

far east



MAGAZINE OF THE COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES

'FRIENDS OF THE EARTH'

Fr Liam O'Callaghan
in Pakistan

EXTINCTION REBELLION

Sr Kate Midgley
on XR's 'Faith Bridge'

BLATANT EXPLOITATION

Hearing the cry
of migrants

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THE FAR EAST

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Subscription

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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

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www.columbans.co.uk
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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

Portrait of a 'red rebel' member of Extinction Rebellion during recent protests in Bristol, UK.
Image: Shutterstock

“THE POOR CANNOT WAIT”

When Pope John Paul II visited Chile in April 1987 he directed the words above to the United Nations in Santiago. These were also the words of Pope Francis in a message to the Director of the Food and Agricultural Organisation on World Food Day in 2018. “The Poor Cannot Wait.”

Pope Francis went on to say that, looking at all the advances made in fields such as technology, science, communications and infrastructure, we “ought to feel shame for not having achieved the same advances in humanity and solidarity, and so satisfy the primary needs of the most disadvantaged. We can dream of a future without hunger,” the Pope continues, “but this is only reasonable when we engage in tangible processes, vital relations, effective plans and real commitments. What is needed is the willingness to end hunger and this ultimately will not happen without a moral conviction that is shared by all peoples and all religious persuasions...”

These words “The Poor Cannot Wait” came dramatically to my mind during a recent visit to Chile where I had spent 27 years as a Columban Missionary. The day after my arrival in mid-October the whole country came to a standstill. The poor flooded on to the streets in massive numbers that took everybody by surprise. (Some 1.2m people took part in one protest march.) The immediate cause of the disturbances was a fare increase on Santiago’s metro/underground transport. Discontent at this increase was obviously just one more reason for people to mobilise and express a deep-seated dissatisfaction. The people of Chile are tired; they feel burdened and abused by the effects of the neoliberal economy



imposed by the dictatorship almost forty years ago.

As happens with most social movements, what began as with peaceful demonstrations and massive ‘cacerolazos’ (pot/pan banging) led to weeks of violent riots and looting with the security forces seemingly unable to contain indiscriminate crime. Countless citizens’ reports, shared on social media, show incidents of disproportionate force by the army and police force. The reports also showed how ordinary people protected their neighbourhoods against looting and made way for emergency vehicles to cross barricades when needed.

At the recent Synod of the Amazon, we were reminded of the many poor in the ‘Latin-American peripheries’ who need to be at the centre of our reflections and actions to rebuild a fairer and more equal society. Chile is now paying the price for having ignored the voice of the poor for many years, as the gap between the poor and the rich became wider and wider. They failed to listen to the Pope’s successive warnings that “The Poor Cannot Wait!” ●

Fr Peter Hughes
Regional Director of the Columbans in Britain



ON THE STREETS WITH EXTINCTION REBELLION



Sr Kate Midgley joined Extinction Rebellion's 'Faith Bridge' at a recent demonstration in London to call for government action on the climate crisis.

It was 8am on a cool grey Monday morning, 7th October in London. We gathered on Parliament Square beside the statue of suffragette Millicent Fawcett, with the continuous drone of police helicopters overhead, and countless vanloads of police on the ground.

This was the first day of Extinction Rebellion's two-week action in 60 cities worldwide. The message to governments was take urgent action to save our planet before it is too late. Save the earth before it heats up to the point that we will be unable to stop even more rapid global heating, resulting in many countries becoming uninhabitable as flooding follows the rise in sea levels.

Extinction Rebellion was founded on 31st October 2018 in the UK as a non-violent direct-action group calling for mass civil disobedience after the example of people like Ghandi and Rosa Parks. From the very beginning Christians were deeply involved.

It's as if the Holy Spirit is blowing all over the world at the same time, urging us to take action. This Extinction Rebellion action took place just as the Synod of the Amazon was taking place in Rome. In his recent Season of Creation letter, Pope Francis wrote, "This too is a season for undertaking prophetic actions."

I had the great privilege of spending a few days with Extinction Rebellion's 'Faith Bridge'. Initially the plan

was to be on an actual bridge, Lambeth Bridge over the Thames. But it was moved instead to Trafalgar Square. The 'Faith Bridge' comprised tents of XR (Extinction Rebellion) Buddhists, XR Muslims, XR Jews, XR Quakers and Christian Climate Action (the Christian part of Extinction Rebellion).

It was inspirational to be able to meditate with XR Buddhists, to be there for the Call to Prayer with XR Muslims, to silently pray with XR Quakers and of course morning and midday prayer with Christian Climate Action. To be able to pray and have spaces of silence in the midst of all that was going on felt so right. It is what we should be doing: praying for a profound change of mind and heart to protect our mother earth.

At one point the whole of the Book of Revelation (the Apocalypse) was read from the steps in the middle of Trafalgar Square beginning with the Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, the Rt Rev Paul Bayes, after whom 20 other vicars and religious ministers continued the reading.

Apart from formal prayer times of the different faith groups there was also a prayerful walking round the site and standing in silence as people were arrested or were unlocked from the places where they had stuck or locked themselves on to. On those occasions the Extinction Rebellion Statement of Intention was sometimes recited by the crowd:

“Let’s take a moment, this moment, to consider why we are here.

*Let’s remember our love for this beautiful planet
That feeds, nourishes and sustains us.*

*Let’s remember our love for the whole of humanity in all
corners of the world.*

*Let’s recollect our sincere desire to protect all this, for
ourselves, for all living beings, and for generations to
come.*

*As we act today, may we find the courage to bring a sense
of peace, love and appreciation to everyone we encounter,
to every word we speak and to every action we make.
We are here for all of us.”*

The commitment and creativity of so many ordinary people who put themselves through much physical discomfort by gluing themselves under or on top of vehicles or on makeshift towers to block roads for very long periods of time was really moving. It brought to mind the asceticism of St Simon Stylite who lived on top of a column.

As I look back it felt like a very missionary experience:

- being on the margins exposed to the elements, sitting on the ground or standing in the rain.
- having conversations with total strangers who had travelled from every part of the UK to take part and hearing of their passion and commitment.
- chatting with a Catholic contemplative Sister while on the Extinction Grief Procession.
- being at Westminster Cathedral Sunday Mass together with Christians of many other denominations promoting ‘Laudato Si’.

them was Sr Katrina Alton, a Sister of St Joseph of Peace, and Fr Martin Newell, a Passionist, as well as many vicars, ministers and a 77-year-old rabbi. Notable also amongst those arrested was the number of men and women in their seventies, eighties and even a 91-year-old!

Let us pray that all of this may bear fruit and that there may be a global shift in our consciousness to move to protect our beautiful fragile mother earth:

*Truth telling God,
weave a thread of love and courage
among those who stand for creation this week.
May they know the sound of your voice in all they do.
May your love echo across the streets of London
so that the sap of change can rise in the mess of the city,
and seep into the corridors of power
to bring the dawning of a new day where the web of life is
sanctified, renewed and replenished.
Amen, Lord have Mercy.*

Extinction Rebellion Prayer written by Rev Helen Burnett

Sr Kate Midgley, a Columban Sister from Britain, has been missioned in Chile, Peru and China. She currently lives in London and volunteers with charities supporting asylum seekers and women who have been trafficked.



