

far east



MAGAZINE OF THE COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES



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(1944 - 2001)
Peacemaker

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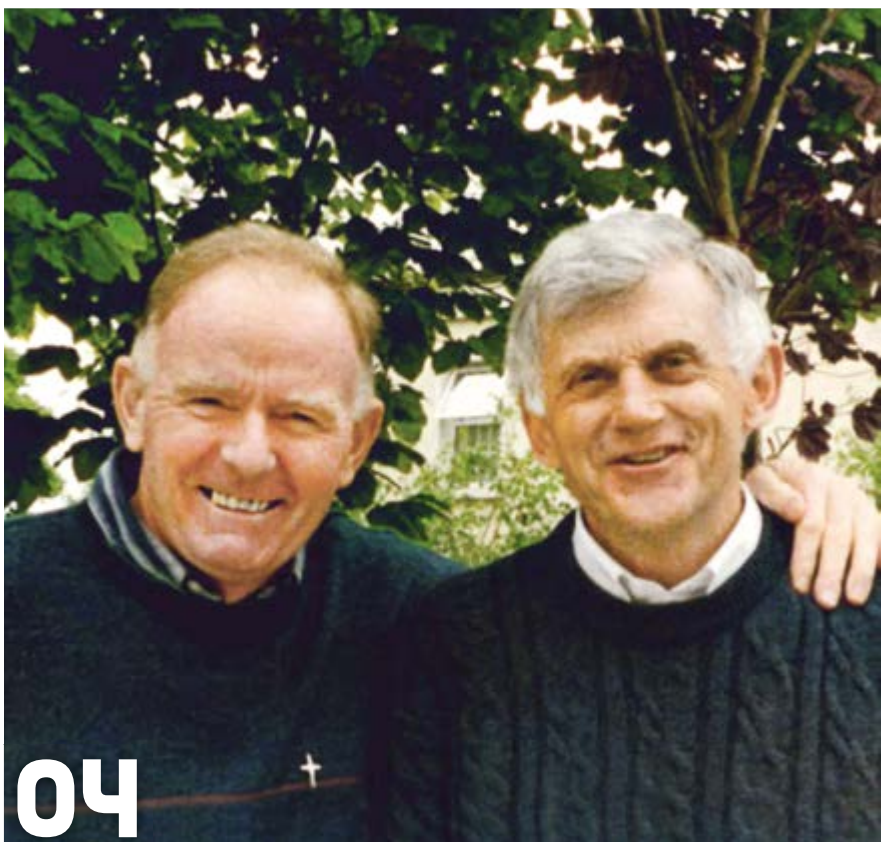
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THE FAR EAST

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

Guest Editor

Fr Donal Hogan

Editor

Sarah Mac Donald
editorfareast@gmail.com

Assistant Editor

Sr Abbie O'Sullivan

Layout & Editorial Assistant

Breda Rogers

Manager

Stephen Awre

Original Design

Gabriel German Carbone
ggcarbone@gmail.com

Printers

Walstead Bicester, Oxfordshire

Columban Websites

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

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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

Fr Rufus Halley in Dalgan Park in May 1999 during a home visit. Photo: Fr Alo Connaughton.

In the past editors have often attempted to find a unifying theme for a given issue of our **Far East**. This may well be the first time that almost all those contributing to an issue are focused on just one of our members. The occasion is the twentieth anniversary of the murder of Fr Rufus Halley. We would like to thank **Fr Donie Hogan**, our guest editor on this special issue, for his dedication and vision in bringing this special issue to fruition as well as Mary Joy Rile-Servicio, who compiled the book **Popong: Stories on Fr Rufus**.

Rufus was a very charming man with a great capacity for befriending people. Everybody loved him and everybody was happy and comfortable in his presence. They enjoyed being with him as one who never said anything hurtful to or about people. He talked little about himself but there was another deeply serious side to him. He was always searching for what was really being asked of him in life's unfolding. The searching was invariably a self-searching for that in him which was limiting his freedom to respond creatively. He went through an extended series of retreats and intensive spiritual guidance.

After such "time in the desert", he was ready for a new challenge which came through an encounter with Bishop Bienvenido Tutud, then bishop of Iligan in the Philippines. Bishop 'Benny', on his own initiative, had gone to Pope Paul VI and proposed that it would be good if the largely Muslim upland part of the diocese be separated from the Diocese of Iligan and set up as a distinct Prelature of Marawi. Responding to the Pope's understandable anxiety as to who he could possibly find willing to go to such a tiny and dangerous place, Bishop 'Benny' volunteered himself, assuring the Pope that there would be no difficulty in finding someone to take over Iligan. Rufus was to become part of this new initiative.

Rufus applied himself to learning Maranao, opting to help out as a salesperson in the store of a Maranao businessman in Marawi. This immersion in the living linguistic community was not simply for language-learning. For Rufus and his bishop, involvement in inter-religious dialogue was far from being a matter for professional theologians. The path to life-enhancing inter-religious dialogue for all was to be that of participation in the



dialogue of life with others: what the Flemish mystic Jan van Ruysbroeck called "the humility of a common task", sharing life with each other.

Rufus was certainly not alone, either in his thinking or in the intensity of his prayer life. The others in the Prelature shared the same vision. And yet, I think it is fair to say that he was an inspiration for the others in creating a pathway in how inter-religious dialogue might be done. It was all about relating with people in profound respect and becoming close to them: only in this way is mutual trust built up at a very deep level.

This was a quite new venture, calling for a different mode of presence to another faith tradition, not with a view to conversion but with a view to creating deep-rooted relationships between two faith traditions. From the viewpoint of Columban missionaries, it seemed imperative to grow into the dynamics of this new initiative. We are present in Asia to vast numbers of people deeply shaped by irreducibly distinct faith traditions. Despite the pluralism, there is to be found a significant commonality of profoundly religious values. These values must be affirmed and revered in mutual appreciation through what we refer to as inter-religious dialogue. It is a necessary part of humanity's journey to the Kingdom of God. ●

Fr Brendan Lovett

Theologian Fr Brendan Lovett was ordained in 1966 and went on mission to the Philippines, where he taught theology for over forty years. His most recent book 'A Dragon not for the Slaying' was published by Claretian Publications. He is now retired in Ireland.

01. A motorbike was Fr Rufus 'Popong' Halley's favourite mode of transport in Marawi. Photo: Fr Donie Hogan.



'TIME TO SAY GOODBYE'



Fr Donal Hogan was a classmate of Fr Rufus Halley's and they both served as missionaries in the Philippines. He recalls the outpouring of grief at the memorial services for Rufus in Mindanao, Butlerstown and Dalgan Park.

On 28th August 2001 in the early afternoon, I received a phone call in Ballymun parish from Fr Tom O'Reilly, our vice-director, to say that my friend and classmate Rufus Halley had been killed in Malabang. He said the family had just been informed through Fr Frank Hopkins, a family friend in Waterford. It seemed that Rufus was killed in a failed kidnap attempt.

Shortly afterwards I called Rufus' brother Gerry Halley, who was still in shock and was wondering what was to be done next. I told him that I would be going to the Philippines for the funeral. He then got in touch with the rest of the family and they decided that the five brothers would also travel to the Philippines for the funeral. Their mother would remain at home and their sister, Evelyn, would come from Canada to be with her. Rufus' father had died several years before.

We arrived in Manila airport on the evening of Friday 31st August and were met by reporters from the national newspapers and TV stations. From there we went to the Columban HQ in Singalong Street in Manila. The next morning at dawn we got a flight to Cagayan de Oro in Mindanao. We arrived at the church where a crowd of over 2,000 had gathered inside and outside. Loudspeakers were set up for the overflow so that they could follow the Funeral Mass. The people, both Muslim and Christian,

had held an overnight vigil in the church. As we approached, the song that was ringing out around the plaza was 'Time to Say Goodbye' sung by Andrea Bocelli and Sarah Brightman. Rufus had brought this CD back with him from Ireland about six weeks previously. According to his assistant Fr Yrap Nazareno, Rufus had been playing this song in Malabang many times during the weeks ahead of his death. "It was as if he had a premonition that he might be killed," he related.

