restoring mangrove swamps. Healthy swamps not only prevent further land loss but also safeguard fish and crab stocks. Sometimes, shipping companies or non-government organisations sponsor such initiatives. For example, Project Halo (UNSW/Swire Shipping) is a five-year project that started in 2025 to reinstate natural tidal flows and integrate mangroves into large-

scale regeneration.⁴ The Kiwa Initiative (C3 Fiji) focuses on “Restoring mangroves for livelihoods” in Northern Vanua Levu, training over sixty community members and planting thousands of mangrove propagules and saplings.⁵ A SPC (South Pacific Community) Innovation Project⁶ ran from 2024 to 2025, aiming to restore 9 hectares of mangrove ecosystems in Vanua Levu for carbon offsetting.⁷ The biggest obstacle is obtaining finance at the scale necessary for climate resilience. In a landmark advisory opinion in July 2025, the International Court of Justice declared that states have a binding legal duty to protect the climate system and help vulnerable countries adapt to the impacts of climate change. This grew from a campaign led by Vanuatu and other Pacific Island nations, who argued that existing climate commitments were too weak to safeguard their survival. To date, though, the Pacific Region has only accessed about 0.22% of global climate funds, sometimes due to regulatory checks, multiple intermediary banks, currency conversions and so on.⁸

For the people of the Pacific, it is not a matter of “adapt to thrive”; it is a matter of “adapt to survive”. How truly catastrophic it would be to see whole ways of life drowned in the sea on our watch. In 2018, the Archbishop of Fiji, Peter Loy Chong, launched a song called “Climate Change Victim’s Lament”, which has these haunting lyrics:⁹ Earth is ravaged by our hand. Oceans weep for beauty lost ... Have mercy, have mercy, have mercy on us, Lord.

At a time when the world seems endlessly convulsed with wars designed by humans against each other, let us not lose sight of the deadly attack we have also launched on our Mother Earth. Without her sustenance, there will be no ‘land’, ‘rights’, or ‘principles’ to fight over. In a message commemorating the tenth anniversary of the publication of his predecessor’s encyclical *Laudato Si’*, Pope Leo left us with this startling question: God will ask us if we have cultivated and cared for the world that he created for the benefit of all and for future generations and if we have taken care of our brothers and sisters - and what will be our answer, my friends?

FR PAT COLGAN

Columban Fr Pat Colgan lives and works in Ireland.

¹Katie McQue, “Trouble in Paradise”, New Scientist, 17 Jan 2026, p. 34.

²<https://www.fijiwater.com.au/faqs>

³Ibid, p. 36.

⁴Harnessing the power of nature-based solutions. <https://tinyurl.com/4jp7de6n>

⁵<https://www.spc.int/cces/the-kiwa-initiative>

⁶<https://www.spc.int/>

⁷<https://lrd.spc.int/projects/mangrove-restoration-for-carbon-offsetting>

⁸Ibid, p. 37.

⁹<https://tinyurl.com/23ajyafp>

¹⁰Leo XIV, Speech at the ‘Raising Hope’ Conference, Castelgandolfo, 1 October 2025.



LOVE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: A PASSION AND A GIFT

For almost three decades, I have worked with young people. It has been part of my ministry as a parish catechist in my home country, the Philippines, and now as a Columban Lay Missionary in Ireland. For this, I owe and give credit to, a dear Columban priest, who was my first-ever “boss”: Fr Donal Bennett.

I write this as a tribute to his great passion and love for young people. Fr Donal had an amazing gift of empowering the young people in the parishes where I was assigned. I was a witness to this wonderful ministry.

After graduating from college as a religious and values education teacher, I was employed by Fr Donal as a full-time parish catechist. My role was to be an assistant youth coordinator. The first thing Fr Donal asked me to do was attend a Youth Encounter Seminar for a week in Virac, Cagayan, in Bi-col.

As a 21-year-old new graduate, it was my first time travelling by plane to attend a national seminar with young people from all over the Philippines. The Youth Encounter Seminar was my baptism of fire in my journey as a youth minister. Through it, I was led to understand the role of young people in the Church and my own role as a youth minister.

After attending the Youth Encounter, we worked towards gathering our young people in the parish. This gave birth to the SAYA Group (St Anthony's Youth Association).

