

# far east



MAGAZINE OF THE COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES



## A COVID-19 WEDDING

Fr John McEvoy on a Fijian couple's celebration

## LET'S CREATE A WORLD WITHOUT RACISM

Columban Schools Media winners

## ROBOTS, ETHICS AND THE FUTURE OF JOBS

Fr Seán McDonagh's prophetic warning

## CONTENTS

### 04 **Robots, Ethics and the Future of Jobs**

Fr Seán McDonagh is renowned for his leadership on care for the earth. His latest book sheds light on the challenges of AI and robotics.

### 06 **Useless: For God's Sake**

Fr George Hogarty writes about coping with the Coronavirus in one of Santiago's poorer suburbs.

### 08 **Ecological Conversion: an ecclesial awakening?**

Fr Patrick McMullan recalls how working in a country parish helped him appreciate the Lunar Calendar's intimate connection with nature and life.

### 10 **A Covid-19 Wedding**

Fr John McEvoy celebrated a wedding in Fiji during lockdown which the couple were determined to go ahead with because the date was of significance to them.

### 12 **Let's Create a World Without Racism**

The winning article and images in our 2021 Columban Schools Media Competition.

### 14 **Signs of Hope**

Sr Kathleen M. O'Riordan highlights the impact of the pandemic and the 'Remain in Mexico' policy on thousands of migrants along the Mexican border.

### 16 **In Praise of Fr Tomás's "eye-opening" work**

Transition year student Dáire King writes about his visit to Pakistan to see first-hand how his uncle, Fr Tomás King, helps some of the poorest and most marginalised.

### 18 **And Then There was One**

Fr Denis Monaghan is the last member of a group of twelve Columbans missioned to Korea in 1969, but he is in no rush to leave his adopted land and return to Co Leitrim.

### 19 **Obituaries**

### 20 **Reflection**

### 21 **Stories from the Bible**

### 22 **Children's Section**

### 23 **Nature: Breathtaking Barn Owls**



**THE FAR EAST**

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**Subscription**

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

**Editor**

Sarah Mac Donald  
editorfareast@gmail.com

**Assistant Editor**

Sr 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**

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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 Ridgale Street, Bow,  
London E3 2TW.  
Tel: (020) 8980 3017

**Front Cover**

Groom Jonathan Kunau and his bride, Hilda Vukikomoala, on their wedding day in Fiji. Pic: Fr John McEvoy.



**HOW LIFE HAS CHANGED**

I had just arrived in the Philippines shortly after ordination. It was 1973 and something unprecedented was happening back home in Ireland. Limerick had made it to the All-Ireland hurling final! Desperate to find out news of how the match went I got my shortwave transistor radio all set up in the presbytery. For younger generations this might not mean much, but for those of us who existed before the internet and mobile phones, we've experienced the radio (particularly when in a remote location overseas) as an absolute lifeline.

Because of the climate, we had Mass at 6am. The sports round-up was due on the BBC World service at 6.45am Philippines time. After Mass, I rushed to the radio and got reception just as the announcer was saying, "In this edition we'll be hearing all the latest from golf, athletics etc as well as a report from Dublin on the All-Ireland final between Limerick and Kilkenny."

Waiting with bated breath, it felt like the sports round-up was the longest in the BBC's history! Then the announcer said, "We're crossing live to Dublin" ... at which point the crackly transmission became ever cracklier and faded into oblivion. No amount of twiddling the dial or hammering the transistor would bring back the voice that could tell me what I desperately wanted to find out.

My heart truly sank and I could only resort to the serenity prayer: grant us the serenity of mind to accept that which cannot be changed; courage to change that which can be changed and the wisdom to know the one from the other.

It was TEN days before I heard the result of the match! And yes, Limerick won the final - for the first time in over thirty years. The local Filipino people looked bemused by my whoops of delight on the day I learned the good news.

In the fourteen years that I was missioned in the Philippines, I was able to go to Manila once a year to make a phone call home. The difficulty of communicating in those days was something we took for granted. Laughable now in the era of instant communication.

After a few years in Ireland, I returned to the Philippines in 2000 for another eighteen years. At that point I hadn't acquired a mobile phone and what really surprised me on my return was that everyone there had one. I nearly fell over with shock on seeing one of the street sellers outside the cathedral, struggling to make a living by selling candles, pulling out his mobile phone after the crowds had gone inside.

The revolution in communications has happened in such a short space of time. For that reason, Fr Seán McDonagh's new book, *Robots, Ethics and the Future of Jobs* (see pages 4-5) raises some serious questions about the speed of technology and our future direction. ●

**Fr Daniel O'Malley**

Fr Daniel O'Malley was ordained in 1972. After many years in the Philippines, he now lives and works in Britain.

Image: Shutterstock

# ROBOTS, ETHICS AND THE FUTURE OF JOBS

Columban missionary Fr Seán McDonagh is renowned for his leadership on climate change and care for the earth. His latest book explores the rise of Artificial Intelligence and surveillance capitalism. To give you a sense of its prophetic insights, we are reproducing a review by Denis Blackledge SJ.

This is a timely, challenging, stimulating, knowledgeable, and, yes, frightening volume by a well-known author who knows his stuff as an environmental theologian. Moreover, he writes in a style which is crisp and clear, and ends all his eleven chapters with a brief summary conclusion.

The book deals with the awesome rise and staggering advance of Artificial Intelligence [AI] over the past four decades or so, and into our present pandemic era. The impact of AI is all-embracing. How it is regulated, and how institutions provide suitable ethical policies to cope with it, are key issues for our present and future generations. And the Catholic Church in general has not yet wakened up to the vast practical impact of AI, not least on the availability of jobs worldwide.

The author, who was instrumental in helping the Philippine Bishops to write the first-ever ecological pastoral letter, **'What is happening to our beautiful land?'**, in 1988, systematically highlights how AI has speeded up, and how it has impacted on jobs, algorithms, 3D printing, robots and drones, the future of farming, caring for children, the elderly and those with special needs. He clarifies how AI has changed retail, hospitality, banking, finance and call centres. He focuses

on self-driven cars and trucks, and how robots are currently used in warfare.

All with stark simplicity and clarity. He

## Robots Ethics and the Future of Jobs

Seán McDonagh

concentrates on how to create a Universal Basic Income (UBI) defined by Seán Ward in 2016 as: "A substantial, unconditional and tax-free payment from the exchequer to all citizens on an individual basis, financed by a flat tax on all income. It would replace tax credits and tax allowances for those in paid employment, and welfare payments for those who are not in paid employment".

His final chapter reminds the reader of what Catholic Social Teaching has to say about work, seen not as a commodity but as crucial and central to an individual's self-worth. Pope St John Paul II and our current Pope Francis have written extensively on the creative value of human work. On the Feast of St Joseph the Worker, 1 May 2020, Pope Francis prayed that no-one would be lacking a job and "That all would be paid justly and may enjoy the dignity of work and the beauty of rest". Sadly, with the advance of AI, only 40-50% of workers will have paid employment. So Catholic Social Teaching will need to be revisited and revised.