During his homily, Bishop Ephrem de la Pena of Marawi Prelature said, "We have laboured for 25 years with little fruit. But now the seed that was planted has been watered by the blood of Fr Rufus and we see the two communities of Christians and Muslims becoming one in their grief for their friend. What he laboured for in life has been accomplished in his death."

At the end of Mass, Connie Balindong, a Muslim, spoke of her friend Rufus (or *Popong* as he was fondly called by the people of Malabang). She said, "We have lost a man of peace, a man of love, but his vision will continue. His legacy will never die." She was treasurer of Our Lady of Peace High School in Malabang, of which Rufus was director. Gerry Halley then spoke movingly on behalf of the family. He thanked the people, Christians and Muslims, for their kindness to Rufus in life and their care for him in death as shown in the outpouring of





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grief and love during the previous few days. "I know Rufus would forgive those who killed him and so do we, while letting justice take its course," he told them. "As much as we would have liked to bring him back home, Rufus wanted to be buried in Mindanao, his home."

Finally, a message from Pope John Paul II was read offering "his heartfelt condolences" to Rufus' family and to the Columbans. The coffin was led from the church with a guard of honour formed by Rufus' Columban classmates in the Philippines. Then on to the burial in the Divine Shepherd Memorial Park in Cagayan de Oro with many people accompanying the hearse. The last to leave the graveside with the brothers were students from Malabang parish school, both Christian and Muslim.

Then we travelled back to Ireland for the memorial Mass on 8th September in Butlerstown, Co Waterford with Rufus's mother and Evelyn his sister and all the Halley family. Bishop Lee and many diocesan priests as well as Columbans concelebrated. Again, loudspeakers had been erected for the overflow outside the church.

Dalغان Park hosted a final memorial Mass on 11th September with Columbans and the Halley family. Dalغان is the home of the Columbans in Ireland and the place where Rufus spent seven years training for missionary life and where he was ordained in 1969. The Mass was scheduled for 7pm but as we were preparing, word came through of the tragic events in the US. It was hard to grasp what we were hearing about planes crashing into the Twin Towers. Adding to the sense of tragedy was the fact that Gerry Halley's father-in-law, an American, was en route that evening to the US.

The principal celebrant at the

Mass was Rufus' friend and co-worker in Marawi Prelature, Fr Kevin McHugh. The homily was preached by Fr Des Hartford, another close friend of Rufus and former Apostolic Delegate in Marawi, who had himself been kidnapped in 1997. He said, "Rufus was a person of total presence. Wherever he was he was fully alive and present. He loved nothing more than to sit down at a meal and converse with others. Rufus loved his family dearly and he knew that his family loved him. It was in the family that Rufus became the person that he was. In a situation of violence and injustice he stood with people in their pain and their powerlessness. And he became a source of life for them in the midst of darkness."

The people of Butlerstown loved Rufus and were determined to keep his memory alive. The old school was refurbished and became the Fr Rufus Halley Memorial Centre. Over the years under the leadership of octogenarian, Billy Walsh and the parish team, the people fundraised for Malabang parish through fun runs, raffles and even an auction of handicrafts donated by parishioners. Walter, Rufus' eldest brother, who was an auctioneer, oversaw the proceedings. Sadly, both Walter and Billy passed away in 2018. ●

Fr Donal Hogan was a missionary in the Philippines for 30 years. He is now based in Dalغان where he is Deputy Safeguarding Officer for the Columbans in Ireland.

01. September 1969 in Bayside New York. Frs Rufus Halley, John Brazil and Donie Hogan on their way to the Philippines for their first time. Photo: Fr Donie Hogan/ Columban Missionaries.
02. Rufus Halley and Des Hartford's last meeting in Carlow in June 2001, a few weeks before Rufus returned to the Philippines for the last time. Photo: Columban Missionaries.
03. The Funeral Mass in Cagayan de Oro as Rufus' brothers grieve before his coffin. (From left) Walter, Eamonn, John, Gerry and Emmet, with a friend of Rufus, Tzoi Tanzo. Photo: Donie Hogan.
04. The class of October 1962, a month after arriving in Dalغان Park. Rufus Halley is seated in the front row, second from left. Donie Hogan is immediately behind him and Sean McDonagh beside him. Photo: Michael Diamond.

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MURDER in THE MISSIONS



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Jean Harrington, author of 'Murder in the Missions', recalls how reading an article about the killing of a 57-year-old Columban missionary in 2001 spurred her to write about the efforts of Fr Rufus Halley and Fr Des Hartford in conflict resolution between Muslim and Christian communities in the Philippines.

One of the most frequent questions I get about **Murder in the Missions** is people asking me why I wrote it. The simple answer is that I am a writer, a storyteller. I had no connection to the Columbans, or the Philippines, and had no background in religion or conflict resolution. But something about the lives of Frs Rufus Halley and Des Hartford drew me to them.

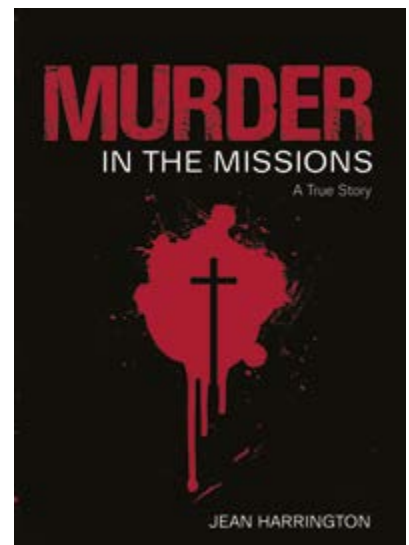
I read an article about Rufus's murder in August 2001, and I was instantly captivated by his life. The horror of his violent death contrasted so enormously with his life as a peacemaker. There was something in the way that people spoke about him that made me realise he was not anything like the priests I had known growing up in Ireland. The article also referred to Des Hartford, who had been kidnapped in the region several years earlier. It described the lives of these men who lived peacefully but were surrounded by violence and chaos.

I cut out the article and vowed to come back to it, as I was in the middle of writing a different book. It wasn't until 2004 that I contacted the Columbans in Navan, asking if they knew how I could get in touch with Fr Des Hartford. I was surprised when the front desk put me straight through to him. I outlined my idea about writing a book on his and Rufus's life, and after taking some time to discern, he agreed to it.

Sadly, he knew he was living with terminal cancer, and would not live to see the book completed.

We spent the next few weeks meeting and I interviewed him for hours at a time. He had a sharp mind and described his friends and colleagues so well that he brought everyone to life for me.

"You know, you'll have to go to the Philippines," he said to me one day. I knew he was right. As much as he could describe the colours, the smells, the events, and how he felt throughout, I had to meet the others, and experience the Philippines for myself so I could better understand the culture, the geography and the people. I



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had to meet his Filipino friends and visit the locations where he lived.

He connected me with them – lay missionaries, and priests and sisters from different orders. “They will look after you, bring you where you need to go and introduce you to the right people.”

He put me in touch with Fr Donie Hogan, who had been the superior in charge of the Columbans in the Philippines when Des was kidnapped. Donie became a key contact, and a great friend. Frs Paul Glynn and Yrap Nazereno acted as my guides in the Philippines, ensuring that I interviewed as many people as I possibly could, both Muslim and Christian. They smuggled me into the Islamic City of Marawi in the back of the bishop’s van, advising me to stay low in case of any ambushes or roadblocks. Each person I met added more colour and detail as I learned about the deep bonds of friendship between the men.

It was because Rufus and Des had forged such genuine relationships throughout their lives that it was possible for me to tell their stories, many years after they were gone. When people ask me about the book, I say that it is a book about priests, politics, and conflict, but ultimately, it is a book about love.

It is a book about the strongest type of love that exists between humans – the type of love where people make sacrifices; where people are willing to stay in an area even though they know they might die, or be kidnapped, because they want to live in solidarity with their neighbours. This is the love that Rufus and Des exemplified. And all the Columbans I have met since writing this book have the same drive to make the world a better place.

Although it seems like a simple question, with a simple answer – *why did*



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I write this book - upon reflection, I know that there was something driving me and helping me to persevere, even when my personal life took many unexpected twists and turns, and I felt like I couldn’t continue with it. But I continued because Des had believed in me when I first approached him, and many people trusted me with their stories and memories. Thinking of all these people gave me the strength to finish writing the book, many years after I first spoke to Des.

