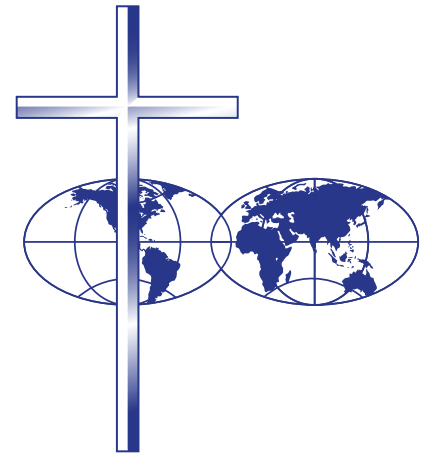


# Vocation for Justice



Winter 2019 Volume 33 No 3

## MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP



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**COLUMBAN MISSION**

Collaborating with the National Justice and Peace Network of England and Wales & Justice and Peace Scotland

Our cover photo shows a protest by Catholics at the Washington Senate Office building rotunda on 18 July on behalf of immigrant and refugee children detained at the US southern border. Many wore photos of migrant children who have died in custody. The Columbans were there, represented by the Columban Advocacy and Outreach Office in Washington. The action offers hope amidst an otherwise cold and sickening diet of current affairs.

Five protestors lay on the floor in the shape of a cross, and more than 70 priests, religious and laity were arrested. "The Gospel compels us to act," Sr Ann Scholz of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious said; "the inhumane treatment of children being done in our name must stop". There was a call for immigration reform to be presented as a pro-life issue. Being pro-life is about standing up for the weakest and ensuring they have their right to live and with their dignity respected. It is about challenging a culture of death. It is about embracing our wounded Creation, and particularly addressing the Climate Crisis, a root cause of mass migration today.

Positive leadership is being offered by Pope Francis, who has given great attention to the Church's Social Teaching. He said last month that discrimination against the forcibly displaced "is an alarm bell warning of the world's moral decline". The presence of migrants is an invitation "to recover some of those essential dimensions of our Christian existence and our humanity". He supported the call of Latin America's bishops for conservation in the Amazon where rainforest is burning, and God's creatures are being wiped out, as well as livelihoods of indigenous people.

All this advocacy resonates with Columban mission, which prioritises the social justice issues of Migration, Environmental Justice, Economic Justice and Peace. *Laudato Si'* has been a huge inspiration and our JPIC team has run study days for J&P activists, educators and students on the encyclical and preparations for this month's Amazonia Synod, examining the call for 'ecological conversion'. We have launched our 2020 Schools Journalism Competition on 'Tackling our Throwaway Culture' and urge you to pass the enclosed poster to local schools and young people who may be interested.

Like most, we mourn climate collapse and have anxieties that public engagement and policy lag far behind the consensus of expert recommendations. But we must snap out of mourning and despair because our missionary discipleship impels us to maintain hope. We are inspired by the resilience of communities we work with in 16 countries.

Specifically, as the Birmingham Archdiocese has prepared for the **Extraordinary Month of Mission**, declared by Pope Francis for **October 2019**, the Columbans have helped deanery meetings reflect on how the Church's understanding of mission has developed over the last 100 years. They explored five characteristics of mission developed by the Columbans through their experience of crossing boundaries for the sake of the Gospel.

One characteristic of Mission is that it contributes towards **building loving relationships**. God reaches out to invite all people, and indeed all creation, to participate in the divine Communion of Love. Another is **promoting the Kingdom of God** in our world. The liberating and transforming power of God breaks into our world in the person and mission of Jesus. The Church is called to be a **missionary community**, constantly reaching out beyond its borders in service of the Kingdom of God.

**Mission today** involves **liberation** from anything that destroys, diminishes or threatens life. It also involves **transformation**, a restoration to a state of wholeness, so that we can live in true communion, in right relationship and harmony with God, with others, and with all creation. The process is important. **Listening and receiving** are essential in mission.

So, the theme of the Extraordinary Month is 'Baptised and Sent'. Every member of the Church is called to play a part in the Church's mission, to be **Missionary Disciples**. The missionary call is rooted in our common baptism and the celebration of the Eucharist as a cosmic thanksgiving.

**Ellen Teague**

## Finding Security **Robert Mosher ssc**

On 3 August, people were shopping, here in El Paso, getting ready to send their children back to school. A gunman killed 22 of them.

For all our planning for the future, the unexpected can make rubble of our dreams and plans, just as it did to the rich person in Jesus' parable. He thought he had found peace and security, but he was wrong. Our deepest sense of security lies not in economic planning for the future (and much less in buying assault weapons). Our only real security in life is God, who invites us to live in a certain way of life that brings peace, joy and an attitude of service.

When we rely on God for our happiness and security, we will find ourselves at odds with others. We will discover that we are a threat, and in conflict with the distorted ideals of intolerant, racist groups of individuals. Such groups reject a faith that calls for justice, or to welcome the migrant, or to live in service to those who suffer. Such people decide to blame the outsider, the migrant, an ethnic group not their own, for their problems, and may decide to act on such lies. They allow violence to manifest the influence of sin on the human heart.

The security, peace and happiness of the way of Christ leads us to experience the strength of the Spirit and the unity of the Body of Christ, fed by Christ's Body and Blood and partnered with God as his adopted children. No amount of money can bring us any sort of substitute, no show of violence can turn us away.