McDonagh believes that, "Preparing for and responding to the social impacts of AI and automation will be the defining challenge of the next decade, and that the Catholic Church and all religions will need to take this issue on board, as a central pastoral focus of their work at local,



## AN EXTRACT FROM ROBOTS, ETHICS AND THE FUTURE OF JOBS:

### Biases against the Poor, People of Colour and Women

The lack of women in important positions in AI was demonstrated by a survey undertaken by the World Economic Forum and LinkedIn in 2018. It showed that women held only 22 per cent of jobs in the AI workforce. The data also pointed out that women with AI skills are employed in data analytics, research, information management and teaching, whereas men are employed in more lucrative and more powerful roles, such as software engineers or as chief executives.

Ivana Bartoletti, a privacy and data-protection professional who chairs the Fabian Women's Network, is adamant that young women must query the outcomes of decisions made by algorithms and that,

furthermore, they must demand transparency in all the processes that lead to the creation of algorithms; otherwise she believes women will be sidelined.

Bartoletti points out that women lose out on another front because the jobs that are about to be automated through the use of AI technology affect women more than men. For example, in Britain, 73 per cent of cashiers in shops are women, and 97 per cent of these are expected to lose their jobs to automation. Bartoletti believes that it is time for women, not only to investigate what AI means for them, but also to make sure that, 'in the public discourse, women frame and lead the debate about the governance of AI, so that it becomes a force for the common good and not the ultimate expression of masculine control'.

01. Cover of 'Robots, Ethics and the Future of Jobs' by Fr Seán McDonagh.

02. Fr Seán McDonagh celebrated his golden jubilee of ordination in 2019. He is pictured here with Fr Peter O'Neill (right) and Fr Bernard Mulkerins (left in green stole). Photo: Columban Mission Images.

**Robots, Ethics and the Future of Jobs by Fr Seán McDonagh is published by Messenger Publications, Pbk, 184 Pages, (2021). [www.messenger.ie](http://www.messenger.ie)**

national and global level". He reckons that groups should be formed in every parish and diocese to address this issue. And most of the people dealing with this issue will be lay people, not clergy.


If this does not wake you up, goodness knows what will. This is required reading for all those who take their faith seriously,

and with adult responsibility. This book needs to be widely available, read, and its contents put into practice and earthed. Otherwise, humanity is in danger of becoming just another digital app. ●

**Denis Blackledge SJ**

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**'...required reading for all those who take their faith seriously. This book needs to be widely available, read, and its contents put into practice and earthed.'**

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# USELESS: FOR GOD'S SAKE

Fr George Hogarty writes about coping with the Coronavirus in Bajos de Mena, one of Santiago's poorer suburbs, in a parish with Fr John Greene, a Columban Associate Priest from the Archdiocese of Dublin.

**T**he Coronavirus pandemic crept up on us like a lion through tall grass. Nobody saw it coming and we could not have foreseen the changes it would make to our lives.

I had arrived in the parish of Saint Matthias in the middle of March and was just beginning to get to know the parishioners and familiarise myself with the layout of this poor suburb of *Bajos de Mena* in *Puente Alto* when first curfew, and then a hard lockdown, were imposed on us all.

Being in quarantine meant we couldn't celebrate mass nor any of the sacraments except in very limited circumstances. As well as this, all catechetical programmes and missionary outreach were effectively halted while the Chilean Government tried to control the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic. As the number of Coronavirus cases spiralled throughout Chile, *Puente Alto* was identified as the municipality in Chile with the highest number of cases. Hopes for a quick end to our quarantine faded, though nobody imagined that we would still be in lockdown six months later!

Both Fr John Greene from Dublin, the parish priest of Saint Matthias, and I were obliged to curtail all pastoral activity in

these early stages of lockdown though we did try to explore how we might continue celebrating masses in some of the chapels in a limited way. In the end, even this was not feasible. We had to resign ourselves to being housebound.

In my own case, this feeling of being useless was exacerbated by the fact that I had damaged my left knee climbing up a steep slope to get closer to the foot of a glacier on a trip down to the South of Chile in January. When the knee specialist recommended that I rest my injured knee for a period of three to six months to cure it I gasped in shock. How was I going to bear such a long period of forced inactivity?

Just when we were feeling pastorally incapable of responding to our people's needs, the parish came to life in an unforeseen way. As the lockdown dragged on, our concerned parishioners began to take action when they realised that many families in the poorer parts of the parish were going hungry. Feeding the hungry soon became a major priority. Firstly, everyone involved had to get a special pass from the police to be able to work in any of the seven soup kitchens which fed 700 people daily across the parish.



02

Next pastoral agents, who were normally catechists or committed parishioners, not only found themselves helping in the soup kitchens but were urged to visit their neighbours to find out who might be going hungry.

Help in the form of food parcels began to arrive in the parish through the auspices of Caritas and the Archdiocese of Santiago. Good-hearted donors like Columban Fr Michael Hoban in the USA and the Columban Lay Supporters in Chile also helped with money and extra food parcels. Fr John soon found himself being called upon to collect copious boxes of foodstuffs destined for the hungry that were channelled through the local episcopal vicar of Maipo, Fr Rodrigo.

The coordinators of the nine chapels in the parish were charged with the responsibility of giving Fr John a list of the names of needy families so that help could be directed to those most in need. With the help of an enthusiastic couple called Luis and Maggie, Fr John was able to redirect countless food parcels and boxes to the different chapels for the needy.

What has been the effect of all this effort on the lives of our lay people here the parish of Saint Matthias in *Bajos de Mena*? Jessica, a committed parishioner in the chapel of Saint Joseph the Worker, spoke of her joy in being able to give to those in need. She explained how she felt: "I just feel so happy meeting people whom we don't normally see coming to our chapel and seeing them learn that through us Jesus is at work among them."

Another parishioner called Sonia who

belongs to the community of Saint Andrew Kim relates her experience of serving the hungry in the chapel's soup kitchen. "At first they all came in sheepishly, embarrassed for having to come because they couldn't feed themselves. However, little by little, as we got to know each other they have come alive and now we're the best of friends."


In my own case, I am still limited in what I can do to help because of my injured knee. However, it is obvious to me that God allowed our seeming uselessness to open the door for the lay people to take action in the parish in a way neither Fr John nor I could have anticipated before the Coronavirus pandemic began. ●

Fr George Hogarty was ordained in 1983. He was missioned in Chile from 1985 to 1999 and after a period in Australia, he went to Lima in Peru in 2006 until 2014. He then did mission promotion for the Columbans in Australia before returning to Chile in 2019.

01. Workers attend the offices of *Chile Atiende* to collect unemployment assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic. Image: Shutterstock.
02. The parish of Saint Matthias in *Bajos de Mena*, one of Santiago's poorer suburbs, where Fr George Hogarty and Fr John Greene serve. Image: Fr George Hogarty.
03. Parishioners volunteering at one of the seven soup kitchens which has been feeding 700 people daily across the parish. Image: Fr George Hogarty.

