



ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY

THE FAR EAST

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EVER NEW BEGINNINGS

Life is new beginnings. Getting up in the morning is the beginning of a new day. Sunday is the beginning of a new week. The 1st is the beginning of a new month. January 1 is the beginning of a new year.

Our lives, too, follow this pattern of new beginnings. From the moment of conception, we are a new 'image and likeness of God' in creation. From the moment we are born, we begin engaging with parents and family. From the moment of our baptism, we are "a new creation", children of the Father, temples of the Holy Spirit, members of the body of Christ. Infancy, childhood, youth and adulthood are all new beginnings. From our first day at school, we begin our formal education. From our first day at work, we begin our career paths in life. From the moment of choosing a partner, we begin a new unit in society. From our last day of work, we begin the new stage of retirement. From our last breath, we begin eternal life in God's presence.

My Columban life has followed this same pattern of new beginnings. After ordination, I was among the first Columbans assigned to Pakistan, a new beginning for the Society. After twenty years on mission on the highways and byways of Pakistan, I had a new beginning in the pristine halls of the academy, doing post-graduate studies and later teaching courses on Islam and Interreligious Dialogue. The Columban apostolate in Sydney transitioned from the seminary of my former years, to a residential institute for the formation and renewal of missionaries, to four Centres of mission priorities, to the single Columban Centre for Christian-Muslims. I became part of that pioneering work in interfaith relations in Australia and just recently, Pope Leo appointed me as a Consultor to the Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims, another new beginning of interfaith work at the international level.

The Columban Society, too, has followed this pattern of new beginnings. We began in 1918 as a society of

priests for mission to China. In the 1950s, we began working in other countries in Asia and Latin America. In the 1970s we accepted Columbans from those countries. In the 1980s we developed partnerships with Columban Lay Missionaries. Now, as the number of Columban priests declines and our ages increase, we again face new beginnings. Roles once done by priests are now done by lay professionals. The priests, once the protagonists of mission, are now the supporters of the laity who are taking on their baptismal responsibility for mission.

The history of the church has followed this same pattern of new beginnings, from apostolic times in 1st century Jewish culture, to the patristic era of Greek culture, being established in the Roman empire, revived by Irish missionaries, the settled monastic centres of education and culture, the roving missions of the mendicant orders, the scholasticism of mediaeval times, new beginnings in Asia and the Americas and now a universal church.

For this new era, Pope Francis has pushed the church towards a new "missionary impulse capable of transforming everything". (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 27) He has promoted synodality, the equal responsibility of all the baptised for the mission of the church; fraternity, the universal solidarity of all peoples as sisters and brothers; and ecology, caring for our common home. "Whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world. Every form of authentic evangelisation is always 'new'." (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 11) I and the other Columbans face our new beginnings in Oceania, as a Society and as Church, with confidence, assured by Christ's promise to be with us always (Mt 28:20), the presence of the Spirit within us (Jn 14:17), drawn by God whom St Augustine confessed as "O Beauty ever ancient, ever new."



REV DR PATRICK MCINERNEY

Regional Director of Oceania

THE SEVEN MILLION BOOKLET MIRACLE



Carol Beck in The Prayer Trust office at St Columban's Solihull in Britain.

In its Silver Jubilee year the Columban-run Prayer Trust celebrates the publication of an astonishing seven million booklets. Columban Co-worker Carol Beck has been there from the start.

"Twenty-five years ... and it seems only like yesterday since we started."

Time has flown for Columban Co-worker Carol Beck, Co-Founder of The Prayer Trust, one of the most enduring and endearing features of the Columban mission ever to come out of Britain.

For a quarter of a century, its prolific output of publications, over 150 titles to date, has brought consolation, inspiration and enrichment to thousands. Translated into various languages, these booklets have appeared in Britain, France, Ireland, Australia and the United States and as far afield as China and India. They have touched the lives of young and old "parishioners, patients, pilgrims and prisoners" and people from all walks of life and in all situations. More than seven million individual copies have been produced.

Yet the whole enterprise had very humble beginnings.

Born in Yorkshire, by the early 1990s, Carol had settled with her family in the quiet West Midlands village of Balsall Common, close to the Columban central house

in Solihull. Her local parish had an unusual patron; it was dedicated to Blessed Robert Grissold - the only church in the country to bear that name. Robert Grissold had been a Catholic layman from the area who, during Protestant Reformation times, joined with a priest, Fr John Sugar (now Saint John Sugar), to secretly keep the Faith alive. They proved to be an effective underground team and Robert stuck with Fr Sugar through thick and thin.

Maintaining the tradition of Robert Grissold, Carol soon found herself becoming a lay volunteer who teamed up with a Catholic priest in a missionary enterprise and stayed with it through all its ups and downs.

Columban Fr Pat Sayles had returned home to England after having done parish work in Peru and served as "Far East" editor in Ireland. He had involved in home visiting but quickly realised there was a limit to the number of homes he could reach on his own and so he hit on the idea of producing little prayer pamphlets. He recalls the moment it occurred to him that if one person "had a little prayer book and could hand it to a neighbour and so on, it would be a wonderful way to spread the Gospel". It would jump-start a kind of "spiritual multiplier".

He knew he would need help with the project and thought of Carol, whom he'd come to know while serving as a supply priest in her parish. The way her three altar-server sons, "*trooped onto the altar one after another to serve Mass*" had brought a smile to his face. For her part, she immediately took to the style and content of Fr Pat's early booklets. "*They were simple, straightforward, with no jargon,*" she explains. "*They could mean a lot to people going through all sorts of problems: bereavement, illness - even cancer.*" She'd read a book Fr Pat had written for his 25th ordination anniversary in 1998 - "*Lord, inflame our Hearts with your Spirit*" and "*for the first time, I realized who the Holy Spirit was*". She began helping him prepare his booklets and accompanying cassettes (the peak of technology at the time).

Fr Pat saw he needed a base. In 1999, he took on a nearby parish in the delightfully named hamlet of Wootton Wawen and began publishing in earnest. Carol drove over every day. In 2000, they decided to organise themselves as a formal charity, choosing

as a name “*The Prayer Trust*” (influenced by Fr Pat’s membership of ‘*The National Trust*’, which administers sites of historic and scenic interest in England and Wales).

The scheme thrived from the outset. The idea was to distribute one booklet and, with the returns from it, publish the next and build the project up accordingly. “*In the first year, we sold 125,000 booklets,*” recalls Fr Pat. Demand soared. About twenty friends volunteered to help and three containers were donated to store the material. Bookmarks and the occasional full-length book were added to their portfolio. Soon, they were not just delivering to homes and parishes but to schools, prisons and hospitals. They diversified the range of topics and devised themes for children, Christmas and Easter, First Communion, Harvest Festival and so on.

So far, Carol and Fr Pat were mirroring the success of the seventeenth-century lay–priest team of Robert Grissold and John Sugar. Unfortunately, the career forged by Robert and John met disaster in 1603 when Crown forces caught them as they were returning from celebrating a clandestine Mass and took them as prisoners to Warwick, where they were tried and condemned to death.

