



ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY



THE FAR EAST

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23 GIFT IN WILL

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A SYNODAL CHURCH IN MISSION



"The world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing breaking point." Pope Francis gives this dire warning in his new Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum – "Praise God"* issued last year on the feast of St Francis of Assisi, the 4th of October, a follow up to his earlier 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home*.

"It is indubitable", says Pope Francis, "that the impact of climate change will increasingly prejudice the lives and families of many persons." Pope Francis pulls no punches when he says, "Despite all attempts to deny, conceal, gloss over or relativize the issue, the signs of climate change are here and increasingly evident." This evidence is seen across our tv screens and in news outlets. Last October in Gippsland, Victoria, we literally had bushfires one day, floods the next. The impacts on the lives of people, animals and agriculture were enormous.

Pope Francis goes on to say, "the mentality of maximum gain at minimal cost, disguised in terms of reasonableness, progress and illusory promises, make impossible any sincere concern for our common home and any real preoccupation about assisting the poor and the needy discarded by society." What is needed is for all of us to undergo what Pope Francis calls an "ecological conversion", to change our mindset and to come to the realization that we need to work together to save our planet. Pope Francis makes a heartfelt plea by saying, "every family ought to realize that the future of their children is at stake."

On the feast of St Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis opened the First Session of the Synodal Assembly held from the 4th to the 29th of October 2023 on the theme "For a Synodal Church. Communion, Participation, Mission". Upon completion of the First Session, a *Synthesis Report* titled *A Synodal Church in Mission* was released by the Vatican. The *Report* states, "Our Assembly has taken place while wars both old and new have raged in the world, with dramatic consequences that are impacting upon countless victims. The cry of those who are poor resounded among us, of those forced to migrate and of those suffering violence and the devastating consequences of climate change." "The war between Israel and

Hamas, which began on October 7, continues to bring untold destruction and loss of countless innocent lives. When will peace come, we cry."

The *Report* reminds us that "the preferential option for the poor is implicit in Christological faith: Jesus, poor and humble, befriended people in poverty, shared a table with them, and denounced the causes of poverty." "Standing with those who are poor requires engaging with them in caring for our common home: the cry of the earth and the cry of those living in poverty are the same cry. The lack of responses to this cry makes the ecological crisis, and climate change in particular, a threat to the survival of humanity." "The Church in countries most exposed to the consequences of climate change are keenly aware of the urgent need to change course." Columban missionaries in Fiji, Pakistan and the Philippines have experienced firsthand the untold destruction of the livelihoods of the poor people they live with because of global warming and the onset of more frequent cyclones and flooding.

In August last year, I visited some of the parishioners of the Columban staffed parish in Raiwaqa, Suva who live in the squatter area close to the sea. They shared with me that when the king tides come their houses are flooded and this occurrence happens more often. Many Australians travel to Fiji to holiday in tourist resorts. Yet, there is a side of Fiji that is hidden from plain sight, those living in abject poverty and suffering the effects of climate change. Poverty is pushing Fijians and other Pacificans to try their luck in Australia taking up arduous jobs in agriculture, aged care and the meat industry where there is a huge shortage of workers.

I invite you to pray for the repose of the soul of Vinita Naidu who passed away last November. Vinita was the Manager of our Columban Mission Centre in Lower Hutt, Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand. She was a dedicated and loyal Columban co-worker for over 30 years. Vinita is deeply missed by everyone in our Columban family. May she rest in peace.

FR PETER O'NEILL
Regional Director of Oceania

GENEROUS GIVING AND GOING



Columban Sisters.

Earlier this year, the Columban Sisters looked back a hundred years to February 1922 when a group of young women came together in Cahiracon, County Clare. These women became the first postulants of the new Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of St Columban, forming its foundation.

Now, in 2023, we have Sisters on mission in Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States, China, Myanmar, Pakistan and the Philippines. This is quite an expansion when we consider those early days when thirteen young women answered a call to respond to the needs of the people of China. Thankfully, we still have young women ready to respond to the call of mission.

Today, we have two novices, Marianna from Korea and Annalyn from the Philippines, and two postulants from Myanmar. None of this, of course, would have been possible without the prayers and financial support of our many faithful benefactors.

In our early days, the Columban Fathers, under the leadership of Fr John Blowick, made provision for the upkeep of the Sisters in Cahiracon. Gradually, this resulted in a strain on finances. In July 1926, when the first group of Sisters were preparing to set out for China, Fr Blowick made his first appeal for support in

the Far East magazine on behalf of the Sisters. This resulted in a tremendous outpouring of generosity.

Responding to this generosity, Fr Blowick wrote in the Far East: "Little did you think as you sent us your donation – small or great as it may have been – what a burden you raised off our shoulders. Little did you think that the combined efforts of our army of friends in Ireland made it possible for us to come to the aid of our immense family, young and old, priests, students and Brothers and Sisters at home in the college and away on the lonely plains of China".

In the years following 1926, a small trickle of donations, some totalling up to £10, then a large sum, reached Cahiracon from the four corners of Ireland. One small donation was accompanied by a request for prayers because of "struggles with unemployment and the availability of part-time work only".

Another benefactor sent "a small donation towards the flood victims of Hanyang" and added, "I am only a working man, and I am sorry this gift is so small", while from another we heard, "I joined with a friend in selling cattle which did not do well, but we promised to send you some money no matter how it would go". Our hearts were equally deeply touched by messages



Columban Sisters Congregational Leadership Team (left to right) Sr Cho Young Mi, Sr Josephine Hong, Sr Margaret Murphy, Sr Anne Carbon (Congregational Leader) who were elected on April 25, 2023.

such as, "When starting my career, I promised three pence a week out of my small salary of 5 shillings to go to the Missions and any little extras I got in the way of tips".

By 1930, the response to the appeals for support had become so generous and numerous that to keep pace with all the correspondence and donations, the Sisters in Cahiracon had to set aside a special room as an office from which to correspond with the many people who had become our generous benefactors.

This past year here in Ireland, I have been opening the envelopes that, since 1926, have continued to come to us with support for our missionary work. And, like our Sisters in our early days, I have been overwhelmed and inspired by the generous assistance and the concern for our Sisters and the people among whom we live and work that supporters from around the world give us.

Some of these envelopes contain a cheque for a large amount of money; others contain a few euros or pounds, which, in the eyes of the world today, would be considered a small amount of money, but for we Columban Sisters, each of these envelopes contains a treasure – not only in money but in faithfulness to us,

which stretches over many years, a treasure of concern for our safety and well-being, and that of the people whom we serve – treasures of great value indeed.

Today, throughout the world, we are all living in uncertain and precarious times as we learn to live with the virus that has disrupted so much of our lives and caused so much suffering. Many of us are living, too, in fear and worry over the war in Ukraine and the spiralling cost of living. And yet, the people continue to respond with great generosity, supporting us with their prayers and donations.