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03



# ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION: AN ECCLESIAL AWAKENING?

Fr Patrick McMullan recalls how working in a country parish early in his ministry helped him appreciate the significance of the Lunar Calendar and its intimate connection with nature and life.

It seems normal now, but when I first came to Korea, I was surprised that the country celebrated two New Year festivals: the Lunar and the Solar New Year. The Lunar calendar festivals, especially New Year and *Chu'sock* (thanksgiving for the harvest), were culturally more significant than the Christian festivals of Easter and Christmas which, in my naivety, I presumed were universally significant.

Not that I understood it then, but what I was really learning through these and other 'surprises' was to appreciate both the validity of different worldviews and their importance in defining 'the normal'. I was awakening to my biases and preconceptions. In simple terms, a worldview is the (mostly) unconscious framework we all hold, which explains and shapes the rhythm of life inherent in a particular historical, cultural, and geographical context. Worldviews are how we make sense of the world.

It was not, however, until I worked in a country parish that I really appreciated the significance of the Lunar calendar and its intimate connection with culture and life. Outside of the major festivals, nowhere was this connection more obvious to me than the increase in activity which came with the *Gyungchip*, one of the 24 seasonal divisions of the lunar calendar

which usually occurs in early March on the solar calendar. *Gyungchip* marks the moment when the entire country seems to awake from the Winter hibernation, farmers stir, and the frogs chirp.

There is, as I have learnt, a delightful comfort in the predictable rhythms of nature articulated by the Lunar calendar: the world just hangs together. However, it now feels as if something has gone seriously astray. As the global ecological crisis deepens, we can no longer presume either the benevolence or the predictability of the seasons and their weather patterns: the rainy season, when or if it arrives, seems to have intensified; the winter weather pattern seems to have altered significantly; summer, which seems to start earlier and finish later, is increasingly hotter and for longer periods; and the chirp of frogs is increasingly difficult to hear.

Globally, the picture is one of worsening, more frequent and intensifying floods, fires, droughts, famines, disappearing forests and inexorably encroaching seas. Even if we do not want to talk about it, all of us are experiencing the impact of a global ecological tragedy which is increasingly challenging our worldview and the related political, economic, social, cultural, and religious



institutions. From a believer's perspective, the "seamless garment of God's creation" (*Laudato Si* 9) is fraying badly, if not disintegrating.

Put another way, how do we pray the first proposition of our creed, "I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." As Christians, we have been good at longing for a heaven created by God; it is the creation of earth that is the problem. In our present day, we can see our Church's leadership struggling with the significance of God's creation. Papal language has moved from talking about environmental awareness and protection to ecological conversion (LS2-6). The change in language is worth pondering. We have become accustomed to the language of awareness and protection, and to varying degrees, take part in the various campaigns to protect the environment by living more frugally, reducing waste, and limiting our consumption of energy.

Ecological conversion, however, involves something entirely different. First, ecological conversion is a rediscovery and deepening of the Hebrew insight that God creates, not just saves, the entire world. Genesis 1-11 is a story of God creating a cosmic temple in which humans are called to worship as tillers and keepers of creation (Gen 2:15; LS66). The Christian vision reinforces this insight by praying, as in the Lord's prayer, that God's name be hallowed not just in Heaven but on Earth too!

However, the cost of sin, understood as our arrogant desire to be like gods (Gen 3:5), results in the disunity of creation and the shattering of humanity's relationship with the Creator. Fear comes to dominate human existence in the cosmic temple: "I heard You in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself" (Gen 3:10).

Sadly, it is not just our relationship with God which suffers, but also our relationships with other human beings and, indeed, the whole of created reality. Ecology, which studies the complex interrelationship of organisms and their environments, takes on a whole new meaning when seen in this context of creation, sin, and disordered worship in the cosmic temple.

Presuming ecological stability, the

Church has, for two thousand years, focused its thinking on our relationships with God and with neighbours. We have asked important questions which include: "Who is God?" "What is a proper relationship with the divinity?" "Who is my neighbour?" "What is a proper relationship with my neighbour?" The overriding question has been, "How do we live a moral life?" Our theological libraries and imaginations are full of answers which, while both beautiful and profound, are now proving to be inadequate in the light of the emerging ecological catastrophe. For example, what is a moral life in the face of the unrestricted destruction of biodiversity across the planet?

Presently, there are about 1.2 billion Catholics scattered around the world. Almost one in five people on this planet have some sort of allegiance to our Church. For a moment, just imagine if this group of people were to promote consciously their ecological conversion and act to protect the biodiversity of the beautiful gift which is our planet. In his letter to the Romans, St Paul beautifully captured this ecclesial awakening, "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God." (Rm 8:19). I am sure the frogs would chirp for that! ●


Fr Patrick McMullan is from New Zealand. He was ordained a priest in 1987 and missioned in Korea. In 2009, he edited a collection of academic papers by Columbans which was published as '**Climate Change: the Agenda for Mission Today**'. He is currently a member of the regional council in Korea.

01. Java tree frogs on a branch. Image: Shutterstock

02. Fr Patrick McMullan in Seoul, South Korea.

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01



02



The pandemic has presented many challenges, not least to life and health, but also to sacramental life. Fr John McEvoy writes about a wedding which the couple were determined to go ahead with, despite the Covid restrictions, because the date was of significance to them.

# A COVID-19 Wedding

**T**heir wedding had to be on the 6<sup>th</sup> June! Jonathan Kunau and Hilda Vukikomoala had planned their wedding a year in advance. Both of them come from big families, so they wanted a big celebration with their two families and friends. In excess of 200 guests were invited. They had booked a hotel in Suva for 6<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

The 6<sup>th</sup> June was an important date for this couple. They first met when they were high school students; Jonathan at the Marist Brothers and Hilda at St Joseph's Secondary School. A Marist Brothers' school function to mark the feast day of St Marcellin on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012 brought them together. They were engaged on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2019 and they planned to celebrate their wedding on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

But in March 2020 Covid-19 struck and not just Fiji but the whole world went into

lockdown. The churches were closed for public worship and only 20 people were allowed to attend functions like funerals and weddings.

But Jonathan and Hilda were determined to go ahead with their wedding on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2020 despite the pandemic. They considered holding it in the church with the allotted number of 20 people allowed but decided instead to hold it in their home. This would mean they had only one place to decorate.

In recent times our Archbishop hasn't been too worried where couples have their weddings, especially when so many tourists come to Fiji to marry. He maintains that a wedding can take place in any sacred space/place. He is a great advocate of *Laudato Si* and the sacredness of the earth and so would not be opposed to a wedding taking place



When the register was signed and the feasting and drinking got underway, it was easy for the two families to meet, chat and compare notes on how the lockdown had affected them over the previous three months. Even the priest had no trouble in getting to know all present on the day!