We began taking part in “Youth 2000”, which was a group of young people focusing on the new millennium. It has since become a big organisation, even in Ireland, which creates space and a platform for young people to express their faith and feel they belong and are important in the life of the Church. We travelled to different parishes in our diocese and the neighbouring diocese for Youth 2000.

When I resigned from the parish to join the Columban Lay Missionaries and begin cross-cultural mission work, I thought I would have to give up youth work. Little did I know that working with young people

Photo: [canva.com/gustavo quiroya](https://canva.com/gustavo-quiroya)

would not end but rather be intensified when I came to Ireland. Pope John Paul II, now St John Paul II, was known for his love and confidence in young people. Just like Fr Donal, he worked for the youth in his parish during his younger years as a priest in Poland. And with his great love for youth, he initiated the World Youth Day (WYD). This concept has been influenced by the Light-Life Movement that has existed in Poland since the 1960s, where, during two-week summer camps, young Catholic adults celebrate a "day of community".

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As the biggest gathering of young people, WYD is a celebration of faith and prayer that no other gathering in the world has ever surpassed. I have been privileged to attend this youth festival of faith. The first was in 1995, before I joined the Columban Lay Missionaries. It was held in Manila, Philippines, and over four million attended. Of course, this was by far the biggest youth gathering I had ever attended.

During my first year on mission in Ireland, I was invited to represent my parish of Ballymun on the Dublin Diocesan trip to the World Youth Day in Rome in 2000, which I saw as a gift. For the second time, following Manila, I saw Pope John Paul II.

Then, in 2005, while working with the Redemptorists' youth ministry team, I was asked to be one of the leaders in bringing over twenty young people to WYD 2023 in Lisbon with the Spiritan missionaries. There we met Pope Francis.

In my lifetime, I have never known what God had in store for me. But working for young people continues to be and will always be, my passion - just as it was for Fr Donal Bennett. In 2023, Fr Donal left this world and went home to God. Hopefully, all those young people

he cared for and supported will continue his legacy and pass on this ministry to the next generation. This is what I continue to do.

Certainly, to journey with young people in prayer and in the celebration of faith at these WYD events has been a great gift in my life. It is also my hope that at the next World Youth Day in 2027, I will see some Columbans accompanying young people to Seoul.

It will be a gift for them.

ANGIE ESCARSA

Columban lay missionary Angie Escarsa lives and works in Ireland.



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CARE AS A PATHWAY TO PEACE



Columban Fr Elbert Balbastro working at the Tuberculosis (TB) clinic.
Photo: Fr Elbert Balbastro SSC

Sadness fills my heart every time I hear news about wars between nations. The unending war between Russia and Ukraine, the continuing conflict between Israel and Palestine, other conflicts in the Middle East, the ongoing civil war in Myanmar and the persistent tension between Pakistan and India have shattered countless lives.

Amid these conflicts, it is always the poor who suffer the most. They are displaced from their homes, forced into refugee camps, stripped of security, dignity and hope. In prayer, I continually ask the Lord for peace, because only in peace can people - especially the poor - live the dignified and humane lives they deserve.

As a Columban priest, justice and peace are at the heart of our charism. Living and working in Pakistan, I often ask myself how peace can be built amid religious diversity, social tension and economic hardship. Over time, I have come to realise that peace does not always begin with grand gestures. Sometimes, it begins quietly, in ordinary places - like our small Tuberculosis (TB) clinic.

As the person in charge of the clinic, I see daily how care acts as a bridge between people. In our clinic, Hindus, Muslims and Christians are welcomed without distinction. Each patient is received with respect, tenderness and love. In this simple act of service, walls are lowered and trust is built. Healing becomes more than a medical act; it becomes a sign of peace.

I find the witness of Dr Zakir Hussein, our in-house doctor, deeply inspiring. A Shia Muslim, he has faithfully served at the Catholic Church Badin Clinic for nearly twenty-one years. Every Friday, he offers his skills and time to care for the sick. One day, I asked him, "Doctor, what made you stay in a Catholic clinic for so many years?" His reply was simple: "I look at people with care. It does not matter to me whether my patient is Hindu, Muslim, or Christian. What matters is giving them the best care they deserve. I also consider you and the staff here as my family. I care for you and I feel the care you show me." His words touched my heart deeply. In that moment, I realised that care itself is a language everyone understands. It crosses boundaries that politics, religion and history often divide.