At a recent meeting of Apostolic Workers, I heard it said that we missionaries "give by going" and that others "go by giving". For me, that is a perfect description of the partnership between we missionaries and our benefactors. The going and the giving are intertwined and equally necessary, and we give thanks to God for both.

SR ANN GRAY

Columban missionary Sr Ann Gray is the new Assistant Editor of the Far East magazine in Ireland.

A BURST OF LIGHT

Pope Francis, before a huge crowd of young people in Portugal, said, “Dear young friends, today we too need something of this burst of light, so that it can fill us with hope as we face the many failures of each day and the darkness that assails us in life, and respond to them with the light of the resurrection of Jesus. For he is the light that never sets, the light that shines even in the dead of night.” Pope Francis spoke about the moment Jesus took three of his disciples to the mountain where he “transfigured.” Jesus draped the disciples in this brilliant burst of light to prepare them for the dark night of the Passion.

A year ago, we had not thought of opening a student centre. What started as a desire to provide an alternative learning program for the youth in the diocese has led to us now celebrating the first anniversary of the Student Learning Resources Centre (SLRC). On 15 August 2022, on the feast of the Assumption of Mary and nine days after the feast of the Transfiguration of Jesus, we opened the SLRC at St Patrick’s Church compound in Shatapru, Myitkyina, Kachin State. The parish priest had allowed us to use an abandoned house, which we then modified into classrooms, a computer room, an office, a library, and a counselling room.

Through your generous contributions, we provide basic English and Computer classes. The main program is the nine-month-long Positive Youth Development Program (PYDP), which is grounded on the Positive Youth Development framework that acknowledges and promotes the assets and strengths that young people already possess. We do not focus on factors that may create negative outcomes but instead on

building protective factors that help young persons succeed in life. These positive assets for young people exist within themselves, in their culture and community. Once they complete the nine-month program, the students continue into the internship program, where they are given the opportunity to work with our partner organisations for two months.

The mission of the SLRC is “to be an inclusive, youth-led institution that provides integrated and holistic formation programs and activities for and with young adults.” Our vision is to produce “Resilient and work-ready young adults who actively participate in the life of their local communities and nation by being transformational leaders, contributing to social and economic development, promoting peace and harmony, and serving those in need.” From 25 students in the first semester, only 7 students of the PYDP (Batch1) are now in our internship program. Last year, we had a maximum of 40–45 students attending our different programs. This year, for the foundational English and Computer classes, we have a total of 18 students, and the more advanced PYDP class has 15 students.

We spoke to our intern students about their experiences. Zsofi Khaung Nywel (a 23-year-old) believes that SLRC is special for the youth in Kachin State because it gives them the chance to acquire the knowledge and skills that will help them find good jobs. Zsofi joined the SLRC to build herself a good network. She believes that education is the key to success and only education can fulfill all her ambitions. She reminds the youth, “Let us be strong and flexible together. Be smart, be stable, and try to



Fr Kurt Zion Pala (center) with Student Learning Resources Centre staff.



Students at the Learning Resources Centre in Myanmar.



Teacher Zau Seng Awng in the classroom.

learn something new each day. The more you learn the more you will improve in both the present and in the future". She wants to tell the world that the young people in Myanmar are starving for quality education.

Another student, Maria Lamawn Ja Seng Lung (a 25-year-old), is a volunteer at a local youth organisation. She believes that the SLRC is "good and full of opportunities" to help her upgrade her skills and life. Although a university graduate, she does not have enough certificates and qualifications; that is why she joined the SLRC. She hopes that after completing the program she will get a stable job. She wants to tell the young people, "... don't give up, and one day we will get a great future and our dreams will come true".

Kareng Sut Chying Htoi Hkawng (a 22-year-old) joined the SLRC to get more opportunities and chances to continue his studies. He wants to be an English-language trainer and help children complete their studies. Education is extremely important for him because "it is not easy to survive unless we are educated". In other words, to earn decent money in Myanmar, "we must be well-educated".

He wants to say that even if young people in Myanmar are facing many difficulties and very few people are willing to help them, "we just have to try ourselves to build our future and survive". But he also calls on the world to give the young people of Myanmar more opportunities to get a quality education.

Lastly, internally displaced youth Sut Mai Naw (an 18-year-old who resides at the Palana Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) Camp mentioned that the "SLRC for me is my future. And I expect to learn more

to increase my qualifications to be able to work. That is why I joined the SLRC. Education is life for me because it is quite important. I want to tell the young people of Myanmar to put education first in their priorities".

The SLRC is also very youthful – most of our staff have not yet completed their university degree programs. It provides not only employment opportunities but also skills training for professional development.

For many young people in Myanmar, the world around them is dark – literally because we experience more than 12 hours of power blackouts a day and figuratively because the whole country is under a cloud of hopelessness, helplessness and restlessness. In many places, it is darkness, with many young people experiencing mental illness, and there has been an increase in suicide among them. Many young people are lost.

Pope Francis invites us all to be a "burst of light" to others. He explained that we do not radiate our own light, but "we radiate light – we shine – by welcoming Jesus into our hearts and learning to love as he does. To love like Jesus: that is what makes us shine, makes us do works of love. Friends, I am telling you the truth: whenever you do works of love, you become light. But the moment you stop loving others and become self-centred, you extinguish your light".

Help us help more young people. Be a "burst of light" for our young people here in Myanmar.

FR KURT ZION PALA

Columban Fr Kurt Zion Pala lives and works in Myanmar.



Teacher Zau Seng Awng participating in a group activity with students.



Students at the Centre.



Group learning at the Center.

REFLECTION

A STRANGER WELCOMED

I have travelled in the United States on several occasions but have never had the chance to visit Omaha during those travels due to limited time. When granted a sabbatical here, I decided to make reconnecting with the Columban US headquarters in Omaha a good part of my sabbatical year. While arranging my visit, I was invited to participate in donor visitation activities with donor relations officers, Angie Determan and Angela Bennett. Below is a short reflection on the experience.

I had initial reservations about participating in the visits because I wasn't sure if my status (lay missionary, woman, Asian) would appeal to the donors. I suppose part of my reservation emanated from the "Asian hatred" that is much publicised in the US. But I have to admit that part of me was also excited at the opportunity to see places and "test the waters", I welcomed the opportunity to connect and thank our donors in a personal way and share experiences/stories of mission in Taiwan.

The visits were well coordinated and well planned. I appreciated the initial preparations done by Angela and Angie from making the appointments and making sure I had essential information regarding a particular donor to arranging sightseeing on the side.

The relationships that are formed and strengthened throughout the years between the Columbans and our donors are palpable. The depths of sharing by the donors are genuinely built on trust – this in itself is an indication of the importance of the work.

I also observed the mutual and sincere relationship between the donors and our staff. I believe that "Columbanness" is a mutual ground to develop such a relationship.