At that Mass in Westminster Cathedral the priest gave a wonderful homily about St John Henry Newman who was canonised that day. He talked about St John Henry and the primacy of conscience and the influence he had on many people, specifically Sophie Scholl and her non-violent resistance against the Nazis. She was voted by young people in 2015 as the greatest German woman who ever lived. Other people influenced by Newman included William Wilberforce and his movement for the abolition of slavery.

The homily was so appropriate for members of Extinction Rebellion who chose to follow their conscience and risked a criminal record in the event of their arrest (1,650 arrests the last I heard) in order to try and save the planet. Amongst

01. The distinctive ‘Red Rebels’ have become one of the most recognisable groups participating in Extinction Rebellion’s demonstrations around the world. Image: Shutterstock
02. The ‘Faith Bridge’ banner and tents belonging to the various Faith groups who participated in Extinction Rebellion’s demonstration in London last October. Image: Sr Kate Midgley.
03. Faith leaders read from the Book of Revelation (Apocalypse) during the demonstration at Trafalgar Square, London. Image: Sr Kate Midgley.
04. Protestors outside Westminster Cathedral. Image: Max Reeves.

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LOSING WEIGHT FOR A GOOD CAUSE

01

Fiji has the highest incidence of diabetes in the world. Fr Frank Hoare writes about a Wellness project which the Columbans set up in a bid to tackle the disease and get people living and eating more healthily.

More than one third of the population of Fiji suffers from diabetes. It is a lifestyle disease. Fijian men could afford to eat big meals of local root crops and vegetables in the past because they walked a lot and worked hard in their gardens. But nowadays most live sedentary lives and eat processed foods as heartily as before. Even Fijian women, 60% of whom are obese, have been making some doubtful choices. Some sell vegetables in the market to buy imported noodles from the supermarket. Others sell freshly caught fish to buy tinned fish from the store. Obesity and processed food are the big causes of diabetes in Fiji.

We, in our Columban Formation House, invited a doctor to speak to us about healthy eating at the beginning of the last two years. She highlighted the problem of diabetes in Fiji and the foods that contributed to the disease. She stressed the importance of not eating between 7pm and 7am each day and recommended occasional fasting and eating plenty of fruit and vegetables. We made changes to our shopping list, bought a weighing scales, and decided to give up eating meat for Lent.

A Proposal

I was chatting about these changes one night to Lilian, our Columban bursar, and to Vitalina, a former Columban lay missionary. It occurred to me that organising a Wellness team project would have many advantages. It would make participants aware of living more healthily by eating less and exercising more. Fijians love to compete in groups and participating in teams would keep up the motivation for healthy living. It would also be an excellent way to prepare for the 25th anniversary of the foundation of our Columban Companions in Mission association in July. This association supports Columban mission in Fiji. Its members have promoted mission in churches and villages especially in October, the month of the missions. They have run catechetical camps in isolated places. They supported devastated communities traumatised by Cyclone Winston in 2016. The Columban Companions organise fundraising for Columban mission at their bi-annual gatherings. So it was decided that the proceeds of the Wellness campaign would be earmarked for the support of young Pacifican Columban seminarians.

I shared the idea with Lilian and Vitalina and they added ideas about how to organise the project. Vitalina volunteered to lead the effort. She set up a Facebook page and was the one to whom the teams reported their weight losing activities and efforts to attract sponsorship. The team registration fees, sponsorship money and donations were sent to Lilian, our regional bursar, and she kept account of the money raised. We contacted friends living in Fiji and Fijians overseas to invite them to participate.

A Prize

Seventeen teams with between 7 and 12 members registered. There were teams in Melbourne, Tonga, Manila, England, as well as from a number of parishes in Fiji and from two Columban communities. Some teams organised zumba sessions, others went walking early in the morning. People who could not participate sent in donations.

The Columban Companions in Mission's silver anniversary of foundation was held on Saturday, 6th July 2019 in a local High School in Suva. It drew about 200 supporters. A professional band, whose members were related to Columbans, volunteered their services free. Their contribution to the Mass and later for dancing was much

The project raised over F\$12,000. Everyone enjoyed the celebration and returned home enthused by their association with the Fiji Columban Companions in Mission. The Columban seminarians in Suva will be well-nourished for the next year. We hope that they will avoid obesity and diabetes. ●

Fr Frank Hoare is from Portlaoise in Ireland. He was ordained in 1973 and sent on mission to Fiji. He has done studies in psychology, anthropology and pastoral theology. Until recently he acted as vocations director for the Columbans in Fiji and Vicar for Teaching in the Archdiocese of Suva. He wrote a history of the Columbans in Fiji (1952 to the present).



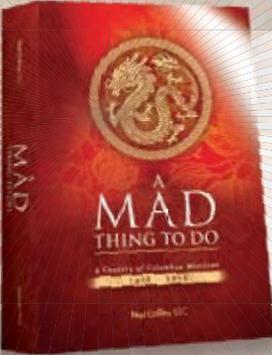
appreciated. There were a couple of talks on the history and aim of the Columban Companions in Mission.

The highlight of the celebration was the announcement of the winners of the Wellness competition for the group which had the highest average weight loss. We were delighted that the winning team was a family from Tonga who called themselves, 'Forget Me Nots' in memory of Losana Veehala, a former Columban lay missionary and dedicated supporter who died suddenly 18 months previously. This group won a cash prize (which they generously returned) and there were two other prizes awarded. However, this was a competition in which everyone won just by their participation. I myself was delighted to lose 5kg in weight.

01. Lilian Bing, the Columban bursar in Fiji, Fr Frank Hoare, vice director in Fiji, and Vitalina, a former Columban lay missionary - the trio behind the successful healthy living initiative.
02. Paulo giving yaqona at the Columban Companions in Mission (CCIM) silver anniversary celebration on 6th July 2019 in a local High School in Suva.
03. Sisi Marama, a Columban Companion in Mission pioneer, and Columban missionary Fr Carlo Jung at the CCIM celebration.

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A PIG'S HEAD AND A TALE

George G. Hogarty writes about a recent return visit to Korea where he was awed by one of the most technologically advanced nations in the world but also noted signs of the more traditional Korea he knew as a seminarian.

I visited Korea last February after an absence of 19 years. I had been invited by old friends to return to this mysterious yet very modern country, where I had previously spent two years doing my Columban Overseas Training Programme from 1980 to 1982. After ordination, I was sent to Chile in 1985. I had heard that Korea had become one of the most modernised and technologically advanced nations in the world. Even though I visited several times after finishing my Overseas Training, I wondered whether any of the more traditional Korea I had known as a seminarian - *Shin Hak Seng* in Korean - still existed?

The signs of modernity were everywhere, including the fast train that whisked me out of Seoul at 220 kilometres per hour to O Song. In O Song, a family I knew from my time on Overseas Training had arranged for me to take part in a bus trip planned by their local Neighbourhood Committee to visit Chil Gak San National Park, then Taechon in Cholla Pukdo. I was no sooner off the train than we set off on our trip.

Word soon passed around that there was a foreigner on the bus and that he was a Catholic priest. Of course, I was asked to stand up in the bus and give What is called *Cho Un Mal Sum* in Korean, which translates in English as "good word". I stumbled through the *Insa* which is the Korean word for greeting in English. After 37 years of not using the language my Korean had grown quite rusty but according to Korean custom I had to greet the people and thank them for their hospitality regardless of how well or poorly I managed to express myself. I was quickly finding out that even though Korea had modernised very rapidly the old traditions hadn't disappeared completely.