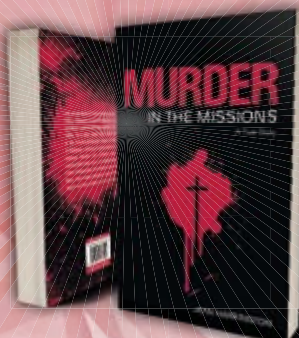
It doesn’t feel like 20 years since I first learnt about the lives of Rufus and Des, and although I never met Rufus, and I didn’t know Des for long, their stories became part of my world and my story. They enriched my life, as they did so many others, and their love and affection still resonate and inspire people today. ●

Jean Harrington is an Associate of the Teaching Council of Ireland. She co-founded Maverick House, a non-fiction publishing company, in 2002, where she remained as managing director until 2011. She ghost-wrote ‘Survivor: Memoirs of a Prostitute’ and ‘The Irish Ballerina’ with Monica Loughman. ‘Murder in the Missions’ was published by Mercier Press in 2019.

01. Marawi 2005: Jean Harrington with (left to right) Fr Yrap Nazareno, Sultan Lawan Minalang, Fr Paul Glynn and Sultan Maguid Maruhom. Photo: Jean Harrington.
02. Cover of **Murder in the Missions**.
03. Marawi 2005: (Left to right) Moctar Matuan, Jean Harrington, Connie Balindong, Noriah Elias and friend. The friendships Rufus and Des made within the Muslim community were long-lasting. Photo: Jean Harrington.
04. Cagayan de Oro 2005. Sr Celia Eco was one of Rufus’ closest friends and exchanged many letters with him. Photo: Jean Harrington.



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MURDER IN THE MISSIONS

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‘Murder in the Missions’
by Jean Harrington
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ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACKWARD

Fr Liam O'Callaghan recalls his inspiring meeting with Fr Rufus Halley in 2001 and the impact his fellow missionary had on his work in promoting inter-religious dialogue in Pakistan.

In July 2001, as both Rufus and I were at home on holiday and our homes are only six miles apart in Co Waterford, we met up for a chat and walk around a local reservoir. I was well aware of his work in Mindanao and, as I was trying to get more involved in inter-religious dialogue in Pakistan, I was interested in learning from him and 'picking his brains'. I was deeply impressed by his sharing, which has inspired my inter-faith efforts over the last 20 years.

What struck me was his vision in seeing the importance and urgent need for building harmony between Christians and Muslims, when very few others did. I was also struck by his commitment to this vision, which was shown in his respect for Muslims and their culture, by learning their language and living among them. It seemed to me that this was the secret of his success and the fruit of the work flowed from this.

Another striking memory from our conversation was how difficult he found it at

times: many setbacks and disappointments including suspicion and hostility from both Christians and Muslims. He explained that his experience was very often "one step forward and two steps backward".

Within a few short weeks of our meeting he was murdered; numbed by the news, I headed to his family home in Co Waterford to offer my condolences.

His inspiration lives on for me and I feel he can be a model for Columbans and other missionaries and indeed for anyone interested in engaging in inter-faith relations for the following reasons:

Church Teaching

Since Vatican II, and in particular the document *Nostra Aetate*, the Church teaches that inter-religious dialogue must be part of its mission. In the spirit of Vatican II, Pope Francis is giving powerful leadership and witness to this, seen most clearly in his fruitful dialogue with Sunni Muslims, led by Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayab





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of Al-Azhar, Egypt which produced the **Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together** (2019); and his recent visit to the Shia majority in Iraq and meeting with Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. However, in general the Church has been slow to engage in this vital ministry.

Rufus saw the huge need in Mindanao for such dialogue and inspired by this Church teaching, he put it into action in a profound and committed way, which will surely continue to inspire Columbans, the Filipino Church, and Muslims to continue this work. In 1979, the Columbans arrived in Pakistan and their two main goals were to engage with Muslims and with the Islamic reality. Rufus can be an inspiring example for us and indeed for countless others.

Relationship is Key

Rufus had a genuinely warm and engaging personality; this was clearly seen in the high regard and deep affection the people of his native Butlerstown had for him when home on holiday. It was the same authenticity which enabled him to be a bridge-builder and peace-maker in the Philippines; his slow and painstaking building up of friendships gained for him the respect and trust of Muslim neighbours and religious leaders, which was the foundation of his inter-faith work. To learn their language and live among them touched the Maranao deeply, as witnessed by their outpouring of grief at his funeral.

For me, this insight of the centrality of relationship is crucial. It is only in relationship with the other that anything meaningful can be achieved; it is particularly so in inter-religious dialogue where often misunderstandings, bad experience, prejudice etc can exist. Building up friendships, gaining trust, sharing in each other's significant events

and celebrations, and working together for the common good are the building stones for inter-faith relationships. Living in an entirely Muslim area in Hyderabad, I attempt to live out Rufus' vision.

Concern for the Poor

Another impressive missionary quality of Rufus was his concern for the poor. Much of his work in education was aimed at Muslim and Christian children growing in respect and friendship for each other. An equally important aim was to ensure that poor children got a good education in order to break out of the cycle of poverty. His work for reconciliation was with and for the poor people whom he lived and worked among.

Working together with people of other faiths for the common good, especially of the poor, is the goal of our interfaith work in Pakistan – schools for poor children, health projects serving all in need regardless of religious background, working for the protection of the environment.

One step forward

Rufus' experience of "one step forward and two steps backward" has also been mine with frustrations, obstacles and disappointments along the way. It can even be dangerous as we tragically found out with his death.

Nonetheless, that one step forward is vital and I have experienced extraordinary breakthroughs when we have the courage to set out on the journey. I fondly remember the passion with which Rufus shared some of his breakthroughs. The pain and brokenness of our multi-cultural, multi-religious world challenges us to courageously keep on taking that one step forward. ●

Fr Liam O'Callaghan is from Co Waterford. He has worked for over 20 years in Pakistan, most recently as coordinator of the ecology commission in Hyderabad Diocese in Sindh Province in southern Pakistan. He also works in the area of Inter-religious dialogue for the Columbans and lives in a Muslim community in Hyderabad city, the second biggest city in Sindh Province after Karachi.

01. Rufus working in the store owned by a Muslim in Marawi. Photo: Fr Kevin McHugh.
02. Rufus by his brother John Halley.
03. 7th November 1997. Rufus (back 1st left) celebrates the freeing of his fellow Columban Fr Des Hartford (front centre) along with Fr Donie Hogan (front left), Fr Michel de Gigord (front right), and Fr Paul Glynn (back right). Photo: Fr Donie Hogan/Columban Missionaries.
04. Fr Liam O'Callaghan at an Interfaith celebration of Christmas in Hyderabad, Pakistan. Photo: Columban Missionaries

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STARRY STARRY NIGHT



An article by Fr Niall O'Brien published in *Mision* magazine following the death of Fr Rufus Halley, providing personal recollections and insights into his spirituality.

When Rufus volunteered for the Prelature of Marawi it meant that he would have to learn two languages. But that did not faze him. His purpose in going there was to be part of an exciting adventure of peacebuilding and reconciliation between two communities which had been at odds for hundreds of years.

The 'vocation within a vocation' came easily to Rufus because for some years he had been taken by the ecumenism of the community of Brother Roger of Taizé and the spirituality of Charles de Foucauld, who led a life of contemplation in the deserts of Algeria - a life close to the Muslims and for whom he eventually gave his life. One of Rufus' closest friends joined the Little Sisters of Charles de Foucauld. So, Rufus was aware of their special spirit of reconciliation with Islam combined with a profound attachment to contemplation.

In Marawi, Rufus revelled in his new life. He was director of the school of Our Lady of Peace and used it relentlessly to encourage the Muslim and Christian students to appreciate and like each other. He saw it as the main aim of the school. In one of his imaginative moves, he probably shocked the townspeople, both Christian and Muslim, when he took a job in a local grocery store, assistant to the Muslim owner and served behind the counter. A half kilo of rice for Mrs Akim, cigarettes and matches for Muhammed-Akol. It must have blown their minds.