We do not need people to tell us what to fear, how to live each day anxiously, fretting about our enemies and storing away material wealth for a supposed coming chaos. We need only live as God invites us to live, in service to others and in the peace and joy of God's Reign, already planted in our hearts.



*Robert Mosher is a Columban priest, based at the Columban Mission Center in El Paso, Texas.*

## Migrants: Criminalising Compassion

**Bobby Gilmore ssc**

**Bobby Gilmore, who is based in Ireland, asks: Are we in an age in which compassion is a crime?**

*“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes him who sent me... And if anyone even gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, because he is a disciple of mine, I assure you, will not go unrewarded.” (Mt. 10:40)*



Columban interns at the US-Mexico border.



Columban lay missionary Jay-Jay at Fatima House, a shelter for refugee women in Birmingham.

The claim of a number of political leaders in the recent past to be protecting the Judeo/Christian civilisation has not gone unnoticed. However, when this claim is justified by the rejection of the humanity and selfhood of immigrants and others seeking safety it has the density of cigarette paper.

First, when immigrants are criminalised by equating them with cockroaches, animals, aliens, illegals, rats, vermin and scum, it creates a dehumanising attitude, instilling doubt and fear in the general public, justifying walls, moats and fences. Essentially, it is saying that immigrants aren't people.

But more than that, it has created a toxic turnaround of the basics of the Judeo/Christian message. Central to this is love of neighbour, doing good to others, protecting the weak and concern for isolated people. In recent times we have not just seen the criminalising of immigrants but of those who help them. The story of the Good Samaritan is subverted!

In Europe, a woman, captain of a rescue ship funded by public concern for the weak, was detained and charged before the court for landing desperate migrants at the island of Lampedusa.

In the US, a man was arrested and charged for offering food, water, bedding and clean clothes to two migrants who entered the country illegally. He was freed because a jury was split in regard to his guilt or innocence. Here is an example of how confused people are regarding helping others in need. This man was not aiding and abetting others to commit a crime. He was not selling arms to criminals to be used against innocent people.

In another incident in the US, a woman, Teresa L. Todd, a lawyer and public official on her way home from work was waved down by three young people on a lonely Texas highway. She gave them a lift in her car. Just then she was spotted doing so by a local deputy sheriff who called the border guard. Teresa was arrested and detained for forty-five minutes while her phone was examined. Teresa said she picked up these young people, two brothers and a sister, because they looked like her own children. She acted out of compassion.



Bobby Gilmore

The incident of a father, Oscar Ramirez, and his 23-month-old daughter Angie, drowning on the banks of the Rio Grande provoked memories of Alan Kurdi's lifeless body being brought ashore on a Turkish beach.

Sadly, the anger and revulsion arising from such incidents and indeed many others seems not to translate into national and transnational structural humanitarian responses. What seems to increase is the xenophobic rhetoric of some political leaders and their sycophantic followers which leaves one wondering. Suppose the man arrested for bringing food, water and shelter was doing so for abandoned cats would he be arrested and charged? Would Teresa Todd be acclaimed rather than arrested if she rescued a few stray dogs? Would the captain of the rescue boat in the Mediterranean be charged if she had rescued abandoned horses?

What would happen if someone on the bank of the Rio Grande threw a lifeline to Oscar and his daughter Angie and brought them ashore alive? Would they be accused of aiding and abetting illegal migration?

Writer John Berger's words make sense.

*'The division between the poor and the relatively rich becomes an abyss. Traditional restraints and recommendations are shattered. Consumerism consumes all questioning. The past becomes obsolete. Consequently, people lose their selfhood, their sense of identity, and then locate and find an enemy in order to define themselves. The enemy - whatever their ethnic or religious nomination - is always found amongst the poor. This is where the circular pattern is vicious.'*

(John Berger, *Bento's Sketchbook*)

# Amazonia Synod: Indigenous People and the Church

**Ellen Teague**

"I'm proud to be here and proud to be heard" said an indigenous Kichwa woman from Ecuador. We all cheered. I was part of the Columban delegation attending a side event at the Paris Climate talks in December 2015 when I heard her and two other indigenous from Amazonia - in brightly coloured tribal dress and one with feathers in his headpiece - tell how their struggle began 25 years earlier when oil companies moved onto their land. "We suddenly found we had to defend our living forest of trees, lagoons, lakes, mountains and fellow creatures" they said, and they took their struggle - often with babies in arms - to courts in Ecuador and Costa Rica. "We feel we're fighting this battle for the entire world" they reflected, "because the Amazon is valuable for all humanity".

They wanted their region - often described as the 'lungs of the planet' - to be declared a zone free of oil, mineral and lumber extraction. The presence of TV crews suggested there was considerable interest in their proposal. However, interest is not the same thing as political will. As we know, the Amazon is burning fiercely today.

## Church response

The Church has a strong record on raising the voices of indigenous people and defending their way of life. When Pope Francis met 2,000 Amazonian indigenous in Peru in January 2018, he told them the place where they live is holy ground, and that they and the Amazon region are important to the Catholic Church and to the entire world. This October, the Vatican's Synod on Amazonia has brought indigenous people together not only from Amazonia but from across the world, spotlighting peoples that have much to teach our modern age.

The Synod's title is: 'Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology'. Of the indigenous groups that were known to exist in the Pan-Amazon region in 1900, one-third are now extinct - a vast treasure of natural, cultural, and spiritual wisdom lost forever. Around three million from 400 tribes still live

there, but President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil is hostile to indigenous rights. "The current government's dream is to exterminate the indigenous people so they can take our land," claims Kevin Mayoruna, a leader from the Matsés tribe.

