

far east



MAGAZINE OF THE COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES



RETURN TO MYANMAR

Despite the risks
Sr Mary Ita
heads back

WASHING OF THE FEET

A Call to be of Service
to Others

ANNUS HORRIBILIS

Strong Criticism
of
Facebook

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THE FAR EAST

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

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

Editor

Sarah Mac Donald
editorfareast@gmail.com

Assistant Editor

Sr Abbie O'Sullivan

Layout & Editorial Assistant

Breda Rogers

Manager

Stephen Awre

Original Design

Gabriel German Carbone

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

Front Cover

Fr Eamon Sheridan washes the feet of a client of the Rebirth Rehabilitation Centre for those battling addiction in Myanmar's Kachinland.



“The one who lives by the truth comes into the light.”
(Jn 3:21)

A DAY OF TRUTH AND LIGHT IN VOTUA

Tears flowed during Lent last year in the village of Votua, part of the parish of Christ the King, Ba (Fiji). For 15 years, the village has hosted a mining company. Despite its promises of compensation, the people have yet to receive anything.

Two of the three elders who allowed the company to do exploration (which has since developed into full scale mining) have since died and whatever documentation they may have signed seems to have gone to the grave with them.

Columbans serving in Ba, not being indigenous Fijians, have been grappling with issues of conflict linked to environmental degradation and the indigenous people's sense of ownership and unity with the land and the sea.

A number of appeals to Archbishop Peter Loy Chong of Suva for advice finally came to fruition with the visit of the Vicar for the Western Region. Fr Veremo Dovarua, an indigenous diocesan priest, said a Mass of Reconciliation, preceded by - at his command - a nine-day novena of 20 daily decades of the rosary per family, along with three days of fasting and reconciliation among subclan and other groupings within the village.

On the surface, it was an onerous task, but it was one the people embraced willingly. The liturgy of repentance at Mass was substituted by a Fijian ceremony offering a whale's tooth. This was undertaken by the remaining village elder to ask forgiveness from the parish and Archdiocese for any actions through which he and his colleagues may have brought wounds to both the community and the land.

After Mass, Fr Veremo directed a session of *yaqona* drinking, during which villagers

were able to further air their grievances and hopes. The priest counselled the villagers to seek the services of a lawyer to force the company to pay the compensation and trust funds it had promised.

One year on, not much has happened, but there is growing confidence among the women and youth about speaking up. They are, after all, the ones whose future is most at stake.

The Gospel of that day last Lent was from John 3, Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, where he counselled him to "come into the light", so that his "deeds could be seen". There has been a veil of darkness and confusion in Votua, and we hoped that as we approached Easter, light and clarity would increase.

The psalm of the day (Ps 136) was the famous Jewish lament: 'O how could we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land'. Fr Veremo likened the Jews' exile in Babylon to the Votua people's division and disenchantment among themselves and within their own land.

Pray that vulnerable communities such as Votua, easily tempted by the promises of international companies, do not succumb to ways that wound their ancestral unity and the sustainability of their natural environment. And if they do, that ways of repentance and reparation can be found. ●

Fr Pat Colgan

Fr Pat Colgan from Belfast is Parish Priest of Christ the King in Ba. He has worked as a missionary in Fiji for many years and also served on the General Council of the Missionary Society of St Columban in Hong Kong.

01. A village elder offers a whale's tooth ('tabua') to ask forgiveness and seek reconciliation.





“When we arrived in the ‘barrio’, there was nowhere for us to live. There was nothing to rent. There wasn’t a home for us. There wasn’t a church or a chapel. There was absolutely nothing.”

REMEMBERING ‘FATHER FIX-IT’

With the help of archives and the memories of those who knew him, Fr John Boles recalls the career of Fr Mick Fitzgerald, a prime mover of Columban mission in Peru.

This was the scene when the first three intrepid Columbans arrived from Ireland in 1952 to start our mission in Lima. The words are those of one of this gallant band, an extraordinary individual by the name of Fr Michael Fitzgerald, generally known as ‘Fitz’.

The Columbans had been invited by the bishops of Peru to take responsibility for a swathe of territory on the edge of the capital, Lima, an immense expanse of desert and farmland containing one neighbourhood (‘barrio’) and 15 neo-feudal estates (‘haciendas’). The resident population was estimated to be about 40,000, which was swollen by some 20,000 seasonal workers at harvest time. Cotton was the main cash crop. The area was designated as ‘The Parish of Blessed Martin de Porres’, in honour of one of Lima’s most beloved sons. It became the Parish of St Martin in 1962 when he was canonised.

Today, scarcely 70 years later, this same area forms the bulk of the Diocese of North Lima, which teems with 2.7 million

inhabitants and 47 parish churches. Around half of these have been established by the Columbans, and many of them were built by the incredible Fr Fitz.

Fr Mick Fitzgerald continued to live in Lima right up to his death in 2006 and is fondly remembered as a man of astonishing energy. His speciality was to secure assistance, not only in finding land and building churches, but also in aiding the thousands of poor people that made up most of the Columban parishes. To do this, he realised early on the value of making contacts. As Columban missionary Fr Dermot Carthy, who knew Fitz for over 45 years recalls, he was an expert at getting help. “He was ‘Mr Fix-it’ for the whole area.”

Eventually having found accommodation and set up a temporary church in this first parish, Fr Fitz went out “on the road”, ministering to the rural population dispersed around the haciendas. It was here he had his first opportunity to make contacts. Several of the estate owners contributed funds towards the purchase of two cars for the parish. It



was an encouraging if modest beginning. But any hope of taking a “slow but sure” approach to expanding the mission was soon dramatically overtaken by events.

Around this time, a process of mass migration of people from the countryside to the city had begun, with peasant farmers crowding into Lima in search of a better life. The government did little in the way of house building, so the people started to take matters into their own hands by organising huge land invasions around the urban periphery. Many of these invasions occurred on Fr Fitz’s doorstep. In the archives I found this quote from him, describing an event in the late 1950s.

“Literally overnight there was an invasion of I don’t know how many families, maybe about ten thousand. I climbed a little hill to see where the night before there had been just a dry riverbed - nothing - apart from rocks and bushes. Now, the morning after, it felt like a scene from ‘Exodus’ in the Bible, all these people and their wicker-work shelters.”

This turned out to be merely the first of

a wave of land invasions that continued over the ensuing decades. The Columbans needed to react fast. Not only did they have to obtain land and build churches in double-quick time, they also had to try and provide social assistance to these people. In particular, there was an urgent need for the squatters to legalise their plots and so be protected from eviction.

This is where Fr Fitz’s gift for contact-making came into its own. Among the ‘high society’ people he had been introduced to was Clorinda Málaga. In 1958, Clorinda married a gentleman by the name of Manuel Prado, who just happened to be President of Peru. Suddenly, Fr Fitz’s friend was the First Lady, with special responsibility for social welfare. Clorinda was only too happy to support the social service initiatives of Fr Fitz and his Columban colleagues, and to put in a good word with potential private benefactors.