Care heals not only bodies but relationships - and ultimately, communities. Care, I believe, is one of the most powerful gifts we can offer our world. If we truly desire lasting peace, care must be at the centre of our lives.

I recall a story about a monk teaching enlightenment. A man holding a cup of coffee was bumped by another person, spilling the coffee. When asked why the coffee spilled, the monk explained, "It spilled because that is what the man was holding." The lesson is clear: what we carry within us is what we pour out into the world. If we hold anger, fear, or hatred, these will shape our actions. But if we carry compassion, love and care, these virtues will naturally flow to others.

With this insight, my prayer has changed. I now ask God to help me store goodness, peace, care and love in my heart, even amid the daily challenges of mission life in Pakistan. I remind myself constantly that my model is Jesus Christ. At his birth, the angels proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to people of goodwill." Peace was at the heart of his coming. Throughout his life, Jesus demonstrated that peace is born from love, expressed through service and sustained by compassion. I have also learned that God does not always give peace as an immediate answer to my prayers. Instead, God offers me daily opportunities to become an instrument of peace. Each day, I am invited to choose care over indifference, welcome over fear and love over division.

FR ELBERT BALBASTRO

Columban Fr Elbert Balbastro lives and works in Pakistan.

HOPE AT THE BORDER



Columban Ministry for Migrants program in Ciudad Juárez.
Photo: Cristina Coronado

Ciudad Juárez, located on the U.S. Mexico border, across from El Paso, Texas, has become one of the most significant transit points for migrants attempting to enter the United States. Between March 2019 and January 2025, thousands of people from Latin America and the Caribbean arrived, fleeing violence, economic hardship and political instability in their home countries.

For many, Juárez became both a temporary refuge and a place of uncertainty, where the dream of reaching the United States clashed with the harsh realities of border control and immigration policies.

The city continues to face serious humanitarian challenges, despite the once-overcrowded shelters being now half-empty. There is limited medical care, a shortage of food programs and a persistent lack of resources to meet the basic needs of so many displaced individuals. Migrants often face exploitation, insecurity and emotional stress as they decide whether to stay in the city or return to their home countries. After enduring long waits and complex legal processes under strict US immigration rules, hundreds are now waiting for these bureaucratic procedures to be processed in Mexico. Residents, community groups and international organisations have stepped up to help. Churches, NGOs and volunteer networks provide food, temporary shelter, medical care and legal assistance. However, the scale of the crisis means

that even these efforts are not enough. Despite the difficulties, Ciudad Juárez has become a symbol of resilience and unity.

It is a place where migrants, residents and aid organisations come together in daily acts of compassion, all struggling to survive and build a safer, more stable future. Among the many groups working in Juárez are our Columban missionaries, dedicated to evangelisation with a focus on migrants and caring for creation. For many years, Columban missionaries have supported local organisations in caring for migrants. In 2019, after seeing the growing number of families unable to cross into the United States, the Columbans decided to establish the St Columban Migrant Ministry, which launched a service guided by the four verbs proposed by Pope Francis: Welcome, Protect, Promote and Integrate.

In January 2025, with a new government in the US, many migrants chose to start a new life in Juárez after their plans to travel north were halted. While this provides a sense of stability, it also introduces significant challenges: securing suitable housing, accessing healthcare, enrolling children in school and helping families adapt to a new environment and culture. The Columbans, through our Ministry for Migrants work, have launched a program to sponsor 150 migrant children and enrol them in local schools. This ambitious effort involves more than just finding schools; it also requires preparing legal paperwork, providing uniforms, school supplies and books and even offering meals for children. Their families also receive guidance and support to help them integrate into the community.

We believe that education is key to protection and change. Keeping kids in school protects them from drug dealers, gangs and street dangers. It gives them hope: the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty and build a better future. When these children are educated, loved and supported, they not only grow personally but bring light and strength to the entire community. In their smiles, we see the reflection of God's love, a reminder that every act of kindness restores dignity and renews faith in humanity.

CRISTINA CORONADO

Cristina Coronado is the Coordinator of the Columban Migrant Ministry in Juárez, Mexico.

A GOLDEN CELEBRATION

FR TOM ROUSE'S 50 YEARS OF PRIESTHOOD

In this special year, we give thanks and celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Fr Tom Rouse, marking fifty years since his ordination to the priesthood on 8 May 1976 at St Patrick's Church in Napier, Aotearoa-New Zealand. This milestone is a moment of gratitude for a life dedicated to missionary service, pastoral care, leadership, and a deep commitment to justice, peace, and faith.