Similarly, the team of Carol and Fr Pat was to undergo a trial, albeit of a more prosaic, twenty-first-century type. In 2008, as they were coming back from Worcester after taking photographs for a new booklet, an out-of-control vehicle hit them head-on. Both were hospitalised and could have died.

Blessed Robert Grissold and Saint John Sugar were executed in 1604. However, Carol Beck and Fr Pat Sayles survived and recovered. It seemed like a miracle. It was only later that they realised how great a miracle it had been, when they suddenly recalled that the “great escape” had occurred on July 17 - the Feast of Blessed Robert Grissold!

The scheme thrived from the outset. The idea was to distribute one booklet and, with the returns from it, publish the next and build the project up accordingly. “In the first year, we sold 125,000 booklets,” recalls Fr Pat.



Carol Beck and Columban Fr Pat Sayles at The Prayer Trust desk, St Columbans Solihull in Britain.

They returned to work and The Prayer Trust continued to grow. In 2016, it moved premises, taking over part of the office extension and an old stable block at the Columbans’ Solihull house. It flourishes to this day, celebrating its Silver Jubilee with Carol and Fr Pat still at the helm and with those seven million copies under its belt.

Carol and Fr Pat even went on to complete the booklet they had been preparing before the crash. Fittingly, it was called *In Joyful Hope*. A miracle indeed. A seven million booklet miracle.

FR JOHN BOLES

Columban Fr John Boles lives and works in Britain.



A collection of booklets written by The Prayer Trust.

A DAY WILL LAST FOREVER



Columban lay missionary Naanise Pola Mo'unga's father leads the family in prayer.

Since 2017, I have been called back to what was then the Region of Fiji, now known as the Region of Oceania, to coordinate the Columban Lay Missionaries (CLM) in Fiji until 2021. Those years were filled with walking alongside people in their joys and struggles, building communities of faith and strengthening the mission presence in Fiji.

In 2022, I was assigned to St Pius X Parish in Raiwaqa, Fiji, where my main focus turned to youth and women's ministry. This role allowed me to nurture young leaders, accompany women in their faith journey and contribute to building a parish family rooted in service and hope.

In December last year, I returned home to Tonga for my home vacation. My intention was simple but deeply meaningful: to spend precious time with my

elderly parents and siblings. It had been years since all of us gathered together under one roof and I wanted to ensure that my parents felt loved, appreciated and cared for. Christmas Day, in particular, created cherished memories that I will carry with me wherever I go.

We began the celebration with a family lunch gathering on Christmas Day. My siblings and I worked side by side in the kitchen, preparing our parents' favourite meals. The aroma of the traditional 'umu' cooked in the underground oven, mixed with the scent of roasted pig, filled the compound and stirred up childhood memories. When the food was ready, we gathered around the dining table, laughter bubbling up as easily as the conversation. My mother's eyes lit up as she recounted funny mishaps from our childhood, while my father added his stories, sprinkling humour and wisdom in equal measure. Their voices carried us back in time, reminding us of the strong roots that continue to bind us together.

On quieter days during the week, we created moments of simple joy. One afternoon, we sat under the tent prepared for lunch. Each of my sibling's

It strengthened me for the journey ahead, reaffirmed the centrality of family and renewed my trust that God's purpose continues to unfold in my life and mission.

FJI

families had chosen a unique colour for our family photos with Mum and Dad. As we waited to take turns, we talked deeply about life, family and our dreams for the future. These conversations gave me a profound sense of connection, reminding me that family is not only about shared blood but also about shared stories, values and support. Listening to my parents speak of their past and their hopes for us, I realised how much wisdom resides in their lived experience. By the end of the day, my heart was full of gratitude for the chance to listen, to learn and to be present.

As the week progressed, I noticed a renewed spark in my parents. The presence of their children brought a fresh wave of energy to them. The house was alive with sound - creaking floorboards, laughter, singing and the happy chaos of grandchildren running around. It was the first Christmas home where all nine siblings, except for one of my sisters who lives in New Zealand, managed to gather together. For my parents, this was a gift beyond measure. Their hair may be whiter and their steps slower, but they remain the anchors of our family.

Before one of our meals, we surprised them by dressing in our chosen family colours for photos. One by one, each family posed with our parents, capturing smiles and laughter that will live on in our albums and hearts. Then, as island families often do, we sang, danced and teased one another, creating an atmosphere of joy and warmth. My parents laughed until tears streamed down their faces. Their happiness was contagious, reminding us that our presence and unity are among the greatest gifts we can offer them.

That holiday was not just a break from routine - it was a sacred reminder of the importance of family, connection and the joy of being together. It wasn't about elaborate outings or expensive activities. It was about the bonds that grew stronger around the dining table, under the tent, in the laughter and the prayers. We ended the week with hearts full of love and an eagerness for the next time we will gather.

Modern technology played its part as well. Thanks to online apps, we were able to connect with family members who couldn't be physically present. My sister and her family in New Zealand joined us through Messenger and although she was far away, she was still woven into the fabric of our celebration. It reminded



Columban lay missionary Naanise Pola Mo'unga alongside her parents.

me that even across oceans, love and connection can bridge the distance. My brief time at home was more than just rest; it was renewal. It allowed me to recharge emotionally and spiritually, giving me the strength to continue my mission work with fresh energy and perspective. The love and encouragement I received from my family gave me a sense of belonging that will sustain me in the months ahead. Our shared prayers were a reminder that no matter where life takes us, we carry each other in faith.

As I returned to Fiji, I held onto the words from Proverbs 19:21: *"Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."* This verse echoed in my heart, reminding me that while we make plans and long for certain outcomes, ultimately, it is God's loving purpose that guides our lives. My time in Tonga was a blessing I did not take for granted. It strengthened me for the journey ahead, reaffirmed the centrality of family and renewed my trust that God's purpose continues to unfold in my life and mission.

NAANISE POLA MO'UNGA

Columban lay missionary Naanise Pola Mo'unga lives and works in Fiji.



JUBILEE 2025: A CALL FOR HOPE AND RESTORATION AMIDST MYANMAR'S CRISIS

YEAR 2025: THE JUBILEE OF HOPE

On 24 December 2024, the Holy Door was opened at St Peter's Basilica, marking the start of the 2025 Jubilee Year. Embracing the motto "Pilgrims of Hope," this Jubilee will continue until the Solemnity of the Epiphany on 6 January 2026. The Jubilee originates from the Jewish tradition, representing a special time for the liberation and restoration of the oppressed. In ancient times, the Jewish people could reclaim their land and freedom during the Jubilee year, beginning anew.

In today's world, the essence of this Jubilee is more urgently needed than ever, calling us to reflect on its true meaning as we consider those who have lost their homes and wander, those who have lost their jobs and worry about their livelihoods, those young people who have lost their dreams, those elderly with failing bodies and minds who know loneliness and those who have lost all hope.

THE REALITY OF MYANMAR: FINDING HOPE AMIDST CIVIL WAR

The civil war in Myanmar has continued to worsen since the military coup in 2021. Countless people have lost their homes and livelihoods. Those forcibly displaced by the military regime's violence are forced to wander in search of refuge.