Having experienced donor visitation, I now realise that being a lay missionary, a woman, and an Asian are not limitations. I realise that I underestimated the generosity of our donors, particularly their capacity to welcome a stranger like me. I felt welcomed and listened to and sensed our donors were interested in what I did. I felt affirmed in each of the visits. Indeed, I felt blessed to be able to connect and thank our donors in person! I believe our donors do appreciate the visits conducted over the years because they talked about the joy of being visited by a Columban missionary even if the visit occurred ages ago.

Benefactor visitation is a valuable activity that every Columban missionary (lay or ordained) must commit to doing. We missionaries are equipped with mission stories, and our generous and supportive donors deserve to hear those stories. I believe that sharing our mission stories is a recognition of their participation in mission. Benefactor visitation is a ministry. I am grateful to have been invited to be part of this ministry here in the US.

BETH SABADO

Columban lay missionary Beth Sabado from the Philippines, lives and works at the US/Mexico border.



WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND SMALL ACTS OF KINDNESS

USA

Throughout the Western world, the growth of women's and children's rights has changed much of societal and cultural expectations for both groups. However, some areas still face challenges. A common expectation that largely remains unchanged concerns household duties and the care of children. Today, many women work outside the home. However, upon arriving home from work, most household duties (cooking, cleaning, etc.) and child-raising falls upon the woman. In general, a man can arrive home from a full day's work and rest. Meanwhile, the woman arrives from a full day's work to more work. My mother was an example.

She married at the age of 18, straight from high school. My father was a career Air Force officer and often was away. When he retired and opened his own private business, my mother decided to pursue a nursing degree. I am the youngest of six, and from early childhood. I remember seeing her poring over the medical books piled on her bed. Yet, she was constantly interrupted by the needs of her children. Once I had a terrible earache and entered the bedroom crying. My mother was deep in her studies but immediately dropped everything to take care of my needs. Her studies at that moment were secondary. It took me many years to appreciate the sacrifices of her small acts of kindness.

In my first year at the Columban Seminary, I had the challenging workload of a master's degree in theology. Like my mother, I would have books piled on my bed as I read and took notes. One evening, a priest in the house held a mission reflection group, and one of the members of the group was a young mother who brought her daughter (about 10 years of age) because a babysitter could not be found. They placed the daughter in a room with various games to entertain herself. On kitchen duty that night, I hastily cleaned up while mentally preoccupied with a test for the next day. When I finished, relieved at last that I could go to my room, I was startled to find the young girl standing by the kitchen door. Immediately, I asked her if she needed something to drink, snack, etc., to all of which she said no. Therefore, I asked how I could help her. She said, "I'm bored. Can you play with me?" Immediately, my mind screamed NO! I had too much to prepare and no time for this! However, seeing the



look on her face, I said I could for a short time. Initially, I was a little put out but proceeded to play some board games with her. In time, I forgot my studies and enjoyed the relaxation of play and laughter. Eventually, her mother showed up, and they left. Tired, I went to bed with no worries about my studies. As you guess, it all turned out well.

Witnessing my mother's selfless sacrifice to care for her children despite a busy workload, and a child's simple approach to enjoying life at every moment, I realised that the more important things in life are these small acts of kindness. After all, wasn't that the purpose of my studies? Women and children have been the greatest teachers in my life.

Witnessing my mother's selfless sacrifice to care for her children despite a busy workload, and a child's simple approach to enjoying life at every moment, I realised that the more important things in life are these small acts of kindness.

FR CHRIS SAENZ

Columban Fr Chris Saenz is the Regional Director in the United States.

KARACHI ARCHDIOCESE DIAMOND

On May 20, 2023, the Diocese of Karachi reached 75 years. Established on May 24, 1948, the Inaugural Mass of the Jubilee Year was celebrated on Pentecost Sunday, May 28, 2023.

Karachi used to be part of the Archdiocese of Bombay (Mumbai) but separated from it in 1947 with the creation of Pakistan when, with a population of approximately 400,000, it became the capital of the new country. Archbishop Benny Travas emphasised in his homily the theme of the Jubilee Year - reflect, rejoice, renew - and with the chosen biblical verse from Ezekiel 36:26: "A new heart I will give you and a new spirit I will put in you".

It is believed that St Thomas the Apostle passed through the territory of the present archdiocese on his journey to South India. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Augustinian Missionaries came on mission in the Sindh Province. Because of the persecution they suffered they had to leave and were succeeded by the Discalced Carmelites, who remained till 1672. After the conquest of Sindh by the British in 1842–43, the Carmelites returned to this territory as chaplains to the troops. They remained till 1852, when the Capuchin Fathers took charge. In 1856, the Jesuit priests took over till 1935. There are about 200,000 Catholics in 16 parishes spread throughout the megacity of Karachi, now with a population of approximately 18 million.

Bishop Benny stated, "God granted the diocese a generous heart, welcoming many ethnic groups, Goans, Anglo-Indians, South Indians, Sindhis, Punjabis, Mangalorians, Parkari Kholis, and many others. Missionaries, foreign and local, built institutions for the needs of these people – orphans, lepers, physically and mentally challenged, those in need of medical care, those with addictions and so on. The diocese also tries to provide education and healthcare to the people of Karachi through schools, hospitals, colleges, and clinics."

Throughout the years, the diocese has faced numerous challenges, both internal and external, including political unrest, economic fluctuations and social upheavals. The journey has also witnessed significant milestones in fostering interfaith dialogue and ecumenism. Recognising the importance of religious harmony and peaceful coexistence, the church

engages in dialogue with members of other faith traditions. Through these efforts, bridges have been built and mutual understanding fostered, leading to a more inclusive and harmonious society.

St Patrick's Cathedral is situated in the heart of Karachi and was opened in 1878. Irish soldiers who served in the British Army contributed generously to the cost of its construction. Recently, the Sindh Government refurbished and strengthened this impressive cathedral. As the people arrived to enter the compound, they had to go through solid security checks so that nothing untoward would happen. The start time was given as 5 pm, so Mass started at 5.40 pm. The summer sun pierced intermittently through the clouds, and people wiped sweat from their faces. At times, a gentle wind blew in from the Arabian Sea, giving welcome relief. In the church compound, 5000 chairs had been arranged for seating. These soon filled up, yet people continued to pour in, resulting in about 2000 having to stand.

Among the congregation were about 700 Parkari Kholi tribal people. At Christmas 2020, I took up an appointment to be on mission with these people. Over recent years, many of them have come from Interior Sindh to Karachi in the hope of obtaining work in factories and a better future for their children. They have fled from the unjust landlord system where they laboured as landless peasant farmers. Many still work as peasant farmers on landlord properties in villages situated to the east of Karachi. They were invited to the Jubilee Mass and given the privilege of praying a prayer in the Parkari language; a family was involved in the offertory procession, and three young women presented a graceful liturgical movement called "Arti", with its accompanying hymn, at the time of the doxology. These three young women had left their village and farm work so that a teacher could prepare them well for the "Arti".