We duly arrived at Chil Gak San or Seven Peaks Mountain and everyone disembarked from the bus. The sun was shining but the weather was freezing, as it was the middle of winter, which is extremely cold in Korea. Soon a plastic mat was laid on the frosty, frigid ground of the car park and a low altar erected. Then with great fanfare a pig's head was pulled from a special bag and ceremoniously placed on a plate on the altar. All the Koreans, regardless of religion, the Buddhists and Shamanists and even the Christians (except for myself) did a profound bow to the pig's head. White envelopes containing seemingly generous donations of money were stuffed into its mouth as offerings. In traditional Korean folklore, the pig represents wealth and the act of placing money in the pig's mouth is a plea to the Spirit World for a continuance of financial security and prosperity. The fact that we had come to Chil Gak San was no accident either. Traditional Shamanism teaches that good spirits abound in places of natural beauty such as Chil Gak San and to come into their presence in nature is to invite health and well-being.

After the customary bows were completed plates of *Dok* or Korean rice pudding and copious bottles of *Soju* and *Makholi*, which are strong Korean alcoholic beverages were generously shared among all present.

After an hour communing with nature we were soon on our way to Taechon where all the travellers on the bus planned to eat at a popular fish restaurant.

However, all of a sudden the organising committee hit a snag! When the *Hwei Jang* or Neighbourhood President looked at the pig's head, now returned to its ceremonial bag, the money he thought was in the pig's mouth had disappeared. There was great consternation! How were they going to pay for the planned lunch in Taechon? The trip organisers were relying on the money that had been stuffed into the pig's mouth to pay the restaurant bill and now it was gone. As they carefully searched for the missing money trying not to alert the rest of the passengers to their plight, tensions silently mounted as the bus neared Taechon. The organisers were so desperate they began to silently wonder if the pig had mysteriously developed magical powers and snaffled the envelopes and the money? They were near despair as the restaurant loomed into sight.

Then all of a sudden one of the trip organisers stood up to get off the bus and a big wad of envelopes fell from his backside pocket. He'd put the envelopes into his tail pocket after the ceremony finished but had forgotten all about it after drinking copious glasses of Soju, no doubt to keep warm in the intense cold of the Korean winter. Since everyone else had also imbibed generously, no one had noticed him put the money in his back pocket. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief! As all the passengers piled off the bus heading for the restaurant, the *Hwei Jang* and his organisers thanked the pig for the sudden return of prosperity shouting happily "*Kenchanayo*", "It's alright." "*O Jing Oh Ka mogo bopshida*", "Let's go and eat some raw squid." It was then that I realised I was back in the Korea I knew of old. Some things just never change! ●



“All the Koreans, regardless of religion, even the Buddhists and Shamanists, except for myself, did a profound bow to the pig's head.”

01. At Chil Gak San or Seven Peaks Mountain in Korea, a pig's head was ceremoniously placed on a plate on the altar. Photo: George Hogarty.
02. In traditional Korean folklore, the pig represents wealth and the act of placing money in the pig's mouth is a plea to the Spirit World for continuance of financial security and prosperity. Photo: George Hogarty.
03. All the Koreans, regardless of religion, did a profound bow to the pig's head. White envelopes containing seemingly generous donations of money were stuffed into its mouth as offerings. Photo: George Hogarty.

Australian-born Columban, Fr George G. Hogarty, was ordained in 1983 and served in Chile and Peru. He is now based in Essendon, Australia.

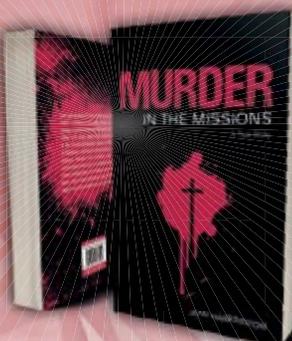
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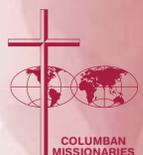
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VOLCANO PRIEST

Fr Donal McIlraith pays tribute to his former student, Fr Laurence Lulkon, Pastor of Bali Hai, who was one of the last to leave the South Pacific Island when the Marano Voui volcano erupted.

01

Chased from his parish by a volcano. That is the story of Fr Laurence Lulkon. Little did I think when I taught Laurence as a seminarian in Fiji that I was preparing him to deal with volcanoes.

Fr Laurence is Parish Priest of Lolopoepoe parish on the Island of Ambae in Vanuatu, which is located in the South Pacific. There were about 12,000 people on Ambae when their quiet lives were shattered on 16 September 2017 with the eruption of the Marano Voui Volcano.

Ambae is better known internationally as Bali Hai. From the nearby island of Santo, site of the US Navy during WWII, Ambae can be glimpsed covered with cloud and volcano smoke. It is said that J. A. Michener, author of 'Tales of the South Pacific', based his island of Bali Hai on Ambae.

Just before the eruption, the signs were so bad that the Vanuatu Government declared a state of emergency and ordered a complete evacuation of all 12,000 people on the island. Lolopoepoe was one of the ports of evacuation so thousands poured into the mission and Fr Laurence had to help with food and water as best he could. He himself was the last to leave. He said the people wept as they left and continued weeping until the island disappeared from view. Their way of life and their culture were in ruins.

People were evacuated to different islands. Fr Laurence went with those going to nearby Santo. From there he was able to fly to the island of Maevo once a month to celebrate mass and minister to the Ambae people who were there.

The people of Bali Hai were subsistence farmers and lived from their gardens and their plantations. In their plantations they grew Kava, a plant that is made into a popular drink. This along with copra and coco was their main source of income.

By the end of 2017, the state of emergency was lifted and people started returning to Ambae. But their hopes were dashed by another eruption on 9 April 2018 at 9pm. The next morning became like night for three hours and people had to use torches during this time. Ambae was covered with ash and life became impossible. Many children developed asthma. Some roofs collapsed under the weight of the ash, which also did much damage to the trees and shrubs. Rivers were poisoned. Yet, the root crops survived and this helped keep the people alive. Replanting became impossible though, because of the ash. It seemed like the end of Bali Hai.

I remember Bali Hai. I visited Lolopoepoe in 1993 for the ordination of another of my students, Fr Celestine Tari,

02



“For those who try to stay on Ambae, Fr Laurence says, there are enormous challenges. Their livelihood is gone. Most of their family are elsewhere. There are no more Sunday services and they do not have the support of their cultures.”

a native of the parish. Fr Celestine now works in the Marquesas, near Tahiti. The late Bishop of Vanuatu, Mgr Michel Visi, my one-time colleague at the Fiji seminary, was from the other parish, Nagnire, in the island. This is even closer to the volcano and is now completely uninhabitable. Ambae was a vibrant bright green tropical paradise back then.

The state of emergency ended on 26 November 2018 and the Government lifted the complete ban on Ambae. Some people returned again. They were concerned for their homes and gardens. The cattle and pigs had done great damage to the gardens. Some have tried to repair their homes and replant. The diocese allowed Fr Laurence to go back to Lolopoepoe. He returned in January 2019. He travels about on foot and by boat. The roads have been destroyed by the landslides that are everywhere and by the heavy rain. Sometimes, he told me, he has ten people for Sunday Mass. Drinking water is scarce. Two schools are functioning. Lolopoepoe Primary has just about 100 children. It is almost impossible to run primary schools under these conditions.