What does the meaning of the Jubilee hold for them? Is there even a place they can return to? What hope do the displaced ethnic minorities of Myanmar, especially the Kachin, Karen and Shan people, have to reclaim their land now?

FORCED DISPLACEMENT AND IDP CAMPS: LOSING THE FOUNDATION OF LIFE

As a result of the tragic events of the civil war, many people in Myanmar are forced to live in United Nations-sponsored IDP (internally displaced persons) camps and temporary shelters, where they must deal with not just physical hardships but also their deep emotional scars. Unfortunately, their struggles grow even more intense each day in these camps due to ongoing shortages of food, water and medical assistance.

Many farmers have been unable to cultivate their land in areas that have become battlegrounds and those who have lost their jobs face difficulties sustaining their livelihoods. In a reality where even securing a meal to share with their families is a daily hurdle, they are suffering from extreme poverty and hunger.

THE SPIRIT OF THE JUBILEE: A TIME OF RESTORATION FOR THE SUFFERING

Nonetheless, in Myanmar and for all of us living on this earth, the spirit of the Jubilee lives on. As Jesus said

in the Gospel of Luke, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:18-19).

This word is the truth we must reflect on as we welcome the Jubilee. We hope this good news will reach those suffering in Myanmar and around the world. We must pray and act so that the oppressed and wounded can rise again and so we can embrace them and live together.

OUR HEART AS MISSIONARIES LIVING IN MYANMAR

The Columbans working in Myanmar strive to share the pain of the people we meet here and help them find hope. The civil war has brought suffering to many, but despite this, efforts to keep the flame of hope alive continue. We are living out the meaning of the Jubilee both here and in various parts of the world where people are suffering.

The Jubilee represents not only a moment to reflect on the past but also an opportunity to support those currently in distress, allowing them to heal and rebuild their lives. We hope for a day when everyone suffering in Myanmar can experience peace and freedom once more. Now is the time for us to intensify our efforts in helping them rediscover hope and restore joy to their lives.

We continue to make strides in these efforts by reaching out to families through the Diocesan Family Commission, to the suffering through the Rebirth Rehabilitation Centre addiction ministry, to the youth through the Catholic Student Action Myitkyina Student Learning Resources Centre and through the creation of a ministerial hub via the Columban Mission Office, which facilitates activities that promote the Columban Mission priorities on biodiversity conservation and accompanying refugees.

JUBILEE, THE PROMISE OF RESTORATION

The Jubilee is, in the end, a promise of restoration given to all who are oppressed and wounded. In Myanmar and wherever people suffer in the world, we should constantly pray and act so that they can regain their freedom and recover what they have lost. The true meaning of the Jubilee lies in caring for people. We must pray together for each other and share in the pain of others so that they can once again discover hope.

COLUMBAN FR JEHOON AUGUSTINE LEE

Columban Fr Jehoon Augustine Lee lives and works in Myanmar.

Photos: Fr Jehoon Augustine Lee SSC

1 & 2: Understanding and encouraging family members through differences and conflicts; developing community in rural areas and among Internally Displaced Peoples (IDP).

3. Columban Fr Eamon Sheridan (left), Bishop John La Sham & Columban Fr Jehoon Lee (right).

4. Columban Fr Jehoon Lee in the underground shelter (bunker) in Myanmar.

COLUMBAN RESOURCE - ORDER NOW

2026 COLUMBAN ART CALENDAR



The 2026 Columban Art Calendar features the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins - a powerful reminder to keep our lamps burning with faith, hope and readiness. The wise virgins inspire us to stay prepared and attentive to God's presence, while the foolish ones remind us not to neglect our spiritual lives. Each month invites reflection on the "oil" we need - love, patience and compassion - to shine God's light in our daily lives.

Cover photo: Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, 1886 (oil on canvas), Liphart, Baron Ernest Friedrich von (1847-1932/34), Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia/Bridgeman Images

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A STEP INTO THE LIGHT

MOVING FORWARD

Alicia and her husband were good, practising Catholics living in a working-class residential area of Chile's capital city, Santiago, where the Columbans administered San Gabriel parish.

Alicia helped lead the weekly meetings of the parents of children preparing to receive their First Holy Communion, gatherings that met for two years. Her husband was inspired by the Church's social teachings to become a leader of a local trade union. He and other union members would collectively bargain for decent wages and safe working conditions from their employers.

Neither of them was prepared in September of 1973 for the military forces to violently take over the government and begin arresting people who might oppose them, but a few months into the dictatorship of General Pinochet, a group of soldiers arrived at their doorstep and took Alicia's husband away. It was just after two in the morning.

She never saw him again.

WHERE ARE OUR RELATIVES?

Over the weeks, months and years that followed her husband's arrest, none of the personnel at any base, government office or hospital recognised the name of her husband. The morgues didn't either, when she was finally moved to look for his body there.

To add insult to injury, the soldiers and officers at the entrances to military facilities began to tire of her entreaties for any information about her husband and would dismiss her with brazen ridicule, suggesting that her husband had fled over the border and was living in Argentina with a new wife and family.

They treated hundreds of families, also looking for their missing loved ones after their arrests, in the same way. At one point, the junta even promoted a story about a massacre in neighbouring Argentina, where most of the arrested had disappeared to and had supposedly died, fighting one another in some kind of internal dispute among the supposed enemies of the military regime. It was an attempt to make the whole affair go away.

Fortunately, the Church stepped in and established a Vicariate of Solidarity, which provided lawyers, social workers, medical personnel and aid to the families of

the disappeared and other victims of the violence of the dictatorship. The Church helped them establish soup kitchens and folkcraft workshops. It published its own monthly review of the human rights situation in the country (distributed through the parishes), as well as nine tomes listing the details and backgrounds of every missing person who was last seen being arrested by state security forces, including the circumstances of the removal of Alicia's husband from their home.

Alicia struggled with bitterness and anger. One could see her normally quiet, cheerful personality and faith-filled demeanour change in the face of the blatant brutality and violence of the dictatorship. Not used to speaking out or assertively expressing her opinions, she now learned how to insist and demand answers from those responsible for her husband's disappearance, joining others in organised demonstrations for truth and justice and becoming a beloved member of the Agrupación, the organisation that the relatives of the arrested-missing founded for themselves and their mutual support.

She also knew Jesus' teachings and example very well. As a disciple of Jesus Christ and a faithful Catholic, she felt sadness and guilt over her inability to forgive those who had taken her husband away.

If a uniformed person got on the bus she took to work, she would get off at the next stop, unable to bear being in the same vehicle. She understood very well the chants and the passion of some of her colleagues in the Agrupación, who firmly held to the slogan, "*Neither forgiveness nor forgetting*" about the past - *Ni perdón ni olvido!*

She, too, experienced the same kind of anger at the violent crime she and her daughter were victims of - an event that, of its nature, could never provide the healing closure of at least seeing her husband's body, or providing a funeral for him, or even simply knowing what happened to him. She would never be allowed to grieve over what was left of her husband and move on in life.