The Missionary Sisters of Charity are also on mission with the Parkaris. They visited the villages and had a "hair cutting and bathing day", while the buffaloes and goats looked on. Four buses transported about 500 people, including adults, children and infants, who happily piled aboard. Travel to the city of Karachi from the villages took a few hours. For most of these people, it was the first time they had seen the bustling

JUBILEE CELEBRATION

PAKISTAN

city and their eyes opened wide. "We did not imagine in our minds that there would be such high buildings," they declared.

Before the Our Father prayer, the commentator invited the Parkari Kholi Catholic young women from the village to perform the prayerful liturgical "Arti". He explained: "Liturgy is diverse. It is the glorification of God and the sanctification of the people. When liturgy meets culture, we become one with the soil. It is a welcome to Jesus present in the Eucharist. It also acknowledges the presence of the loving Trinity. The Trinity of love encompasses the people gathered here as well as in all of Creation. God is the source of life. Everything is in God's hands and without God there is nothing. Jesus is our teacher, and we are His disciples."

During the Mass, hundreds of hawks circled in the sky, some soaring high, others swooping low. People on roofs of nearby buildings had "bird's eye views" of the celebrations. Boys flying kites in the streets added to the Pentecost Spirit as the kites fluttered above. A red kite appeared above the altar at the time of Consecration. The distribution of Holy Communion coincided with the sunset, and from the loudspeaker of a nearby mosque "Allah-O-Akbar" (God is Great) rang out for all to hear. When the drone camera appeared above, a tribal man commented, "I thought it was Jesus coming down." Karachi, "The city of lights", then lit up, and Mass concluded with fireworks. "We suddenly ducked down as we thought a bomb had exploded," declared some of the Parkari people. St Patrick's Cathedral and compound had become the "Bright Shining Light of Karachi".

In conclusion, Bishop Benny stated, "I invite each and every one of you during this Diamond Jubilee Year to reflect, rejoice and be renewed so that truly we may all have a New Heart and a New Spirit."

The local Christians asked the Parkari people, "Where are you from? Are you from the desert area? What are these clothes and many bangles that you wear? What is this language that you speak? Are you Christians?" The tribal women were surprised when they noticed that many city women were not covering their heads with a dupatta (head cloth). The Karachi people said, "Thank you for coming to the Jubilee Mass. We did not know of your existence and so it was a joy for us to pray together." The Parkaris felt a warm welcome and



The Parkari Kholi people.

acceptance from the Karachi Catholics. They reflected, "We felt as one with the City Christians. We saw and now we believe that we are not only a few Christians but very many." A local priest commented, "It is historical that, with the tribal people from the villages present for the first time, the Diocese of Karachi was visible in all of its dimensions." This experience captured something of the Spirit of a Church of Synodality that Pope Francis is calling forth with his vision.

It was wonderful that Columban Fr Joseph Joyce was present, as a week later he retired from mission in Pakistan and returned to Ireland. Joe had been on mission in Pakistan for 30 years. His humble, loving, kind and committed service to the Church and people of Pakistan had also given new Heart and Spirit to those he journeyed with.

The Parkari Kholi people, full of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, boarded their buses for the return journey to their simple life in the villages. On the way, the Army Rangers stopped the bus and checked them over. On looking inside the bus, they noticed many hammocks and inquired, "What are these and who are you?" They replied, "These hammocks have our babies sleeping in them, and we are Christians and have been to celebrate our feast day." Some males travelling on the roof of the bus went to sleep and, on arrival at the village, had to be woken up. The next morning, they were back attending their recently opened village school, then tilling Mother Earth and talking about the wonderful experiences of the previous day, which they treasured "with a new heart and a new spirit".

FR DAN O'CONNOR

Columban Fr Dan O'Connor lives and works in Pakistan.

PROMOTING HUMAN FLOURISHING: ON MISSION WITH THE COLUMBANS



Columban Fr Trevor Trotter and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Maha Shawky.

On the fourth Sunday of October, we celebrate World Mission Day within the broader context of Mission Month, held annually each October. In his message for World Mission Day 2023, Pope Francis chose a theme inspired by the story of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, “Hearts on fire, feet on the move” (Luke 24:13–35). When the Pope writes in his message that “One cannot truly encounter the risen Jesus without being set on fire with enthusiasm to tell everyone about him”, and commends “those persons who have come to know the risen Christ in the Scriptures and in the Eucharist, who carry his fire in their heart and his light in their gaze”, he could be describing the Missionary Society of St Columban, which goes out across the globe in the name of the Church to announce the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The Missionary Society of St Columban, also known as the Columbans, was founded by two young Irish priests, Fathers Edwin Galvin and John Blowick, in 1918. Its name was inspired by St Columban, a great Irish missionary who worked on the European continent in the sixth century. Rather than being a congregation, it is a Society of Apostolic Life, made up of missionary priests, lay missionaries and lay people, called “co-workers”. Currently, there are 289 Columban priests, 26 lay missionaries, 27 students and many co-workers working in 15 countries around the world – namely, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Chile, Peru, the United States, the Philippines, Myanmar, Pakistan, China, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Ireland and Great Britain.

Columbans are known for basing themselves in places where the Gospel has not been preached and for standing in solidarity with the poor. They consistently fundraise to help those living in poor conditions and develop and manage schools, hospitals and clinics in areas of need.

Fr Trevor Trotter is based at the Columban Mission Centre in Essendon, in the north of Melbourne. A Columban priest since 1970, he explains that the Columbans initially travelled to China and soon moved to the Philippines, Myanmar and Korea at the invitation of various bishops. Their role was to build up the kingdom of God wherever they went but also, in those early years, to supply priests to churches in need. “Different people would hear about us and so when they needed help, or if they needed priests, they’d reach out to the Columbans,” he says.

Fr Trevor explains that Columban priests are more akin to diocesan priests than to those who join a religious order. They don’t take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, though they do take oaths, which they follow. Being established this way allows Columban priests the freedom to serve on their own, often in very remote and rural parishes and ministries - which has often been the case where there’s been a shortage of priests.

“When you’re appointed to a diocese in a country that doesn’t have enough priests, you might have one priest in one location, and then it’s a long trip to the next parish. If you’re in Myanmar, for instance, you have to climb mountains often to get somewhere, so it can be difficult to gather. And so these secular societies of priests who go out into the world were established, in order to serve where needed.”

There are currently Columban priests and lay missionaries on mission in the Myitkyina diocese, Myanmar. The education centres and boarding schools for the local population are supported by the Columbans. The boarding schools are necessary because the students need to travel far and climb mountains to attend. The Columbans also support and work in the rehabilitation centre due to the impact of drugs on the local population.