Over decades, the Catholic Church has affirmed the importance of cultural diversity. Bishops from church jurisdictions in the Brazilian Amazon have gathered periodically since 1954. When they met in 1972 in the Amazonian city of Santarem, Pope Paul VI sent a message of support. The Synod on Amazonia continues that trend. The Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network, or REPAM, has played a key role in the nine countries of the Amazon in the lead up to the Synod. On Indigenous Peoples Day on 9 August 2019 Pope Francis said, "indigenous peoples, with their variety of languages, cultures, traditions, and ancestral knowledge, remind us that we are all responsible for the care of Creation, which God has entrusted to us".

## Learning about sustainability

The Philippines, like Brazil, is another of the world's 17 mega biodiversity countries that together contain two-thirds of Earth's biodiversity and around 70 to 80 percent of the world's plant and animal species. Yet, in the last 100 years, the rainforest cover of the Philippines has been reduced from 21 million hectares to 5 million hectares. This plunder has included all forms of life that thrive in the complex rainforest ecosystem, including indigenous people.

The Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM-Pilipinas) and Columban missionaries are involved in ecological education in the Philippines. There is a focus on interfaith dialogue, sustainable agriculture, reforestation programs and creation of seed banks. GCCM-Pilipinas organised activities during the recent Season of Creation.

## Aboriginal rights

Australia's indigenous people were dispossessed of their tribal lands in what were called the Frontier Wars. As Europeans established farms

and cattle stations, many Aboriginal people were murdered, others paid in rations to work on the stations or forced onto Reserves, their children abducted from their communities and placed elsewhere. There they were forbidden to speak their native languages or learn from elders their sacred ceremonies. The goal was "assimilation". Aboriginal people are 3% of the Australian population, yet today they make up 26% of the prison population. Suicide is all too common, even among children.

But Aboriginal people refused to give up their ancestral heritage. In 1967 they were granted Citizenship Rights. And a landmark ruling of the High Court of Australia in 1992 declared that Australia was not, at the time of European settlement, "terra nullius", that is, land belonging to no one. Instead, the Court held that the common law of Australia recognises a form of traditional native title.

The Church has supported aboriginal rights. In a remarkable speech to Aboriginal people at Alice Springs in 1986, Pope St John Paul II said that the Church in Australia can never become the Church that God intends it to be until it has recognised and welcomed the unique contribution of its Aboriginal brothers and sisters. In May 2017, over 2000 Aboriginal people met in Central Australia to hammer out a document called the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart'. It was an appeal to the nation to give aboriginal people not only recognition in the Constitution, but to make structural changes which will give them a political voice.

Catholic missionaries - ordained, religious and lay - have helped promote reconciliation and to help the communities they work with to integrate their traditional beliefs with their belief in Jesus. As one man in Warmun Eastern Kimberley says: "We are two-way people - we have 'Jesus dreaming' and the 'dreaming' of our Spirit Ancestors". ■

**A Columban series of articles on 'Synod on the Amazon: Model for the World' available at:**  
**<https://columbancenter.org/Synod-on-Amazon-Model-for-World>**

## Mission to protect Biodiversity

Sean McDonagh ssc

**Sean is a Columban eco-theologian and author of 'The Death of Life: The Horror of Extinction.'**

The publication in Paris of the Global Assessment Report in May confirmed that we are now living in the sixth-largest extinction in 3.8 billion years of Earth's history. The 1,800-page study shows that we and future generations of species are seriously at risk, unless firm action is taken to reverse this trend. The last time such a major extinction of life happened on Earth was 65 million years ago when an asteroid hit the Yucatan area of Mexico. The explosion caused such global destruction that more than half the species on Earth became extinct.

More than 450 scientists worked on the Global Assessment Report document over a three-year period. It is the largest and most comprehensive assessment on the health of nature ever published. Reading it is a chilling experience as it spells out the appalling damage humans have caused during the past four decades. It also tells us the kind of world we are leaving for future generations.

The report states that the human footprint on our planet is so large now that it is not allowing enough space for other species to exist or flourish. The authors believe that one million species are at risk of extinction in the next two to three decades. Consequently, the annihilation of wildlife by human activity is eroding the very foundations of human civilisation. The abundance of native species in most major land habitats has fallen by a fifth since 1990. For example, frogs and amphibians have suffered an horrendous 40 per cent decline. The biomass of wild animals has fallen by a staggering 82 per cent.

In recent years, natural ecosystems have lost about half of their area, mainly to create farmland. During the 1980s and 1990, I watched the destruction of the tropical forests in Mindanao in the Philippines. Destroying the forest made enormous profits for rich local loggers and provided cheap timber for us in rich countries to build houses or furniture. It opened land for farming as the population grew.

However, because of typhoons and monsoons, good topsoil was washed away leaving barren hillsides.

The report also found that the impact of the meat and dairy industry is huge. The grazing area for cattle accounts for 25 per cent of the world's ice-free land, and for 18 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Even species that humans value as sources of our food are also threatened. For example, the lack of genetic diversity within species is providing less protection against diseases and environmental changes which will afford fewer options for breeding plants and animals that will adapt better to our changing climate. The imminent extinction of the Cavendish banana is an example.

In the oceans, nearly a third of coral reefs around the world have been destroyed in four decades. Incredibly, a third of marine mammals are also threatened. Overfishing is devastating the oceans. Globally, industrial fishing takes place on a huge scale.