Most people have now tried to make a second home elsewhere. A group of visiting Australian scientists recently advised those still on Ambae to leave as they saw no future for them there. For those who try to stay on Ambae, Fr Laurence says, there are enormous challenges. Their livelihood is gone. Most of their family are elsewhere. There are no more Sunday services and they do not have the support of their cultures. At the moment there are no public services to Ambae, no planes where once there



03



04

were three airstrips, no banks, no public works or education department.

But the Pastor of Bali Hai is determined to stay. “The people feel happier and more secure when they have a priest with them,” Fr Laurence says. He finds that a priest has an important role and task listening to and accompanying the peoples in such a desperate situation. He sees himself staying on as the ‘Pastor of Bali Hai’ as long as life is at all possible there. What can we do to help Bali Hai, its people, its pastor and its schools in their hour of need? ●

Fr Donal McIlraith was ordained in 1971 and missioned in Fiji. He has been involved in formation and recently served as regional director in Fiji. Currently he oversees Mission Awareness and Education.

- 01. The eruption of the volcano on Tanna Island, Vanuatu. Image: Shutterstock.
- 02. Mount Yasur Volcano spews out ash over Tanna Island, Vanuatu. Image: Shutterstock.
- 03. An ash covered village on the Island of Ambae in Vanuatu. Image: Fr Laurence Lulkon.
- 04. Fr Donal McIlraith and Fr Laurence Lulkon, Pastor of Bali Hai.

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'FRIENDS OF THE EARTH'

Fr Liam O'Callaghan is helping people in Pakistan address the climate crisis one small step at a time. He talks to Sarah Mac Donald about the country's challenges and the plight of Christians in a predominantly Muslim setting.

Thirty years ago, a young man from Portlawn in Co Waterford joined the Columbans. Fr Liam O'Callaghan knew nothing about the Missionary Society of St Columban. As he was preparing to leave school he was thinking about priesthood. "I wanted to join a missionary group and have a missionary experience - I was fairly clear on that. I tried one or two other orders before the Columbans. It was actually through the **Far East** magazine that I made contact. We always got the magazine at home and I sent off the little coupon at the back for a 'Come and See' - that was my first connection. I hadn't known about or ever met a Columban before that."

Fr Liam joined the Columbans in 1989 and was ordained in 1997. "For my First Mission Assignment (FMA), which is the period during theology when students go overseas to a mission country, I went to Pakistan for a year and a half from 1994 to 1995. After ordination I was reappointed to Pakistan. So, I have been in Pakistan for about 20 years with the exception of two years when I was studying for a DMin in Muslim-Christian dialogue in Pakistan at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago."

The Columbans celebrated 40 years of ministry in Pakistan in 2019, marking the arrival in January 1979 of the first two members of the Society out of an initial group of six. Fr Liam arrived in a later wave

of missionaries and was based in the Pakistani city of Lahore for fifteen and a half years, including his time on FMA. Then in 2016, he moved to Hyderabad. "We decided that having Columbans based in a few areas about 1,000kms apart was not good for us. A decision was taken to focus on Sindh province and Hyderabad diocese in the south."

In Sindh, Fr Liam combines his role as Columban JPIC Co-ordinator with the role as Co-ordinator for Inter Religious Dialogue. "The idea being that you work on justice and ecology issues from an interfaith perspective." When he first came to Hyderabad, he was based in the Cathedral parish of St Francis Xavier as Bishop Samson Shukardin appointed him as the Coordinator of Hyderabad's diocesan Ecology Commission. He is now living in a predominantly Muslim area of the city, having decided that he would not be parish-based. Other Columbans in Sindh work with the marginalized Parkhari Kholi tribal group.

The 53-year-old is focused on the negative toll climate change is having on the people and the natural environment in Pakistan. According to the annual Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) published by Germanwatch, Pakistan ranks eighth in the list of countries worst affected by the climate crisis. "In terms of climate change, the effects are just horrendous and obvious. Month on month, year on year, the heat is increasing all the time. Last year on 30th April 2018 in a city called Nawabshah in Sindh, about two hours from where I live, a temperature was recorded of 50.2C which is a world record. Never before has a temperature above 50C been recorded in the month of April anywhere. It is increasing all the time."

Compounding the heat is the unpredictability of the

monsoons and heavier rainfall which often results in flooding. "Over the last ten years there has been some major flooding in Sindh during the monsoon seasons. Land in from the coast is being destroyed by the sea coming in, rising water levels are a factor." Part of the problem is the low level of forest coverage in Pakistan, totalling just 1.9%, which Fr Liam describes as "next to nothing". He believes that if there were more forests the flooding wouldn't be as severe.

"We have been training up two Christian community groups called *Mahool Dost* or 'Friends of the Earth' in the local language, through workshops and a plantation. It is very much at a local level. The idea is to work in a more in-depth way with a few people, so that they in turn become agents of change in their families and the wider community. We journey for a year with students and teachers in each school, and with the community groups."

On the thorny issue of discrimination against Pakistan's 2.5 million Christians, Fr Liam O'Callaghan describes the situation as "not good". There is, he underlines, "huge discrimination against Christians, as was seen in the Asia Bibi case. There are many Muslims who are completely unaccepting of Christians as equals. Plus, there are extremists who would be very sectarian in their ideology." However, Christians are not the only group discriminated against. Hindus, he explains, are "equally despised, the lower castes especially" while the Ahmadis are considered non-Muslim and even heretics by the Sunni majority and are the most oppressed group in the country.

He worries about the school drop-out rate among young Christian boys which is high. Few see the point of education when there is "massive unemployment". With so many young males dropping out, there are social consequences especially where girls may end up better educated. "Marriages often don't work because the woman is better educated than the man, who can't take that. Social issues emerge. Drugs and alcohol are big problems and many families are mired in debt with loan sharks. Education has failed to raise the Christian community. You would have hoped that there would have been some uplift, instead it is worse than ever. There is a need to in some way bolster the Christian community, especially the young people, by getting some sort of training for them. The Christian community is in a bad way and that is a real concern." ●

Fr Liam O'Callaghan from Co Waterford in Ireland was ordained in 1997 and has been on mission in Pakistan ever since.

“Education has failed to raise the Christian community. You would have hoped that there would have been some uplift, instead it is worse than ever.”



01. Fr Liam O'Callaghan (left) with Fr Paul Glynn, Columban regional director in the Philippines, at the launch of the book 'Murder in the Missions' in Butlerstown parish, Co Waterford. Photo: Sarah Mac Donald
02. Fr Liam O'Callaghan, Columban JPIC Co-ordinator for Pakistan, explaining the importance of trees for the environment to students from St Paul's High School in Hyderabad, Pakistan. Photo: Danish Yakoob.
03. Students learn in a practical way at Fr Liam's seminars how to look after seeds and saplings. Photo: Fr Pat Visanti.
04. Danish Yakoob, Fr Liam's co-worker in the Columban JPIC office, shows students what to look out for when they plant their saplings. Just 1.9% of Pakistan is covered by forests and the country is currently promoting a tree plantation drive to try and offset the effects of the climate crisis. Photo: Fr Pat Visanti.

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THE STRUGGLE IS THE PRAYER

Fr Chris Saenz looks at the nature of prayer. He challenges the unreal expectation that we will never doubt and that we should see everything as God's will.

Carmen and Diane, who were both equally well qualified, sought employment with the same local company. Both prayed to God for help, and the company granted both women interviews. Carmen was immediately given a position. Full of joy, Carmen thanked God for answering her prayers. Diane was told that she was not the right candidate for the position.