"It's right up on the Chinese border, so a lot of drugs come across," says Fr Trevor. "The people suffer because they've been persecuted. They are working in the highlands and the government, of course, is in the lowlands. And so the government is always trying to push these highland people off. As a result, the Kachin rebel army is growing and the people are caught in the middle, so they have a terrible life, and drugs are a way to cope."

The Columbans have also established many disability centres, with Columban priests and lay missionaries supporting those in Korea, Peru, Taiwan and China. St Elizabeth's Hospital in Pakistan is supported by Australian Columban Fr Robert McCulloch, migrant centres in Taiwan, Chile and Britain are managed by Columban priests and lay missionaries. Fr Trevor says these are just some examples, but there are many videos on their website, in a section called "Meet a Columban", that showcase the many ways in which Columbans are on mission across the globe.

Within Australia, the Columbans have established a number of offices that speak to their missionary work here. In Blacktown, there is the Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations, which has been building mutual understanding between Christians and Muslims since 1997. Fr Trevor explains that the Columbans started the centre in response to seeing the many conflicts around the world between Christians and Muslims and recognising that as Australia is a neighbour to one of the largest Muslim populations in the world - Indonesia - this would be an important dialogue to foster and share. Columban Fr Patrick McNerney currently heads this centre, which Fr Trevor describes as "a major part of the Church's mission".

Based on their commitment to solidarity with the poor and care and respect for all of creation, another important area of work for the Columbans is "peace, ecology and justice". Their work has been inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato si'* and his more recent

apostolic exhortation, *Laudate Deum*. Maha Shawky is a co-worker and Chief Executive Officer of the Columban Mission Centre in Essendon. She explains that as part of their peace, ecology and justice (PEJ) missionary work, they engage with schools across Oceania, along with parishes. She says, "Each year we run a competition for schools based on a theme in the Season of Creation (September 1 - October 4), which helps to engage students with issues around climate and care for creation. We also run workshops and programs in Australia through our Regional Director, Fr Peter O'Neill, and Sr Caroline Vaitkunas RSM, who run our PEJ office." Every quarter, supporters of the Columbans can stay up to date with quarterly newsletters, which boast a subscriber list of 18,000 people.

"Our supporters are so important," says Maha. "Fundraising is an important part of our missionary work. Through our Columbans in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji, we raise money to support the work we do in those poorer countries such as the Philippines, Pakistan, Chile, Myanmar and Peru." To help spread awareness of their missionary work and their causes, Columban priests often share their stories in local parishes and help to raise funds from donations and through sales of The Far East magazine and the annual Columban Art Calendar.

"This is the great thing about having these guys working on the ground in all these places," says Fr Trevor. "These priests come home and share with their local parishes real stories about what they've been doing overseas. So they tell their people in Ballarat what they're doing in Peru, and how the people are living in Chile, Pakistan, Myanmar and the Philippines, and it builds awareness and helps raise funds. But it also provides communications and linkages across these distant places, which helps build that connection of the Church. After all, it's not just the Columban mission; it's God's mission and a mission for all of us."

"When we share what is going on overseas, it is a way of helping the local people have some sense of the global Church - the global mission. We are part of a whole deal, with the whole Church being on mission."

FIONA BASILE

Writer and photographer working for Melbourne Catholic, the news platform of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne.

TO HIDE A PRIEST ... AND A KING

Fr John Boles visits Moseley Old Hall in Staffordshire, where in the 17th century, a remarkable priest ministered in secret - and even hid a king!



Moseley Old Hall, Staffordshire.

On the night of September 7, 1651, things were looking bad for Charles Stuart, the future King Charles II. Four days earlier, his Royalist army had been destroyed by Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentarians at the Battle of Worcester, the final engagement of the English Civil Wars (1642–51). Together with a small group of supporters, he was now on the run. There was a price on his head. The previous day, he'd only escaped capture by hiding in the branches of an oak tree (later to be celebrated as "The Royal Oak") in the grounds of Boscobel House in Shropshire. The stakes were high – two years before, his father, Charles I, had been publicly beheaded in London.

For the desperate fugitives, there appeared to be one last chance of safety. The persecuted English Catholic minority had sided with the Crown in the Civil Wars,

and close by in Staffordshire (dubbed "Little Rome" for the number of its Catholic houses) lay Moseley Hall. This was owned by the Catholic Whitgreaves, a family clandestinely served by a priest, a Benedictine monk called Fr John Huddleston, who lived there disguised as a servant. As Charles later recalled to the diarist Samuel Pepys, they were "Roman Catholique, and I chose to trust them, because I knew they had hideing -holes for Priestes, that I thought I might make use of in case of need."

Under cover of darkness, five brothers from the Penderel family – Charles's "five faithfuls" – brought the prince to Moseley mounted on an old mill horse. (When Charles complained about the discomfort of his mount, Humphrey Penderel allegedly replied, "My liege, can you blame the horse to go heavily when he has the weight of three kingdoms on its back?")

The bedraggled future monarch of England, Scotland and Ireland stumbled into Moseley in the early hours of September 8, to be received by Thomas Whitgreave, Thomas's mother Alice, and Fr Huddleston. These three were to be the only members of the household privy to the mystery visitor's identity. (Even loyal servants were informed that the man was just another hunted Royalist.)

Huddleston immediately conducted Charles to his own first-floor room, which had a clear view of the approach road and was accessible by a back staircase. Crucially, it had another advantage. Next to the fireplace was a wardrobe and, under its floor, a trapdoor leading to one of the famous "priest holes". It had served Huddleston well for many years. Now it was to save the life of a king.

Charles's taking refuge at Moseley had come not a moment too soon, for Cromwell's Roundheads were hot on his heels. On only his second day at the house, he heard the dreaded cry, "Soldiers are coming!" He was immediately bundled into the priest hole, where he lay low until the troopers had left. Looking at it now, you can only imagine how claustrophobic it must have been, yet Charles later remarked tongue-in-cheek to Pepys that it was the best place he was ever in.

Charles had evaded capture by the skin of his teeth, but he and his hosts knew their luck couldn't last. The soldiers would be back. So the day after, they arranged for a courageous Protestant Royalist, Jane Lane, to take Charles with her to Bristol disguised as her servant, under the pretext of visiting her sister who lived in that city. It was from Bristol that Charles made it to the South Coast and, eventually, from there to France.

Nine nervous years lay ahead for those who'd assisted in his escape. However, the story had a happy ending. Or rather, several happy endings. Cromwell died in 1659, and in 1660 Charles was finally restored to the throne as Charles II. The Whitgreave, Penderel and Lane families were all richly rewarded. As for John Huddleston, he was summoned to London, housed in Somerset House, granted immunity from prosecution, and installed as Royal Chaplain, first to Charles's Catholic mother Queen Henrietta Maria and then to his Portuguese Catholic wife Queen Catherine of Braganza – the only Englishman ever to be accorded that honour.