Even better, she smoothed the path to the President himself. Fr Dermot recalls how Fr Fitz ended up with almost free access to the presidential palace. “He could get in at any time. Just used to walk in through the back door.”

Fr Fitz used this influence to try and solve the issue of legal title for the squatters’ plots. Thanks to his intervention, huge numbers of families secured right of tenure. Where the areas in question were barren they could be declared State property, and so Fr Fitz persuaded the government that in these cases titles should be given out free. Even where private property was involved, the problem wasn’t insurmountable.

And so it continued, year after year. As the city grew, so did the number of Columban parishes, and so did Fitz’s land acquisitions, church construction and social welfare in Condevilla, Palmeras, Naranjal, Mesa Redonda, Covida, Villa Sol, Huandoy. The list goes on. ●

Fr John Boles is a Columban missionary from England who worked in Peru from 1994 until 2021. He is now Regional Director of the Columbans in Britain.

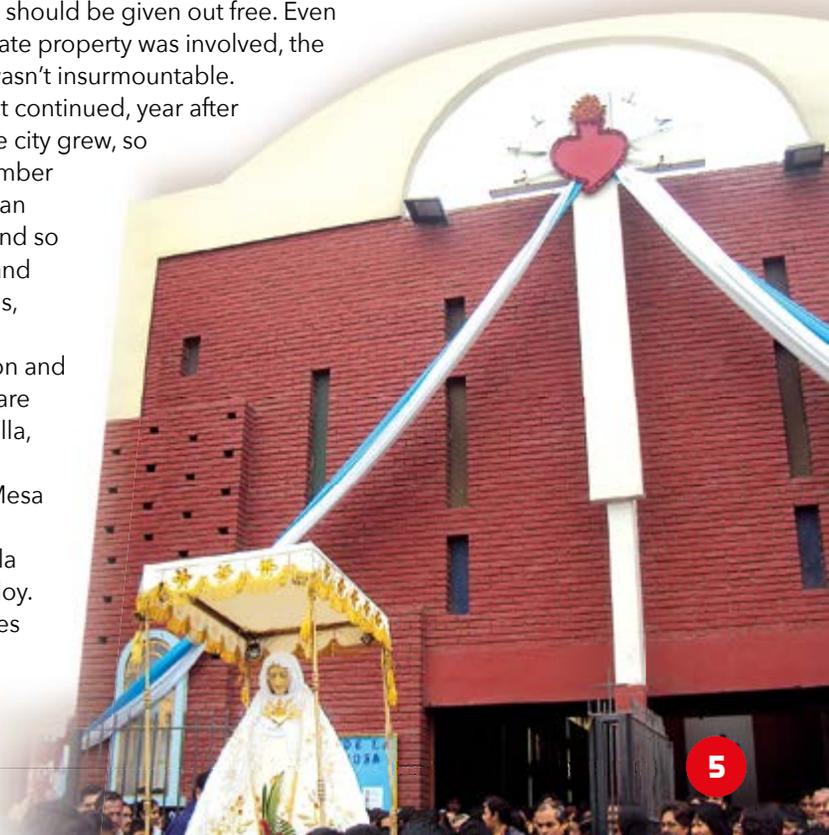
01. Fr Fitz observing La Virgen Dolorosa under construction in 1961.
02. Fr Michael Fitzgerald (left) with Irish Columban associate priest Fr Fintan Cassidy in 1960. (All images courtesy of Juan Diego Torres, Communications Officer, Columbans in Peru.)
03. Inauguration of the parish church of La Virgen Dolorosa in Lima in 1962. (Left to Right) Señor Rodrigo Guerra (Health Minister), Señora Clorinda Málaga de Prado (First Lady of the Republic), Fr Fitz, Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston, and Archbishop Juan Landázuri of Lima.
04. Peru’s First Lady Señora Clorinda Málaga de Prado, President Manuel Prado and Fr Fitz at a reception in the presidential palace, Lima, for Columban and associate missionary priests in 1961.
05. A contemporary view of La Virgen Dolorosa, with the eponymous image being carried in procession on the Patron’s feast day.

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05





GOD'S WORK

Sr Abbie O'Sullivan recalls how Lady Frances Moloney and twelve companions began their training one hundred years ago in 1922 as members of the Missionary Sisters of St Columban.

People's activity is usually their response to the historical situations in which they find themselves. In 1918, Lady Frances Moloney had in mind "some kind of Sisterhood". From 1918 to 1920 she was a prime mover in bringing this to reality. Fr John Blowick, co-founder of the Missionary Society of St Columban, referred to her as "the first live spark" of what became the Missionary Sisters of St Columban. He saw her as "the woman sent by God". Together they worked and prayed, planned and refined the Constitutions of the newly founded Missionary Congregation of Columban Sisters.

The context, in which Lady Frances Moloney's dream for "some kind of Sisterhood", was born against the backdrop of war. In 1916, Europe was on the march. The 1914 - 1918 war was at its peak. The propaganda of war was in the air and men were urged on to 'great things'. Patriotism encouraged them to be willing to sacrifice everything for the love of their country. The challenge was great and many young men and not so young marched into the battlefield to fight for the 'great cause'.

Some went proudly and gladly with heads held high and sureness in their steps. But some wondered and reflected on the death and

destruction, crippled bodies and damaged minds. In the end what would victory mean?

In 1916, China was coming to an awareness of herself. She was very aware of her great Empire and the vastness of her territories. She was also aware of her potential as a world power. Ireland in 1916 was awakening to the cause of freedom. Revolution was in the air and the youth of the nation were not asleep. The leaders of the movement were men and women of high ideals - poets, writers, scholars, mystics and idealists. Their goal was not merely that Ireland fight for freedom from foreign domination but that she become free to shape her own destiny and to make available to her sons and daughters the heritage of Faith and culture which was rightly theirs. They aspired to take their place in the world in a manner worthy of God and country. They were in no doubt as to the greatness of their cause and the dedication which was necessary. They weren't blind to the sacrifices which might be asked of them. Ireland was witnessing its rebirth and like every birth it came by way of suffering. Padraig Pearse summed up his insight and understanding when he wrote:

*"I turned my face to the road before me
To the deed I see and the death that will
be mine."*





In 1916 the Irish Church was experiencing an extraordinary upsurge of missionary zeal which touched almost every household for many years. New centres of missionary endeavour emerged. Leaders rose up who were committed to the cause, challenge and call of mission. They put their hands to the plough and didn't look back. Fr John Blowick took up the call and challenge of mission. He gave up his professorial chair in Maynooth. In 1920 he made his first journey to the Far East when he led the pioneer group of Columban Fathers on mission to China. In 1918 he wrote, "The work is God's work not yours or mine. God is behind the whole thing and He will see it through."