Diane couldn't understand why God failed her.

Seeing Diane looking rejected and depressed, Carmen tried to console her with the following words: "Diane, as they say, when God closes one door, he opens..." But Diane didn't allow Carmen to finish. In anger she yelled, "No! I don't want to hear that nonsense! Those clichés don't help me now!" Diane stormed out of the office leaving Carmen dumbfounded. Shaking her head, Carmen prayed that Diane would have more faith in God.

Carmen may have believed that her attempt to console Diane was noble, but Diane felt it was preachy. In reality, does Carmen understand God's will better than Diane does? Does God favour Carmen over Diane? Is Diane's anger justifiable? Does Carmen believe that Diane's anger makes her less faithful?

There may be no answers to these difficult questions but the 16th century Spanish mystic, St Teresa of Avila, may have wisely advised someone like Carmen: "Let us

look at our own shortcomings and leave other people's alone; for those who live carefully ordered lives are apt to be shocked at everything and we might well learn very important lessons from the persons who shock us. Our outward comportment and behaviour may be better than theirs, but this, though good, is not the most important thing; there is no reason why we should expect everyone else to travel by our own road; and we should not attempt to point them to the spiritual path when perhaps we do not know what it is" (Interior Castle, The Third Dwelling Places, Chapter 2, paragraph 13).

Sometimes our biggest obstacles in prayer are attitudes like Carmen's, which fail to understand the spiritual struggle with all its intense emotions and profound doubts judging it as a lack of faith. In reality, it is part of the deepening spiritual journey that many faithful believers, mystics and saints, have experienced. One of the greatest modern saints, St Teresa of Calcutta, in a collection of personal letters revealed that she struggled with doubts and darkness in her spiritual life for nearly 50 years: "In my soul I feel just that terrible pain of loss, of God not wanting me, of God not being God, of God not really existing" (Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light). Mother Teresa's life and struggles are a testimony to a faith not

hindered by doubt, but rather deepened by it. Faith does not eliminate doubt but allows doubt to transform it. Yet, many of us find difficulty in understanding this experience. Why?

Many of us were taught to believe that prayer is always polite and clean. We should never raise our voices. We should never doubt, and we always accept all things as





“Many of us were taught to believe that prayer is always polite and clean. We should never doubt, and we always accept all things as being God’s will. Maybe all things are not God’s will.”

being God’s will. We never consider the possibility that sometimes prayer is rough and messy. We do not consider that we can use strong words, scream, and even question why. Maybe all things are not God’s will. Prayer is simply presenting ourselves to God the way we are without masks, guises or fluff. If we feel angry, anger is our prayer. If we feel depressed, depression is our prayer. If we feel frustrated, frustration is our prayer. If we pray with an honest heart then the words we use, the feelings we have, and the way we pray is never inappropriate. Prayer doesn’t have to be perfect, it only has to be honest.

The biblical scene of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26, 36-46) reveals the nature of prayer. We see Jesus praying spontaneously, emotionally and, most importantly, honestly. Jesus struggled to join his will to his Father’s and he didn’t sugarcoat his feelings about it. Jesus sweated and was anguished in prayer. This is very contrary to the concept that prayer always brings us interior peace or some concept like Nirvana. In reality, prayer is a struggle and we shouldn’t evaluate a prayer as

successful if we get the “right emotions” like peace and happiness. Many times, we feel that our prayer time didn’t go well, we were distracted. But, that is not important. Prayer is what God does in our lives. Often, the fruits of prayer come after our prayer time in our daily lives when we are doing ordinary things. Many times, those fruits come weeks, months and even years after. In the case of Jesus, it came three days after. What is important is that God sees our efforts in trying and appreciates our attempts. That is why the struggle is the prayer. ●

Fr Chris Saenz is a native of Bellevue, Nebraska in the US. He was ordained a Columban missionary priest in 2000. He spent seventeen years in Chile where he was involved in spiritual direction, retreat work, giving workshops and the formation of Columban seminarians. In September 2017, Fr Saenz returned to the US and is currently assigned to the Hispanic Ministry of the Columbans.

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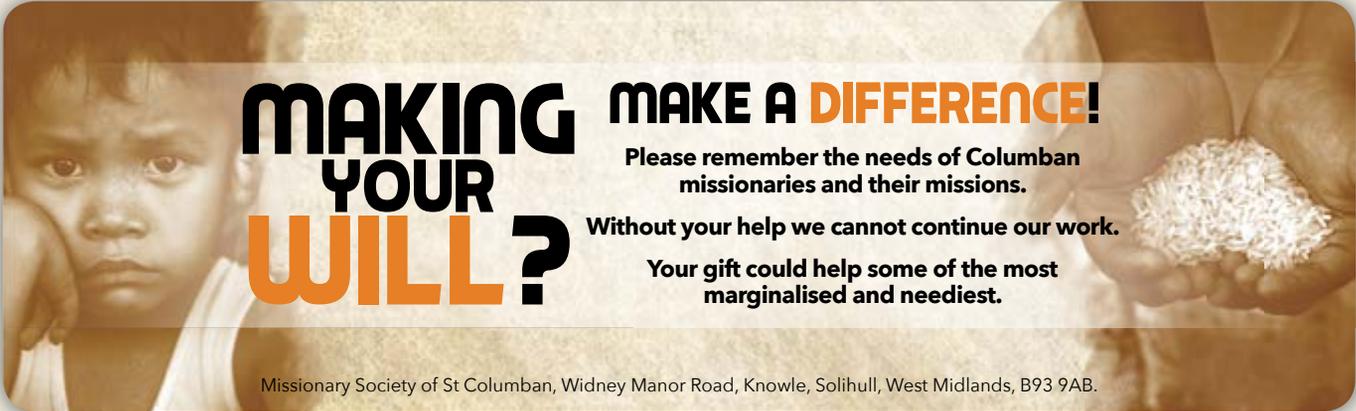


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BLATANT EXPLOITATION

01

Fr Jim Fleming reflects on Pope Francis' prayer intention for February 2020: 'That the cries of our migrant brothers and sisters, victims of criminal trafficking, may be heard and considered'.

A sylum seekers and trafficked migrants are amongst the most marginalised groups in British society today. The discovery last October of 39 migrants in the back of a lorry was an eye opener for most of us working with migrants and asylum seekers. We mourned the terrible loss of so many lives in that sealed container, which became their coffin, as they desperately sought a better life in this country. Their destiny was completely at the mercy of cruel slave masters.

We have always known that among the migrants and asylum seekers we deal with are a significant few who have been trafficked into this country but we haven't always been able to find out who helped them get here or what routes they used, unless they are willing to share that knowledge with us.

Asylum seekers and trafficked migrants in British society today are often regarded as 'stealers' of local jobs, scroungers, criminals and basically dishonest. The tabloid press has fuelled xenophobia leading to vulnerable

people being verbally abused and physically assaulted. Legislation over the past few years has been characterised by deterrence and control and has also contributed to the ongoing victimisation of asylum seekers. There is also the plight of so-called 'failed' asylum seekers who have come to the end of the legal process and can no longer access benefits or accommodation. Because they come from so-called unsafe countries like Syria, Iraq or Somalia they are not being repatriated and so they quickly become destitute and dependent on handouts - mainly from faith communities.