In the encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis tells us: "Earth's resources are also being plundered because of a short-sighted approach to the economy, commerce and production. The loss of forests and woodlands entails the loss of species which may constitute extremely important resources in the future, not only for food but also for curing diseases and other uses". The pope says: "Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right." Pope Francis makes an extraordinary statement that, "all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God".

People of faith need to educate themselves about this new teaching and become advocates for policies which protect other species. They also need to act to stem the tide of extinction. We need a requiem to honour those creatures which are



Sean McDonagh with Pope Francis

facing extinction. This liturgy would create the space where humans could express their pain, sadness and culpability for the loss of these wonderful creatures which God has created over millions of years. The liturgy would encourage people of faith to take the destruction of biodiversity much more seriously.

### Avoid Genetic Engineering

In his first speech as British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson said: "Let's start now to liberate the UK's extraordinary bioscience sector from anti-genetic modification rules and let's develop the blight-resistant crops that will feed the world." Almost everything in this statement is untrue. Genetic engineering crops will not feed the world. In fact, they will fill the pockets of Monsanto and its parent company Bayer.

Almost 20 years ago, the molecular geneticist, Professor Bevan Moseley, drew attention to the unforeseen effects inherent in genetic engineering technology. He argued that the next generation of GE foods, such as vitamin A-enriched rice, will be dangerous because of the complexity of the gene construct.

As far back as 1993, the Union of Concerned Scientists in Washington published a report on genetic engineering entitled *Perils amidst the Promise*. The report concluded that no company should be permitted to commercialise a transgenic crop until a strong government programme is in place that assures risk-assessment and regulation. On biodiversity, they called for adequate protection for centres of crop diversity in the US and other places around the world.

We should equally be aware of the power of GM manufactures such as Monsanto to direct and influence government policies on genetic engineering. Does Johnson's first speech to parliament indicate that the GM corporations have got him in their back pocket? ■

# COLUMBAN MISSION

## ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION

“Ecological issues are huge in Pakistan and Columban mission is involved in such initiatives as **tree planting and ecological education**” says Fr Tomas King who is based in the Sindh. “There are far fewer trees than there used to be” he reported “and improved infrastructure is facilitating transporting Pakistan’s natural resources out of the country”. Intense heat of over 40 and even 50 degrees centigrade in recent months means that people cannot leave their homes for many hours of the day. Pakistan is also predicted to be a severely water-stressed country by 2020. Tomas says he sees hope “in the resilience of ordinary people”. He admires, their ability to recycle everything and use what we might discard, such as old bicycles. For him, **mission today means working in new and creative ways, and in an inter-faith context with Muslims and Hindus.**



*Columban Liam O'Callaghan involved in tree planting in Hyderabad Diocese, Pakistan.*

Columbans internationally support the **Season of Creation**. Australian Columban Charles Rue produced liturgies for the Sundays of Creation Time (1 September - 4 October), which thousands downloaded around the world. See [www.columban.org.au/media-and-publications/educational-resources/a-catholic-season-of-creation-sundays-of-september-\(year-c\)](http://www.columban.org.au/media-and-publications/educational-resources/a-catholic-season-of-creation-sundays-of-september-(year-c))

## WELCOMING THE STRANGER



*Ellen Teague in Dover.*

On 20 June, World Refugee Day, Columbans joined Westminster and Southwark Justice and Peace Commissions to attend a service on Migrants in Dover. Titled ‘**People Not Walls**’ it was held beside a memorial for deceased migrants who have died trying to cross the English Channel between Calais and Dover. 70 million people are displaced worldwide, needing refuge from war, conflict, persecution and environmental disasters. There was a lantern walk at Dover’s famous White Cliffs where a ‘Love Knows No Borders’ banner was displayed and a Declaration of solidarity with all migrants was read.

**Video at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fy95JZ68AKk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fy95JZ68AKk)**

On 28 June, refugee women from Fatima House in Birmingham - together with Columban lay missionaries and co-workers - joined a **Lift the Ban campaign action**, calling for parliament to change the prohibition to work of those who are claiming asylum in Britain. <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/campaigns/>

*Nathalie Marytsch, Mauricio Silva and Catherine Bridgwood are on the left.*



## ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Columbans support those organisations challenging free trade policies which are a disaster for the environment. **Global Justice Now** suggests that free trade deals promote industrial scale agriculture and logging, give big business new powers to shape environmental policy, and make it harder for governments to limit fossil fuel-produced energy. The **New Economics Foundation** calls for a new economy to ensure that the economy works for everyone. It feels government and regulators need to look into skyrocketing personal debt, which leads to extreme financial hardship, stress and mental health problems in some of the UK’s poorest households. The **London Mining Network** offers solidarity and advocacy to communities badly affected by London-linked mining companies.

<https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/> <https://neweconomics.org/>  
<https://londonminingnetwork.org/>

# COLUMBAN MISSION

## NO FAITH IN WAR

Columban JPIC supported a 'No Faith in War' protest outside one of the world's largest arms fairs in London on 3 September. DSEI (Defence & Security Equipment International) takes place in London's Docklands every two years. This year, the UK government invited 67 countries - including Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Turkey, the UAE, and Uzbekistan. People representing a huge range of faith communities came together to declare their objection to the weapons trade. Most world faiths have in common a deep sense of the value of peace in the world, believing that peace is not achieved by the use of weapons or threats of violence, but by dialogue, respect for universal human dignity and human rights, and just social structures. Pax Christi led an adapted Stations of the Cross liturgy.