Entrance to the "Chimney Breast" priest hole at Harvington Hall.

But the tale doesn't even end there.

Inspired in no small part by the courageous examples of those Catholics who'd sheltered him after Worcester, Charles long considered becoming a Catholic himself, but political considerations made it impossible. Then, on the morning of 2 February 1685, he fell gravely ill. Knowing he was dying, he quietly conferred with his Catholic brother James (soon to be King James II). Once the Protestant clergy had been ushered out, up the back stairs came a Catholic priest, who gave Charles the Last Sacraments and received him at last into the Catholic Church.

That priest was Father John Huddleston.

FR JOHN BOLES

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

JUMPING INTO THE EXPERIENCE OF CROSS-CULTURAL MISSION



On the day I left for Chile from Korea, I really didn't feel that I was going to Chile, even at the airport. Chile was too far from Korea, and it was only a country I had seen on TV. I arrived at the end of February 2022, finished studying Spanish in Santiago, and by July 2022 arrived in Alto Hospicio.

Here in Alto Hospicio, I wasn't sure how to start because I didn't speak Spanish well and didn't have any relationships with anyone. But with God's help, I found places one by one where I could work. Sisters, Brothers and a parish coordinator gave me a chance. I understood that it was also not easy for them to accompany someone who did not speak their language well. I felt bad but was grateful at the same time. During this short missionary journey, I experienced very surprising things.

I have already seen God's presence through the minds of those willing to help me with the things I need as a missionary. Moreover, the Sisters were already with the refugees, the parishioners living together with the poor, and the Brothers were providing educational opportunities for the poor so they could draw a bigger picture for their lives. Two priests and I lived with all those people. Their solidarity shows the poor that they are not alone and that God is with them. I had just come to where God was already.

The situation in refugee camps is very difficult. Refugees cannot find food in their own country, so they come to the place where there is no water or electricity, but where they can buy food. And they are working hard for a better life.

It is strangely heartbreaking to see a woman selling drinks with her daughter on the roadside near my house. All I can do is go buy some drinks and say a few words in Spanish that I don't speak well and remember her family in my prayers. Basically, what I can do right now in Alto Hospicio is to participate in the mission that other people are doing. I don't know if that's enough. I can't do anything but prepare myself for God to do his mission through me. Gradually, I am learning what it means to know there is nothing we can do but prepare ourselves to participate in God's mission.

Meeting children at school is an amazing experience. There is a child with Down Syndrome who touches my head twice and hugs me as an expression of affection. We do not speak, but I can feel her affection. The love I receive from children is so big that I wonder if I have ever received so much love in my life before.

Photo: Yo Sup Park in Chile.

This reminds me of Jesus' words, "Unless you repent and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven", (Matthew 18:3). Adults are often hesitant to show themselves openly. When they meet a new person, they use their head to think of what to say. But children seem to follow the voice of their heart. Children have a lot of questions. The energy of children who open themselves up to curiosity is so pure and beautiful. When I meet them, I am comforted and healed.

I smile a lot because I cannot express myself in words. The downside is that people might get me wrong and think that I don't want to talk to them or that conversations with me would not be fun. Just imagine. Someone tells you something funny, and the answer they receive is, "Oh, yes?" It's hard for such a conversation to last! The advantage is that I can stay in the situation rather than make judgments about it. I can see something as it is. And I try to listen rather than speak. I could do what I wanted without difficulty in Korea, but I can't do it here. Through this experience I have also learned that I am a person who needs help from others. Knowing that I am also a person in need reminds me that I am a person who needs God's love.

Letting go of what I have is not as easy as it sounds. There is a limit to living on my own strength. When I want to run away from a certain situation, I realise that it is time to live with the strength of the Holy Spirit. Who wants to live I like a fool? But I think being able to live like a fool means being able to live humbly as well. I hope to keep this precious experience in my heart and live it without forgetting it.

I have been thinking about what mission is. Mission is the breath of God and his existence. I believe that when I live in the love of Jesus that the breath of God - that is, life and love - will be delivered through me. This is because we do not only meet and talk to each other but also exchange energy with each other.

I heard a lot from other Columban missionaries that they felt like a child when they first started on mission. But I didn't know that it was not easy for an adult to become a child again. Opening one's heart means an attitude of accepting both joy and pain. To do that, I have learned about humility again and asked for it.

The missionary journey isn't just beautiful and happy. I also feel a lot of difficulties and despair. I have learned that mission is not about living in hope of certain visible results but about living with hope in the invisible God. I think it is through a life of faith that

God's will is accomplished through us. I ask for the wisdom and strength to be constantly humbled so that mission becomes God's work, not mine.

There is an idiom "first penguin". It originated from the fact that penguins in Antarctica are afraid to jump into the sea to hunt because there are predators in the sea - but if one penguin has courage and jumps in first, a group of penguins will follow it into the sea. It refers to a member who challenges with courage and has a great influence on others. In the English-speaking world, this word is used as an idiom for a "pioneer" who takes on uncertainty and challenge courageously.

The children, the Sisters, the Brothers, the parishioners, the priests, they're all "first penguins" to me. Looking at them makes me hope I can become a first penguin too. Instead of running away from fear, I hope that I can trust God and dive into the sea that he opens before me.

YO SUP PARK

Columban FMA (First Mission Assignment) student living and working in Chile.

I think it is through a life of faith that God's will is accomplished through us.

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KACHIN CATHOLICS MAKE THEIR MARK ON MYANMAR'S STRIFE-TORN FRONTIER

Part2: A vibrant Church begins

The Columban mission started among the ethnic Kachin people in 1936, marking a new era in evangelisation. By 1939, the Banmaw area was an apostolic prefecture. Some 38 priests served the territory under the leadership of Columban Bishop Patrick Usher. The Diocese of Myitkyina was created in 1961 with Columban Bishop John Howe as the first bishop.

The Columban missionaries faced enormous trials in serving the Kachin people, who lived in a sparsely populated territory of rugged mountains. Each priest was responsible for looking after a huge parish with as many as 38 villages and a central mission station, church records say. The priests and catechists travelled on ponies to visit outlying stations, meet communities, administer the sacraments, and treat ailments such as fever, skin rashes and colds.

They set up new parishes and schools as Catholics grew in number. Within a few years, the area had 13,000 baptised Catholics and some 7,000 catechumens, prompting the Columbans to erect 19 brick and wooden churches and several clinics and schools. They also started a catechist school in Banmaw in 1939, designed to train catechists to serve the faithful amid a shortage of priests. It moved to Tangphre in Myitkyina in 1957. In 1978, the school became St Luke's College – Socio-Pastoral Formation Center. Currently located in Edin, Myitkyina, it has trained over 700 catechists.