On the 7th February 1922, six young ladies arrived to join the Congregation. On the day after, four more came and on the 16th February 1922 two young ladies came from Australia. Now life in the new Congregation could go ahead.

Right from the beginning the emphasis was on preparation for China. It seemed a distant dream. However, in March 1926 shipping accommodation for a group of Sisters was booked for the autumn. They sailed thirteen thousand miles to Shanghai and couldn't presume on returning to Ireland again. The Missionary Sisters of St

Columban had reached their goal.

Today, Columban Sisters are back again in China. They are also in Korea, the Philippines, Pakistan, Myanmar, the USA, Britain and Ireland. Sisters from Asia have been missioned abroad and are carrying on the work of those first Sisters who left the security of their daily lives to venture into places unknown so that all people may come to know the Living God. They have the same energy and dedication as the Sisters had one hundred years ago. What Fr Blowick wrote is still relevant: "The work is God's work. He is behind the whole thing and He will see it through." ●

Columban Sr Abbie O'Sullivan served on mission in the Philippines, Hong Kong and Britain. She is now based in Magheramore and is archivist for the Columban Sisters as well as Assistant Editor of the Far East magazine.

01. The first group of Columban Sisters who set sail for China from Cobh Harbour in Co Cork on 13 September 1926 along with members of the Columban Fathers.
02. Lady Frances Moloney
03. Columban Missionaries onboard the Bremen. After many weeks travelling, covering 13,000 miles, the missionaries finally arrived in Hanyang, China.
04. Irish Columban sisters visit a rural Chinese parish in the 1930s.
05. The first novices of the Missionary Sisters of St Columban, who joined in February 1922. Among that pioneering group were: Frances Moloney, Nora Collins, Brigid McSweeney, Mary McKey, Elizabeth Walsh, all from Ireland, and Frances Mapleback who had travelled from Australia to join the newly founded congregation.
06. After profession, Lady Frances became Mother Mary Patrick Moloney.
07. The first members of the Congregation came together in a farmhouse in Cahiraon beside the River Shannon in Co Clare to begin their training as missionary Sisters.

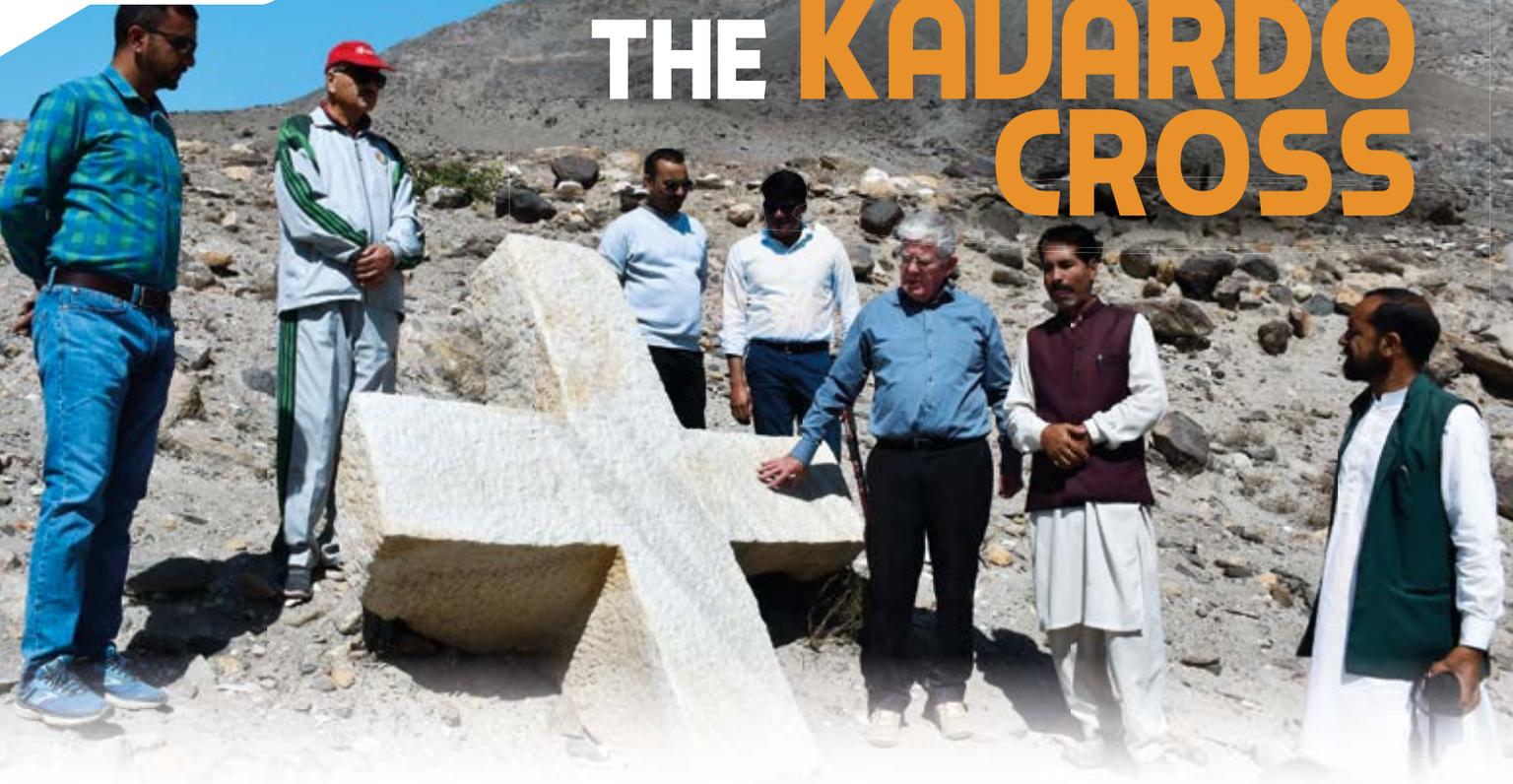
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THE KAVARDO CROSS



Last year Fr Robert McCulloch visited a remote part of northern Pakistan to see the monumental Kavardo Cross which is believed to date from the 8th century. It suggests there was a Christian presence in this part of Pakistan before 1000AD.

In early 2019, a group of young Muslim men discovered a large, monumental carved marble cross on the mountain side above their village in the Kavardo Valley in Skardu in the far northern part of Pakistan. The cross was upside down and almost completely buried in the dry stony soil of the mountain. This geographical area has no rain but is covered in deep snow every winter. The cross seems to have rolled down the mountainside due to earthquakes and landslides over a very long period.

In 2020, three researchers from the recently established University of Baltistan in Skardu, led by Dr Zakir Hussain Zakir, happened to visit the village in search of any old artifacts such as utensils, wood carvings and weapons as part of the university-sponsored project to preserve the culture of the people of Skardu valley. They were given hospitality in the village, but the villagers said they were too poor to have any such objects. As the village leader was walking the researchers back to their jeep, he casually mentioned that something had been found some months earlier but that it was a long way up the mountain side and would probably be too far away for them to get to. Fortunately, Dr Zakir and his companions immediately turned around to climb the mountain. That was the beginning of the academic and archaeological interest in what is now called the Kavardo Cross.