"But how can I call myself a Christian?" she would ask herself. Yet she still couldn't forgive those who had taken her husband away into oblivion.

She shared her inner struggles with several of us Columbans over the years. And then, light came into her life - a new perspective that opened the door to



Demonstration in front of the Chilean Human Rights Commission, between 1973 and 1990.

Photo: Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manifestaci3n_en_el_fron_tis_de_la_Comisi3n_Chilena_de_Derechos_Humanos.jpg), "Manifestaci3n en el frontis de la Comisi3n Chilena de Derechos Humanos", <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/cl/deed.en>

a happier existence without requiring her to give up the search for her husband or cease her demands for accountability, truth and justice, along with others like her in the Agrupaci3n.

In fact, nowhere in the Bible, in either Testament, is there any command to "forgive and forget". "Forget about the past" is not a value in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Remembering the past, on the other hand, is central to the history of salvation that it describes for us and through which God speaks to us in His saving Word.

But there was something else she could do. Despite the need for accountability and justice, both for her and for the country, there was something else she could cling to, to be authentically faithful to Christ's teaching to forgive one's enemies and to do good to those who harm you (Luke 6:27-28).

She knew that she could not wish anyone else to suffer what she had gone through, no matter who they were.

The question that came to her put the whole situation in a new light. When she considered how much she and her daughter had suffered, from the very first night of the abduction and for years afterwards, she asked herself, "Would I want the families of those responsible for this crime to suffer as I have, as my daughter has?"

She had to say no, she didn't. No matter how heinous the violence done to her husband, her daughter, her own person, she could not wish the same thing to happen to her worst enemies. It was too much for anyone to go through, no matter who they were.

And that turned out to be the beginning of healing in her life as a follower of Christ. Over time, she no longer stepped off the bus when a uniformed person stepped on. She no longer crossed the street to avoid a carabinero. On the national day for celebrating the police force, she finally was able to stop a policeman in uniform, shake his hand and thank him for his service to the country.

When Alicia died two years ago, she was still working with the Agrupaci3n, which had by then been recognised by the governments elected after the return of the democratic system of government and civilian control. Monetary compensation had been proposed to resolve the situation by an investigative committee set up by the government, but the struggle to find out the truth and bring those responsible to justice continues to this day, sometimes eking out results, but never abandoned.

I was moved to see the photograph of a smiling Alicia sitting at an information table with others, the picture of her husband pinned to her blouse, published next to her obituary on the information website of the Agrupaci3n. She kept up the struggle to the end of her life but found a measure of healing and joy in her life of faith, before passing over into everlasting freedom and into the presence of the Paschal victory of Christ and the New Life of God's Reign.

COLUMBAN FR ROBERT MOSHER

Columban Fr Robert Mosher, who lived in Chile for 30 years, now lives and works in the United States.



Columban Fr Ed O'Connell with children and adolescents in San Benito, Lima, Peru.



Warmi Huasi Centre during Reading Club time.



Columban Fr Ed O'Connell, Venezuelan and Peruvian families with the new parish priest in Our Lord of the Miracles chapel.

WARMI HUASI

EMPOWERING WOMEN, CHILDREN AND COMMUNITIES IN PERU

“Warmi Huasi” - Quechua for “Women’s House” - is the name Columban Frs Ed O’Connell, John Hegerty and Bernie Lane, along with three lay professionals, chose for a small civil association they founded in 2003. By 2018, Warmi Huasi was well established, with 15 years’ experience accompanying women and families in situations of poverty, first in the parish of “Our Lady of the Missions” and then on a mission to the town of San Benito on the northern outskirts of Lima.

The initiative began with the mothers in San Benito crying, “The children, the children, they are at risk”. We responded by setting up homework clubs in community spaces for children, with mothers and teachers also present. The Warmi Centre was then built to provide space for a children’s reading club and a place for children and adolescents to meet.

In 2014, we arranged funding for a library at San Benito’s main school and stocked it with reading books so that all 2,000 primary and secondary

students could have an hour of reading a week. Now in San Benito, children and adolescents have safe spaces to go where they can advance their education.

In 2015, a parish priest in the province of Paucar del Sara Sara, high up in the Andes, asked Warmi Huasi to work there with children and adolescents at risk. The Warmi team, after a preliminary study, accepted the mission and set up homework and reading clubs on parish premises in the provincial capital, Pausa, and the convent in nearby Lampa. When the parish priest was transferred, the new priest did not share the same priorities, as can happen, so the Warmi team liaised directly with primary school principals to continue the work. This work continues today.

From 2016 onwards, Venezuelans no longer felt safe or able to earn a living, so many of them migrated to Peru. By the end of 2019, Peru had become home to 870,000 Venezuelan migrants, many moving to Columban parishes in North Lima. When UNICEF arrived on the scene, it chose Warmi Huasi as a partner organisation due to our well-known expertise in community development and the trust the people had in us.

Working with UNICEF, we coordinated with three Columban parishes in the San Martin de Porres district to set up homework and reading clubs for Venezuelan children. Mothers were also asked to come along. We organised activities - such as sharing national dishes, songs and dances - to integrate the children and their



Painting competition in the Children and Adolescent NEICE park.



Children waiting to enter Reading Club in San Benito, Lima, Peru.



A child with a book from the Warmi Huasi book kiosk in San Benito, Lima, Peru.

mothers. This proved very successful in breaking down prejudices and natural shyness; the friendships that were built have lasted to this day.

Then, in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the work suddenly came to a stop! Most families were affected. Warmi's work changed dramatically too. Communications became virtual by Zoom and mobile phones; everybody worked from home. UNICEF continued integrating migrant children and adolescents, adding a pandemic orientation to the programme. The Warmi team designed a programme for adolescent leaders, both Venezuelan and Peruvian, to promote migrant integration and access to information on health, education and protection programmes in the context of the pandemic.

The children and adolescents during the pandemic had literally been isolated at home for almost two years, frustrated and in some cases suffering abuse. Parents were at home with no work and food was scarce. It was then that I wrote an article in the Columban magazine and as a result, funds began to flow from our benefactors.

We were able to provide vegetables and chicken to five community kitchens, run by mothers of the homework clubs. They served over 1,000 meals daily for three years to the children and the elderly. They were heroines!

The children and adolescents, on returning to school in 2022, faced the trauma of having lost two years of education, so our reading comprehension programme became even more important. The reading club at the Warmi Centre in San Benito reopened, with the head teacher at the San Benito school identifying the 60 children most in need. In Ayacucho, the Warmi team reached out to smaller, isolated rural schools. This year, storybooks in both Spanish and Quechua have been delivered and tutoring given to 239 children in 11 primary schools to improve their reading skills.

The three children and adolescent organisations are active again. The "NEICE" group, which means "Our effort is behind every success", promotes soccer skills in neighbourhood parks. The group "GLI", which means "Great ingenious readers", organises literary and cultural activities at the Warmi Centre. The Sacred Heart Chapel Organisation offers their own vegetable gardens. As well as fulfilling these individual plans, last June, the C&A organisations together organised a march to raise awareness of the need to care for our environment.