There was yet another reason why Hilda, in particular, wanted to have her wedding at home. The house was owned by her uncle and aunt and in the garden of the house there are three large coconut



in a home, especially under the present circumstances.

And so it was, on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2020, members of Jonathan and Hilda's immediate families gathered and transformed the house into a place of beauty for the occasion. Jonathan's parents and three of his grandparents were there, as well as Hilda's sister, aunt and uncle and two of her grandparents. The groups also included the cameraman and the priest. But none of Jonathan's siblings were able to be present which was a source of disappointment.

The setting was beautiful and homely. The celebration of the wedding Mass was as solemn as any celebrated in a cathedral or a church. Jonathan's mother, Essie, who is a member of the parish choir directed those who were willing and dared to sing a few hymns.

trees. It is the custom in some parts of Fiji, that when a child is born the umbilical cord is planted with a young coconut tree. This was the case with Hilda. In this house her parents placed her umbilical cord and later on those of her sister Tiresa and her brother Wayne with a young coconut tree when they were born. She saw the day as a very special connection with nature and her life. The Fijians believe that this ceremony prevents a child from becoming mischievous in life. As the photos of the day show, Hilda has grown up into a most gracious and lovely young lady! ●

Fr John McEvoy was ordained in 1972 and was sent on mission to Fiji. He is parish priest of St Pius X in Raiwaqa.

01. Groom Jonathan Kunau and his bride, Hilda Vukikomoala, with Fr John McEvoy on the day of their wedding.
02. Hilda and her family.
03. Jonathan and Hilda with Jonathan's parents.
04. The entire wedding party.

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# WE ARE EQUAL



01



02



03



## COMPETITION RESULTS: 'LET'S CREATE A WORLD WITHOUT RACISM'

Students were invited to write an article or create an image on the topic 'Let's Create a World Without Racism' for the 2021 Columban Schools Media Competition.

The competition was run by the Columbans and the **Far East** magazine and was open to young people aged 14-18 years of age. The entries were judged by leading editors, journalists as well as experts in the area of race relations and diversity.

A student from Gumley House Convent School in Isleworth, West London, **Kashaf Zahid**, won this year's print category while a student from

St Paul's Academy, London, **Esther Ojobaro**, won the image category.

Second place in the print category was awarded to **Zane Sekhon** of Worth School, West Sussex and third place in print went to **Cara Treacy** of Sacred Heart, Upminster.

Second place in the image category was awarded to **Dior Knorr** of Holy Cross, New Malden and joint third place went to **Lilly Heryng** of Holy Cross School in New Malden and **Hirah Ahsan** of St Augustine's, Redditch.

Congratulations to all the winners! We would like to thank every student who took the time and made the effort

to enter the competition. The judges paid tribute to the very high standard this year. Thank you also to all our judges for their time and expertise. ●

The full list of winners can be seen here: [www.columbancompetition.com](http://www.columbancompetition.com)

01. The winning image in this year's Columban Schools Media Competition by Esther Ojobaro of St Paul's Academy, London.
02. Second place in the competition was awarded to Dior Knorr of Holy Cross, New Malden.
03. Joint third place went to Lilly Heryng of Holy Cross School in New Malden and Hirah Ahsan of St Augustine's, Redditch.



This is the winning article in the 2021 Columban Schools Media Competition in Britain. It is by Kashaf Zahid, a student of Gumley House Convent School in Isleworth, West London.

**M**y sister was sitting on the seat in front of mine, in a double decker bus. The bus is known for its distinctive red colour, which to some may represent a well-known feature of London but is a different story for not only my family, but also for other ethnic minority citizens all over the UK. She sat patiently, while a stranger was hurling racist abuse at her. According to [Tuc.org.uk](http://Tuc.org.uk), 1 in 3 BAME (Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic) people face racial abuse on public transport in the UK.

Although we did not know one another, the stranger hated us; she despised 'our kind,' she wanted all immigrants gone. These same immigrants were the ones who helped rebuild our country and grow the economy after a series of destructive events. These same immigrants were wrongly treated, with some being deported in the Windrush Scandal in 2018, despite being invited here decades ago. I wonder what a world without hatred would be like.

My mother was out shopping during the earlier stages of the pandemic. Wanting to keep herself and others safe, she wore a face mask, kept a sanitizer on hand, and was cautious with what she was in contact with. She was refused entry to a shop, despite not having symptoms or needing to isolate. When demanding a reason for their actions, she was told - "You are part of the BAME community, you're more likely to have Covid-19." During lockdown, many articles appeared claiming that the majority of cases were in the BAME community due to cramped multi-generation households. This went on to cause xenophobia, especially in less diverse areas of the UK. The pandemic itself caused a lot of fear, but a xenophobic fear. Originating from China, many Asians were and still are subject to racism in the form of abuse, jokes and much more. This is only the beginning of seeing into our world filled with prejudice and racism. I wonder how the world would be with no prejudice.

Recent movements and campaigns, such as the Black Lives Matter movement across the world, is a start in changing problems that have existed for centuries. This makes us wonder, if God has made us all equal, in the image of God, why does humanity categorise itself? Why do some races believe themselves superior and others inferior? Why do some religious groups go against their beliefs by imposing fake prejudiced information on their followers? Scientifically speaking, Carl Linnaeus did not make a classification for humans based on race, so why do we do this?

Most of our 7.8 billion population would like to have a world without racism, but how can this be done? It would be a dream, some may even think it's inaccessible, but it can be done with the right education and right action. Feeling unsafe in a developed country where I was born does not

feel right. In fact, wherever you are from or wherever you live should be a place of comfort, a place in our hearts. Charity and kindness to me is not only a main principle of my religion, but also something I like to live by. One of my favourite Hadiths (a narrative from the Prophet Muhammad) - "O people, your Lord is one and your father Adam is one. There is no favour of an Arab over a foreigner, nor a foreigner over an Arab, and neither white skin over black skin, nor black skin over white skin, except by righteousness. Have I not delivered the message?" - shows that religion is against prejudice of any kind, and that God wants a world under the stewardship of people who do not care about power and money, but instead those who care about everyone, no matter what religion or race.

A story from the Bible, which my teacher introduced me to, clearly shows this message. The story of Ruth and Naomi from the Old Testament is a story of a lady, Naomi, and her two widowed daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. In this melancholic time of losing her two sons, she instructs Ruth and Orpah to return to their tribes. Orpah follows her instructions, whilst Ruth shows an unlikely loyalty and wants to stay with her mother-in-law. "Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die - there will I be buried." (Ruth 1:16-17). I interpret this as despite their differences and being from different tribes, she wants to stay with her because of love, and nothing can be done to separate them. This reflects the idea of a world without racism, as love has trumped all other factors.

Human dignity, a theme of Catholic Social Teaching, shows that every being has value. God's plan for world peace can only start to take shape once we humans realise what our role is. Mother Theresa is a fine example of someone who showed dignity and excellence in all she did, but mostly her unconditional love for everyone despite who they were.

