

# far east



MAGAZINE OF THE COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES



## WARMI HUASI

Responding to children at risk in Peru

## THE CHALLENGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Winning article in Columban Schools Journalism competition

## A PEARL IN THE ORIENT

90 years of Columban Mission in the Philippines

## CONTENTS

### 04 Warmi Huasi - Responding to the Cry

Fr Ed O'Connell writes about a project the Columbans set up in Peru 13 years ago which accompanies families living in poverty and children at risk.

### 06 Columban Pioneers: Caring for Creation

Columban eco-theologian Fr Seán McDonagh speaks to Sarah Mac Donald about the greening of his theology and his advisory role in Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si*.

### 08 A Pearl in the Orient

Fr Michael Martin and Fr Kevin McHugh mark 90 years of Columban Mission in the Philippines.

### 10 Columbans Who Died Violently on Mission

In the last in our series, Fr Donal Hogan recalls Fr Rufus Halley who was gunned down in an apparent kidnap attempt on 28 August 2001.

### 12 The Challenge of Climate Change

The winning article by Anna Joy Marshall in the 2019 Columban Schools Journalism competition.

### 14 Bringing God's Kingdom to Birth

Life in Pakistan has shown Columban missionary Sr Roberta Ryan how we can all make a difference in the lives of others.

### 16 Tiananmen Recalled

Fr Michael Molloy was living in the city of Wuhan thirty years ago when the student protests of 1989 unfolded in Beijing.

### 20 A Woman of Great Faith

Dawn Rosa Chiu was born in Hong Kong. She explains how her Eurasian mother's first words and her last words will be in the Philippine Ilocano language not Cantonese.

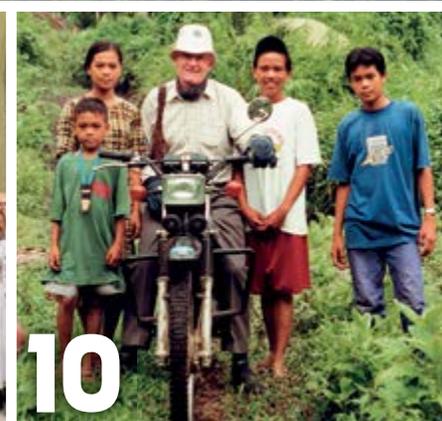
### 18 Reflection

### 19 Obituaries

### 21 Stories from the Bible

### 22 Children's Section

### 23 Nature: The Wonderful Wren



**THE FAR EAST**

Published seven times yearly by the Missionary Society of St Columban (Maynooth Mission to China).

**THE PURPOSE OF THE FAR EAST IS**

To promote an awareness of the missionary dimension of the Church among readers; to report on the work of Columban priests, Sisters and lay missionaries; and to seek spiritual and material support for missionaries.

**far east**

**Subscription**

£10 a year.  
Contact the Mission Office:  
Tel: (01564) 772 096  
Email: fareast@columbans.co.uk

**Editor**

Sarah Mac Donald  
editorfareast@gmail.com

**Assistant Editor**

Sr Redempta Twomey

**Layout & Editorial Assistant**

Breda Rogers

**Manager**

Stephen Awre

**Original Design**

Gabriel Carbone

**Printers**

Southern Print, Dorset

**Columban Websites**

News, reports, reflections etc.  
www.columbans.co.uk  
www.columbansisters.org

**Follow us**

Twitter: @fareastmagazine  
Facebook: www.facebook.com/fareastmagazine

**Missionary Society of St Columban**

Widney Manor Road, Solihull,  
West Midlands, B93 9AB.  
Tel: (01564) 772 096

**Columban Sisters**

6/8 Ridgdale Street, Bow,  
London E3 2TW.  
Tel: (020) 8980 3017

**Front Cover**

Children take part in International Day of Children's Right to Play in San Benito, Peru. (Photo: Fr Ed O'Connell/Warmi Huasi)



In 2005, with the financial support and encouragement from the Irish Government and the Missionary Society of St Columban, a fourteen-hectare biodiversity centre was established in Manolo Fortich on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines.