He told me on one occasion of how an old lady, who was Muslim, had been sick and he had used his jeep to take her to the hospital some distance from the town. Unfortunately, a crisis arose in the woman's home so none of her family could fulfil the task of watching her from the special 'watcher's pallet' which all rural hospitals have. The watcher is a close family relation who brings the food and gets the medicine which the doctor prescribes. Rufus stayed on as the watcher, bringing the food and getting the medicines and never patronising them by using his own money. He used what they had and bargained as best he could and when they ran out, sent a message back to the family to send more. When the woman finally emerged from the hospital, Rufus had become a member of that family. Muslims do not forget a good deed.

A high point in his life was when two Muslim clans who had been warring for years, with many family members killed on both sides, asked him to be the go-between in ending their feud. When they laid down their arms, it was his happiest moment.

Behind Rufus' actions was a very special spirituality, inspired by people like Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton, who championed non-violence. Rufus rose at 04.30 in the morning and prayed for an hour before he took his shower and said Mass. In the evening, he prayed for half an hour before the Blessed Sacrament and invited visitors to join him at evening prayers before supper.

Rufus came from a privileged background



but frugality was a special strand in his spirituality. In the diocesan pastoral plan, which he helped to draw up, living close to the poor, Christians and Muslims, was almost an eighth sacrament for him and his companions. I have to smile now when I think of our discussion on Sr Wendy Beckett's book on the history of western painting: "It's not a luxury, Ruf; it's a necessity. After all, the world will be saved by beauty." I was determined to get him to share my enthusiasm even if it meant a touch of hyperbole. He loved the book.

For the last eighteen months of his life, Rufus frequently carried around on him a copy of a book on St John of the Cross by Iain Matthews - 'The Impact of God'. The point of this book, as he would readily explain to you, was that we must be more aware of what God is doing than of what we are doing, and we should make space to allow God to do what God wants to do in our lives. His long periods of prayer were one way of creating this space for God.

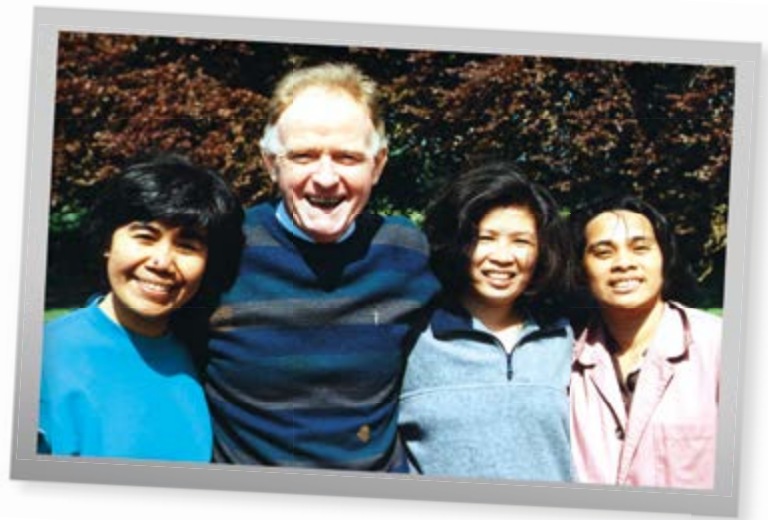
Shakespeare was wrong, at least with respect to Rufus, when he said, "There is no art to find the mind's construction in the face." Rufus glowed with delight that he had discovered the secret at the heart of the world: we are loved. A woman in his parish once said that if she was asked what Jesus would have looked like had He walked the earth again, "He would," she said, "have looked like Rufus".

A joke went around among his fellow Columbans that if Rufus was ever kidnapped, we would exhaust ourselves getting the ransom and then he would not come home. We may never get a clear picture of what actually did happen when he was killed by armed men wearing ski-masks, but we know that in the event his mind seemed to have been more on the fact that a poor young couple were waiting for him to marry them

than on the danger around him. But if the Rufus I knew had been allowed to follow the song of his heart, I can visualise exactly what would have happened on that occasion: I see that big smile spreading on his face, his clear blue eyes shining and him saying, 'You are my brothers. God is one. We are all brothers. He wants us to be one family'.

Alas, Rufus, these are the most subversive words possible in our very angry world, and I am tempted to borrow the words of the song about Vincent Van Gogh: "I could have told you, Ruf, this world was never meant for one as beautiful as you". ●

Fr Niall O'Brien was the founding editor of **Misyon** and worked for the magazine from 1988 until 2002. He died in 2004 aged 64. He became known internationally in 1983 as one of the 'Negros Nine' falsely accused by the Marcos dictatorship of murdering the Mayor of Kabankalan, who had in fact been killed by guerrillas. He was charged along with Columban, Fr Brian Gore, Filipino priest, Fr Vicente Dangan, and six Filipino lay workers, and detained for eight months. The charges were later dropped.



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01. Fr Rufus Halley teaching community leaders in Our Lady of Peace High School in Malabang in 1996. Photo: Fr Donie Hogan/Columban Missionaries.
02. May 1999: Fr Rufus with Filipina lay missionaries, Venus, Sancha and Eden, on a visit to Ireland. Venus (first left) became friends with Rufus while she was a student in Marawi State University and they remained close friends for the rest of his life. Photo: Alo Connaughton.
03. Undated photo.

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03

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MY BROTHER RUFIE

A moving tribute by John Halley to his brother in which he admits, "That Rufus was murdered is hard, and the hardest part is not knowing why he died."

Rufus had a different style to me. While I was always impressed with fancy things like glory and martyrdom (I'm still like that, a sucker for the epic picture) Rufie was more practical and preferred funny things. He was forever finding spiritual significance in boring everyday events. He introduced me to the story of Charles de Foucauld, the Frenchman who left Western society to live the life of the unseen Christ in a small village in Muslim North Africa. De Foucauld was killed by gunfire during the First World War. It is still a bit hazy as to why he was killed, or by whom. Though de Foucauld was considered a failure in his lifetime, dying without any 'converts', he left a big impression on those he met.

Today the Little Brothers and Little Sisters of Charles de Foucauld are among the most

vibrant orders in the Catholic Church, taking monastic vows but living alongside ordinary people. My brother was very excited at the thought of nuns and monks doing proper jobs in factories and sharing serious poverty. That was far too gritty for me. Over the years, Rufie continued to grow closer to the ideas of Charles de Foucauld and I continued to hide from them.

But when we talked, he didn't entirely deny me the epic splendour that I craved. One such moment was the evening he told me of his decision to work in Lanao del Sur. He would be in "the Islamic City of Marawi". He said his life would henceforth be dangerous. I was full of excitement. I was young and young people like risky adventures.

When he shared with me his vision of



dialogue with Islam my enthusiasm grew. I had always had a romantic love of the religion of Mohammed, without ever having met a single Muslim. Maybe I read the Arabian Nights too much when I was young. Finally, he told me about the spirituality of the Sufis, about Ibn El-Arabi who had so inspired the young Saladin and about Rabi'ah al Adawiyya who is said to have run through the streets of Baghdad wielding a firebrand and a bucket of water and threatening to burn and drown Hell with these words:

“Lord if I love you out of fear of hell, throw me into Hell.

And if I should love you in hope of Paradise, deny me Paradise.”

And so Rufus went to Marawi. His gift for being as enthusiastic about everyday things and ordinary people's preoccupations would make just as much of an impression as his love for Islamic philosophy and mysticism, probably more.

What I miss most is his laughter. There is a kind of humour that thrives between close friends which is utterly unique to that friendship. As the friendship develops, so the dialogue grows with it and also the humour. Eventually you find new things which only that one person will understand and laugh at. Rufus began this process with his humorous view of world events and personalities, and as we talked, I began to develop a similar capacity.

Between us there evolved an alternative history, a joke history of the world. Whenever we met or wrote letters to each other, we updated this history, adding new chapters and new jokes all the time. We spent many happy hours in this way. Even now, I will often wake up in the still dark hours of the morning inspired by some new connection. I know that only Rufus will get the joke. But Rufus is gone.

That Rufus was murdered is hard, and the hardest part is not knowing why he died, or who really wanted him dead. You could call his death 'martyrdom' but there is nothing epic or glorious in it now. Sometimes, like in the 'failed kidnap attempt' theory, it seems like a sort of glorified accident. But if it really was like that, then my brother shared the death of so many in Mindanao with whom he shared his life. And so I, and others, have been compelled

to share the indignity suffered by countless others in this world: to lose a dear one to injustice, to stupidity, to ignorance.