The next question is, what can be done to unite all stewards of our common home, the Earth? Racism, and other types of prejudice, start from ignorance, miseducation, and influence. This can be from an early age, or from life experiences. Whatever way it has been imposed, is utterly wrong, but can be changed for good. A small act of kindness can change our perspectives. Deciding to be fair can make someone's day. Choosing not to hate may inspire others to follow your ambition of wanting change, of wanting a world without racism. This journey to a world of love will not be smooth, unsupportiveness will be prominent, and this movement will not be taken seriously, but, remember, one good deed turns into a hundred and God will be by your side.

Altogether, we can create a world without racism. ●

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# SIGNS OF HOPE



**Sr Kathleen M. O’Riordan** writes about the impact of the pandemic and the ‘Remain in Mexico’ policy on thousands of migrants left waiting along the Mexican border, many without money, food or the possibility of work.

In his message for World Refugee Day 2020 Pope Francis called for “eyes and hearts to open to action by recognising, contemplating and sharing the life of refugees, internally displaced persons, and migrants”. This invitation touched me and challenged me.

I have been privileged and blessed to serve in the *Casa del Migrante*, house of refuge in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico for the past year sharing life with so many people fleeing from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Brazil and Mexico. Like most people, the Coronavirus pandemic caught me totally unprepared and the lockdown came suddenly.

At that moment there were more than 200 people in the house, women, men and children of all ages. The restrictions imposed in order to protect and prevent the spread of the virus presented many new challenges. Volunteers could no longer come to help and some staff had to take time out because of other health conditions. Then the Trump administration suspended all immigration court hearings in El Paso and closed the US/Mexican

border, so our people were literally stranded ‘on a road going nowhere’. This caused a lot of anxiety and desperation as no one had a future date for a court hearing and most were already waiting many months. This so-called ‘Remain in Mexico’ policy left thousands of migrants waiting indefinitely in the cities and towns along the Mexican border, many without money, food or the possibility of work.

At the same time the US administration continued to deport people including many Mexicans who had worked for years in the US, without any medical attention or testing for Covid-19. They were left “over the bridge” to fend for themselves in very precarious circumstances. A light that shone in the darkness was the generosity and solidarity of the ordinary people from both sides of the border who supplied food, clothing and many gestures of comfort and love that kept a spark of hope alive.

The pandemic travel restrictions did not deter people from fleeing violence, poverty, extortions, kidnappings and natural disasters. The destruction caused by two hurricanes in Honduras forced



01



02

03

thousands of people to set out on the perilous journey north. There was no other option for them...they had lost everything except hope. The end of the Trump era and the election of President Joe Biden gave them new hope to seek refugee status. May that hope become a reality.

In whatever situation we find ourselves, we too can be carriers of hope for others. May our faith sustain us in these uncertain times and help us to know that a loving and caring God walks with His people. And may the Faith and resilience of migrants/refugees continue to inspire us to make our "common home" a better place for all God's children. ●

Sr Kathleen M. O'Riordan from Co Limerick served in Chile/ Peru for 45 years and hopes to return to Mission in Mexico when the pandemic permits travel.

- 01. Gathering to celebrate Mass near the Border for migrants who died or disappeared en route. All images: Sr Kathleen M. O'Riordan.
- 02. The entrance to the shelter for migrants in Ciudad Juarez in Mexico run by the diocese.
- 03. Children at one of the workshops with Sr Kathleen M. O'Riordan.
- 04. Celebrating Mass on Christmas Day at the tents where migrants stayed when waiting to cross to the Migrant Court in US.

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Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.

Maya Angelou



04

# IN PRAISE OF FR TOMÁS'S "EYE-OPENER"

Transition year student Dáire King writes about his visit to Pakistan to see first-hand how his uncle, Fr Tomás King, helps some of the poorest and marginalised.

Part of my life growing up was the occasional phone call from my uncle, Tomás, who is a missionary priest in Pakistan. Every conversation I had with him over the phone, would include the question: "When are you coming to Pakistan, Dáire?" While I knew he was usually joking, it still made the phone call a little awkward as I was unable to tell him I never planned to go to Pakistan to see him. So I would always answer with, "Maybe next year."

I didn't think I would ever go to Pakistan and never imagined myself wanting to go there. Not until my brother, Cathal, decided to call my uncle's bluff and visit Pakistan during his Transition Year.

Cathal is two years older than me and two years ahead of me in school. As far as many people are concerned, he did something unimaginable when he visited my uncle in Pakistan. Tomás has had visitors from Ireland before, including

his sisters and brother, but Cathal was the first of our generation in the family to visit. He really set an example for me and made me realise that when you have the opportunity you should take chances and be adventurous in life.

The media would have us believe that visiting a country like Pakistan is risky. But Cathal experienced it for himself and definitely debunked that myth. Following in his footsteps and after hearing how much Cathal enjoyed it, I decided, along with my cousin Eoin, to go to Pakistan during my Transition Year. I had to see for myself what Tomás has been experiencing for the last 27 years.

My first day in Pakistan was somewhat overwhelming. I couldn't believe that I was actually in Pakistan with my cousin and uncle and not back in Ireland with them during one of Tomás's occasional visits home. One thing I noticed in the city of Karachi, where we stayed for the first two days, was the smog. When we were in the streets of the city, distant buildings were not very visible, and I could smell the accumulation of fumes and smoke. That was my first experience of smog and I got a real sense of how air pollution affects the environment.

After doing some travelling around the city, I began to realise why there is so much smog. Over two days in Karachi, I saw just a few bicycles. In every street, there were so many motorbikes, sometimes carrying up to five people. The traffic was 'mental' in the city and it's no wonder that the air is so



# ENING" WORK

polluted with all the fumes being emitted from the millions of motor vehicles.

In Tomás's parish there was a rubbish dump that we visited, and this dump was a shocking sight. Every kind of rubbish could be seen in large heaps that caused foul smells. We saw families working at the dump, sorting and even burning rubbish. Young children working to help their fathers eke out less than a living. This dump highlighted how the government does not provide proper services to deal with all the rubbish that is produced or how to recycle it. So some poor people collect the rubbish and sell what is reusable to try and earn a precarious living for themselves. Seeing these children work in these conditions while others their age attend school in other countries really put things into perspective for me.

Following my uncle around the southern part of Pakistan I got to see him deal with many different people in difficult situations. He is always trying to help those who are in need and seeing him work so selflessly really inspired me to think about my own actions. His constant efforts to help these people obtain basic needs like education made me realise how much people from developed countries take for granted.

Thinking about my life in Ireland and seeing these people struggle each day really put my wealth into perspective and I am not talking only about money. I really am blessed to be living in a place where education is free for everyone, there is no shortage of water, opportunities are

endless, and dreams can be fulfilled with determination and hard work. What I used to call 'hard work' would be a walk in the park for most of the people I met in Pakistan, who work tirelessly for their landlords just to be able to feed their families each day.