Fr Tom Rouse was born on November 9, 1951, in Napier, New Zealand, the son of Eric and Patricia Rouse, and the third of four children. He received his early education at St Joseph's School and St Patrick's Marist Brothers School, later attending St John's College in Hastings for his secondary education. During these formative years, his faith and sense of purpose steadily grew, eventually leading him to respond to the call to the missionary priesthood.

In 1970, he began his Columban formation at Turramurra in Sydney, undertaking his spiritual year and then continuing with studies in philosophy and theology. His diaconate year included pastoral experience in Newtown and Arncliffe in Sydney and Wellington in New Zealand, helping to prepare him for the responsibilities of ministry. His ordination in 1976 marked the beginning of a remarkable missionary journey that would take him across cultures and communities over the next five decades.

Shortly after ordination, Fr Tom was assigned to Fiji, where he began by studying the Fijian language in Suva. He served in several parishes, including Rewa, Varoka in Ba, Labasa, and Raiwaqa. These early years were marked by close pastoral involvement with local communities and a growing awareness of the social realities facing many people. Alongside parish ministry, he became actively involved in Justice and Peace work, serving as the Fiji regional coordinator and engaging in social analysis and advocacy. In 1981,

he studied social analysis at the Ecumenical Institute for the Development of Peoples (INODEP) in Paris, France and in the Philippines.

In 1988, during a period of political unrest in Fiji, Fr Tom, together with fellow Columban priests, was arrested while taking part in a peaceful prayer gathering opposing the military takeover. Though later discharged without conviction, the experience reflected his courage and commitment to standing in solidarity with those seeking peace and justice. Following these events, he eventually had to leave Fiji in 1989.

He then travelled to Dublin to continue his studies at Trinity College, focusing on theology, scripture, and sociology. His academic work included research on reading the Bible in contemporary mission contexts, particularly related to land, culture and identity in Fiji. This period of study enriched his understanding of mission and deepened his theological reflection.

In the early 1990s, Fr Tom returned to Australia and New Zealand, where he became deeply involved in formation ministry at St Columban's College, Turramurra. He served as a staff member and teacher at the Columban Mission Institute, later becoming Rector of the Initial Formation Programme. He also served as Spiritual Year Director. During this time, he supported the development of future missionaries and contributed to courses run by the Mercy Urban Ministry movement. He also served as chaplain to the Fiji Sydney Catholic community, maintaining strong pastoral connections and, for six years, was a member of the chaplaincy that served the migrants and refugees of the Villawood Immigration Centre, Sydney.



Columban Fr Tom Rouse with parishioners when he was working and living in Fiji.



Columban Fr Tom Rouse working in Parish ministry in New Zealand.



Columban Fr Tom Rouse joins the Hikoï march alongside the Catholic Peacemakers, advocating for justice, peace, reconciliation and unity within local communities.

In 2004, Fr Tom returned to Fiji, once again offering his gifts to the people there. He served as assistant parish priest in Ba before being appointed Regional Director of Fiji in 2007. He completed two terms in this leadership role, guiding the region through important periods of development and representing Fiji at international meetings and assemblies. After completing his term, he took time for renewal and further study.

Since 2014, Fr Tom has been based in New Zealand, where he has continued to serve in significant roles. He was appointed Mission Coordinator for Columban Mission New Zealand, became a member of the New Zealand Columban Trust Board, and took on the role of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) coordinator.

For several years, he served on the executive and as president of the Congregational Leaders Conference for Aotearoa-New Zealand (CLCANZ). He has also contributed to the wider Church through involvement in national leadership groups, ecumenical dialogue (as a member of the Catholic-Lutheran Dialogue Commission), and advisory bodies. In 2019, he was elected New Zealand country leader within the Oceania Region and became a member of the Columban Regional Council.