Meanwhile, living in the shadows of highly controlled nail bars and sealed cannabis-producing terraced houses are those who have been trafficked into this country, now living in squalid conditions and completely at the mercy of their slave masters. They seldom emerge into the daylight and are fed through letterboxes as they await the full growth of the cannabis plants. Their masters come to harvest the crop and move their slaves on to similar work elsewhere.

Thankfully here in Birmingham there are many charities seeking to alleviate the plight of both asylum seekers and those who have escaped their traffickers. Among them are Columban lay missionaries, co-workers and priests who lobby on their behalf, find shelter for them and do advocacy work with the legal services. They

“God loves the stranger giving him food and clothing... and you must love them, for you were strangers in Egypt.”

Deut. 10:18-19

also try to create awareness among local people, parishes and second level students of the need to reach out a hand of friendship to whoever has been exploited or seeks sanctuary.

National Refugee Week last summer highlighted the advantages of having refugees and migrants in this country where the labour shortage is acute and where the skills, talents and qualifications of so many new immigrants can be fully utilised. It was also an opportunity for refugees and migrants to affirm and share their cultural identities as well as facilitate real encounters between local people and refugees. It was a chance to deliver positive messages countering the fear, ignorance and the negative stereotyping of refugees and migrants.

Britain is now very much a multi-faith and multi-cultural society. Christians are more than ever invited to be a leaven within this society. We have to truly be salt for the earth and light for the world in this context. A new invitation is being offered to our communities to reach out to these strangers in our midst and make them feel welcome as well as making sure their basic needs are catered for.



Our ministry to asylum seekers and especially trafficked migrants here in Birmingham can be difficult, yet challenging and rewarding too. It's a constant reminder of the need to find room in our hearts for the strangers among us and work on their behalf for justice. It's also a reminder to us of how migrants and asylum seekers can be, not a

threat, but a gift to us and how much richness they can add to the diversity of modern day Britain. ●

Fr Jim Fleming was ordained in 1973 and went to the Philippines for five years. After that he served for 20 years in Pakistan, initially in Lahore and later with the Parkari Kholi people. He is currently based in Britain where he is involved in interfaith dialogue.

01. A refugee family in the Balkans during the 2015 refugee crisis. Image: Shutterstock.

02. Protestors at a World Refugee Rally. Image: Shutterstock.

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Early in the last century, when walking along a narrow path through the small farms in a remote part of China, a missionary met an elderly man coming towards him. When he saw the priest the man's face lit up and with a big smile he bowed to the foreigner and made the sign of the cross. No word was spoken but there was an immediate understanding between the two of them. They might not be able to speak each other's language but by this sign the man revealed that he had faith in Jesus. The priest blessed him and they went on their respective journeys.

What was the first thing you did this morning? Probably, though still only half awake you made the Sign of the Cross. And the last thing at night before settling down to sleep? The Sign of the Cross. Our lives begin with this sign when at baptism our foreheads are signed with the cross; and when we die in the faith this sign will be given as a final gesture. For many the cross will mark our graves as we await the resurrection. We begin every Mass, "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

The cross really is our branding. Just as that Chinese man was instantly recognised as one who believed in Jesus, so too with us. We are marked out as belonging to the Lord. His seal is on us, burned into our souls. "He has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (Cor 1:22). We belong totally to God. Here is my home and no matter what, I will never be turned away.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. At the end of St Matthew's Gospel when he commissioned his disciples to go out into the world, Jesus told them to baptise people in this

formula - the blessed Trinity. Here we have the profound mystery of our faith. Here we have the Cross that is rooted and planted in the lives of all his faithful followers. Both the words and the gesture are deeply significant, but we use them so often we seldom reflect on their importance. A quick gesture made before we begin to pray - as though this was not a prayer. Unaware of the profundity of our action we do not realise that, as someone has said, "There are few moments of prayer that are so intense and so concentrated in meaning as the making of the Sign of the Cross."

Many people of course, do understand and make the Sign of the Cross with great devotion. St Bernadette, for example, was noted for the reverence with which she always blessed herself. Her example was our Blessed Lady who appeared to her in the grotto at Lourdes. She, the Mother of God, blessed herself with profound reverence. Something the little visionary never forgot and always followed. It grieved her deeply to see people bless themselves carelessly, with no thought of what they were doing, no consciousness of the presence of the Blessed Trinity. She knew that to make the Sign of the Cross well was already a great prayer.

As we enter a new year, begin a new decade, let us do so full of faith, full of hope and with joy, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." ●

Sr Redempta Twomey

“He has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”

REST ⁱⁿ PEACE



Sr Miriam Cousins



Fr Kieran Heneghan



Fr Patrick ('Pat') O'Connor

Sr Miriam Cousins died unexpectedly in hospital in Seoul, Korea on 17 August 2019. She was 78 years old. Miriam, from Athlone, was about to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of her profession of vows a week later. Although she had been in hospital for several weeks her death came as a shock to everyone. After her early schooling in St Peter's, Athlone, Miriam trained as a nurse and a midwife in England. She joined the Columban Sisters in October 1966, making her novitiate in Magheramore. After vows she was sent to Korea where she spent the rest of her life. Working first in the Sister's hospital and nursing school in Mokpo, Miriam took a year off to take a course in teaching midwifery. On her return she established a midwifery school where many young Korean nurses were trained. She later became very aware of the pressures on young women and their being forced into prostitution. Visiting the red-light districts and befriending the prostitutes, she felt urged to open a small community house and help them to re-insert into the community. A chance visit from a man with HIV/AIDS focused her ministry on these sufferers. In a society unwilling or unable to take care of them she, with congregational funding, established a small home which was later expanded to help more people. Her hands-on approach in her ministry, especially to those on the fringes struck a chord with many. In 2005, the Korean Government awarded her the highest possible honour in recognition of her work. A year later she received the Athlone Person of the Year award. She continued her ministry until it became clear that she needed hospital care. She is buried in Chunchon, Korea.

Fr Kieran Heneghan was born on 9 September 1924 in Knock, Claremorris, Co Mayo. He was educated at Knock NS, Casla NS and St Jarlath's College, Tuam. He came to Dalgan in 1942 and was ordained a priest on 21 December 1948. Kieran was appointed to the Philippines where he would serve during the following 29 years. After a brief period in Malate and Morong, he was among the first to be assigned to Zambales. He served in four main parishes, San Antonio (1958-1964), Castillejos (1964-1974), Santa Cruz (1974-1978) and St Joseph's, Olongapo City (1974-1978). In the post-war years all these parishes needed churches repaired and rebuilt. They also needed a whole system of schools and

trained catechists to offset the effects of the strong Aglipayan presence. Kieran was responsible for introducing a very effective tuberculosis eradication programme and campaigned until the Government eventually funded the necessary medicine. In 1979 he was appointed to Ireland where he was involved in mission promotion and as a chaplain in Bolton Street Technical College. From 1984 to 1996 he was chaplain to Filipino communities in London and around Britain. In 1996, he returned to his native Knock, and helped out in the local parishes. In failing health, he returned to the Dalgan Retirement Home at the end of 2013. Kieran will be remembered as a kind, generous, gentle, non-judgmental priest. He died in the Retirement Home on 22 September 2019 and was buried in Knock, Co Mayo on 25 September 2019.