Moreover, the Warmi Huasi teams in both Carabayllo and Ayacucho have designed a "plan of life" programme to strengthen the personal development and critical-thinking skills of fourth-year secondary students as they transition from school to the workforce. A total of 83 students from the San Benito school and 106 students from three secondary schools in Ayacucho are participating this year. In a similar way, the Warmi team in Ayacucho, together with the provincial capital, has opened an academy to help adolescents who lack preparation to apply to public universities. The academy is underway at the largest school in the district of Lampa. This year, 66 students from five of the secondary schools in the province are participating.

Warmi Huasi's defined mission is "to strengthen children and adolescents skills to contribute to the development of their schools, communities and districts in defence of their rights". The success of this mission is reflected in the young adult graduates who now serve as role models, accompanying younger generations. Our hope is that these young people will stay in their communities, building them, rather than migrating away.

COLUMBAN FR ED O'CONNELL

Columban Fr Ed O'Connell lived in Peru for over 40 years. He now lives and works in Britain.

Photos: Fr Ed O'Connell SSC

OUR COLUMBAN EXPERIENCE AT THE AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL



The Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF) was a grace-filled, energising and truly memorable experience for our small but dedicated Columban team. Over three vibrant days, our booth became a lively hub where faith, culture and mission came together - drawing young people into meaningful encounters, joyful conversations and deeper reflection on the call to live the Gospel in today's world. Throughout the festival, we witnessed a renewed sense of hope as young people approached our space with curiosity, openness and enthusiasm to learn about the Columban mission.

One of the main attractions at our booth was the **Spinning Wheel and Scripture Quiz**, which quickly became a favourite among the youth. Participants eagerly tested their knowledge of the Old and New Testaments, celebrating both the challenge and the fun of engaging with Scripture. These activities created a natural starting point for deeper dialogue about faith, discipleship and the ways young people are called to witness to Christ in their everyday lives. It was heartening to see the smiles, laughter and confidence with which many of them shared their faith stories and asked thoughtful questions about mission.

We were also privileged to offer a cultural experience through the **Fijian Masi activity**, beautifully presented by our Regional Partnership Coordinator, **Adi Mariana Waqa** and the Fiji Peace, Ecology and Justice Coordinator, **Noa Tuivunilagi**. Rooted in the rich cultural traditions of Fiji, this interactive workshop invited young people to reflect on creation,

community and the resilience of Pacific peoples as they face environmental and social challenges. Through storytelling, art and shared dialogue, we highlighted how Columban missionaries accompany vulnerable communities in Fiji and throughout the world - especially those affected by natural disasters, climate change, conflict, or poverty. Many young people expressed appreciation for learning not only about Fijian culture but also about the global dimension of Columban mission.

A significant contribution to the festival came from the **interreligious dialogue panel**, featuring **Columban Fr Patrick McInerney**, **Irene Baik** from Catholic Mission and **Bishop Gregory Homeming**. Their conversation offered powerful insights into the importance of dialogue as a path toward peace, understanding and mutual respect in an increasingly diverse and divided world. The panel drew a large audience of young people who were eager to explore how interfaith engagement is grounded in Catholic teaching and lived out in Columban ministry.

We were blessed to have **Fr Francis Xavier La Aung** with us - a Columban priest serving in Fiji and originally from Myanmar. His presence drew significant interest from youth who wanted to hear his personal vocation journey and learn how faith carried him across cultures and continents into mission. His gentle and humble witness resonated deeply with many.

We also had the privilege of welcoming **Columban Fr George Hogarty**, who joined us for a full day at the festival. Fr George spent time meeting young people, sharing stories from Columban mission work and offering insights into the challenges and hopes of the communities we accompany around the world. His presence added great depth to our booth and allowed many youth to hear firsthand what it means to live a missionary vocation in today's world.

Our participation was greatly enriched by the talents and dedication of our team members.

- **Assunta Arena**, our Multimedia Coordinator, did exceptional work capturing the voices of young participants. Through video reflections, she recorded their feedback, impressions and moments of learning - creating a powerful visual record of the festival's impact on their lives.
- **Rita Salama** warmly managed our souvenir store, ensuring that every visitor felt welcomed and connected to the Columban story through both hospitality and meaningful conversation.

We are also deeply grateful to the **other congregations and youth leaders** who supported us by encouraging their groups to join our activities and spend time at our booth. Their collaboration enriched the atmosphere of community and helped create a space where the young Church could gather, learn and celebrate together.

Our sincere thanks also go to the **organisers of the festival**, whose outstanding planning and professionalism resulted in a remarkable, well-coordinated event. Their hard work created the environment in which these meaningful encounters were possible.

Though we were a small team, we felt strongly that the **Lord was with us - guiding, strengthening and doing the rest**. Every conversation, every shared moment and every spark of interest felt touched by grace. I was honoured to work alongside such a committed and joyful Columban team. Their passion transformed our booth into a place of learning, laughter, cultural sharing and mission awareness.

The festival reminded us once again that the Spirit is alive in the hearts of our young people and that the mission of Christ continues through their desire for justice, peace and meaningful engagement with the world.

MAHA SHAWKY

Maha Shawky, Oceania Regional Business Manager.



Columban Missionaries ACYF team (left - right); Hany Shawky, Columban Fr Francis Xavier La Aung, Noa Tuivunilagi, Maha Shawky, Assunta Arena, Rita Salama and Adi Mariana Waqa.



STILL ON MISSION: AN INTERVIEW WITH COLUMBAN FR JOHN BURGER

Columban Mission Magazine editor: Until the end of 2021, you were the Regional Director of the Columbans in the United States and well-known to our readers. What have you been doing since?

JOHN BURGER: My term of office as regional director finished on November 23, 2021 and that same week, I turned 75. It seemed a good time to hand over the director's office and responsibilities to someone else. The members saw that Fr Chris Saenz was a good choice to succeed me. When I mentioned to a Sister in Philadelphia that my term was ending, she told me that Camilla Hall was looking for a chaplain. Camilla Hall is both a convent and a healthcare centre for the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. I was taught by these Sisters in grade school and am originally from the Philadelphia area, so I applied for the position. It has been a homecoming for me.

CM: HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO ENTER THE COLUMBAN SEMINARY?

JB: During high school, we had a series of religion textbooks that captured my imagination. It was quite a different approach from the catechism question-and-answer format I was used to. I also had a pen pal in Japan and had discovered an interest in Asia.

At the same time, I was reading books that inspired me, such as *Deliver Us from Evil* by Doctor Tom Dooley. But I knew I would never be a medical doctor.

During those years, I met my first Columban priest, a friend of my mother's family, who had spent 25 years in Burma (now Myanmar) and he was quite an interesting character! I also had a couple of uncles and other relatives who were missionary priests. But I shied away from applying to that community. At that time, they did not have a mission in Asia. Also, I did not want to go through life as "Fr Bill's nephew".

CM: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A COLUMBAN PRIEST?