As with the death of Charles de Foucauld, many times I have been tempted to believe that the sacrifice was pointless. I hear the call for justice and see it swallowed whole by conspiracies of silence and fear. And this is a bitter pill for me to swallow. “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him” (Psalm 37).

Where are those seeds of his work? Bless those robust, cheerful souls who see evidence sprouting all around them like a runaway garden! I haven't been so lucky. But perhaps it is not the plan for all of us to see the same things. And I have found some little things that start to wash away my bitterness. For example, the work of Charles de Foucauld no longer seems dull and, though it is not my vocation, I do not run from his ideas anymore. Instead they stir in me a longing like the Song of Songs does.

Something else happened too. For many years before his death I had found churchgoing difficult. I was so trapped in self-righteousness that the company of other churchgoers was virtually unbearable to me. Then one day I found myself in church again, and as I looked around, I realised that I was no longer irritated by people. That was shortly after my brother's death and so I see it as his parting gift to me. I believe that God will complete Rufus' work, and that those of us who are willing to wait and pray may see some of it. But if this experience of mine is any guide, God's work may be so quiet that we will see very little. Until one strange day we notice that the fear, the hatred, the darkness have moved on. No bells, no music, just gone. ●

First published in July/August 2007 in Misyon, the Columban magazine in the Philippines.

01. Fr Rufus in a family photo with his five brothers and sister Evelyn and their mother following their father's death in 1996. Photo: Halley Family.
02. The Halley family on the day of Rufus' ordination in 1969. Photo: Halley Family.
03. The extended Halley family in 1996 following Rufus' father's funeral. Photo: Halley Family.
04. Gerry Halley speaking at Fr Rufus' funeral Mass. Photo: Donie Hogan.
05. Rufus' five brothers flew to the Philippines for his funeral and are seen here carrying his coffin for burial in Malabang, Lanao del Sur Province, Mindanao. Photo: Conal O'Connell.

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MY FRIEND ALONGAN

Connie Balindong, a Muslim school principal, was a close friend of Fr Rufus Halley's. At his funeral Mass she paid tribute to 'Alongan' and explains here how he got that name.

He calls me *Bai* and I call him *Alongan*. He has a sunny disposition and a fantastic sense of humour which, to casual acquaintances, belie his deep thinking and strong religious beliefs.

I first met him in the summer of 1979. I was in my third year of teaching at Our Lady of Peace High School (OLPHS), a local Catholic school in Malabang, and my Alma Mater. One day my friend and school director asked me if I would like to attend the Annual Summer Session on Mindanao & Sulu Culture at Dansalan College (DC) in Marawi City, which was a joint undertaking of the Protestant Dansalan College and the Prelature of St Mary's in Marawi.

At first, I was offended by the idea of studying my own culture under people of different cultures. But out of curiosity I decided to go not knowing that it would be a very pleasant and memorable experience. Fr Rufus Halley was my classmate and housemate at the Bishop's house. We became like a family with Bishop 'Benny' Tudtud as 'father'. In no time at all we became friends. On one occasion, one of the groups asked me how I would describe Rufus. I replied with one word - *Alongan*, the Meranao word for sun. From that time, he was *Alongan* to me, to my family and to Muslim friends. In fact, the sun became his symbol.

In June 1994, he became our school director. He was actively involved in school activities. Our faculty office was at the ground floor of the convent. At times I would go up for a cup of his special brewed coffee. Sometimes he would join me without him taking coffee so I would know that he was fasting. Sometimes in the midst of bantering he would excuse himself for his daily prayers and bible reading.

He very rarely, if ever, missed his daily mass either in church or in his room. He was once in our house when the Muslim call to prayer sounded. We left him alone in the living room for our prayers while he prayed in his own way. He had a genuine love for people especially the poor. Although he had a privileged background, he lived modestly. He had no car because he said that when driving, one feels like the "king of the road". He told me once when he came back from a vacation that his father divided his property among his children and he refused to accept his share. He even refused his father's desire to deposit it in his name. So, his father gave his share to his siblings, but he made them promise to help *Alongan* if he was ever in need.

What a rare attitude in this materialistic world! I was really impressed! True to his





02



03

Connie Balindong was treasurer at Our Lady of Peace High School, Malabang for many years.

01. Rufus' Muslim friend and colleague, Connie Balindong, conveys her condolences to his brothers in August 2001 in Cagayan de Oro. Photo: Donie Hogan.
02. At the end of the funeral Mass, Connie Balindong spoke of her friend Rufus. "We have lost a man of peace, a man of love, but his vision will continue. His legacy will never die," the Treasurer of Our Lady of Peace High School said. Photo: Donie Hogan.
03. Connie at the celebration in Malabang to mark the 10th anniversary of Rufus' death in August 2011. Photo: Fr Kevin McHugh.
04. Rufus and Connie Balindong sharing a meal. Photo: Fr Kevin McHugh.


name he brought light wherever he went with his beaming countenance, his laughter and his peace greetings. Indeed, he had given light to both Muslims and Christians in the Prelature with his passion for dialogue and service especially to the needy.

His last act of dialogue was facilitating the first meeting of a group he had organised, composed of students from Our Lady of Peace High School and a nearby school on 26 August 2001. His last picture was with me and the advisers from the other school after the meeting. He was then in a hurry to leave for his regular visit to Balabagan, a neighbouring parish. On his way out, he passed by the office to get some stationary. I had no premonition that that was my last time to see him alive.

On 28th August he had a rendezvous with destiny and with God, whom he had loved and served so faithfully. Alongan left unexpectedly without saying goodbye but he left a lasting mark which will never be forgotten. ●

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04

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01

Fr Rufus Halley published an account of his peace efforts with two warring families in Marawi in the November/December 2000 issue of *Misyon*, the Columban magazine in the Philippines. This shortened version provides an insight into his perseverance and ability to gain people's trust.



It was Sunday morning in late September. I don't remember the date, but I'll never forget the day. Joel was to be buried and the whole parish was in shock and in mourning. Here was a grand young fellow, of deep faith, who was gunned down on his way home for his lunch. Nobody would be picked up for the crime as the perpetrator came from an influential Muslim family.

As I rode my motorbike I thought how difficult this dialogue between Muslims and Christians was. At times like this, you just have no stomach for it. A heaviness comes down, almost incapacitating you. But I had made a promise to visit a Muslim family that day who had a girl in our high school, and so I decided to keep going. The family was grieving because another child, a boy of only 17 years, had been shot in an ongoing blood feud between two Muslim clans. As the director of the school, I was on my way to offer condolences.

Even though I did not know them personally they were most friendly

A MAGIC MOMENT IN MARAWI

and welcomed me warmly. One of the cousins lived in the first house on the way, and I put this question to him a little diffidently, "Can nothing be done to end this feud among you?" To which the reply came back, "Would you help us?" I was speechless. This was the first time I had even been asked - in eighteen years since coming to the Muslim area - to help out in this type of situation. What an honour to be invited! But perhaps I'm way in over my depth here. What if something goes wrong? Maybe my knowledge of Maranao is not up to scratch. At the same time what an opportunity to help. This feud has been going on ten years now, with nearly twenty people dead.

I was brought to other houses through beautiful rolling countryside studded with coconut trees. There were fox holes along the way, wire fences and earth works thrown up around the houses just in case of an attack. They were just as welcoming here, and before I left, the men asked me again, "Would you help?" "All right," said I. "I'll go and visit the other side and see what can be done." "The one you ask for is Commander Erning," they suggested. Yes, they were indeed looking for peace but were on a war footing, in battle fatigues, carrying every imaginable weapon. For sure there's a lot of prayer needed here, I thought. "You know," a Muslim friend said, "they could not ask another Muslim to do that. It might appear as weakness."

A few days after, I headed for the other family. I was stopped immediately by a young gun-toting fellow. "Why do you want to see Commander Erning?" "Oh, just a visit," I ventured. "Alright, I'll take you." So, up he hopped on the motorbike and off we went. There was a cluster of about eight houses. And there was Commander



02



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Erning - longhaired, with an authoritative air about him. Again I was struck by the friendliness of the people. They were satisfied when I said it was just a social visit and so we started talking about their place, and how fertile the land was - the trees bending under the weight of coconuts. They had many questions on hearing I also was a farmer in Ireland. After what I judged a suitable time, I broached the object of my visit. I had been with the other side and they were interested in peace. "Would you be interested in peace?" I ventured.