My visit to Pakistan was an eye-opener and the poverty I witnessed first-hand will remain with me. One thing that stood out was the generosity and kindness of the people, no matter how bad their situation was. We went to two remote villages where people lived in mud huts and one of their biggest concerns was to ensure that we enjoyed our visit. They offered us a lovely dinner. I don't think I ever appreciated where food came from as much as I did then. It felt like so much more than a dinner, it was a gift.

We also visited a parish where Tomás used to be based, where he and the Columban Missionaries help people break free from bonded labour by providing land to build houses on. When we visited the area, many houses had been demolished illegally by the government officials who claimed falsely that the land was being encroached upon. While we observed the wreckage, a lady invited us over for tea and she boiled water on the ground where once her house had stood. Her family found chairs for us to sit down beside their tent as Tomás talked to the people. It was very upsetting to see what they had to go through, yet they wanted us to feel welcome and they put us before themselves.

I have never felt as welcome in another country as I did in Pakistan and I will definitely visit Tomás again in the future. Seeing how hard these people's lives are, I can understand why Tomás devotes so much of his time to helping them. I am proud to call him my uncle. ●


Dáire King is a student at St Jarlath's College in Tuam, Co Galway.



01. Dáire King, his cousin Eoin and his uncle, Fr Tomás King in Karachi.
02. Dáire and Eoin meet locals living near the rubbish dump in Fr Tomás's parish.
03. "I have never felt as welcome in another country as I did in Pakistan," recalls 16-year-old Dáire of his visit to Pakistan.
04. Fr Tomás King's two nephews meet young people and children from Mirpurkhas.

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Fr Denis Monaghan is the last member of a group of twelve Columbans missioned to Korea in 1969 but he is in no rush to leave his adopted land and return to his native Co Leitrim.

01. Columban missionaries Fr Denis Monaghan and Fr Sean Conneely who were ordained at Easter in 1969 and sent on mission to Korea.

02. Fr Denis Monaghan celebrating a First Profession in Korea.

In September and October 1969 twelve newly appointed Columbans arrived in Korea. Our fame had preceded us, we were the class of '69, the first class to be ordained at Easter because we were held back from ordination at Christmas 1968. It was decided by the powers that be that we were not ready for ordination at Christmas - obviously the extra four months worked wonders because by Easter we were all deemed worthy of ordination.

However, the word had reached the regions where we had been appointed that a bunch of troublemakers were on the way. Some took the attitude of wait and see, others condemned us on hearsay.

Among the twelve there were two Australians, Charlie Rue and Ray Scanlon, one American, Bill Schmitt and nine from Ireland, Michael Nallon, John Houlahan, Jerry Dunne, Brendan Kennedy, Tom Cleary, Sean Conneely, Eddie O'Donovan, Colm Murphy and me, Denis Monaghan.

Michael Nallon and I had trouble getting our visas and we arrived a little later on 2 October 1969. Here was proof, if proof was needed, that we were people who did what we wanted! It must have been a terrible disappointment to some that we did not live up to our reputation as troublemakers.

We studied the Korean language for 10 months before we were all appointed to parishes. Six were appointed to Kwangju Diocese and six to the north, to Wongju and Chunchon Dioceses. I decided I would try it for a year and see how things went. The language was very difficult and

at times I felt like giving up. But then I was appointed to a parish and I began to mix with Koreans for the first time and all thoughts of giving up left. I made friends with Koreans in that first parish who 50 years later I still regard as friends.

Over the years four of our group have died: Colm Murphy, Mick Nallon, Brendan Kennedy and Bill Schmitt. Tom Cleary, Ray Scanlon and Charlie Rue now work in Australia. Jerry Dunne and Eddie O'Donovan live and work in America. John Houlahan works in Ireland. So that just leaves Sean Conneely and me in Korea. But Sean has announced that he is returning to Ireland so that leaves me as the last member of the group in Korea.

Recently, I have been watching Michael Harding, Eleanor Shanley, Seamus O'Rourke and Charlie McGettigan in a video on 'Lovely Leitrim' which rekindled a longing to return there. Maybe when I get old, I might just do that but at present I feel I have a few years left in me yet, so I'll stay here a while longer.

Leitrim has changed over the last 50 years and I would not be returning to the Leitrim I recall. When I occasionally return there for a holiday I still find the people as friendly and welcoming as ever but whether I could happily live there now, I'm not sure. I would have to be doing something and I'm not sure how many job opportunities are open to someone over 75, even in the Church. I could hear confessions, but I hear there's not that many looking for confession. For now, I'll continue to represent the class of '69 in Korea. ●

## AND THEN THERE WAS ONE

# REST in PEACE



Fr George Webster



Fr Martin Murphy

Fr **George Webster** was born on the 25 August 1932 in Lewisham, South London, England. He was educated at the Salesian College, London (1943-1951) and at the English College, Valladolid, Spain (1951-1957). He was ordained for the Archdiocese of Southwark on 9 June 1957. He did parish ministry in Brighton and Kingston on Thames between 1957 and 1962.

He then volunteered with the Columbans in Peru from November 1962 until 1968. After a probation period in Dalgan, George joined the Society and returned to Peru in October 1968. He had various parish appointments in Lima between 1968 and 1989 including Pastoral Vicar for three years for the Northern Zone of Lima Archdiocese.

He was appointed to Britain in April 1989 for Mission Promotion and was part of the mission team until June 2001. He then took up university chaplaincy at South London University for two years until September 2003. He continued his chaplaincy work part-time, while supplying in a number of parishes in the Archdiocese where he had begun his priestly ministry in 1962.

In June 2006 a need arose in the parish of St Patrick's, Chislehurst and he was appointed 'priest in charge' until his retirement in 2014 when he took up residence in the retirement wing in St Columban's, Solihull.

George was a popular member of the Solihull community with a dry wit and plenty of jokes. He was always willing to do weekend supply in the Archdiocese of Birmingham. He carried on helping to open the daily post in our Solihull office until shortly before his death. His considerable spiritual presence will be sadly missed.

Fr **Martin Murphy** was born on 14 April 1929 at Enniscorthy, Co Wexford. He was educated at Glenbrien NS, CBS Enniscorthy, and St Peter's College, Wexford. He came to Dalgan in September 1948 and was ordained priest on 21 December 1954.

Appointed to the Philippines in 1955, he was assigned to the northern Luzon Diocese of Lingayen in the province of Pangasinan, where the Columbans had worked in parishes since 1933 because of a grave shortage of priests there. Lingayen is 200kms north of Manila. The major language there and in the province is Pangasinan, also known as Pangasinense. The first Columbans who worked in Pangasinan laboured to encourage the people to return to the practice of the faith, to rebuild churches and parish houses, and to set up schools. They were blessed to be helped in this last endeavor, and in the preparation of catechists, by the presence of the Columban Sisters.