In Washington, the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach joined Pax Christi, Sisters of Mercy, Maryknoll, Franciscans, and other religious on 6 August in commemorating the 74th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They were joined by Kodama Michiko, who was 7 years old when the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. She is assistant Secretary General of the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organisation. She pleaded for the abolition of nuclear weapons, an end to war and the pursuit of nonviolence and peace.

## INTERRELIGIOUS COLLABORATION

More than 50 participants joined a three-evening summer school in Birmingham in July organised by the Columban Interreligious Dialogue Team. The evenings were held at a Synagogue, a Mosque and a Gurdwara. Speakers from various faiths shared thoughts on gender issues, care for the Earth and community engagement. Participants then reflected on the ways faith communities can contribute to tackling justice issues which affect the whole community. **Promoting 'life-giving' relationships among people of different faiths and cultures is a priority of Columban mission in Britain today.**



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## INVITATION TO MISSION

In May, the latest **Columban 'Invitation to Mission' initiative took place to the Philippines.** A small group of Columban educators, benefactors and staff from Britain went through a programme of prayer, reflection, encounters and visits – seeing mission alive both here in Britain and in the Philippines. In the Philippines they visited livelihood projects - making candles and recycling juice cartons into bags; also Fr Shay Cullen's work with abused children at the Preda Foundation and several projects promoting organic agriculture and produce. A banner on the altar at the Columban parish in Malate, Manila read 'If you want to know God, embrace God's creation'.

## ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE

Columban Education has **engaged young people** with climate lobbies, refugee campaigns and ecological awareness-raising. Columban Schools' Competitions in 2018 and 2019 encouraged students to use writing and video skills to look at a topical issue relevant to Catholic Social Teaching and Columban Mission. Some of the 2019 winners on the topic of 'The Challenge of Climate Change' received their awards in June - see below - from Columban Director Peter Hughes and Bishop John Arnold of Salford, the Environment bishop.



# Columban Education

## Empowering Young People

**James Trewby**

*From the Columban Education Worker.*

The Pope's declaration of October 2019 as an 'Extraordinary Missionary Month' gave us an excuse and opportunity to try something new for young people from across the Archdiocese of Birmingham. We were keen to challenge outdated notions of mission, and share something of our lived experience around justice, peace and care for creation. Working collaboratively with the Diocesan Education Service we were able to run '2019: The Mission Project', with 40 Year 9 students from eight Catholic schools. The aim was to prepare young people to be leaders in their schools, able to share enthusiastically about mission and missionaries today, in preparation for October.

The programme began in May with a day conference including games, prayer and thought-provoking content exploring the concept of mission. Particular highlights were on-line interviews with Marjorie Engcoy, a Filipina Columban Lay Missionary based in Fiji, and a workshop exploring key characteristics of mission today. The young participants engaged well with big ideas such as the call to reach beyond borders, the importance of both giving and receiving, and the invitation to be missionary disciples.

Participants were then given the opportunity to spend a day witnessing mission in action. Eight days were offered, attempting to give a glimpse of the breadth of missionary commitments around the city of Birmingham. Each day was framed with prayer and reflection, with each participant using a specially prepared journal.

The days all featured a missionary, including lay and ordained, male and female, young and old, as well as a visit to a project in which they work/

volunteer. The range of projects speaks of the diversity of mission: welcoming asylum seekers, campaigning against climate change, living in simplicity and solidarity, caring for the discarded, working for peace and justice.

The young people's reactions were wonderful to witness – there were tears, passion, enthusiasm, laughter. They were clearly inspired to see faith lived out so deeply and whole-heartedly. They asked probing and challenging questions about prayer, about commitment, about the costs and risks of choosing to live in such counter cultural ways. Discernment, vocation and the deep joy of doing what you believe you're supposed to be doing were recurring themes.

Towards the end of the summer term we gathered again. The young people enjoyed sharing their various experiences of mission, the people they'd met and the stories they'd heard. Through prayer stations, discussion and creativity (drawing huge symbolic pictures of

missionaries), participants processed their experiences and began to consider their own missionary call. The final reflections showed a huge growth in understandings of 'mission', while the discussions about next steps were very encouraging. Plans were made to share learning back in school through assemblies, collective worship and workshops.

Pleasingly, a number of the schools have already been in touch asking for more! Please pray for the work of Columban Justice and Peace Education, that we might "plant seeds that will one day grow, water seeds already planted, lay foundations that will need further development and provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities" (to paraphrase the famous prayer).

### In other education news ...

.... The Columbans were pleased to support the Million Minutes 'Celebrating Young People Awards'. It is encouraging to hear the stories of young people living out Catholic Social Teaching. We look forward to being involved in events for National Youth Sunday in November.

.... Many thanks to Catherine Bridgwood as she concludes her year as the Columban Faith in Action Volunteer. She made a superb contribution and will be missed! She has worked with asylum seekers, on justice and peace education, and accompanied educators on visits to justice projects.

... We have been collaborating with the London Mining Network on taking young people to witness protests at a mining company's AGM. Get in touch if interested.