Having heard me out nobody said anything till Erning enunciated his position. "Father, all we're asking for are the seven guns they owe us and payment for an outstanding debt. We're prepared to settle for that. We are very grateful for your help." "So, who would we get to negotiate this?" I queried. "We would like the Sultan of Barurao," they said. Before seeing the Sultan I had to confirm the other side's acceptance of the chief negotiator. They agreed.

The Sultan was very surprised when I told him what was afoot. "A thousand thanks, my brother, for helping us. You know both sides are related to me. Tell them what you have just told me about how peace has now finally come to Northern Ireland. I, with the Vice-Mayor of Matanog, will work on the negotiated settlement. You just keep speaking to them of the benefits of peace to try and lessen the bitterness."

"Who's winning in this conflict?" I asked. Silence. They were honest enough to admit that everybody lost out. "Here you are, locked in to your area. If you go to Malabang, something might happen to you. Your boys cannot study in high school or college for the same reason. Yet we

have here now a real chance for peace, which may not return again. Don't just focus on the faults of the other side. We all have faults. Allah is with us. He wants us to live in peace. Don't squander this opportunity."

There was a further 15-day extension to the ceasefire. The Sultan reported good progress. And I noticed in both sides a diminution of arms on display and fighting talk. Initially, each side warned me to beware of the other. "Don't trust them" was a recurring theme. But now they were even prepared to admit some of their own failures.

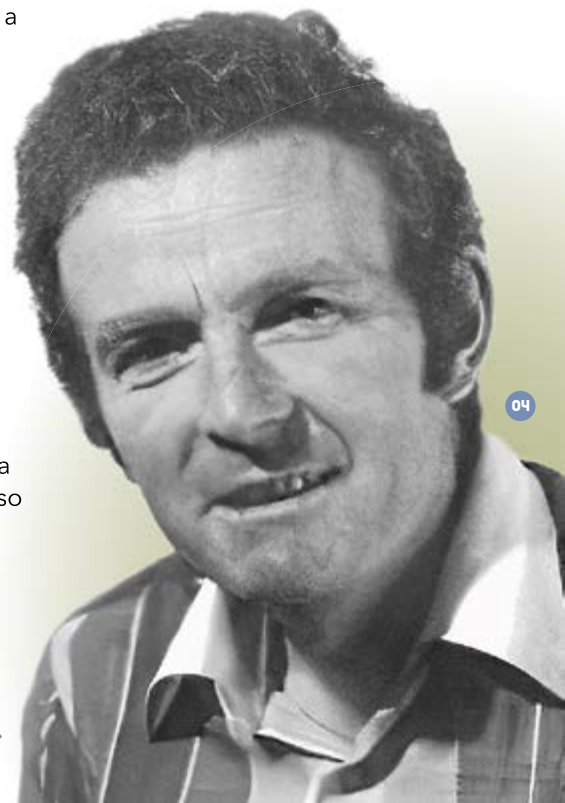
I kept up the visits. The ceasefire was extended for another four days. "We're nearly there," the Sultan told me confidentially. "But don't say anything yet." After a further and final ceasefire extension of two days, both sides agreed to the signing of a peace accord on Tuesday, 17 November at the Municipio. What a day! I'll never forget it.

The Qur'an was unveiled. Erning and Igid's hands were placed on it and with their respective followers swore to abide by the terms of agreement. Then both were brought to embrace one another - a noble but alas, premature gesture. They could not even look at one another. But the papers nevertheless were signed, photos were taken and speeches were made. It was such a privilege to be part of something so good. ●

01. Fr Rufus Halley on his motorbike in Malabang with Muslim children. Photo: Donie Hogan
02. Fr Rufus in 1989 outside the Muslim store where he worked. Photo: John Halley.
03. A photograph of the moment of reconciliation between the two previously warring families in Matanog 1998.
04. Fr Rufus Halley: Born 25 January 1944 in Kilmeadan, Co Waterford, Ireland - Died 28 August 2001 in Malabang, Lanao del Sur Province, Mindanao, Philippines.

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04



A JOURNEY OF FAITH

Columban missionary Sr Anne Carbon writes about the celebration of 500 years of Christianity in her home country and the role played by missionaries in developing the Church locally.

This year 2021, the Philippine Church celebrates half a millennium of Christianity. According to 2015 statistics, the population of the Philippines is more than 100 million of whom 80 percent are Catholic. The Philippines, after Brazil and Mexico, has one of the largest Catholic populations in the world.

The official celebration of the anniversary began on 21 April 2021. On 14 March 2021, Pope Francis celebrated Mass at St Peter's Basilica in Rome to commemorate this big event for the Philippine Church and for Filipino people scattered all over the world.

On 31 March 1521, the first Mass and planting of the Cross took place in Cebu City, my birthplace, 500 years ago. The seed of faith was sown in our fertile land, it took root, bore fruit, and up to the present day, Filipino people freely and joyfully share the faith they embraced wherever they are in the world.

But I could not say that it was an easy sowing. As our history attests, there were struggles. Our faith has been tested to the core and yet by the grace and love of God, which was there from the beginning,

that covenant was sealed with the Filipino people.

As I look back I can see that we as a nation have so many things to be grateful for. The arrival of the missionaries and religious congregations shaped and deepened our faith. Their pioneering spirit was the beacon of faith and they freely shared the mission of Jesus as they lived heroic expressions of this faith and ministered to all sectors in the society. They introduced different kinds of devotions: *Flores de Mayo*, the *Santo Niño de Cebú*, Black Nazarene, and veneration of our *Virgin Mother*, to name just a few.

They built churches and opened dedicated services in the areas of education and health care. They inspired an awareness of responding to social issues as they accompanied the people in their darkest moment in our history - during World War II and the restoration of our democracy. Their lived expressions of faith and love had a strong influence on our culture, our hospitality, and gave us a resilient spirit which encourages us as we trust in the One whom we believe never fails us.

Another important aspect of the development of the Philippine Church was that the missionaries developed the local Church and the clergy, and founded religious congregations. Now wherever you go in any continent you can expect to meet Filipino missionaries spreading the good news of the Gospel.

As a missionary myself, a Columban Sister, I am conscious of the gift of faith I received and I am freely sharing this gift with others - especially with the Christian community here in Pakistan, where I have been ministering recently. Like the first missionaries, I have also experienced the generosity, hospitality and friendship of my countrymen and women, wherever I am on mission and I can see how they share and keep the faith alive in the local church wherever they are.

We Filipinos are a people of faith and hope. We place our trust in a God who is always present in us and in all things even in the multiple crises that our country continues to face. And so we come to this time of celebration to pray and to give thanks for all those people who have gone before us, the missionaries, Christian lay leaders and especially our great grandparents, who passed on the faith from one generation to the next.

As we face the future, conscious of


our responsibility to pass on the faith gifted to us 500 years ago, and recently recommissioned by Pope Francis, urging us to persevere in the work of evangelization, I join my Filipino brothers and Sisters, as we thank God and utter the chorus of the theme song of our 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines:

**“We stand before the grand horizon,
500 years of faith grateful today.
We bear the gift of mission.
Totally yours, to give ourselves.
Faithfully yours until the end.
To your mission, Lord.
We give our Yes.”**

Sr Anne Carbon is a Columban missionary from Cagayan de Oro in the Philippines and a psychiatric nurse by profession. In the past she worked with children traumatised by terrorism in Peru. More recently she was missioned in Pakistan until the Covid-19 pandemic. She is now working in the Philippines.

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01. Devotees celebrate the feast of the Black Nazarene in Manila, Philippines. Image: Shutterstock.
02. Sr Anne Carbon who has worked in the UK, Peru, Pakistan as well as in her home country of the Philippines.
03. The official logo to celebrate 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines.
04. Magellan's Cross was planted by the Spanish expedition led by Ferdinand Magellan which arrived in Cebu in the Philippines on 21 April 1521. This cross is housed in a chapel next to the *Basílica del Santo Niño* on Magellan Street in Cebu city centre. Image: Shutterstock.