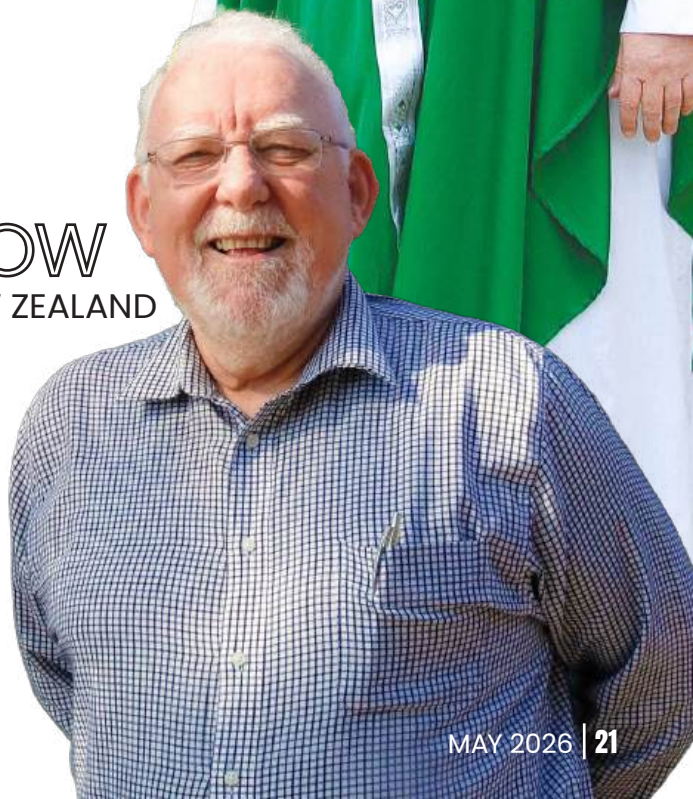
Fr Tom's fifty years of priesthood reflect a life of faith, courage, and faithful service. Through parish ministry, formation work, leadership and advocacy, he has quietly touched countless lives. As we celebrate this golden jubilee, we give thanks for his dedication, his generosity and his enduring commitment to Columban mission.

ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY

Fr Tom's fifty years of priesthood reflect a life of faith, courage and faithful service. Through parish ministry, formation work, leadership and advocacy, he has quietly touched countless lives.

THEN
FIJI

NOW
NEW ZEALAND



MISSIONARIES OF HOPE

I am returning to this theme - “missionaries of hope” - from Pope Francis’ message for World Mission Day 2025. In a previous reflection on World Mission, I noted that he wrote this homily before he died and left this message as a legacy. He called all Christians to be “missionaries of hope”.

Taking up the same theme, Pope Leo XIV wrote a message for the 111th World Day of Migrants and Refugees. He began by saying that he was taking up this theme because 2025 coincided with the Jubilee of Migrants. In his message, Leo XIV spoke specifically of migrants as “missionaries of hope”. Because it speaks very much to our present situation, I will directly quote what the pope has to say: “The current global context is sadly marked by wars, violence, injustice and extreme weather events, which force millions of people to leave their homelands in search of refuge elsewhere. The widespread tendency to look after the interests of limited communities poses a serious threat to the sharing of responsibility, multilateral cooperation, the pursuit of the common good and global solidarity for the benefit of our entire human family. The prospect of a renewed arms race and the development of new armaments, including nuclear weapons, the lack of consideration for the harmful effects of the ongoing climate crisis and the impact of profound economic inequalities make the challenges of the present and the future increasingly demanding.”

Pope Leo XIV goes on to say that, in this present global context, we all desperately seek signs of hope. He then goes on to talk about the link between migration and hope. “Many migrants, refugees and displaced persons are privileged witnesses of hope. Indeed,

they demonstrate this daily through their resilience and trust in God, as they face adversity while seeking a future in which they glimpse that integral human development and happiness are possible.”

Despite having to leave their homelands because of war or famine, refugees believe there can be a future for themselves, their families and their communities. Often, they endure having to wait for years before they can be granted official status as refugees and then provided with the means and documentation that allows them to enter assigned countries of refuge. This experience can severely challenge their faith. But what our Popes Francis and Leo XIV stress is that they witness to their faith in a way whereby they can be a source of inspiration and hope in a world where we wearily wonder whether or not there is a future worth hoping for.

Migrants and refugees help to revitalise religious communities that have lost members over the years due to the pressures of secularization and loss of religious faith.

As Pope Leo XIV said, migrants and refugees also help to initiate “inter-religious dialogue based on everyday life and the search for common values”. Then there is the challenge to the welcoming communities in these countries of adoption or refuge. We are called to ensure that these newly arrived migrants are made to feel at home. In this sense, then, we are all called to be “missionaries of hope”.