Fr Patrick ('Pat') O'Connor was born on 14 January 1935 in Wexford. He came to Dalgan in 1952 and was ordained a priest on 21 December 1958. He was assigned to Korea and spent his first term in the Vicariate of Chunchon, serving in the parishes of Hoengsong and Yongsomak. His last three of those years were spent as secretary to Bishop Thomas Quinlan. In 1968, he was appointed to promotion work in the US and was superior of the Milton MA house from 1971-1974. He was reappointed to Korea in 1975 and served as pastor of To Bong Dong in Seoul. Two years later he was appointed to Australia. He spent the following four years on promotion work in the Brisbane area. In 1983, he was appointed to Britain and became parish priest of Widnes, Liverpool, and in 1988 vice-director of the Region of Britain. He was also elected as a delegate to the 1988 Chapter. In 1989, he moved to Solihull. In the years up to 1994 he served successively in the London and Glasgow houses. In 1994 he became parish priest in Cong. In 2002 he was appointed house-superior in Dalgan and served for fourteen years in that role. In 2016 he became chaplain to the Columban Sisters in Magheramore and served there until ill-health forced him to move to the Retirement Home. He died in the Hermitage Hospital, Dublin, on 26 September 2019. Pat was a wonderful storyteller and a gifted preacher. The variety of his appointments are an indication of his many talents.

May they rest in peace.

MEET MR KATO

Fr Barry Cairns writes about one of his parishioners who made headlines in Japan for promoting the message that loving our neighbour means driving safely.

I would like to introduce Mr Dismas Shigeru Kato. He was born 90 years ago in a small fishing village called Kushimoto in Wakayama Province of Japan. In his youth, when he was drafted into the wartime army, he built up a massive debt for alcohol at different bars.

Then he got married. His wife was very patient with him. Mr Kato worked for the Kansai Electric Power Company. He cared for external power lines and he paid off his debts bit by bit. Then Mr Kato became a Christian, first with the local Protestant Church and later the Catholic Church where he was baptised. He chose as his baptismal name 'Dismas', which is the traditional name of the penitent brigand on a cross beside Jesus at his crucifixion.

At this time I was pastor of Kushimoto, which was one of the smallest parishes in Japan. It was definitely a mission of primary contact to the unevangelised! At Sunday Mass we had 5-10 people attending. However after Mass, 50 non-Christian children from the village came for Sunday school. Mr Kato's daughter, Majimi, was the only Christian.

It was here that Mr Dismas Shigeru Kato really shone in the darkness. We used a projector showing a filmstrip about a small Catholic boy in Africa to the children. This was long before TV came to the village. The filmstrip was in colour and had many episodes. Mr Kato would study each episode during the week and in the darkness needed for the projector could give off the story without looking at the script. Each character in the story was given its own distinctive voice. It was a masterful and captivating presentation. I often heard the children discussing both the developing story and its Christian message.

At this time too Kato-san was giving witness in another field. The Kansai Electric Company had a trade union seminar. The subject was traffic safety. During the open discussion Mr Kato stood up and stated, "As many of you know I am a Christian. You have probably heard that Christ 2,000 years ago was strong on love of others. A modern aspect of love of neighbour is driving safely. Drivers should be concerned and respectful towards others who use the road. Aggressive, dangerous driving can be a form of self-centeredness. Careful, considerate driving is a form of love of neighbour. Let this be our motive for safe driving."

A moment of spontaneous reflective silence was followed by massive applause. This was a new, different and appealing approach. The provincial section of the newspaper featured Kato-san and his talk emphasising motivation for safe driving instead of just keeping rules for their own sake.

At 90 Shigeru Kato has moved into a Catholic-run retirement home. Here he is a leader of a group who pray the Rosary together. I pray for more like Kato-san to evangelise this nation of Japan. ●

Fr Barry Cairns was born in New Zealand in 1931. After studying to be a Columban missionary in Australia, he went to Japan in 1955 after ordination. After eleven years in parish work in Japan, he spent the next 13 years on the staff of the Columban seminary in Sydney before he returned to Japan in 1983. At 88 years of age he still serves in a small parish in Yokohama City.

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JESUS CALLS FISHERMEN

Jesus needed friends to help him with his work. As he walked down by the Sea of Galilee, he saw some fishermen casting their net into the water to catch fish. They were brothers: Simon and Andrew.

Jesus called to them and they came back to the shore.

"Follow me," said Jesus, "and I will make you fishers of people." At once, the two men left their nets and joined him, for they knew Jesus was the promised Messiah.

A little further on, Jesus came to the brothers James and John. They were in their father's fishing boat, mending the nets with their father, Zebedee.

When Jesus called to them, they immediately left the boat and their father and followed him.

They, too, knew that Jesus was sent by God.

Jesus chose these men not because they were clever or gifted, but because he knew they were strong, honest and loyal to God. He would later give Simon a new name: Peter, which means 'rock'. And James and John he called the 'sons of thunder' because they were keen, fiery young men.

Instead of gathering fish into their nets, Peter, Andrew, James and John would gather people into the kingdom of God.

These four disciples stayed close to Jesus, always learning from him and helping him as he travelled the country, teaching and healing. ●

Read also: **Luke Ch5: vs1-12.**



BIBLE QUIZ

NUMBER
83

- 1 In Paul's letter to the Romans ch.16, who was then living in Rome but had been the first convert to Christ in the whole of Asia?

- 2 Supply the missing word from ch.1 of John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the"?

- 3 In ch.10 of his Gospel, who does Matthew place first in his list of twelve apostles?

- 4 In Luke ch.2, the census was the first to take place during whose governorship of Syria?

- 5 In Luke ch.14, what should a farmer consider before building a watch tower?

- 6 In John ch.2, during the wedding feast of Cana, why was the master of the banquet surprised?

£20 vouchers for the first three correct entries received!

Consult your Bible, answer the questions above and send your entry to: Bible Quiz N° 83, St Columban's, Widney Manor Rd, Solihull, West Midlands, B93 9AB, before 28th February 2020.

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- WINDMILL



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L	M	B	J	A	L	Z	B	C	W
S	C	A	R	E	C	R	O	W	W
U	A	R	B	Y	J	M	V	M	F
A	N	N	P	L	M	J	P	E	V
C	H	A	R	V	E	S	T	Q	J
U	M	W	I	N	D	M	I	L	L

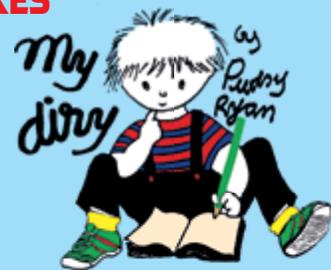


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PUDSY'S DIRTY - FIND THE 10 SPELLING MISTAKES

Back in school after the Christmas hols all tired as dogs except for the gerls and they kept telling us about all the lovely things they got and everything. And us boys were saying why do they have to talk such nonsins. And when I got back home our old aunt Mamie was visiting and drinking tea and so she said what has our young scholar to say for himself we're all dying to hear. And I said aunt Mamie you are lucky you dont hafta lissen to all the rubbish them girls talk. And she said excuse me what's this rubbish you are talking about.

And I said why can't these girls talk about football and everything like us lads. And she said thats becoss thos girls are smart and know how to use their heads not like you yung fellas who think their heads are only for wacko haircuts and heading the football. And i am thinking I dunno what else could our heads be for if not for that. And next day at school Ms Flinn was saying something about our next essay how we only have to use our heads or something. So if essays were like football maybe we could use our heads too...



Help Puddy correct his spelling to win a £15 voucher.

Rewrite the story and send to Puddy's Dirty, St Columban's, Widney Manor Rd, Solihull, West Midlands B93 9AB, before 28th February 2020.