04

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19

All down through the centuries we have heard and read about the lives of martyrs. The Martyrology of the Saints and of very many holy people since the beginning of Christianity right up to our own day has often been gruesome reading. Martyrdom, be it a slow process of pain and suffering or a quick planned plot is inhuman and very brutal. The first Christian martyr, St Stephen was stoned to death because he was a follower of Christ. His Faith in Christ was dearer to him than his own life. "Unless a grain of wheat dies in the earth it cannot bear fruit. But if it dies it bears abundant fruit."

Stephen has inspired many and has lived on in the history of Christianity. Today, there are multitudes of people dying because they won't renounce their Faith. They are in all countries and all cultures. It is impossible to answer the question 'why'. However, their blood is never lost. It flows down through the ages and strengthens others' faith.

In the interlude to T.S. Eliot's 'Murder in the Cathedral' Archbishop Thomas Beckett says in his Christmas morning homily in the year 1170, "A martyrdom is always made by the design of God for the love of His people to lead them back to His ways. It is never a human design. For the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God and who has lost himself in God and who no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of being a martyr." Archbishop Beckett knew that he who had been King Henry's Chancellor was no longer the King's favourite and death would be a likely possibility. And so with complete awareness and understanding he said his last words to his Congregation. "Dear children, I do not think that I shall ever preach to you again because it is possible that in a short while you shall have another martyr." As he said this, the boots of the King's knights were heard pounding towards the sanctuary. The Archbishop stood straight and was surrounded by four knights with drawn swords. Thomas



Beckett said, "For my Lord I am now ready to die. Do with me what you will." And so another martyr and saint was anointed in his own blood.

In our own time we remember Archbishop Romero of El Salvador who was shot dead while saying Mass in his own Cathedral. He knew also about the likelihood of being martyred. Shortly before his death he said, "I have frequently been threatened with death. As a Christian I do not believe in death without resurrection. If I am killed I will rise again in the Salvadorian people. I say that with great humility. As pastor, I am obliged by Divine Command to give my life for those whom I love,

even for those who may assassinate me. A bishop will die but the Church of God, which is the people, will never perish."

Rufus Halley was the 24th Columban Missionary to die a violent death. He was missioned in the Southern Philippines which saw many conflicts between Muslims and Christians. Rufus lived with a Muslim family in order to have a greater understanding of their culture. In August 2001, he was on his motorbike going to the marriage of a poor couple when six armed men stopped him and shot him dead. Almost immediately local Muslims took away his body to prepare it for burial. When it was brought to the Catholic Church the place was crowded with Catholics and Muslims. They shed tears together and mourned the passing of a martyr. They had lost a brother and were ashamed that people living among them had spilled the blood of a peacemaker. ●

“A martyrdom is always made by the design of God for the love of His people to lead them back to His ways.”

Sr Abbie O'Sullivan

MARY VISITS ELIZABETH

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to the hill country of Judah to visit her cousin. She went into Zacharias's house and greeted Elizabeth.

As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb leaped for joy and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

"You are the most blessed of all women, and blessed is the baby you carry," cried Elizabeth. "Why should I be honoured by a visit from the mother of my Lord? As soon as I heard your voice, the child in my womb leaped for joy. Yes, blessed are you for believing that the promise made to you would be fulfilled!"

Then Mary sang a joyful song of praise to God:

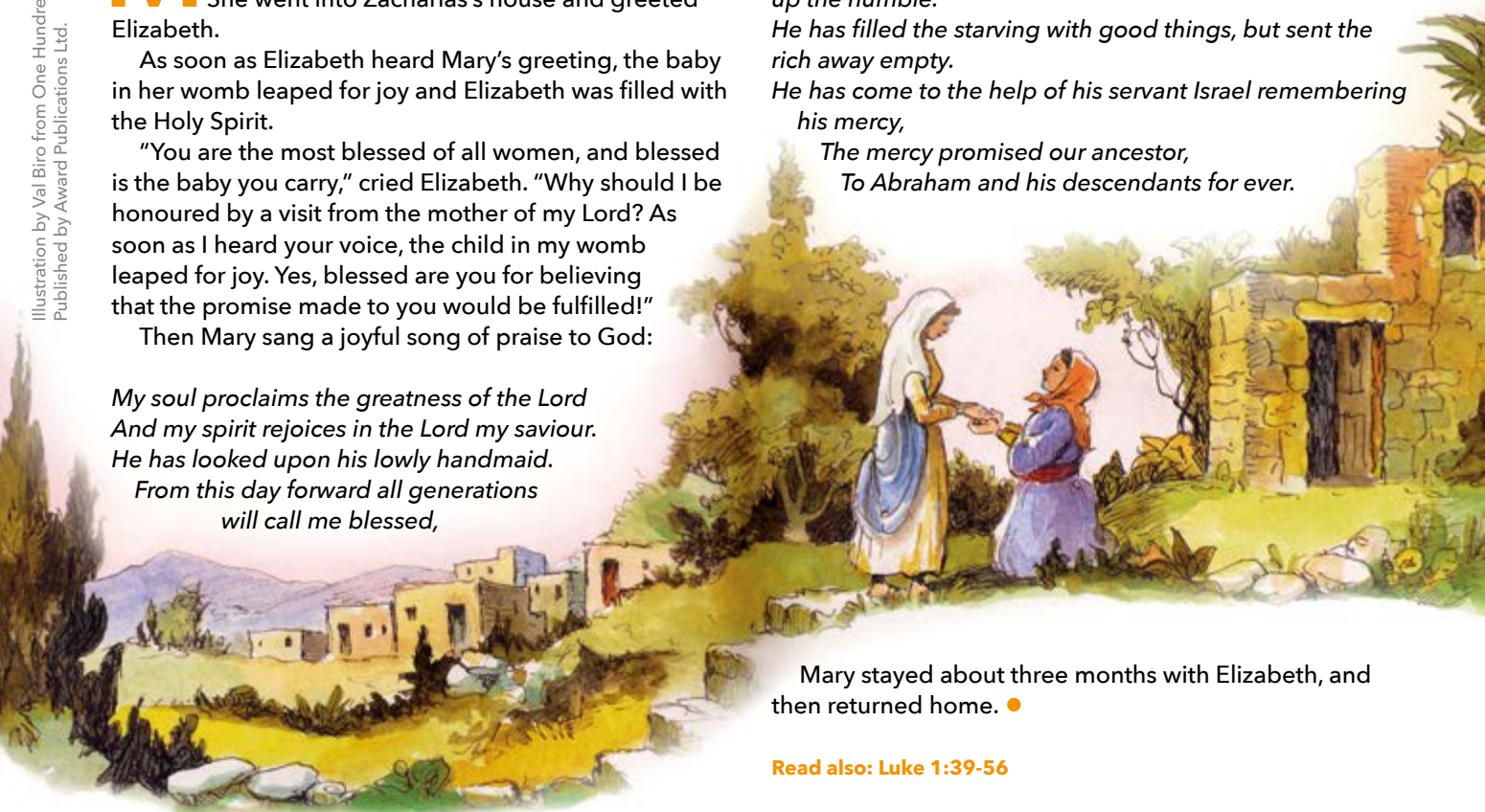
*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord
And my spirit rejoices in the Lord my saviour.
He has looked upon his lowly handmaid.
From this day forward all generations
will call me blessed,*

*For the Almighty has done great things for me.
Holy is his name.
His love extends from age to age to all those who love and obey him.
He has shown the power of his arm to scatter those with proud hearts.
He has pulled down princes from their thrones and lifted up the humble.
He has filled the starving with good things, but sent the rich away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel remembering his mercy,
The mercy promised our ancestor,
To Abraham and his descendants for ever.*

Mary stayed about three months with Elizabeth, and then returned home. ●

Read also: Luke 1:39-56

Illustration by Val Biro from One Hundred Bible Stories for Children. Published by Award Publications Ltd.



BIBLE QUIZ

NUMBER 93

1 In Mark ch.7, True or false, Jesus performed healings in the region of the Decapolis?

2 According to Ezra ch.2, did the Jews who left Babylon to return to Jerusalem number fewer or more than 42,000?

3 In Acts, ch.23, how many soldiers were sent with Paul to Caesarea?

4 In Isaiah ch.7, who was the prophet told to take with him to meet Ahaz?

5 In Genesis ch.8, where did Noah's Ark finish its journey?

6 In Acts ch.13, from which port did Paul and Barnabas set sail on their first missionary journey?

Name:

Address:



£15 vouchers for the first three correct entries received!