Much has happened since then to try and discover the origin and purpose of the cross. In June 2020 a small group of Muslim and Christian academics, led by the vice chancellor of the University of Baltistan, Dr Naeem Khan, visited the new archaeological site. There has been national and international media coverage. An academic conference was held in August in Skardu and another in October in Islamabad. During the August conference, opinion was divided as to whether the discovery of the cross could be proof of the existence of Christianity in Skardu before the arrival of Islam in the 14th century.

When the October conference was held, the overall opinion was that it was most likely an ancient Christian cross which should not be regarded as a threat to the present national or religious reality of Pakistan. The Kavardo Cross was recognised as an important testimony to the multi-layered reality of the peoples who lived for thousands of years within what is now Pakistan and especially in Skardu.

The University of Baltistan estimates the weight of the cross to be three or four tons. Vertically it measures six feet and seven inches while horizontally six feet four inches. The front side is finely finished while the back side is rough. The base stem of the cross is very slightly broken. The University of Baltistan estimates it to be 1,000 to 1,200





years old.

I visited the site of the Kavardo Cross with Fr Gulshan Barkat in September 2021 and I now act as the cultural ambassador of the University of Baltistan to promote academic research and collaboration with other universities in the archaeological research needed to unlock the secrets of this cross.

Geographically, the place of the discovery of the cross is a mountain in the Kavardo valley facing the right bank of the Indus River. Behind the cross is the gigantic Karakoram Range while at the foot of the mountain, where the cross was found, is the Indus River joined by its tributary, the Shigar River. On the left bank of the Indus are the colossal Himalayas. The cross would have been positioned on the mountain facing east so that it overlooked the Indus River, the Himalayas and the Skardu valley. The area is now full of olive and apricot trees. The village near the mountain where the cross was discovered is thirty kilometres from the city of Skardu.

Skardu is not only the geographical meeting point of the Hindu Kush, Karakoram and Himalaya ranges and the Indus River but it is also an important part of the Silk Road which from 500AD connected China through what is now northern Pakistan and Central Asia with the Persian Empire and beyond to Syria and Constantinople. Adventurous modern tourists and equally inquisitive and scholarly archaeologists and historians have turned their attention to the ancient Silk Road. The Silk Road seems

to be the antique version of the modern Belt and Road Initiative which is a global infrastructure development strategy of the present Chinese government.

How did the Kavardo Cross come to be where it is? Obviously, the presence of a cross means the presence of Christians. The spread of Christianity into the Skardu valley seems to have had two sources after 500AD. Firstly, by Christians from the nearby Persian Empire which included present-day Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan and by Christians from the ancient Sogdian civilisation which comprised parts of present-day Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara. Secondly, through the evangelisation carried out by Syrian monks who were active up and down the Silk Road and even in China at this time. The present hypothesis is that the Kavardo Cross was set up in about 800AD by Syrian monks who had links to the Sogdian Christians and who may also have established a monastery near where the cross was found in 2020.

There is a sense of excitement around the intellectual and archaeological challenges surrounding the discovery of the Kavardo Cross. The site of the cross is, for the moment, secure. The people of the nearby village own the land and have donated four acres where the site is. The villagers themselves control the access ascending up the mountain to the cross. However, it is of serious concern that the cross and the site of the discovery remain open to the natural elements and possible human threat. ●

Fr Robert McCulloch is an Australian member of the Columbans. He served in Pakistan from 1978 to 2011. He was decorated by the Government of Pakistan for his services to health and education in 2012. He is currently based in Rome and serves as the Procurator General of the Missionary Society of St Columban.

01. Fr. Robert McCulloch visiting the Kavardo Cross site near Skardu in northern Pakistan accompanied by Dr Naeem Khan, Dr Zakir Hussain Zakir, Zeeshan Ali, Imtiaz Ali, Fr Gulshan Barkat and Ghulam Rasool, village Elder.
02. The village near the mountain where the cross was discovered is thirty kilometres from the city of Skardu. The cross would have been positioned on the mountain facing east so that it overlooked the Indus River, the Himalayas and the Skardu valley. The area is now full of olive and apricot trees.
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A CHURCH SYNOD

The Synod Pope Francis has convoked is a Church synod, Fr Sean McNulty emphasises. It is a forum for listening to everybody's experience of discipleship with compassion and tenderness.

I am hoping that the Synodal Pathway will provide the Church with an opportunity to put in place processes that would see the Church becoming a better version of itself. I strongly believe that the credibility of the process will determine the acceptability of the results. We are all aware of political examples where a faulty process leads to rejection of the results.

In his promotion of the processes for Synodality, Pope Francis talks about walking together, listening to each other, and listening to the Holy Spirit speaking through other people. More recently the new Archbishop of Tuam, Francis Duffy, said at his installation last January that Synodality "... is a pathway, a journey accompanied by a great variety of people. We will continue listening, discerning and planning as we walk together and with the Holy Spirit; I see no alternative." This commitment gives me hope because it implies an equality of persons, and it is based on a successful process, the one described in Chapter 15 of the Acts of

the Apostles, where issues about how to accept non-Jewish Christians were settled by listening to experience, discerning the presence of the Holy Spirit, and coming to a consensus for change. The consensus is presented as "the Holy Spirit and we have decided..."

Decisions are about courses of action and the kind of decisions to be expected of a Synod are about changing the institution. We are familiar with the struggle involved in changing our personal lives and how difficult it is to come to the self-knowledge needed to put our lives in order, to leave behind the baggage that clutters and obstructs us, to overcome whatever is making us less human, whether that comes from outside us or inside us. We have some familiarity with the struggles involved in changing the civil institutions within which we live and which in turn shape our lives, whether they be the cultural, political, economic or technological institutions of our modern world. But we have little familiarity with