HA! HA!

1. How can you spell cold with two letters?
2. What goes up, but never comes down?
3. What starts with a P and ends with an E and has a million letters in it?
4. What's the best thing to put into a pie?
5. What is green and sings?

1. IC (icy)
2. Your age!
3. Post Office!
4. Your teeth!
5. Elvis Parsley

COMPETITION WINNERS

NOVEMBER 2019

Claudia Donnelly
Newton Le Willows,
St Helens



Colpaint - Aged 7 and Under

Jensen Perry
Hartlepool,
Cleveland



Ally Daniels
Bury St. Edmunds,
Suffolk



Colpaint - Aged 8 and Over

Sophia Watanabe
Harborne,
Birmingham



Puddy's Dirty

The Cobweb Spider

By Elizabeth McArdle



High up between the wall and the ceiling of your home, the cobweb spider dwells. I appreciate that this is not a place you would normally frequent, but I guarantee that unknown to you, she is there. Her pale, yellow-brown body which is almost translucent can be difficult to see but her large, loose web made from spider silk is easier to spot. Her days are spent suspended on her web watching with her eight eyes for any unsuspecting insect or fellow spider that might wander into her territory. The rest is history. She binds the poor unfortunate creature in a bundle of silk and dines on it in her own time.

Despite all this I would not like you to have a poor opinion of this super spider. She deserves better press. For example, when she lays her eggs, they are skilfully wrapped in her own silk strands and placed on her back. The precious bundle of about fifty eggs is delicately carried for 17-24 days. When they hatch

into spiderlings, she continues to carry and care for them for another week until they disperse into her web and beyond. As the spiderlings grow, they must keep moving farther apart because if they make contact with each other, it could be brother eat sister or vice versa.

The beauty of having cobweb spiders in your home is knowing that they keep everything in balance. Because their diet is primarily insects, they keep pest numbers down, flies are kept in check and your home is actually cleaner because spiders peacefully live there. Having God's creation so close is a special privilege and we rejoice in knowing that we share our homes with some unseen but very beneficial creatures. These secret guests take care of us and hopefully, we unknowingly take care of them too. ●

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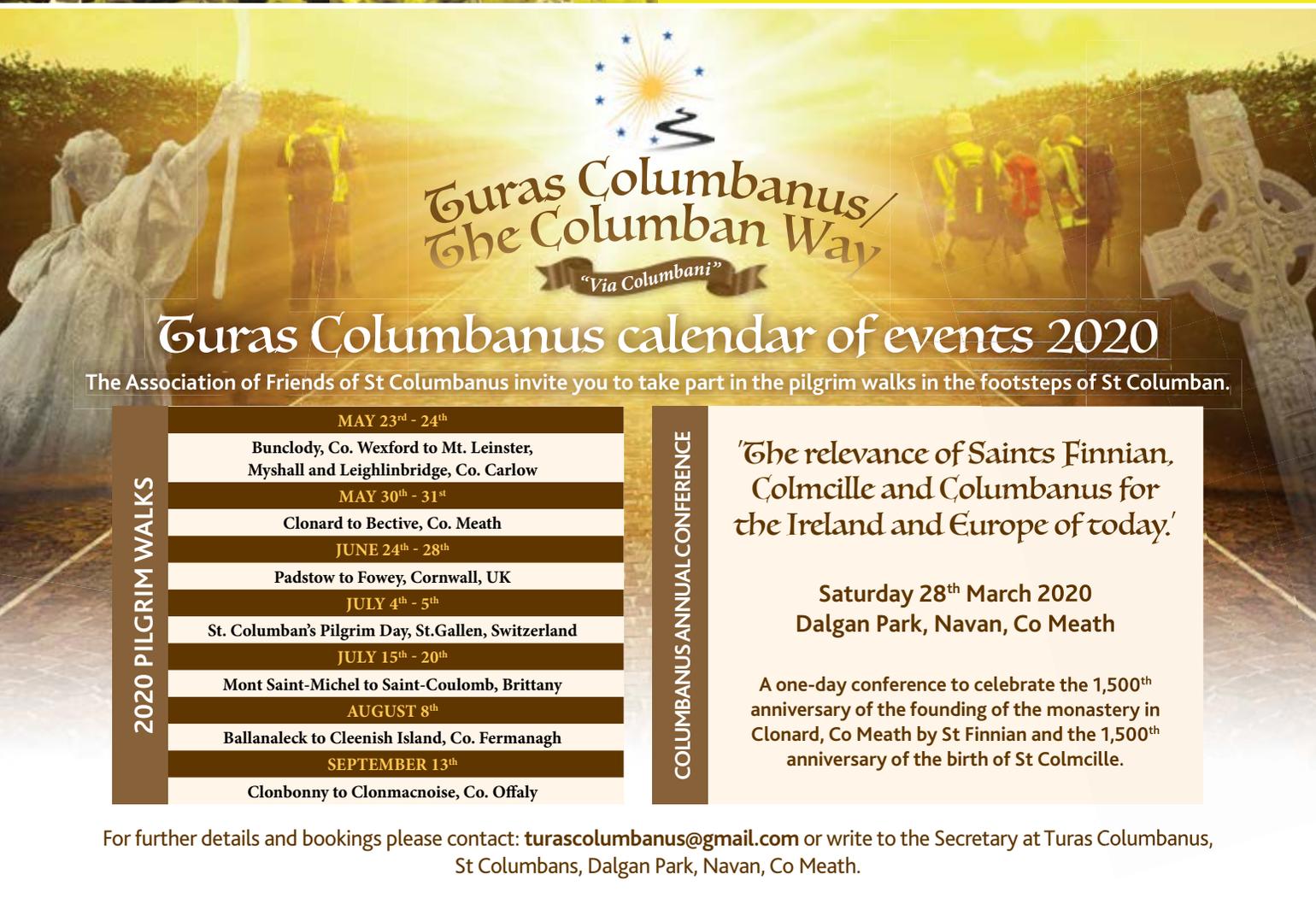


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POPE FRANCIS

“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.



Turas Columbanus The Columban Way

“Via Columbani”

Turas Columbanus calendar of events 2020

The Association of Friends of St Columbanus invite you to take part in the pilgrim walks in the footsteps of St Columban.

2020 PILGRIM WALKS

MAY 23 rd - 24 th
Bunclody, Co. Wexford to Mt. Leinster, Myshall and Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow
MAY 30 th - 31 st
Clonard to Bective, Co. Meath
JUNE 24 th - 28 th
Padstow to Fowey, Cornwall, UK
JULY 4 th - 5 th
St. Columban's Pilgrim Day, St.Gallen, Switzerland
JULY 15 th - 20 th
Mont Saint-Michel to Saint-Coulomb, Brittany
AUGUST 8 th
Ballanaleck to Cleenish Island, Co. Fermanagh
SEPTEMBER 13 th
Clonbonny to Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly

COLUMBANUS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

'The relevance of Saints Finnian, Colmcille and Columbanus for the Ireland and Europe of today.'

Saturday 28th March 2020
Dalgan Park, Navan, Co Meath

A one-day conference to celebrate the 1,500th anniversary of the founding of the monastery in Clonard, Co Meath by St Finnian and the 1,500th anniversary of the birth of St Colmcille.

For further details and bookings please contact: turascolumbanus@gmail.com or write to the Secretary at Turas Columbanus, St Columbanus, Dalgan Park, Navan, Co Meath.