Consult your Bible, answer the questions above and send your entry to: Bible Quiz N° 93, St Columban's, Widney Manor Rd, Solihull, West Midlands, B93 9AB, before 31st August 2021.

Bible Quiz N° 91 Winners: Paul Hughes, Belfast, NI • Margaret Glynn, Stourbridge, West Midlands • Brian Darby, Wigan, Lancs.

WORD SEARCH

Find these words in the puzzle. They can be found across, down and diagonally:

- WATERMELON
- GRAPES
- APPLE
- LEMON
- AVOCADO
- KIWI
- PLUM
- ORANGE
- BANANA
- PEACH
- PEAR
- MANGO
- MELON
- STRAWBERRY
- CHERRY
- PINEAPPLE

F R U I T S



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PUDSY'S DIRTY - FIND THE 10 SPELLING MISTAKES

I nearly forgot my b-day is coming. I don't know why it comes round so fast and on top of that we will be on Summer hols Ms Flinn kept telling us be carefull and wear our masks and no going to parties and bringing the virus back to skool with us. So mebbe no birthday party and none of the nice things the girls are always saying they get but us boys dont go in for that. Anyway it would be no fun with all those masks and things. I asked my friend Bump what should I do but he sed his b-day always comes during the hols too and so he

dosnt have to be showing off like the others with a big party. Then I asked Grandad what they did when he was small but he sed they were so busy helping with the work that they might have one next time. So I said when the next time came round what then? but he said by then you wud be a big fella and no need for those silly parties cos they are only for the little ones who dont know anything... so I'll tell them at skool that us big guys have no time becoss we have more important things to do like fishing with uncle Brian...that was great!



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

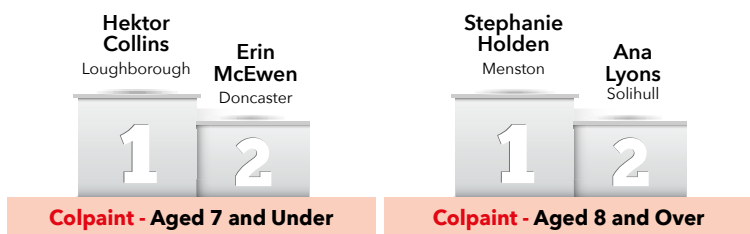
Rewrite the story and send to Pudsy's Dirty, St Columban's, Widney Manor Rd, Solihull, West Midlands B93 9AB, before 31st August 2021.

HA! HA!

1. How do we know that the sea is friendly?
2. What do ghosts like to eat in summer?
3. Where do sheep go on holidays?
4. Where do sharks go on holidays?
5. What did the beach say to the tide when it finally came in?
6. Why do bananas use sunscreen?

1. It waves.
2. I scream.
3. The Baa-hamas.
4. Finland.
5. Long time no sea.
6. Because they peel.

COMPETITION WINNERS MARCH / APRIL 2021



Perky Pigeons

By Elizabeth McArdle



Pigeons, also known as rock doves, were originally coastal birds which, long ago, would have inhabited rocks and coastal cliff faces. However, these very intelligent birds have learned that humans provide the best food sources and they have moved from coastal cliffs to our cities and towns. Pigeons are highly sociable birds, faithful partners and they mate for life. Both parents feed the tiny chicks with a unique substance known as pigeon milk. This is not the same as the milk that you or I put on our cereal or porridge each morning. Pigeon milk is a thick, milky gloop, secreted from the lining of their stomach. It is extremely nutritious and loaded with immune boosters which help the tiny pigeon hatchlings survive and thrive. In the wild, it is a very rare substance, and it is only flamingos and a few species of penguin which produce it.

Pigeons love to eat grains, fruits, bread, cheese, pasta and food from bins. Discarded McDonald's take

away is considered the most delicious treat of all. For many of us they are pests, but a closer look reveals a different picture. Have you ever noticed how beautiful their feathers are? As a pigeon moves in the sunshine, iridescent feathers on their neck change colour from green to purple as the viewing angle changes. Also, pigeons may have been the first birds which humankind ever domesticated. For thousands of years, their value as a food source was immeasurable.

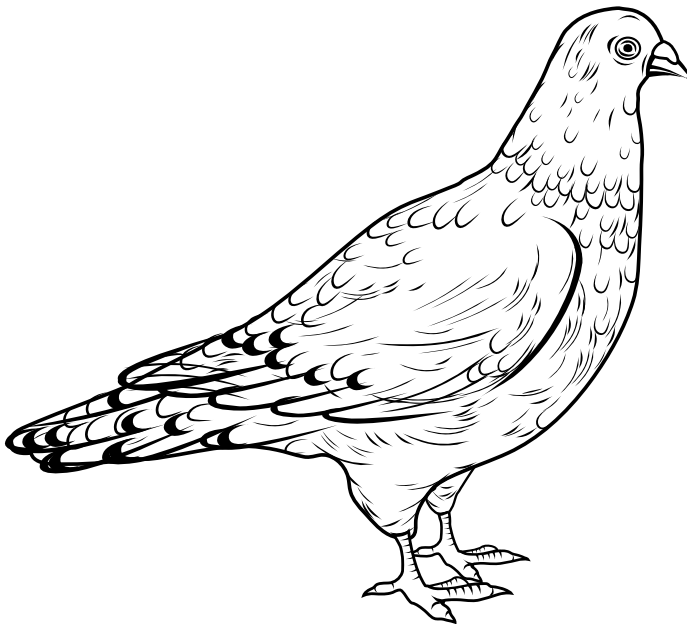
In my life I have travelled to exotic places and lived among parrots, macaws, toucans and other exotic birds. However, pigeons still rank very highly on my list of wonderful birds. God does not have favourites when it comes to the bird world. He loves them all the same way He loves us. We must look with new eyes to see the wonder and beauty of the Perky Pigeon. ●



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RUFUS HALLEY

PEACEMAKER (1944-2001)

“Rufus told me of a ‘brother Muslim’ whom he loved very much who had hired him to work in a store in the market in Malabang. ‘Why?’ I asked him. ‘This is my kind of dialogue’ he told me. He was pushing Christian/Muslim dialogue to the limit.”

Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales
Archbishop of Manila and
friend of Rufus

“Fr Rufus Halley was given the name ‘Popong’ by his Meranao friends, which expresses friendship, fondness, familiarity and closeness. His fluency in the Meranao language gave him wide access into the lives of ordinary Meranaos. Rufus made a conscious effort to step down from the position of power and relate to people as one like them, or even less than them. His name ‘Popong’ is a testimony to this.”

Fr Yrap Nazareno

“It is not possible to think of Ireland without recalling its monastic tradition, its love of learning and the missionary zeal which led many Irish men and women down the centuries to become *peregrini pro Christo* throughout the world. The Christian foundations of Europe owe much to the vision and labours of great Irish saints such as Columban and Gall. In later more troubled times, Irish men and women suffered discrimination, persecution and even martyrdom for their tenacious fidelity to the faith of their ancestors. Even now Irish men and women are in the forefront of the Church’s work of evangelisation and service in all parts of the world, and not infrequently they bear the supreme witness to their faith and commitment, as very recently in the case of Father Rufus Halley, an Irish Columban in the Philippines...”

Pope St John Paul II
September 2001, Vatican

“It’s surprising how, as the years have gone by, I find myself more drawn to the work I’m doing here, or trying to do here, which I dare not call dialogue (as dialogue is something which is going two ways). I would regard myself here somewhat as a healer, really trying to bring people together; trying to get people to heal their hurts which are very, very real, whether Muslim against Muslim or Muslim and Christian, or between Christians. For me, this thing, what they call Dialogue, or what I call maybe Working for Harmony and Peace, is something that you don’t put on when you meet Muslims. It’s something that’s hopefully bubbling out of you like a spring. It’s something you bring with you wherever you go. It’s part of you. It’s an attitude. It’s an outlook. It’s a spirituality for life. And that’s exactly how I see it now.”

Fr Rufus ‘Popong’ Halley



01. The funeral of Fr Rufus Halley in Cagayan de Oro in Mindanao. Fr Donie Hogan can be seen on the left holding a camera. Photo: Fr Conal O’Connell.