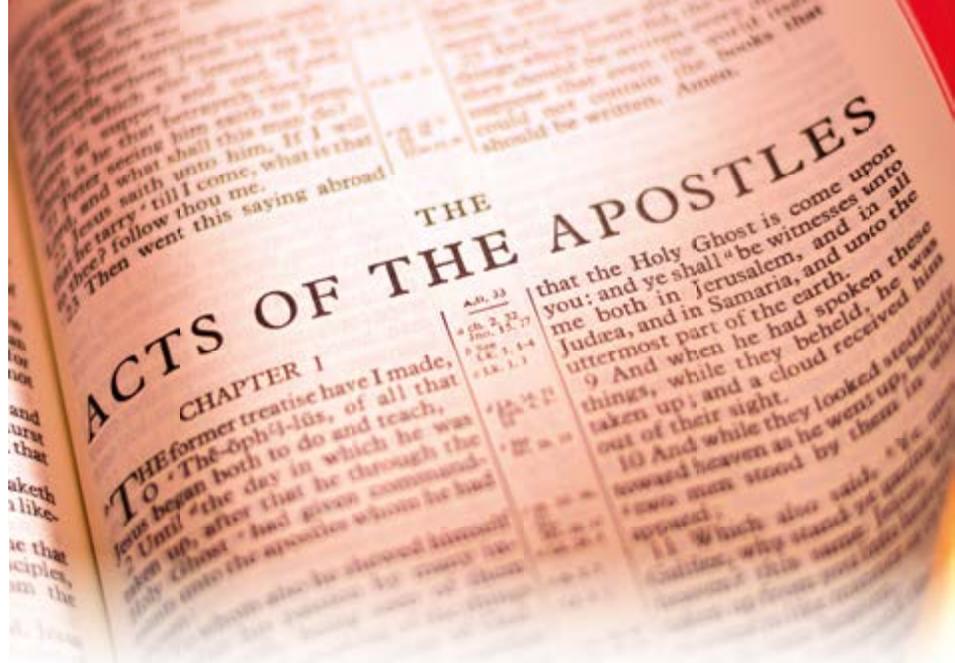
changing the institution of the Church, partly because it is ancient and complex, but more perhaps because we recognise that despite its many dreadful sins and mistakes, it connects us with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. So while we need to bring forward what we got right, we also need to let go of what we got wrong, and as in the prayer attributed to St Francis, we must have the wisdom to know which is which.

The infallibility of the Church means that while we can be confident of the truths about God, life and love as revealed principally in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, and expressed for example in the Apostles' Creed or the longer Nicene Creed, our understanding of these realities can always be improved. There is no infallible wisdom about our decisions on how to live our lives in accordance with them.

Over the last two thousand years there has been great progress in our understanding of what it means to be a disciple and myriad decisions on how to go about it. However, as well as often failing to live up to our good decisions, we also have a history of failing to translate past understandings into the different idioms of different cultures, with the inevitable result of inadequate decisions for Christian living. Think, for example, how much of the richness of the New Testament image of the Reign of God as a wedding feast is lost in the image of the "salvation of souls" that I grew up with, and how that is going to affect pastoral policies.

Pope John XXIII intended the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) to mark an end to a period of decline that had already lasted almost 300 years. He also intended it to set the Church on a course of recovering aspects of our tradition that should never have been forgotten or minimised and to engage in a dialogue of life with the modern world.

We need to deepen our understanding of the fact that unlike the Second Vatican Council, the Synod Pope Francis is convoking is not just a bishops' synod but a church synod; it is not a parliament or a discussion of opinions but a forum for listening to everybody's experience of discipleship with compassion and tenderness, because there is a lot of hurt and harm in our history.



Then we must discern what may be the way forward, what is the newness the Holy Spirit is calling us towards. I take it as a good omen of newness that a woman, Dr Nicola Brady, is chair of the Irish Bishops' Synod Steering Committee. I hope that we will be able to take on board what we hear from listening to each other. However, I worry that we may be so trapped by our past that we do not have enough freedom to move forward. There are many personal instances of victim and oppressor being reconciled, but I don't know of any victim collective, or community, being reconciled with any oppressor collective or community in Ireland or Britain. A wonderful example of reconciliation that has taken place in my lifetime is that which occurred between Germany and France and which has enabled both countries to find new ways forward in peace and friendship.

Archbishop Francis Duffy of Tuam also said on the day of his installation that "[Synodality] isn't always easy, it can be challenging and it can be energising. The Holy Spirit is present and who knows where that combination of listening, walking together and prayer and discerning will lead?" Would the CELAM (Latin American Bishops' Conference) model for participation: 20% bishops, 20% religious, 20% clergy, 40% laity, work for us? Would the FABC's (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences) insistence on permanent dialogue within the Church, with other religions, and with the world we live in help us? ●

Fr Sean McNulty was ordained in 1965 and studied Missiology at the Gregorian University in Rome. He spent 25 years on mission in the Philippines and taught at the Pacific Mission Institute in Sydney. He was also a Director of the Faith & Mission renewal programme for missionaries in Ireland. He spent 20 years in China between 1995-2015.

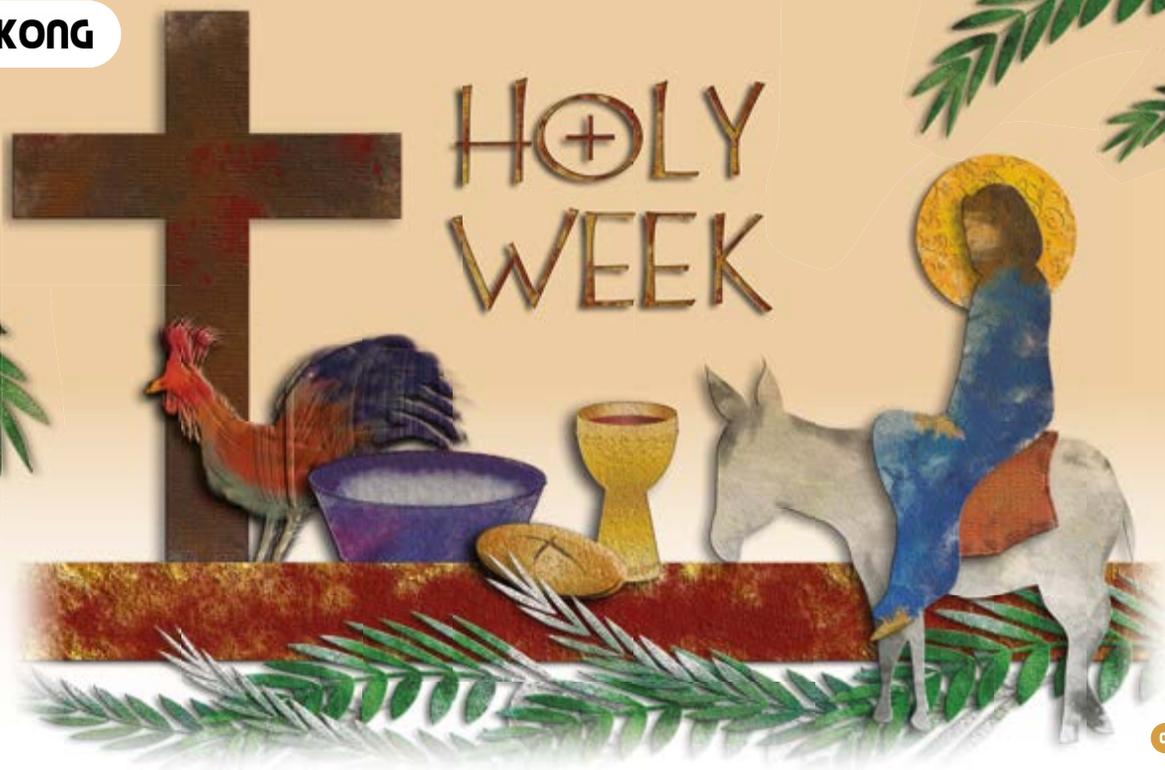
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A CALL TO BE OF SERVICE TO OTHERS

On Holy Thursday we commemorate Jesus' washing of the feet of the apostles. Fr Tim Mulroy explains how that ritual reminds priests that they are called to be of service to those who feel worn and faded by the demands and suffering of the world.