In this setting Martin was to spend the next forty years. He served at various times as parish priest or curate in Lingayen, Sual, Domalandan, Naguelguel and Labrador. Always quiet and conscientious, he was as gentle as the people that he served and was greatly appreciated by them. He was reassigned to Ireland in 1996. He was a quiet but active member of the community, interested in, and informed about all that happened in Dalgan. As his health deteriorated in 2019, he moved to the Nursing Home until his death on 12 December 2020.

May they rest in peace.

**MAKING YOUR WILL?** **MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

Please remember the needs of Columban missionaries and their missions.

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Your gift could help some of the most marginalised and neediest.

Missionary Society of St Columban, Widney Manor Road, Knowle, Solihull, West Midlands, B93 9AB.

**J**eremiah is one of the prophets of the Old Testament. He never wanted to be a prophet and he protested against the call of Yahweh/God. He lived at the time of the last days of Jerusalem's monarchy and he reluctantly proclaimed a message of destruction.

But in spite of his messages of disaster he also had a message of hope. In the Book of Jeremiah Chapter 29:11 he writes:

"Yahweh/God says:

'I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned  
Plans to take care of you, not to abandon you  
Plans to give you the future you hope for  
When you pray to Me I'll listen to you.

When you look for Me you'll find Me.

I'll make sure you won't be disappointed."

The Bible is really a Library of Books.

There are many books but the same central focus. The emphasis is on what God was doing in the lives of His people. The people in the Old Testament were not much different from us today. That is why the Bible is one of the oldest and most influential books ever written.

It is not easy reading at times as it tells of disasters and calamities, death and destruction. But don't we hear plenty about these today? And do we listen to our modern prophets today?

The people of the Old Testament believed that Yahweh/God spoke to them through the prophets. They spoke to them of new leadership and gave them hope for a more equal life for all people and freedom and prosperity which would sustain them. So, these sacred books tell the history of the earth and its evolution, its people and their laws right up

to the spread of Christianity in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD. Throughout the whole Bible the faith of the people shines through and sustains them.

We have the Good News brought by Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus preached the coming of God's rule breaking through the bonds of evil, sin and death. Jesus was the fulfilment of the Old Testament. He was the One the prophets looked forward to. In Him was the hope of the Chosen People.

In Matthew's Gospel we read: "The people who lived in darkness have seen a great light. On those who lived in a country of shadow a light has dawned." This was to fulfil what was spoken by the Prophet Isaias:

"The Lord will give you a sign - a young woman will be with child and will give birth to a son whom she will call Emmanuel which means God with us." The woman we know was Mary who paved the way for all people to have free access to the grace by which we live and confidence in the hope of the glory of the children of God.

Mary is the pledge of our redemption. She and her son Jesus are the two most important people of the Old and the New Testaments. They are both continuously present to us if

only we call upon them.

As He hung on the Cross, Jesus gave His mother to all people. She is your mother and mine. She will be close to us as we live our human life and for all eternity when we meet her in glory.

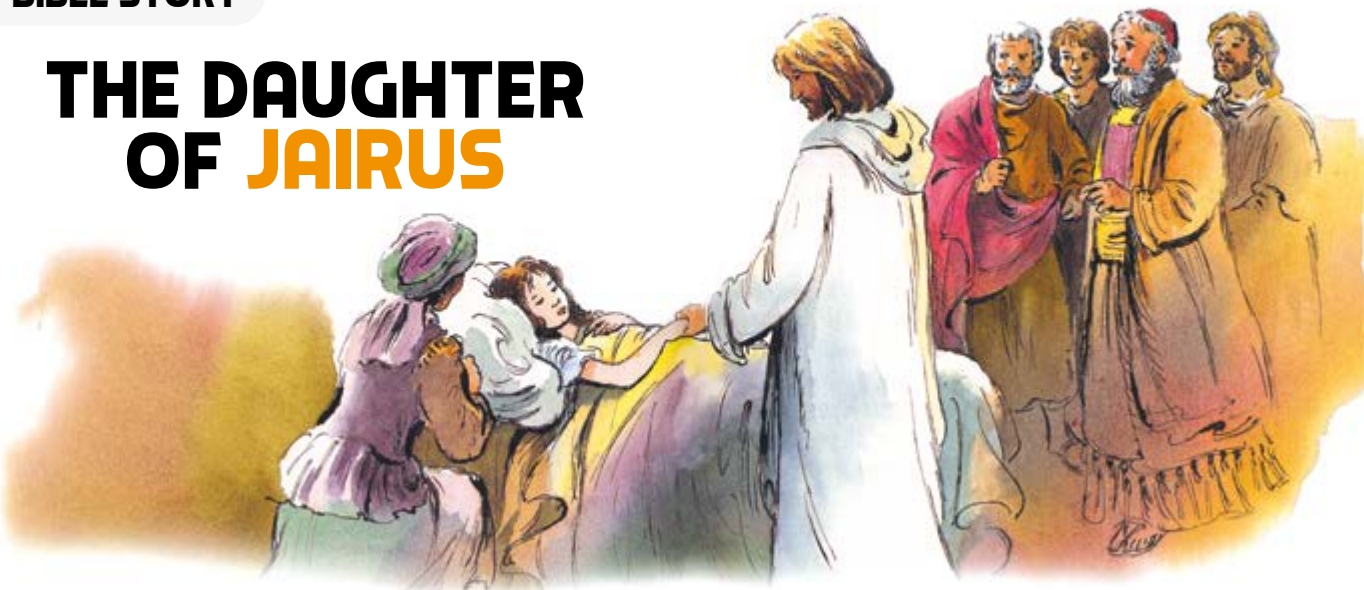
Holy Mary, Mother of God, and our Mother, pray for us now and always. ●



Raphael's 'Madonna Conestabile' (1502-1504).  
Reproduction from illustrated Encyclopedia Art  
galleries of Europe, Partnership M. O. Wolf,  
St Petersburg - Moscow, Russia, 1901.

Sr Abbie O'Sullivan

# THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS



One day, a man pushed through the crowd that had come to hear Jesus and threw himself at Jesus' feet. The man was a minister at the local synagogue.

"Master, please help me," he sobbed. "My little girl is very ill. She's dying. She's only twelve years old, Lord. Please come and make her better."

"I'll come at once," said Jesus. But first, he and his disciples had to work their way slowly through the hundreds of people pressing all round them.

They were not far from the house of Jairus when a friend of his met them.

"Your daughter has died," he told Jairus, "So there is no need to trouble the Master any further."

But when Jesus heard this, he said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid. Have faith and she will be safe."

The house was crowded with mourners, weeping and wailing. Jesus made his way past them to the room where the little girl lay, taking with him only Peter, John and James, and the child's parents.

"There is no need for you to cry," he told the crowd. "The child is only asleep." But they all laughed at him. They had seen for themselves that she was dead.

Jesus stood by the bed and took the little girl's hand.

"Come, child," he said. "It's time to get up." At once her spirit returned and she sat up, smiling.