More local priests ordained

The last three members of the original group of Columban missionaries left Myanmar in 1979, two years after the first Kachin priest, Fr Paul Zingtung Grawng, was ordained Bishop of Myitkyina. The diocese then had only 10 Kachin priests. But the Columban legacy continued as churches and school buildings were named after St Columban and the number of local priests and religious steadily increased and efforts to evangelise the people continued. Eventually, a new Banmaw Diocese was created from Myitkyina Diocese.

The local church has produced three Kachin bishops, including the late Archbishop Grawng, about 80 priests, and hundreds of sisters and catechists, who serve about 116,000 Catholics in the Christian-majority Kachin state of 1.7 million people. More church-run boarding schools and hostels have sprung up in various parishes to offer education to children in remote areas.

In some areas where the government operates schools, the church runs boarding houses to provide accommodation and supplementary tuition for rural children.

Bishop Raymond Gam (Banmaw Diocese) stated that the local church took over the role of missionaries after the missionaries were forced to leave the country. "As a result, a vibrant and growing church has emerged, thanks especially to good priestly and religious vocations, dedicated catechists and baptised Catholics," the prelate said.

"For the local church, it is easy to communicate with the faithful as we know the language and culture, and transportation is better than it was in the time of the missionaries."

However, like other ethnic Christian-majority states, such as Shan, Kayah and Chin, the Kachin also suffer heavily from fighting between the military and rebels. "Sporadic fighting in the region restricts our movement, so we fail to respond to the needs of the people and to implement the development of young people," Bishop Gam said.

Violence has engulfed the northern state since Burma gained independence from British rule in 1948. Since the military takeover in 1962, the Kachin people have been fighting for self-determination and autonomy in the Buddhist-majority nation.

Fighting has intensified since 2011, displacing more than 100,000 people, mostly Kachin Christians in Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) camps in Kachin and Shan states. As peace remains elusive, the displacement continues to linger.

“For the local church, it is easy to communicate with the faithful as we know the language and culture, and transportation is better than it was in the time of the missionaries.”

The return of the Columbans

Sr Susanna Choi was among the Columban sisters who returned to Kachin state in 2003 in Myitkyina after an absence of almost 40 years. Sr Choi, from Korea, founded Community Healthcare and Development (CHAD), which has reached out to people in remote villages to provide basic health care and training for community health workers.

Catholic, Peter Myo Aung, has worked at CHAD in Myitkyina for nine years. Due to repressive military rule and the forcible expulsion of missionaries, education and health services remain seriously neglected, underfunded and weak, he said. The services of CHAD are vital in remote areas, where they fill gaps in health sectors by responding to the urgent needs of the people. “The local team has moved on with its service and network by collaborating with other organizations. It’s a legacy of Sister Choi, who had already left the country,” Aung told UCA News. The Kachin man hailed the Columbans for “giving hope to the hopeless” – especially the young drug and alcohol addicts and the unemployed.

In 2015, following the return of minimal democracy in Myanmar, retired Bishop Francis Daw Tang of Myitkyina and Bishop Raymond Gam of Banmaw invited the Columbans to resume their mission in the state. The news enthralled the faithful, who geared up for a warm welcome. In June 2015, a new Columban team composed of priests and lay missionaries arrived and resumed their mission, albeit on a smaller scale. The local church had already filled much of the vacuum left by the departure of the missionaries. A team of Columban lay missionaries had earlier worked in the Banmaw diocese from 2008 - 2011.

Today, a small group of foreign missionaries are active in Myitkyina, Banmaw and Mandalay. They hail from a range of countries including Ireland, the Philippines, Korea and Chile and are dedicated to watering the plant of faith just like their predecessors did. And enthusiastic local priests, like Fr Dang, continue the missionary spirit that foreign missionaries brought to the Kachin land so many years ago.



Sr Susanna Choi, founder of Community Healthcare and Development (CHAD) and Teresa Blowick.

Sr Choi, from Korea, founded Community Healthcare and Development (CHAD), which has reached out to people in remote villages to provide basic health care and training for community health workers.

JOHN ZAW - UCA NEWS

Union of Asian Catholic News, www.ucanews.com/news/kachin-catholics-make-their-mark-on-myanmars-strife-torn-frontier/95133

A LIFE UNLIKE OUR OWN CAN BE OUR TEACHER

It's a humbling experience to teach sign language and share our gifts with those who are eager to learn and serve the people of God.



Lani Tamatawale and Pau.

The world faced devastation during the COVID-19 corona-virus pandemic. Millions of people died, and many others suffered when they lost their work and could not support their families. Many continue to suffer. Most young people tried to cope with the pandemic, which brought them family problems and difficulties with online classes etc. Some did not see any good coming out of that time; others were grateful for the good things that happened unexpectedly because of living differently.

In November 2022, I met a young man named Pau, who joined our vocations "Come and See" session. He shared with me that the pandemic had brought something good to his life. Before the pandemic, he said he was not always active in church activities nor did he attend Mass often. He usually stayed home and focused on school. He did not even socialise much with his friends.

During the pandemic, he had time to reflect and search. This brought him closer to the church community and changed him for the better. He joined the youth group and got involved in youth activities; he also became a lector at Mass.

He made new friends through the youth group and associated himself with Columban Missionaries, whom he met in his local chapel. He is very grateful because, if not for the pandemic, he would not have become active in his church community. I shared with him that God really loves him and wants him to come closer to him.

On Columban's Day, we celebrated Mass at Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish for the Feast of our patron, St Columban. Most parishioners attended the Mass, and I interpreted for the two deaf people present. Pau was also at the Mass and became interested in learning sign language to serve the deaf.

I asked him why he was interested, and he explained that one day when he was in a jeepney, two deaf persons boarded and paid their fare. They wanted to tell the driver where they were going but could not make themselves understood because of the language barrier. Pau tried to help them but, like the jeepney driver, could not. It was this experience that made him want to learn sign language.

Since being elevated to a parish, Our Mother of Perpetual Help has introduced a Deaf Ministry as one of the parish ministries. I began to visit chapels and attend Parish Pastoral Council meetings to introduce the Deaf Ministry in the hope that some parishioners might be interested in learning sign language. Some women in one of the chapels, together with some of the youth, including Pau, were responsive.

Every Sunday afternoon, I would have sign language classes for those who were interested. Pau was very committed and eager to learn. He never missed a class. We always have fun in class, especially when we have a quiz to see what we remember from the lessons we studied. Young people are naturally competitive and are very interested in learning. I have always hoped and prayed that after learning sign language they will have the heart to serve the deaf.

I shared with him that God really loves him and wants him to come closer to him.

In February 2023, the Deaf Ministry was introduced to the parishioners of the parish, and the deaf were invited to attend the 8 am Mass every Sunday, during which there would be interpreters. As an inclusive church, we welcome the deaf and interpreters to Mass every Sunday. I am proud to say that Pau is a member of the Deaf Ministry and interprets during Mass on Sundays.