Migrants and refugees help to revitalise religious communities that have lost members over the years due to the pressures of secularization and loss of religious faith.

FR TOM ROUSE

Regional Councillor of Oceania

MISSION INTENTIONS

POPE LEO XIV

May - That everyone might have food: Let us pray that everyone, from large producers to small consumers, be committed to avoid wasting food, and to ensure that everyone has access to quality food.

COLUMBAN ACTIVITIES

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

SCAN QR CODE to read the May 2026 Columban Calendar Art Guide and complete the crossword puzzle.



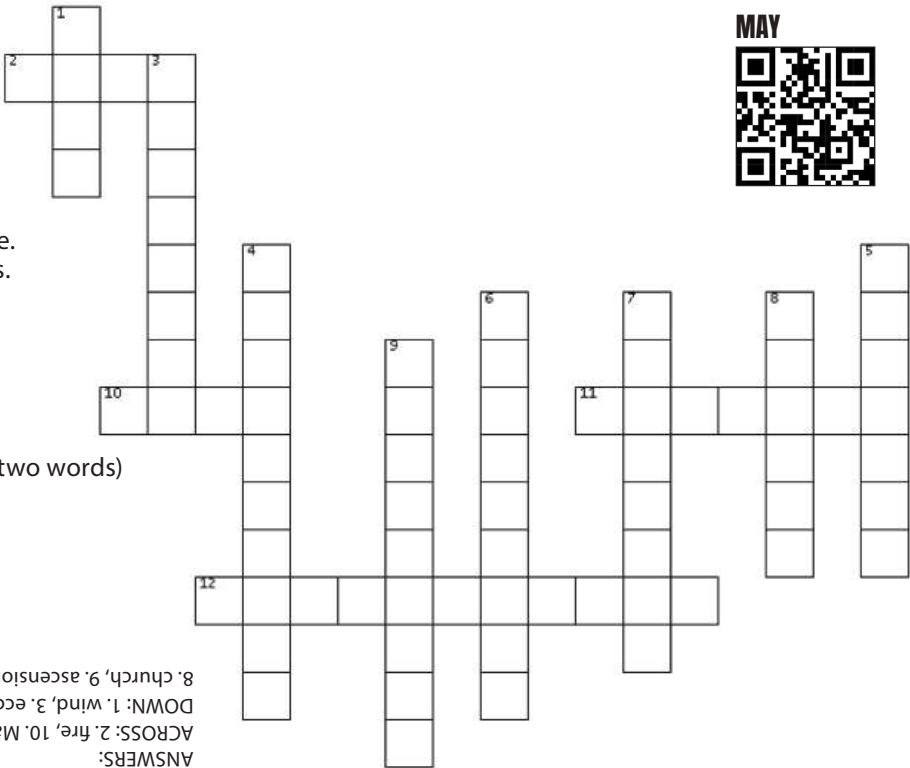
ACROSS

- 2. Visible sign resting on each disciple.
- 10. Mother of God, standing firm at the centre.
- 11. What appeared above the disciples' heads.
- 12. What the Spirit makes of ordinary people.

DOWN

- 1. A violent force heard filling the house.
- 3. Latin word for the Church on earth.
- 4. God's Spirit sent to empower the Church. (two words)
- 5. Shared calling born from the Spirit.
- 6. Feast celebrated fifty days after Easter.
- 7. First witnesses filled with the Spirit.
- 8. The Body of Christ formed at Pentecost.
- 9. Christ's return to the Father.

ANSWERS:
ACROSS: 2. fire, 10. Mary, 11. tongues, 12. transformed
DOWN: 1. wind, 3. ecclesia, 4. Holy Spirit, 5. mission, 6. Pentecost, 7. apostles, 8. church, 9. ascension



GIFT IN WILL

'Do what you can' Bishop Edward J Galvin



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We cannot take our earthly possessions with us, but we can so dispose of them that our good works will continue after we are . By leaving a gift to Columban Missionaries in your Will you become a partner in our work and you are leaving a lasting legacy for the future. Why not speak to your lawyer about it?

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2026 COLUMBAN MID-YEAR APPEAL



A farming family in the Philippines meets Columban Fr Shay Cullen while delivering their organically certified mangoes - a partnership helping families earn a fair income and build a better future.

“Whoever has received much... should use it for the benefit of others. Pope Leo XIV

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