The biodiversity centre has provided a home for rice, maize, vegetables, fruit, trees, fishponds and livestock. Over 600 native varieties of organically grown rice and 40 varieties of maize, collected by farmers from all over Mindanao, are cultivated and conserved. Seeds are distributed to farmers all over the island and beyond. The centre also provides training for farmers, community development workers and university students.

The centre today is managed by Agro-Eco Philippines, a Mindanao-based non-governmental organisation of organic farmers and advocates, civil society and faith communities, dedicated to uplifting the lives of poor farming communities in the Philippines through organic and sustainable agriculture, seed conservation and protecting biodiversity.

In 1991, Agro-Eco Philippines, first known as Masipag Mindanao, began its development work with poor farming families in Mindanao. It is based around small-scale farmers and their needs. Its success is due to the active involvement of Church people, civil society organisations, local government units, scientists and farming families. Agro-Eco currently works with 300 organisations all over the Philippines.

In January 2019, in recognition of its work, Agro-Eco Philippines was chosen by an international panel of renowned experts as an example of 'Outstanding practice in Agro ecology', the first ever recognition given in this field. The winning programme



**AGRO-ECO PHILIPPINES**  
Building Resilient Farming Communities & Sustainable Economies.

entitled 'Building Resilient Farming Communities and Sustainable Economies in the poorest provinces of the Philippines through Agro Ecology' joined 14 other examples of best practice from Latin America, Africa and Asia.

These 15 outstanding programmes were announced at an event held on 18 January 2019 by the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Germany during International Green Week and the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture 2019. It was attended by representatives of the FAO, IFOAM, BMZ, OXFAM and several prominent international organisations actively supporting sustainable development.

On receiving the award, Geonathan Barro, Executive Director of Agro-Eco Philippines said, "We dedicate this award to our member farmers, staff, officers, and institutional partners at the local, national and international levels who all have worked together to improve the lives of the small-scale farmers, the most neglected sector in Philippine society."

Columban missionaries all over the world continue to actively support groups like Agro-Eco Philippines.

Our recent General Assembly stated, "As Columbans, we stand in solidarity with, and are evangelised by the poor, the marginalised and the wounded earth. We actively witness to Jesus' message by working for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation." ●

Fr Oliver McCrossan, a native of Co Donegal, has worked in the Philippines for over 30 years and is now based in Ireland.

All the programme winners are listed here: [www.worldfuturecouncil.org/p/opa-2019](http://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/p/opa-2019) or on Agro-Eco Philippines link: [www.agroecophilippinesinc.blogspot.com](http://www.agroecophilippinesinc.blogspot.com)





# WARMI HUASI

## RESPONDING TO THE CRY

01

Warmi Huasi was set up in Peru thirteen years ago by Fr Ed O'Connell along with two other Columbans and three lay professionals. Its aim is to accompany families living in poverty and children at risk.

**T**he name Warmi Huasi comes from the Indian Quechua language meaning 'Women's House.' We began in 2006 in the parish of Our Lady of the Missions, where I work as parish priest, with health and non-violence programmes supporting families, especially women, in the area.

Then I was asked in 2008 to visit Lomas de Carabayllo, some twenty miles north from the parish, by the Government's Human Rights Office, to help interview people displaced by the violence in Peru of the 1980s and 1990s, for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. That was when I got my first look at San Benito, the largest of the townships in Lomas de Carabayllo, where many lived in extreme poverty. San Benito in the foothills of the Andes, on the extreme northern side of Lima, has a population of 12,000 people.

The Warmi Huasi team and I were moved by the plight of the people. After consulting the parish priest and community leaders we decided to run two projects responding to the malnutrition of young children and family violence.

At the end of 2011 we evaluated our work with the

community and what we heard back, especially from the women was: "the children, the young children, we have to do something about the children, they are at risk."