JB: I entered the Columban seminary right after graduation from high school in 1964. I became a temporary member of the Columbans in 1968 and was ordained in 1973. A friend who knew that I had spent my whole adult life as a Columban remarked, "You have been doing the same thing for fifty years!" But that is not how it has felt to me.

Over the years of my life as a priest, I have been a student priest, a parish priest, a teacher, a seminary rector, a counsellor, an editor, an administrator and now a chaplain. Each assignment brought with it its own requirements for skills and even virtues.

Besides living in several states from New England to the Great Plains, I have lived outside the United States - in Japan, Ireland and Hong Kong. And for various reasons, I have visited many other countries. It has not been a boring life.

CM: DO YOU HAVE ANY ACHIEVEMENTS THAT YOU ARE MOST PROUD OF?

JB: There is a Japanese proverb that says, "You are a fool if you never climb Mount Fuji and a fool if you climb it twice." I am a fool who climbed it twice. But not in recent years! I have a couple of master's degrees, but I consider my diploma from a Japanese language school my top academic accomplishment.

It was such an important key to functioning as a missionary over there. It is not that I mastered the language, but I never gave up.



And I once had a hole-in-one while on the golf course, but it was more good luck than skill. Or perhaps catching sight of a little sign that read “rattlesnakes in the rough” helped my concentration!

A friend who knew that I had spent my whole adult life as a Columban remarked, “You have been doing the same thing for fifty years!” But that is not how it has felt to me.

CM: WHAT TALENTS DO YOU WISH YOU HAD?

JB: Maybe in the next life I will have a good singing voice! And it would not be bad to be better at sports. It would be great to have sufficient golf skills not to spoil a good walk with friends.

More seriously, as I mentioned above, each assignment for a priest demands a variety of different talents. As a chaplain in a nursing home, being present to the dying and responsive to their needs, is certainly important.

Bringing confidence in God and accompaniment in life’s final journey makes for a demanding job description.

COLUMBAN FR JOHN BURGER

Columban Fr John Burger lives and works in the United States.



Congratulations to all the students who participated. Each did a fantastic job and the creativity and reflections were truly inspiring.

All winning entries and submissions can be viewed online at www.columban.org.au or by scanning the QR code:



Primary School 1st Place winner for a written submission: Lucas, Grade 6 - St Vincent De Paul Primary School, Strathmore, VIC



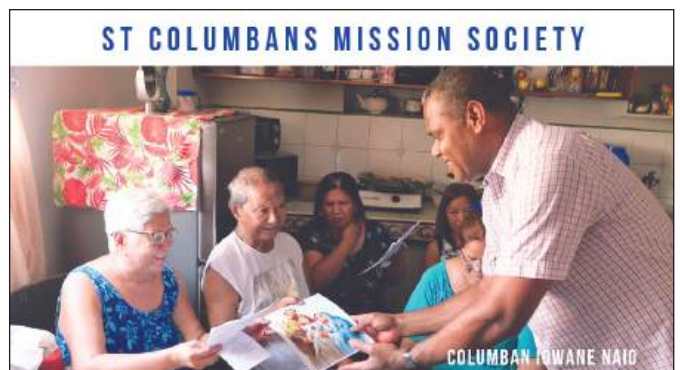
Secondary School 1st Place winner for a written submission: Mylah, Year 8 - Sacred Heart College, Geelong, VIC



Secondary School 2nd Place winner for a written submission: Miranda, Year 9 - St Benedict College, Penant Hills, NSW



Secondary School 3rd Place winner for a written submission: Pavni, Year 7 - St Teresa's Catholic School, Ba, Fiji



COLUMBAN VOCATIONS

Do you have a dream of doing some service that is pleasing to God and good for God’s struggling people? Is your faith important to you? Could God be calling you to be a missionary priest or a lay missionary?

JOIN US

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Vocations Coordinator
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www.columban.org.au



ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY



A HUMBLE AND COMPASSIONATE CAREGIVER

When I asked her why she had chosen to come to Taiwan, Adi, an Indonesian caregiver, replied, “To earn money for my family, to provide for their needs and well-being, to send my children to school and to have a decent life back in my home country.”

But what Adi does is even more.

I’ve known and worked with Adi at the Ai Jia Development Center since 2018. With her family, including three children, living in Indonesia, she has been in Taiwan for a full ten years without any home or local leave, missing all the significant family events back home. After her first three years in Taiwan, she changed employers. Then, just as her second contract was expiring, the COVID-19 pandemic struck. I witnessed her intense eagerness to go home. However, financial concerns and the health risks of travelling at that time convinced her to stay put.

Adi looks after Mèimeì, a student with physical and mental challenges who attends the Ai Jia Development Center. Mèimeì’s physical movements are limited. She is confined to a wheelchair and struggles to speak. Adi’s work is much like caring for a baby; she even sleeps in the same room as Mèimeì. Moreover, her responsibilities include household chores such as cleaning, shopping and cooking. Fortunately, she gets to leave her employer’s house each day when she takes Mèimeì to school.

Adi’s employer trusts and values her greatly, providing her with the salary she deserves and extra pay for her days off. Not that Adi can take many days off, because no one is available to care for Mèimeì, who is entirely reliant on her and constantly longs for Adi’s nurturing affection. I have noticed how Adi displays genuine, tender love and care for Mèimeì. She loves Mèimeì as if she were her own child. I have seen how patient and gentle she is in supporting one of our students - an invaluable and heroic service.



Adi caring for Mèimeì. Photo: Febie Gonzales

Adi is a cheerful woman with a big, generous heart. Her humility and helpful nature are well known. Two years ago, she had to undergo surgery, which was a challenging time for her. After being discharged from the hospital, she gradually returned to work because she needed to. It was hard, as she had to lift and carry Mèimeì, who is a bit heavy. It took a month or more to fully recover and bring Mèimeì back to attend classes.

Adi is a resilient woman. Amidst life’s knocks, I haven’t heard any complaints from her. She continues to push on and works devotedly. She is a humble and compassionate caregiver who selflessly strives for a better life for her family and Mèimeì.

Adi’s passion and dedication have inspired and influenced me to invest more love and value in my ministry at the Ai Jia Development Center. Whenever I feel tired, challenged and unmotivated, I always remember Adi as a model of faithful service, a reliable worker. I am truly grateful to have met her. She has shown me the true life of a migrant worker - a caregiver who wholeheartedly provides exceptional care to her clients.

May God bless and guide her always, reward all her good deeds and fulfil her heart’s desires.

FEBIE GONZALES

Columban lay missionary Febie Gonzales lives and works in Taiwan.

MEMORIES OF A WELCOMING CHURCH

Now aged 94, I guess I qualify as a senior citizen in the “Kingdom of God”.

Sometimes I have an experience like this: I see something that triggers an image of an event or a person from long ago. Do other “seniors” have such experiences?

For example, just last week I saw a disabled child in a wheelchair. From the depths of my consciousness, a scene from forty years ago rose to the surface. I saw children playing in the churchyard. There were five disabled children in wheelchairs, wreathed in smiles.

It was a Saturday afternoon after the children’s “Meet Jesus” class. This class was for children of parishioners, but it was also open to anyone who wished to come.