The wrapping on the small parcel resembled a brown paper bag rather than an envelope while Fr Elmer's name and address were written in bold, clear letters. Perhaps it was a gift for the tenth anniversary of his priesthood, which he was going to celebrate with a few parishioners that weekend. With increasing curiosity, he began to tear open the wrapping, which seemed to melt between his fingers, suddenly revealing a carefully-folded towel. He unfolded it and quickly sensed that though it was bright and clean, it was somewhat faded from having been used. He held it in the air and shook it, then examined the brown packaging, but there was nothing more. Moreover, there was no sender's name or address.

Puzzled, he sat down and carefully examined once more the packaging and then the towel itself as his mind raced in circles trying to make sense of this gift. Was it a prank played by one of his former seminary classmates? Or, was it a rebuke from a member of the pastoral council in his previous parish with whom he had several arguments? Mystified, he sat there on his low, swivel chair, thinking about this

person and that person, as well as about their strange and improbable motives, while the slightly worn towel and tattered brown paper lay carelessly on his lap.

A string of weekend Masses and meetings, followed by dinner out with a few parishioners on Sunday evening, meant that he gave the matter no more thought until the following week. Then, once again, he carefully examined the torn, brown paper packaging, the handwritten name and address, and the towel itself, hoping to discover some hidden clue as to who the sender might be and what was their intent. However, the mysterious gift seemed determined to continue to conceal its meaning from him.

A few months later Fr Elmer found himself busily preparing for the Holy Week and Easter ceremonies - clarifying the route for the Palm Sunday procession, making a list of designated parishioners for the foot-washing ceremony on Holy Thursday, and ensuring that the small group of catechumens were ready to receive baptism during the Easter Vigil.

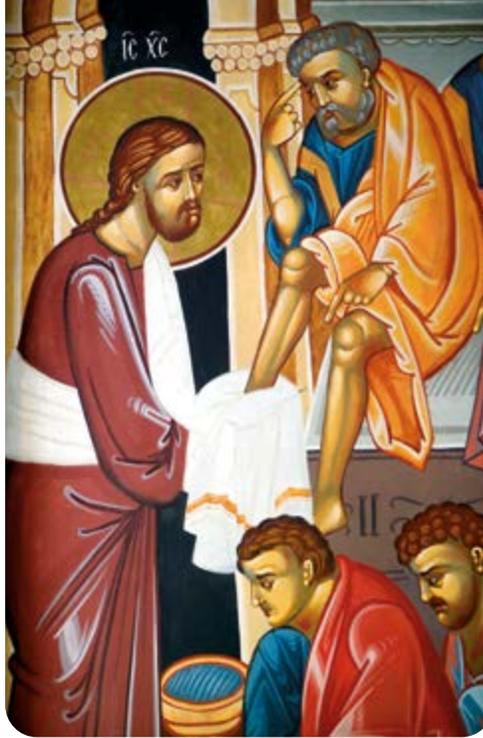
During the Mass on Holy Thursday evening, having already washed the feet

of six or seven parishioners, he was feeling less self-conscious and began to reflect not just on what he was doing but also on the deeper meaning of the ritual. The humility conveyed by being crouched on the floor at the service of another person. The cleansing and refreshment that was conveyed through pouring crystal-clear water over tired and worn feet. The affection and tenderness expressed by the gentle caress of a towel around another person's toes.

Then, suddenly, the scene of his mother bathing his own feet as a child flashed through his mind and he felt an overwhelming sense of well-being and serenity. That memory of his feet having been caressed by his mother's hands stayed with him for the remainder of the Mass. Perhaps, he reflected, the apostles had a similar experience when Jesus washed and dried their feet. Maybe, this was the reason that Jesus insisted on washing and drying Peter's feet: he wanted him to experience such real and tender care, similar to a mother's unconditional care expressed in ordinary, everyday chores for her family.

Generally, after Fr Elmer returned to the rectory at the end of a long day, he would instinctively flick on the television and skim the channels. However, on that particular Holy Thursday evening, he sat absent-mindedly in his low, swivel chair, his eyes wandering aimlessly around the living room. He still had a vague sense that he was caught up in something mysterious. It was then that he noticed the tattered brown bag and the towel still lying in the bottom shelf of the bookcase. He had forgotten about them and felt no inclination now to think about them again. Yet, they seemed to call out with a quiet insistence for his attention.

Wondering why he had not done so earlier, he decided there and then to put them in the bin. However, as he picked up the towel and looked at it once again, he sensed something strange, yet familiar about it. Though clean and bright, the texture was slightly worn and faded, which made it a strange gift. But what was it that also made it look familiar? Why did it



02

Society Leader, Fr Tim Mulroy, is from Meelick, Swinford, Co Mayo. Prior to his appointment to this leadership role in the Columbans he worked on mission in Japan and in El Paso, Texas and he was also Regional Director in the US.

01. Image: Shutterstock

02. Wall painting in Sts Cyril and Methodius Orthodox church in Ljubljana, Slovenia of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. Image: Shutterstock

03. Jesus washing Peter's Feet: statue at the Hill of Grace Sanctuary on Jeju Island, Korea. Image: Fr Tim Mulroy.

now seem like his personal belonging? Then it dawned on him: just a few hours earlier he had been using such a towel to lovingly dry the feet of the parishioners.

Once again, clutching the towel in both hands, the mystery suddenly revealed itself. As Fr Elmer gazed at it, he could see himself just as clearly as if he were looking at his own image in a mirror. Like that slightly worn and faded towel, the stresses and strains of ten years of priesthood had dented some of his youthful idealism and enthusiasm for ministry, but there was still so much more that he wanted to do in the service of God's mission. That towel was also a reminder that his priesthood was a call to be of service to others who felt worn and faded by the demands and suffering of the world. ●



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03

RETURN TO MYANMAR



Before she returned to troubled Myanmar last January, Sr Mary Ita O'Brien explained how her trust in God and sense of belonging among the people in Kachinland were calling her back, despite the risks.

Before making my final profession 47 years ago, I made a retreat. During this retreat I had to decide whether to finalise my commitment as a Columban Sister or to take another way of life. St John's Gospel was my companion during the retreat and the text Jn 17:19 - "For their sakes I consecrate myself" - empowered me to make a decision which would direct the course of the rest of my life.