... We are continuing to support the youth-led climate strikes, organising encounters between Catholic headteachers, students and strikers. ■



*Young people explore the call to care for creation.*

[education@columbans.co.uk](mailto:education@columbans.co.uk)



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# Mission for Peacemaking

**Marie Dennis**

**Washington-based Marie Dennis was a co-president of Pax Christi International for nine years, alongside Bishop Kevin Dowling of Rustenberg in South Africa.**

Hope generated by the witness of dedicated peacemakers in local, challenging, often violent contexts is a lasting legacy from two decades in leadership of Pax Christi International. The gift of time in local communities around the world has left me with powerful memories that continue to inspire and to challenge:

- ◆ Meeting students at Miriam College in Greater Manila motivated by their friendship with Muslim youth in Mindanao, learning to organise and to advocate for just peace;
- ◆ Standing on holy ground in Auschwitz, El Salvador, Sarajevo, Gaza - remembering a cloud of witnesses to horror and to courage;
- ◆ Learning from young Pax Christi members in Cite Soleil, Port au Prince, Haiti who shared with former gang members the skills of active nonviolence, organised them into football teams, and helped them to plant trees in a formerly desolate, post-earthquake landscape;
- ◆ Visiting, with legendary Bishop Paride Taban, remote villages in Sudan and South Sudan, where a claim on life and determination to move beyond years of war persisted;
- ◆ Observing the creativity of Pax Christi members - in Austria as they prepared for a festival celebrating Roma culture; in the UK as they prepared resources for parishes on the Pope's annual World Day of Peace message; in Africa's Great Lakes region as they brought training in active nonviolence to their communities; in Peru as they held mining companies to account for contaminating their water;
- ◆ Reading the stirring stories written by young people based on interviews with migrants and refugees as part of Pax Christi's Young Peace Journalists project.

Proclamation of the Good News in a broken and violated world; speaking about just peace in the context of communities wracked by direct, systemic and cultural violence; evangelising cultures of death, transforming them into cultures of nonviolence and just peace – this is the urgent mission of Pax Christi International.

Often it is dismissed as naïve, not up to the task, not politically useful or pertinent. Yet, at other times – as in Palestine or Peru, the DR Congo or Mindanao, Chicago or Colombia - the Gospel of just peace falls on fertile ground and is welcomed.

We are learning from the deep, rich experience of Eastern traditions, especially in pursuit of harmony and benevolence; from the many different African traditional rituals for reconciliation and healing; from the indigenous understanding of right relationships with others, including ancestors, future generations and the natural world. We have come to recognise the agency of people themselves – the presence of grace and the seeds of peace present in local communities, even in the midst of war.

The Pax Christi International Peace Prize recipients we met in these years made very visible this presence of grace and the seeds of peace. In Sarajevo we heard the reconciling music of PONTANIMA, a choir that bridged the ethnic divide, and the inspiring words of Jesuits from Syria, "We keep our doors open for everyone even if they come to kill us." In Bethlehem (2015) we honoured powerful women from Colombia who were at the heart of their country's peace process. In Rome we learned about the amazing work of Justine Masika Bihamba with women victims of sexual violence in the DR Congo. From the European Lawyers in Lesbos to The Women's Active Museum on War and Peace, laureates in these years have been enormously inspiring. Then there are the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace of Pakistan and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, the U.S. No Boundaries Coalition, Mexico's Zodavite, the Russian Federation's International Memorial Society. Year after year, they generate amazing hope.

Dialogue and the practice of respectful encounter are also essential to Pax Christi's peacemaking mission. In 2009, as part of a Pax Christi International delegation to Iraq we

met Dominicans and other Christians in Mosul and Qaraqosh, visited holy sites of the Yazidis and were introduced to Suni and Shia religious leaders in Kirkuk by their respected friend, Chaldean Patriarch Louis Raphael Sako. In 2014, we were heartbroken as Christians and Yazidis in the north of Iraq were brutally attacked by ISIS. They were killed, captured or forced to flee. Just two years later, during our 2016 conference in Rome on nonviolence and just peace, we were deeply inspired by Iraqi Dominican Sister Nazik Maty's clear call for nonviolence and an end to war.

In fact, the conference on nonviolence and just peace convened by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and Pax Christi International was the beginning of a remarkable Pax Christi process, now known as the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative. In the 2016 conference and a subsequent conference in 2019, hosted by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, as well as during a series of global roundtable conversations on different dimensions of active nonviolence and just peace, the focus was on the experience of participants from the global South and areas of violent conflict. These included members of the clergy, women religious, academics and peace practitioners from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Thailand, DR Congo, El Salvador, South Sudan, Colombia, Burundi, Guatemala, Mexico, Northern Ireland, Fiji, Palestine and more. Columbans are members of Pax Christi International, and Fr Pat Cunningham from Korea has been involved in this process.

Catholic theology on war peace has evolved dramatically in the last half century. More recent thinking about the positive work of "just peacemaking" and the possibility of waging "nonviolent conflict" has begun to shift the location and parameters of Catholic/Christian contributions to peace. The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative is encouraging this shift toward active nonviolence as a universal ethic promoting just, integral peace. We are engaging the institutional, theological and spiritual resources of our tradition in the great task of creating a culture of nonviolence and just peace in the Church and in the world. ■

## Bishops call for a more sustainable lifestyle

The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales issued a statement in August calling for the development of a “Christian spirituality of ecology” which begins in “personal” and “family life”. Quoting from *Laudato Si’*, they highlighted the urgency of the environmental crisis and reported that more than 4,500 Catholic churches and schools have switched to renewable gas and electricity. They are keen to follow Pope Francis’ call to move away from fossil fuels and ‘protect our common home’.

The bishops also reported that there are now 59 Livesimply awardees, including 50 parishes. The Bishop for the Environment, John Arnold, has launched a *Laudato Si’* Centre in his Diocese of Salford. A walled garden houses vegetable patches and beehives.