First, some background. At that time, Bishop Stephen Hamao was at the helm of the Yokohama Diocese. Our bishop’s constant theme was: “Let us be an open church, a *welcoming* church, a missionary church”. He emphasised those three words.

At times, our bishop gave us practical advice. For example, he told us: “Most of our church halls are not used on weekdays. Let it be known that they are available free of charge for those who wish to use them.”

So, on Saturdays, our hall for the “Meet Jesus” children’s class was open to all. The hall was used at different times by a day nursery, a choir, an Alcoholics Anonymous group and once by a Buddhist monk for the funeral of a local resident.

But back to the resurfaced memory! I saw five disabled children being gently carried from a big car to the church - children waiting in their wheelchairs, with large smiles on their faces.

The man responsible for the child transport was Yamada-san. At a sharing meeting of the church men’s group, he told us: “As you see, I have a big car with very generous horsepower. Speed used to be like a hobby for me. The toll road to Nagoya was my



Every step of faith begins with courage, no matter the wheels beneath us.

speedway. But after my wife died so peacefully in the church’s embrace, I reconsidered my way of living. Now I get far more enjoyment and satisfaction by going around the houses to collect disabled children for the Saturday school. It does my heart good to see these children come from a rather lonely life to enjoy company and fun with the children at the church. Their mothers also get a rest.”

That is the memory that came from the depths.

But as it happened, this was followed by another memory. One of those coming to our Saturday school was a young girl from the neighbourhood. Her father was known as a Yakuza gang member (evidenced by his visible tattoos). He wrote us a letter saying: “Thank you for the warm welcome you always give my daughter at your church. At her school, she is teased and bullied. But with your children, she feels welcome and experiences genuine friendship. She always returns home happy. I thank you for this healing effect.”

This kind of welcoming church - a church that walks together - is now called “synodality”. I find that concrete examples are more effective than theological shorthand.

COLUMBAN FR BARRY CAIRNS

Columban Fr Barry Cairns lives and works in Japan.

OPENING A CLINIC FOR MIGRANTS IN JUAREZ

In Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, a Columban group has chosen to accompany migrants arriving in the city, many hoping to cross into the United States, but all in search of a better future. Despite Juárez's sometimes overwhelming needs, the missionaries affirm that their work is guided by the Spirit of Jesus. It is based on the "See, Judge and Act" method of pastoral discernment.

This method was formulated in the twentieth century by the Belgian priest Fr Joseph Cardijn. Within the Social Doctrine of the Church, it invites us to observe reality objectively (see), analyse it in the light of the Gospel and ethical values (judge) and finally commit ourselves to concrete actions to transform situations of injustice (act). Adopted by various movements after the Second Vatican Council, this approach continues to be relevant in pastoral and social contexts.

Inspired by this method, the Columbans have concentrated their efforts on providing

comprehensive care to migrants in Juárez. Since November 2018, among many other responses to migrants' various needs, they have started offering basic medical services. In 2025, with support from the Diocese of Juárez, a small clinic was established near the Cathedral to provide physical, mental and dental health services and care for complex chronic diseases.

Within the Social Doctrine of the Church, it invites us to observe reality objectively (see), analyse it in the light of the Gospel and ethical values (judge) and finally commit ourselves to concrete actions to transform situations of injustice (act).

SEE JUDGE ACT

This work is carried out with the help of volunteer doctors and nurses, as well as social organisations. Currently, the clinic serves more than 40 people each week, mostly migrant women and children, along with almost 70 individuals suffering chronic diseases from different Latin American countries. They receive medical support, self-care advice, medications and assistance with clinical study payments.

The clinic also aims to help migrants integrate into the Mexican legal and social systems by improving access to education, health and food. Although this effort may seem small given the great need, the missionaries believe that the transformative power of love in solidarity is vital because every act of shared love adds to the ocean of hope that the Gospel embodies for those who migrate in difficult circumstances.

FR ALVARO MARTINEZ

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



Columban missionaries, together with volunteer doctors and nurses bring life-saving care and compassionate support to migrants seeking safety and healing. Photo: Fr Alvaro Martinez SSC

WORKING WITH NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES

When refugees arrive in South Korea from North Korea, they are investigated by the National Intelligence Service, undergo a health checkup, and receive treatment. After that, they are moved to Hanawon Centre, where they spend three months preparing to settle into life in the south. (*Hanawon is an organisation of the Ministry of Unification that helps North Korean refugees prepare for settlement in South Korean society.*)

There are two centres. Hanawon 1 in Anseong is for children, teenagers, and adult females, and Hanawon 2 in Hwacheon accommodates adult males. The training period is three months with education on weekdays; on Sundays, the refugees can rest or attend a service conducted by one of the major religions in Korea: Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, or Won Buddhism. During the training period, there is also a monthly two-day Family Cultural Experience Programme for the adult women in Hanawon 1, hosted by the religious groups.

Last August 5, the volunteer families and the refugees met together in the second-floor auditorium at the Columban Mission Centre. This August programme was hosted by the National Reconciliation Committee of the Conference of Religious Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life. The North Korean mothers who had already settled in South Korea prepared lunch featuring North Korean food preferences.

After orientation and lunch, the refugees joined their host family to do some shopping and exploration of the local area. They then went to the family home and stayed overnight. On day 2, after breakfast and lunch, they met again at the Mission Centre, shared the experience with the families, and engaged in some recreation before moving back to Hanawon.

For the trainees, it is an opportunity to experience ordinary life outside of Hanawon. And for some of the volunteer families, it is the first time they have met people from North Korea and shared with them.

I continue to accompany the refugees as they familiarise themselves with South Korean culture and adjust to life in a democratic society. I organise a monthly Mass for them, the religious, and other individuals accompanying the refugees.



North Korean mothers who have resettled in South Korea prepare a special lunch inspired by familiar flavours of home.

I continue to accompany the refugees as they familiarise themselves with South Korean culture and adjust to life in a democratic society. I organise a monthly Mass for them, the religious, and other individuals accompanying the refugees.

The Korean Church continues to pray for peace on the Korean Peninsula. We hope that you, too, will continue to pray for peace, reconciliation, and healing of the fractured Korean nation.

FR THOMAS NAM SEUNGWON

Columban Fr Thomas Nam Seungwon lives and works in Korea.

MISSION WORLD

DON'T FORGET THE POOR

Pope Leo XIV gratefully uses the last encyclical letter his predecessor wrote as a preface for the first official “exhortation” of his pontificate. Pope Francis published his letter on October 24, 2024 under the title *Dilexit nos*. (As is the custom, the title of a papal document is taken from the first two words of the Latin version.) The title is “He loved us” and it refers to a passage from St Paul’s letter to the Romans (8:37). Leo XIV’s exhortation is entitled *Dilexi te* which translates “I have loved you” from Revelations 3:19. The titles of these two documents alone tell of how Leo XIV sees himself as one called to continue in the footsteps of Francis even as he puts his own stamp upon the role of Bishop of Rome.