To me this simply called me to commitment to the people to whom I was sent. In some way this text opened up a dream, a horizon within me as a Columban Sister which has drawn me forward into places, cultures and peoples that I could never have imagined at the age of 26.

This star has been my companion in moments of doubt, in moments of uncertainty and confusion, and at times when the risks seemed a

bit too scary. It has led me into medical laboratory work in a clinic, to walking the streets seeking out provision, food and medicine for the homeless, as well as listening to their stories and trying to restore their rightful dignity, self-respect and confidence to start over again. I have had the privilege of learning about the personal lives of so many men and women of different cultures, languages and ages through formation programmes as well as programmes aimed at combatting gender-based violence.

Pan Pan is one of the many beautiful people I have been privileged to encounter along the way. She is my neighbour in Myanmar where I have lived for 19 years. She suffers from very poor health, has severe pain all over her body and her eyesight is deteriorating with the passing of each day. When she was younger, she educated her children and provided food and shelter for them through her skill as a hand-weaver. She sat on the floor from morning to evening each day weaving beautiful traditional products like *longis* (traditional skirts), bags and scarves. Her failing eyesight and arthritis means she no longer has the 'eye' and nimble fingers needed for the perfect handcrafting of these beautiful garments. So now she lives with her daughter and



02

her grandchildren who live from hand to mouth eking out enough for survival each day. Walking is difficult for her, and she is very often confined to bed.

Pan Pan is a woman of deep faith and even though physically she is very limited, her spirit is strong and every morning, whether during the downpours of the monsoons, or the very cold January mornings, or the summer heat, she limps her way to early morning Mass. She has deep devotion to Mary our Mother. During the Covid lockdowns or the politically oppressive and dangerous situation at present, when her health permits, she can be seen stealing by at dusk to visit the Marian Grotto, where she prays and pours out her grief and fears to Mary in whom she has placed her complete trust. Her faith and trust in God and Mary has sustained and encouraged her over many decades under a very severe and oppressive regime and is now helping her to be strong in the face of present atrocities.

Grandmother Pan Pan (as she is called), who is nearly 80 years old, and even though she is very ill herself, is a woman for others. Every morning when I meet her at Mass, we always chat, and she shares her worries and discomfort with me. One morning during the pandemic, amid the unrest, anxiety and fears of all that was happening around us, I wasn't well and I didn't attend morning Mass. Next morning at Mass many people came to me anxious about where I was the previous morning. They were relieved to know that it wasn't anything more serious than a health issue.

Pan Pan came to me later and said that she hadn't been well either. She told me

that there was a very good medicine in the pharmacy and it would be good for her to get it. Thinking it was for herself, I gave her a small donation and suggested she send somebody to fetch it for her. A few hours later that day, I saw Pan Pan coming towards our house. Because of the political situation and Covid it wasn't safe for her to leave her home. She looked exhausted and was perspiring as it was the very hot season in Myanmar. She handed me a package and told me she had walked the long way to the pharmacy to get this medicine for me and she hoped I would be well soon. It was then I realised that the medicine was for me not for her and not only was it very dangerous for her to walk the roads but also because of her slow movement it had taken her a very long time to make the journey. As we chatted, she very spontaneously shared that she was my elder sister and together with all people in our area we were supporting and encouraging one another on our faith journey at this very dangerous time.

Life's journey has been a blessing for me within a community of both Christians and non-Christians, seeking peace through justice. Belonging to such a community has been a gift and a privilege: I have received so much more than I could ever have given. Over the past couple of months, many people have asked me why I am returning to a situation which is so dangerous at this time? My heart, trust in God and sense of belonging to this community is calling me back to continue, for as long as I can, to walk together with them in this uncertain and risky path of this moment. Our faith journey is one of great hope for a better future. ●

Columban missionary Sr Mary Ita O'Brien celebrated her golden jubilee in June 2018. She has spent 19 years in Myanmar where she has been involved in formation. She has also been involved in a women's centre offering counselling and skills such as traditional weaving. She returned to Myanmar on 9th January 2022.

01. Sr Mary Ita O'Brien in Myitkyina, Myanmar where she accompanies men and women on formation programmes and programmes to combat gender-based violence.
02. Staff preparing a programme on gender-based violence.
03. Sharing food and rice with villagers during the challenges of the Covid pandemic.
04. Listening to the stories of some of the women.

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FACEBOOK'S ANNUS HORRIBILIS

Criticism of Facebook intensified in 2021. Fr Seán McDonagh looks at former employee Frances Haugen's allegations that Facebook put "astronomical profits before people".

In my book, *Robots, Ethics and the Future of Jobs*, I described how in 2016, at the time of the US presidential election, Cambridge Analytica, a British political consulting firm that combined data mining, brokerage and analysis, harvested the personal data of millions of conservative voters in the US and encouraged them to vote for Donald Trump in the presidential election. Initially, Facebook did not admit its role in the Cambridge Analytica scandal, until Christopher Wylie, a whistleblower who had worked for Cambridge Analytica broke the story in *The Observer* newspaper in March 2018.

Facebook came under increased pressure to respond to what happened and finally accepted that it was responsible. As a result, many people claim that Facebook does not respect people's right to privacy online. This has led to a growing clamour that legislators, both locally and globally, have an obligation and responsibility to regulate the behaviour of powerful, technology companies. Many of these companies, such as Facebook, enjoy a monopoly situation and should, in justice, be broken up to allow other competitors enter the market. Facebook should be forced to sell Instagram and WhatsApp and must not be allowed to gobble up competitors as they have done in the past.

Criticism of Facebook intensified dramatically in 2021, when Frances Haugen, a product manager at the company, resigned from her job and took tens of

thousands of the company's documents with her. These documents show that Facebook knew its products were damaging teenager's mental health and stirring up ethnic violence in countries such as Ethiopia and Myanmar. Dan Milmo, writing in *The Observer*, reported that Haugen alleged that Facebook put "astronomical profits before people". According to a report in the *Irish Times* last December, Haugen's research revealed the effect that Instagram, a company owned by Facebook, has on teenage mental health because their algorithm makes "body image issues worse for one in three teen girls".

In 2018, a UN fact-finding mission in Myanmar highlighted the role Facebook played in spreading hate speech against the Rohingya people. Last December, the *Sunday Business Post* reported that a group of Rohingya refugees have requested the Irish government to intervene in their fight to make Facebook pay for its part in the ethnic cleansing operations against them in 2017. James Douglas who works as a legal adviser for Victim Advocates International believes that Ireland should support the Rohingya, since Facebook's regional centre is in Ireland and also that Myanmar users' data is stored in Ireland and content moderation of the site is handled there also.

In October 2021, Haugen testified before the US Senate which sparked a rare display of bipartisanship among Democratic and Republican senators, who were impressed

with her competence and concerns. Haugen has also spoken at the British Parliament in London and the European Parliament in Brussels.