Regarding the Rainforest fires in Amazonia, on 23 August Bishop Arnold, said: “We echo the deep concern of the Latin American Bishops in their statement yesterday about the seriousness of this tragedy, which is not only of local impact, nor regional, but of planetary proportions....What happens to the Amazon is not just a local issue but of global reach. If the Amazon suffers, the world suffers.”

## Philippine bishops issue letter on “climate emergency”

In July, the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines released a pastoral letter, ‘An urgent call for ecological conversion, hope in the face of climate emergency’. They urged their communities to ecological conversion, to listen to the cry of the Earth and the poor, and to act to mitigate the worst effects of climate change.

The letter outlined problematic issues, among them irresponsible mining, the building of dams, and the growing dependence on fossil fuel-based energy, such as coal. The Philippines is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change, which the bishops described as a moral issue. They urged that financial resources of Catholic institutions be divested from “dirty energy” like “coal-fired power plants, mining companies and

other destructive extractive projects”. They also encouraged everyone to “live simply” and “minimise consumption” and to “actively promote ecological awareness and action” by segregating waste, minimising the use of plastic and paper, and eliminating single-use plastics.



Columban group at the July annual National J&P Network Conference in Derbyshire.

They called for transition to safe, clean and affordable renewable sources of energy such as solar power. The bishops also announced the creation of an “ecology desk” in all diocesan social action centres, and that *Laudato Si’* would be integrated into the curriculum and strategic plans of Catholic schools, seminaries and religious formation houses.

Full text on the website of the Archdiocese of Manila.

## Climate crisis should be a Church priority

Climate should be ‘a central priority’ for the US Church, says Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego. “If we don’t get this issue right, in the end none of the other issues are going to matter, because human dignity will have been destroyed as we know it if our planet is destroyed,” he said at the inaugural “*Laudato Si’*” and the U.S. Catholic Church” conference in July. He called on churches and schools to become centers of truth-telling about what’s happening to God’s creation. He regretted that the US has permitted “the wholesale spread of pseudo-science created by and in service to those industries and economic interests that despoil our planet”.

## Dioceses pledge divestment

Several dioceses located near important maritime trade centres

and ports are among the dozen latest Catholic institutions to commit to divest from fossil fuels. Among them are Panama City Archdiocese, the Catholic Church in Greece, San Carlos Diocese of the Philippines, Malta Archdiocese and Naples Archdiocese.

## UK supports fossil fuels overseas

CAFOD reports that the UK government provided support for energy in developing countries with a total value of £7.8 bn from 2010 to 2017. Of that 60 per cent – or £4.6bn – went to outdated fossil fuels, which are a major contributor to climate change. Some of the financial support was in the form of export guarantees, credit and insurance for British businesses operating overseas in the fossil fuel industry. CAFOD criticised aid money being spent on fossil fuels, when it is supposed to help people living in poverty and hard hit by climate change. <https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Latest-campaigns>

## Mission in a world in transition

“Locating European Missions in a Wounded World in Deep Transformation” was the theme of an August conference in Germany organised by the International Association of Mission Studies Europe in partnership with the Conference of European Churches (CEC). Participants explored theologies of mission and resources of healing, renewal and deep transformation. A special focus was made on a transformative missionary spirituality emerging from new understandings of baptism, especially with regard to refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. There were sessions on mission in relation to inter-faith dialogue, mission and politics, the future of churches in Europe, and migrations and missions.

## Green Christians

Green Christians offers support to Christians who take seriously the care of our common home. Their excellent magazine for members is produced twice a year. This year’s Green Christian retreat ‘Signs of Hope’ will be held at Launde Abbey in Leicestershire 22-24 November. Contact George Dow at [GeorgeDow@GreenChristian.org.uk](mailto:GeorgeDow@GreenChristian.org.uk)

**BAPTISED AND SENT**  
**OUR CALL TO BE MISSIONARY DISCIPLES**

Pope Francis has declared October 2019 as an Extraordinary Missionary Month. The Justice and Peace Commission for the Archdiocese of Birmingham and the Columban Missionaries invite you to reflect on your experiences, celebrating and putting in to action the call to mission for justice, peace and care for creation.

**BOOK YOUR PLACE**  
Use Google Forms at [http://bit.ly/JandP\\_Assembly2019](http://bit.ly/JandP_Assembly2019) or email: [bham.jandp@gmail.com](mailto:bham.jandp@gmail.com)

**DATE: SATURDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2019**  
**TIME: 10 AM to 5 PM**  
**VENUE: ST. PETER'S CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL, SOLIHULL**

The Columban Missionaries are visiting parishes in the Archdiocese of Birmingham during 2019.

Pope Francis has declared October as the Extraordinary Missionary Month, offering the theme 'Baptised and Sent: The Church of Christ on a Mission in the World'. The Columbans and the Archdiocese of Birmingham are working together to challenge and encourage all in their baptismal call to "missionary discipleship" (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*).

2019 is also the year in which the Columban Missionaries in Britain have been doing Mission Appeals in Birmingham, meaning Columban Missionary priests are visiting parishes across the Archdiocese. The Columbans and the Archdiocese share the desire that this year leaves a legacy of formation – broadening understandings of 'mission' and inspiring practical action in service of the Kingdom of God.

The Columbans are working side-by-side with the Diocesan Justice & Peace Commission on 'Baptised and Sent: our call to be missionary disciples', the annual J&P Assembly at St. Peter's School, Solihull, on Saturday 12 October.