"Give her something to eat," said Jesus to her astonished parents. "And don't tell anyone what has happened today." ●

Read also: [Mark 5:21-43](#)

## BIBLE QUIZ

NUMBER  
92

1 In Acts ch.13, where was Paul when Mark left him to return to Jerusalem?

2 In 1Kings ch.17, to whom did God say, "Leave here turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan?"

3 In Luke ch.19, when Jesus met Zacheus, he was entering which town on his way to Jerusalem?

4 In Acts ch.15, which two men were sent with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch by the Council of Jerusalem?

5 In Exodus ch.2, where did Moses meet Zipporah who became his wife?

6 In Acts ch.13, which two towns on Cyprus does Luke say Paul visited?

Name:

Address:

THREE  
£15  
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TO BE WON!

**£15 vouchers for the first three correct entries received!**

Consult your Bible, answer the questions above and send your entry to: Bible Quiz N° 92, St Columban's, Widney Manor Rd, Solihull, West Midlands, B93 9AB, before 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

Bible Quiz N° 90 Winners: Graham Dean, Shropshire • Simon Marley, Lancashire • Julie McCarthy, London.

# WORD SEARCH

Find these seaside items in this word search. They can be found across, up, down or diagonally:

- BEACH
- LIFEBELT
- PALM
- SAND
- SEA
- SEAGULL
- SHELL
- STARFISH
- SUMMER
- SUN
- WINDSURF

T	L	E	B	E	F	I	L
S	U	M	M	E	R	L	H
S	L	H	O	L	U	P	C
A	L	I	D	G	A	A	A
N	E	Y	A	E	S	L	E
D	H	E	S	U	N	M	B
H	S	I	F	R	A	T	S
W	I	N	D	S	U	R	F



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## PUDSY'S DIRTY - FIND THE 10 SPELLING MISTAKES

At school I was thinking its funny becoss in the lockdown we were dying to go to school and now we are mad to be off again for the summer hols. I told Granny the girls were complaining they'd love to go to Spain for the luvly sunshine except they might not be allowed. Granny said the sun that shines there is the same sun that shines here at home so no need to be talking through their hats about forin places. Then Miss Flinn asked us to do an essay on what we would be doing during the hols and we all said oh no Miss but she

only sed oh yes and with good spacing and polish and of course good spelling. But I got a brill idea. I can write I'll be hill walking with cussin Colm the fella with the long legs and huge steps- that will be spacing. Then helping uncle Edward shine the new tractor - that will be the polish part cept I don't know about the spelling. That will do just fab and the ones that go to Spain can't do it cos there won't be tractors or hill climbing over there. I bet this will be the best essay ever and Miss Flinn will shurely be happy at last.



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 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

### HA! HA!

1. What do you get when you combine an elephant with a fish?
2. Do fish go on vacation?
3. Why did the dolphin cross the beach?
4. Why don't oysters share their pearls?
5. What do you call a snowman in July?
6. What's black and white and red all over?

1. Swimming trunks!
2. No, because they're always in school!
3. To get to the other side!
4. Because they're shellfish!
5. A puddle!
6. A zebra with a sunburn!

## COMPETITION WINNERS JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2021

<p>Sophie Moss Chorley</p> <p>1</p> <p>Colpaint - Aged 7 and Under</p>	<p>Layla Renfrewshire</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Lilly Roberts Wirral</p> <p>1</p> <p>Colpaint - Aged 8 and Over</p>	<p>Layton Darlington, Co. Durham</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Evie Starr Stafford</p> <p>1</p> <p>Pudsy's Dirty</p>
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# Breathtaking Barn Owls

By Elizabeth McArdle



With their banshee screech, bright feathers and ghostly appearance, the sighting of a Barn Owl, flying silently in the night sky, can challenge the most rational of us into thinking we have seen a ghost. Unlike most birds, owls do not make noise when they fly. Their special, comb-like feathers break the air turbulence into smaller currents or micro-turbulences. This process muffles the sound of air rushing over their wing surface and dampens all sound. It is little wonder some of us get spooked when a barn owl flies over our heads.

They are known as the farmer's friend. Surveys have shown that a pair of owls can eat up to 2,000 rats and mice during the breeding season and yes, you may have guessed, their favourite food are rats and mice. They find them scrumptious. *Tyto alba* is their scientific or taxonomic name. *Tyto* (not related to Tayto crisps) comes from the ancient Greek word 'tuto' meaning owl and *alba*, is the Latin for white.

These mainly nocturnal birds hunt by sight and sound. Their survival depends on their amazing hearing powers. Barn Owls are capable of hearing prey deep within burrows, under sheets of leaves and even hidden in snow. Their superb sight allows them to see eight times farther than we humans, even in low light intensities, and they can target prey which may be about two miles away. While we might see a light at that distance, a small animal, camouflaged in its surroundings would be hidden from us. For the barn owl, this would be a doddle.

While the Barn Owl may be elusive and only frequent the night hours, God is with us night and day. Isn't it heartening to know that when times get tough, God will be there, protecting us and our loved ones from all danger and harm. ●



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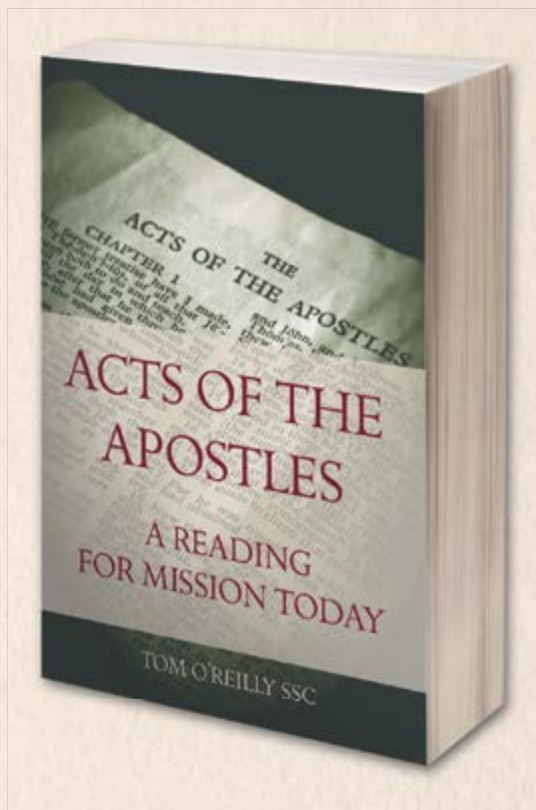
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Age:

Address:

FOUR PRIZES TO BE WON!

# ACTS OF THE APOSTLES



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**Is your faith important to you?**

**Could God be calling you to be a Columban missionary?**

If you see yourself today making a difference and feel drawn to work as a missionary overseas, come and explore the possibilities as a Columban Priest or Lay Missionary.

### For Further Information:

Fr Denis Carter,  
St Columban's, Widney Manor Rd,  
Solihull, West Midlands B93 9AB

**telephone:** 01564 772 096

**email:** [vocations@columbans.co.uk](mailto:vocations@columbans.co.uk)

**website:** [www.columbans.co.uk](http://www.columbans.co.uk)