In San Benito, there is a large number of families where the mother is the main breadwinner or where the father works far away from home. These women have to go out each day to make enough money to cover their families' basic needs. This results in young children being left alone to fend for themselves and even looking after toddlers by themselves.

The risks faced by the children are five-fold. Accidents at home or on the rocky hillside of their neighbourhood; poor health due to inadequate diets and the lack of adults to supervise the preparation of meals; poor school results with no one to help with homework or no time to do homework; no time for play and no safe facilities in which to play; having to face situations of violence or physical, psychological and even sexual abuse.

We began by setting up homework clubs in a chapel, a soup kitchen and two community halls, as safe places for the children to be after school and where they would be helped with their homework. Township organisations took on the responsibility of hosting the clubs and providing mothers, taking turns, to accompany the children.

Warmi Huasi found the money to hire teachers to work with the children three afternoons a week. Each year about 80 children attend. Over the years, hundreds of children have passed through the homework clubs, all of them passing their end of year exam. In the summer break we

run classes for other children who have failed the academic year. We get about 50 children each year through the re-sit exam so they can move up a year.

We also set up a play centre. The township leaders gave us the land, and we built a simple plywood hut, in which toys and games were placed. Many were donations from the parish in which I work. On average 50 children use the centre in the afternoon during the week.

Then we opened a reading club in the Warmi Huasi centre in San Benito. Over 70 children attend every Saturday, and they are queuing up before opening time to get in to read. Some children have read over a hundred books, and younger children are helped with their reading as well. Over the years hundreds of children have had a safe place to be in and the chance to read and dream of a better future. The local state school asked us to help set up a library and reading club for their 1,150 primary and secondary students. We had to build the library first, through donations from benefactors, and books were donated from the parish in which I work. We also prepared the teachers to run the reading club. Now all the students have one hour of reading each week.

We noticed that some of the children in the clubs and reading club had speech difficulties and a number also had posture problems. So, with the help of physiotherapists from the local municipality, we set up a therapy club three afternoons a week. Average attendance in a week can be as high as 50 children.

In 2016 the children formed themselves into a Children's Committee called 'Children of San Benito in Action' to work with the local council and the adults in the township to make a number of public places for children safer to play in and to



be able to move around without being molested. This is especially important for the girls. It proved very successful, and we had the inauguration of the San Benito 'Maze Park' at the end of 2016. Soon afterwards a second park was remodelled and opened.

We also ventured outside Lima. We received an invitation in 2015 from a young Peruvian parish priest who worked high up in the Andean mountains, in the county of Ayacucho. He was based in the town of Pausa and heard of the work of Warmi Huasi from a parishioner of ours. He was worried about the risks some children in his parish were facing from their stepfathers. We set up a reading club first in Pausa and then in an outlying town called Lampa, an hour away by bus, for children between 6 and 12 years of age. Two years later 140 children are participating regularly in Pausa and 48 in Lampa.

The local communities in Pausa and Lampa are now more aware of the need to protect and to listen to children. News is spreading around the villages and towns of Ayacucho about the reading clubs and the growing demand by children that they be treated with dignity, that their rights be respected and that they are not mistreated or abused. ●

Columban Fr Ed O'Connell began his mission work in Peru in 1973 and is working in the parish of Our Lady of the Missions in Lima since 1999.

If you would like to support Fr Ed O'Connell's work with Warmi Huasi please donate online at [www.columbans.co.uk](http://www.columbans.co.uk) or send a donation to: Missionary Society of St Columban, Widney Manor Rd, Solihull, West Midlands, B93 9AB.

To make a comment on this article go to:

 [facebook.com/foreastmagazine](https://www.facebook.com/foreastmagazine)

 [@foreastmagazine](https://twitter.com/foreastmagazine)

01. 250 young participants celebrate International Day of Children's Right to Play in San Benito, Peru.
02. Fr Ed O'Connell talks to a volunteer outside a Warmi Huasi centre.
03. Warmi Huasi reading club and library where up to 70 children queue up every Saturday to read or be helped with their reading.