Leo XIV takes up Francis’ vision of “a church of the poor and for the poor”. It was the inspiration behind choosing the name “Francis” and it remained with him throughout his pontificate. But it also underpinned his vision of mission. Possibly as a legacy of his papacy, Francis closes his encyclical with an insightful reflection on mission. “Mission, as a radiation of the love of the heart of Christ, requires missionaries who are themselves in love and who, enthralled by Christ, feel bound to share this love that has changed their lives.” (*Dilexit nos*, n. 209)

In his opening remarks, Leo XIV writes, in reference to Francis’ encyclical, “I am happy to make this document my own - adding some reflections and to issue it at the beginning of my own pontificate, since I share the desire of my beloved predecessor that all Christians come to appreciate the close connection between Christ’s love and his summons to care for the poor.”

This is a profoundly humble acknowledgement of how grateful Leo XIV is to Francis and a sense of responsibility for ensuring continuity in the task

of guiding all Christians in our call to missionary discipleship.

As he commences to introduce his own reflections on the biblical call to listen to the cry of the poor, Leo XIV recalls how “Pope Francis, (in) explaining his choice of that name, related how, after his election, a Cardinal friend of his embraced him, kissed him and told him: ‘Do not forget the poor!’” (*Dilexi te*, n. 6)

It is in this context that Pope Leo XIV goes on to explain why the poor are central to our understanding of the history of salvation, the nature of church and the call to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. His letter includes a “litany” of saints, men and women who have carried out the call to mission. He also focuses briefly on two particular groups of people, the sick and migrants.

His final words are worth quoting, “By its very nature, Christian love is prophetic: it works miracles and knows no limits. It makes what was apparently impossible happen. Love is above all a way of looking at life and a way of living it. A Church that sets no limits to love, that knows no enemies to fight but only men and women to love, is the Church that the world needs today.” (*ibid*, no. 120)

Leo XIV recalls how “Pope Francis, (in) explaining his choice of that name, related how, after his election, a Cardinal friend of his embraced him, kissed him and told him: ‘Do not forget the poor!’” (Dilexi te, n. 6)

FR TOM ROUSE

Regional Councillor of Oceania

MISSION INTENTIONS

POPE LEO XIV

January - For prayer with the Word of God: Let us pray that praying with the Word of God be nourishment for our lives and a source of hope in our communities, helping us to build a more fraternal and missionary Church.

February - For children with incurable diseases: Let us pray that children suffering from incurable diseases and their families receive the necessary medical care and support, never losing strength and hope.

COLUMBAN ACTIVITIES

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

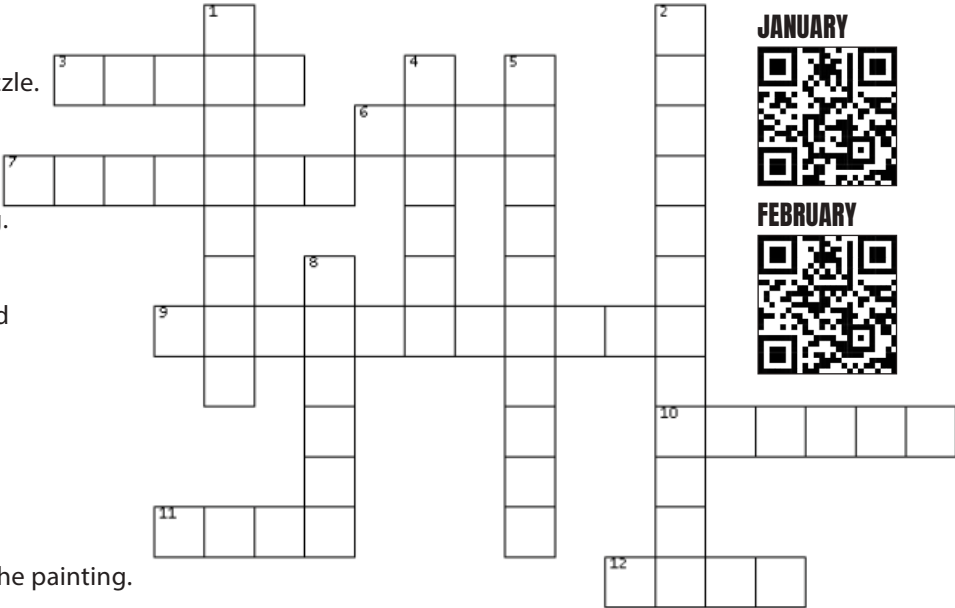
SCAN QR CODE to read the January & February 2026 Columban Calendar Art Guide and complete the crossword puzzle.

ACROSS

- 3. Element of repentance and cleansing.
- 6. Manuscript between them: *Regole Benedetto per Le Monachi*.
- 7. Building Benedict indicates as blessed by Christ.
- 9. His sister; feast day February 10.
- 10. Descends upon Jesus at baptism.
- 11. The Baptist who baptised Jesus.
- 12. Sign of the Spirit descending.

DOWN

- 1. Founder of Western monasticism in the painting.
- 2. Abbey where Benedict later resided.
- 4. Umbrian birthplace of the two saints.
- 5. Purpose of John's baptism.
- 8. River where Jesus was baptised.



ANSWERS:
ACROSS: 3. water, 6. rule, 7. convent, 9. Scholastica, 10. spirit, 11. John, 12. dove
DOWN: 1. Benedict, 2. Montecassino, 4. Nursia, 5. repentance, 8. Jordan



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?

Form of Will

"I give and bequeath the sum of \$..... to the Regional Director of Oceania (Australia, New Zealand and Fiji), St Columbans Mission Society to be used for the Society's general purposes as seen fit."

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2025 Columban Christmas Appeal



"The poor can be witnesses to a strong and steadfast hope." Pope Leo XIV

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LEAVE A TESTIMONY

We'd love to hear from you! Share a short testimony about what The Far East magazine means to you. Your words may inspire others to support our mission.

Email your testimony or video message.

Australia: info@columban.org.au

New Zealand: info@columban.org.nz

YOUR GIFT

The Far East Subscription \$15.00 per year
(\$6.00 per year + \$9.00 postage)

My gift to the 2025 Columban Christmas Appeal

☐ \$40 ☐ \$70 ☐ \$120 ☐ \$240 Other \$_____

I wish to donate ☐ QUARTERLY ☐ MONTHLY ☐

AUSTRALIA

2026 Columban Art Calendar (\$14.00 inc. GST & postage)
Additional calendars \$11.00 each inc. GST & postage

NEW ZEALAND

2026 Columban Art Calendar (NZ\$17.00 inc. GST & postage)
Additional calendars NZ\$14.00 each inc. GST & postage

Total Amount Enclosed

Gift in Will

☐ Please send me information on Columban legacy

☐ I have included the Columbans in my Will

I send my gift by: ☐ Cheque ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa  www.PayPal.Me/StColumban3040

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PLEASE FILL IN YOUR DETAILS BELOW:

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An acknowledgement will be sent by email.

Vocations: ☐ Please send me information on Columban vocations

AUSTRALIA return coupon to: St Columbans Mission Society, PO Box 752, Niddrie VIC 3042 E: info@columban.org.au

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TFE/JAN/FEB/26