He has come a long way. I am so happy for him and with his enthusiasm and commitment. I hope and pray that he continues to serve the deaf. The more he communicates and engages with them, the more sign language he will learn. The deaf are so happy and willing to help him learn more signs.

"A life unlike our own can be our teacher."
St Columban.

LANI TAMATAWALE

Columban lay missionary, Lanieta Tamatawale lives and works in the Philippines.



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A NEW AGE OF MISSION – HOW DO WE VIEW THE PAST?

In reflecting upon world mission today, I would like to return to the issue of what it means to live through the present age of transition regarding the meaning of mission. (This reminds me that the document title that emerged from our last Columban General Assembly in 2018 was "Transitioning for Columban Mission".)

The variety of approaches to mission reflect the uncertainty of what Christian mission entails or involves. In other words, it is one thing to agree that there is a future for Christian mission, but it is another to decide what the shape of that future might be. One problem is found in the ambiguities surrounding the language used in speaking of mission. These ambiguities arise from the history of past colonial missions, the plurality of contemporary approaches to mission, and the present efforts to avoid the ruts of dogmatism.

The diverse approaches to mission can be seen from at least five perspectives: the historical, contextual, cultural, evangelical and biblical perspectives. Let us begin with the historical perspective. There are at least three broad approaches to studying the history of mission. The chronological approach views this history in terms of a sequence of events. These events are usually divided into several periods of history, and they move from one to the next. Secondly, there is the interpretative approach whereby the history of mission is viewed through the eyes of a particular class or group of people, such as those who attempt to write from what they would call "the underside of history". Thirdly, there are transformative approaches to the history of mission. A classic in this

approach is David Bosch's book *Transforming Mission* (1991). In rereading the history of Christian mission, Bosch analyses the philosophical and theological assumptions that underly what he calls the foremost missionary "paradigms" throughout the history of Christianity.

How these different approaches view the past colours their perceptions of the future. Despite the Eurocentric bias behind his chronological approach, in the last section of his book *A History of Christian Mission* (revised second edition, 1986), Stephen Neill detected several new directions, including local churches' independence and the ecumenical movement's growth.

While Church historians like Neill record the efforts of past missionaries to translate and teach the Bible, the interpretative approaches study how readers or hearers responded to the biblical texts, especially within mission contexts where people may be susceptible to any scent of lingering colonialism or ideological domination.

To use the words of David Bosch, the transformative approach goes further and calls for "an interaction between the self-definition of early Christian authors and actors and the self-definition of today's believers who wish to be inspired and guided by those early witnesses." (Bosch, 1991, p. 23.) Let us ensure, then, that our readings of the past will inspire us to be bold in expressing the emerging paradigms of mission.

FR TOM ROUSE

Columban Fr Tom Rouse lives and works in New Zealand.

MISSION INTENTIONS

POPE FRANCIS

January - For the gift of diversity in the Church: Let us pray that the Spirit help us recognise the gift of different charisms within the Christian community, and to discover the richness of different ritual traditions in the heart of the Catholic Church.

February - For the terminally ill: Let us pray that the sick who are in the final stages of life, and their families, receive the necessary medical and human care and accompaniment.

COLUMBAN ACTIVITIES Crossword puzzle

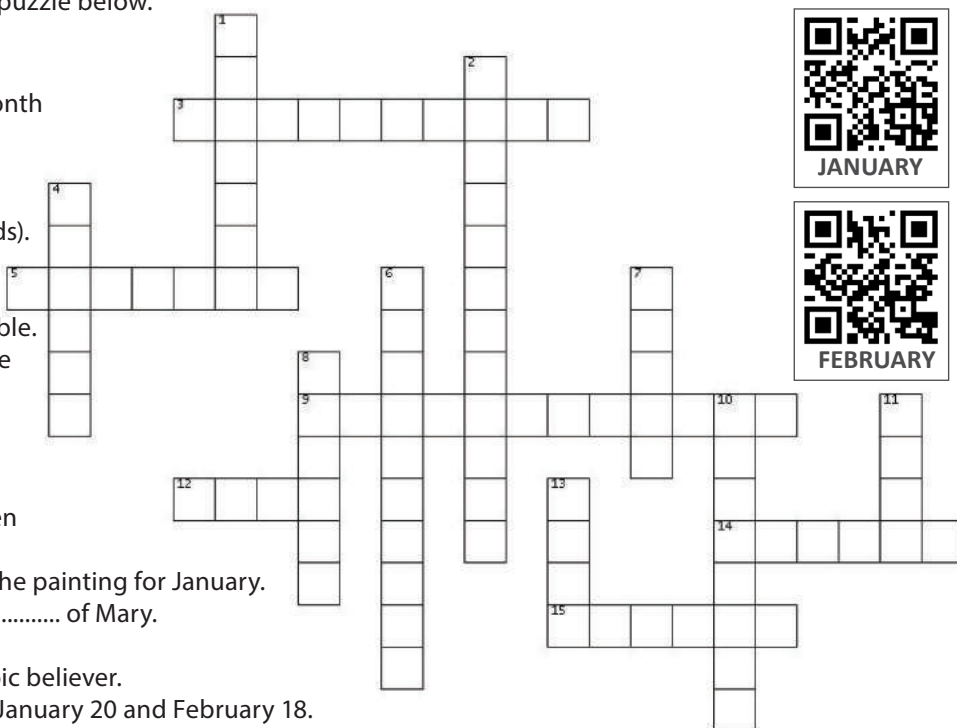
SCAN QR CODE to read the January - February 2024 Columban Calendar
Art Guides and complete the crossword puzzle below.

ACROSS

3. The saint depicted on the calendar month of January (two words).
5. Saint Brigid lived to restore in the midst of conflict.
9. The Holy Day of February 14 (two words).
12. A spiritual time for repentance and renewal.
14. Spiritual messengers of God in the Bible.
15. The name of the saint depicted on the calendar painting for February.

DOWN

1. The nationality of Saint Agnes.
2. One special trait of those born between January 20 and February 18.
4. The kind of necklace on the image in the painting for January.
6. The first day of January celebrates the of Mary.
7. The nationality of Saint Brigid.
8. Saint Agnes died as a faithful and heroic believer.
10. The star sign of those born between January 20 and February 18.
11. His feast day is on January 25.
13. The animal depicted in the January painting.



ANSWERS:
ACROSS: 3. Saint Agnes, 5. harmony, 9. Ash Wednesday, 12. Lent, 14. angels, 15. Brigid,
DOWN: 1. Italian, 2. intelligence, 4. pearls, 6. motherhood, 7. Irish, 8. martyr, 10. Aquarius,
11. Paul, 13. lamb



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'Do what you can' Bishop Edward J Galvin



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