Based on the 'See, Judge, Act' model, participants will be invited to learn about mission from a variety of perspectives and to engage in practical action for justice, peace and care for creation. People from across the Archdiocese are expected. And it is exciting that it will be held the same weekend as the ordination of Cardinal John Henry Newman - founder of the Birmingham Oratory - in Rome.

To book your place, visit: [http://bit.ly/JandP\\_Assembly2019](http://bit.ly/JandP_Assembly2019) (Google Form) or email [events@columbans.co.uk](mailto:events@columbans.co.uk)

## CLIMATE ACTION

A relatively small number of fossil fuel producers and their investors could hold the key to tackling climate change. Just 100 companies have been responsible for 71 percent of global climate emissions since 1988.

ExxonMobil, Shell, BP and Chevron are among these highest emitting investor-owned companies. If fossil fuels continue to be extracted at the same rate over the next 28 years as they were between 1988 and 2017, global average temperatures would be on course to rise by 4C by the end of the century. This is likely to have catastrophic consequences, including global food scarcity risks.

Who is campaigning on this?

Global Justice Now campaigns at: <https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/campaigns/climate-and-energy>

Rainforest Action Network identifies companies and industries driving deforestation and climate change. <https://www.ran.org/>

Also:

- Push governments to declare a climate emergency and commit to 100% clean energy
- Support young people for the Friday climate strikes. They are coming under vicious attack from climate deniers and the fossil fuel industry.

- 2019 has seen a huge new global protest movement. One of the most important of the protest groups is Christian Climate Action, linked to Extinction Rebellion. They are undertaking nonviolent direct action to demand radical action from the government.

@CClimateAction and @ExtinctionR



Climate lobby at Westminster in June.

## ARE YOU A BUDDING JOURNALIST?

### SCHOOLS JOURNALISM COMPETITION 2020

We are looking for students (aged 15-18 inclusive) to write an article or produce a short video report that informs, challenges and raises important issues on the topic:

## TACKLING OUR 'THROWAWAY CULTURE'



The winning article will be published in the **Far East** magazine and the winning video report will be broadcast online on **Columban** websites in Ireland and Britain and shared on social media. **Don't miss this chance to make your mark!**

**DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES:  
FRIDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2020**

For more information on entry guidelines see:

[www.columbancompetition.com](http://www.columbancompetition.com)

or email [hello@columbancompetition.com](mailto:hello@columbancompetition.com)



COLUMBAN  
MISSIONARIES

**PRINT PRIZES: 1<sup>ST</sup> £300 · 2<sup>ND</sup> £150 · 3<sup>RD</sup> £100**

**VIDEO PRIZES: 1<sup>ST</sup> £300 · 2<sup>ND</sup> £150 · 3<sup>RD</sup> £100**

**POPE FRANCIS**

“I would like us all to make a serious commitment to respect and care for creation, to pay attention to every person, to combat the culture of waste and of throwing out so as to foster a culture of solidarity and encounter.”

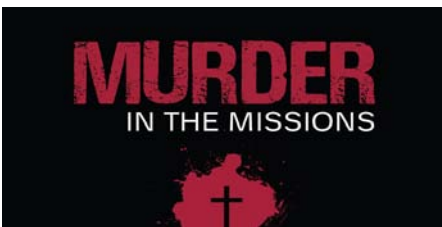
World Environment Day, 5 June 2013.

### **Murder in the Missions** *Jean Harrington*

The true stories of one Irish Columban priest's killing and another's kidnapping in Philippines. Rufus Halley was murdered by Islamic extremists in 2001, after working on interfaith dialogue and conflict resolution. Des Hartford was held hostage for 12 days in 1997 by the Moro National Liberation Front which harmed his health long-term. For many years the priests had lived peacefully as Christians in a Muslim-dominated region on the island of Mindanao.

Mercier Press

ISBN-13: 9781781177129



### **Anne Hope: The Struggle for Freedom** *Stephanie Kilroe*

This book is about the life of the visionary Anne Hope. She is president of the ecumenical lay community The Grail in South Africa, co-founder of the acclaimed *Training for Transformation* programme for community development, and was a campaigner in the struggle against apartheid.

Darton, Longman and Todd

ISBN: 978 0 232 53401 6

### **Words out of Silence** *by Jill Segger*

The common ground of the poetry and prose in this book is silence, and specifically the silence of the Quaker Meeting. There is an unwavering belief in the core Quaker values of equality, justice, peace, truth and simplicity. This is perhaps most evident in Segger's writing on war and peace, and society's

relationship with the military. Bernadette Meaden says: "Readers from all backgrounds, religious and non-religious, may find this book thought-provoking and engaging, and ultimately, encouraging, as it tackles the most serious of issues whilst never forgetting to rejoice in what is good and true."

*Ekklesia*

ISBN-13: 978-0993294280

### **Peace Sunday 2020** **Sunday 19 January**

*Pax Christi sends resource materials to every parish in the country to help them mark and celebrate the day.*

*And an Assembly is available for use in secondary schools.*

[info@paxchristi.org.uk](mailto:info@paxchristi.org.uk)

### **VOCATION FOR JUSTICE**

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*Vocation for Justice* is a publication of the Missionary Society of St. Columban (Maynooth Mission to China) Reg.Charity No.221594. It is produced three times a year. Names will be added to the mailing list on request. Suggested contribution of £20.00 for three issues annually is requested every year.