Facebook challenges some of Haugen's claims. The company points out that in 2021, it spent \$5 billion on improving safety and security and that they have 40,000 people globally working on these issues. Content moderators in Ireland who filter out repulsive material for Facebook complain that they are given no psychological support for the damage done by looking at such content and that they are poorly paid.

One of the points I make in my book, *Robots, Ethics and the Future of Jobs*, is that we need to understand the enormous power that these multinational companies have, and we also need to challenge their activities from a moral perspective. Frances Haugen says that her decision to resign from the company and publish Facebook documents came after she moved in with her mother, who had given up an academic career to become an episcopal priest. Obviously, conversations with her mother, helped her make the courageous decisions she made.

It is an open question whether Facebook will change its ways since its finances now are secure. Facebook Ireland has seen a major jump in its revenue and profits from €6.3 billion to €40 billion in 2020. Pre-tax profits rose from €482 million in 2019 to €890 million in 2020. International Facebook is also doing well financially. It reported its third quarter revenue in 2021 to be \$29.01 billion.

These are staggering figures, so, while Facebook's finances are in good shape, its good name is not. Part of the problem, according to Frances Haugen is the control which Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's founder and chief executive, has on the company as he controls the majority of shares. She believes that if independent investors joined the company, they would demand change at the top which would rein-in Zuckerberg's power.

Interestingly, shares in Facebook's parent company Meta fell by 26.4 percent on February 3rd 2022. On that day the company suffered a \$230 billion wipe out which is one of the biggest losses ever for a US company on Wall Street. ●

Columban priest, eco-theologian and writer Fr Seán McDonagh was on mission in the Philippines for two decades. He is the author of numerous articles and books including, 'Climate Change: The Challenge to All of Us'; 'Care for the Earth'; and 'Dying for Water'. His latest book 'Robots, Ethics and the Future of Jobs' (2021) deals with the rise and staggering advance of Artificial Intelligence [AI] over the past four decades.

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Brendan Hoban, Western People

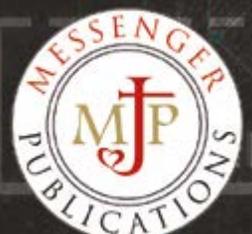
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01

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Fr Donal O’Keeffe writes about a liturgy with a difference on Good Friday in Korea.

On Good Friday last year, the Columban formation community in Seoul participated in the Good Friday Liturgy organised by the Korean Branch of the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM). Formally inaugurated in January 2020, GCCM Korea is now a national movement coordinated by a team of lay persons, religious and priests.

The liturgy was organised by the Coordinating Team of GCCM where one of the key persons is Columban Lay Missionary, Noh Hyein Anna. In fact, it was Anna’s invitation which spurred the Columbans to participate.

On Good Friday, before noon about 70 people gathered in Seoul city centre dividing into teams of seven - the maximum allowed to move as a group in line with the Covid Regulations.

The 14 Stations of the Cross were set up ahead of time at various places in the financial heart of the city with the final Station on the steps of Myongdong Cathedral. The Way of the Cross highlighted the passion, suffering and death of God’s creatures in our world today.

A mix of young and old, lay, religious and priests came prepared with placards and posters highlighting the suffering world and displayed these while walking the Way of the Cross. For instance, at Station 9: Jesus falls again - we reflected on the plight of organic farmers driven to their knees by competition from industrial-sized GMO farming.

At Station 6: Veronica wiping the face of Jesus - we focused on Korean solidarity with the present challenges of the people of Myanmar, a nation whose natural resources have been sacrificed to the greed of the military generals. At Station 12: Jesus dies on the Cross - we mourned the loss of diversity and life due to our own

greedy culture.

Starting at 11.30am, the stations finished at about 1.30pm. Walking through the city’s business centre at this time we were constantly meeting office workers coming and going to lunch. The placards and posters caught the eyes of the passers-by and although engrossed in conversations it was clear that they were glancing at the content and reading the messages. One or two people joined for the short prayer at the different stations.

Back in the Formation House we shared about the event. It certainly was a ‘Stations of the Cross’ with a difference! Some felt that the noise of traffic, people chatting as they went past, did not facilitate deep reflection. For others this noisy, chaotic city centre atmosphere was probably closer in reality to the original way of cross than any liturgy in the silence and prayerful atmosphere of a church.

Walking in a public place carrying a placard was a new experience for most of our community and so was a challenge in itself. The action of carrying a poster highlighting the suffering of the earth caused us to question more deeply our own consumer lifestyle which keeps an exploitative system in place. This is a serious challenge and invitation to us as disciples today. All in all, it was one of the most meaningful moments of Holy Week for us in Seoul. ●

Fr Donal O’Keeffe is from Bantry, Co Cork. Since 1976 he has been on mission in Korea, working with the urban poor and the workers’ apostolate. More recently he has worked as director of formation for the Korean region. On 20 May 2021, Fr Donal was honoured as ‘Immigrant of the Year’ by the Korean State in recognition of his 40 years of dedication to supporting the marginalised in Korean society.



02

01. The Columban group who attended the Good Friday Stations of the Cross in Seoul organised by the Korean Branch of the Global Catholic Climate Movement.

02. Following the Way of the Cross across the financial heart of the city which culminated with the final Station of the Cross on the steps of Myongdong Cathedral.

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TILL WE MEET AGAIN

Elena Venzon Wood pays tribute to Amparo Abalos (1927-2021), the first Columban Lay Missionary to join the Society, who died recently.

- 01. The Columban Lay Missionary programme began with the arrival of (from left to right): Elena Wood, Zosing Mecasio and Amparo Abalos, photographed here at the door of St Columban's in Solihull in 1983. They were the pioneers of the Columban Lay Missionary venture as there was no Lay Missionary Programme in Britain prior to their arrival.
- 02. From left: Fr Ray Collier, Amparo Abalos, Gertrudes Samson LM, Elena Wood and Fr Aodh O'Haplin at the Columban Centenary celebrations at Solihull in 2018.
- 03. Elena Wood and Amparo Abalos, the first ever Columban Lay Missionary in the global Society. Her first assignment was Britain.

Amparo, you have passed over to the other side of life. I know I will see you again but in the meantime I know you will continue to look after me as you always did. It was you who told me about the Columban Lay Mission Programme when we both represented our Dioceses in Vigan City (Philippines) where Fr Ludger Fieldcamper, SVD spoke about revising the handbook, 'How to Pray the Bible'.

It was you who met and welcomed Zosing Mecasio and me at Heathrow Airport when we arrived in Britain in 1983. We were pioneers of the Columban Lay Mission programme with Fr Ray Collier guiding and inspiring us. You were assigned in Whitby for a while, then you moved to Mary Immaculate & St Gregory in Barnet where you enjoyed a very fruitful ministry.

Zosing also experienced a fruitful ministry at St Francis of Assisi, Pottery Lane, Holland Park and at St Joseph's, Hanwell in West London. I was assigned in White City, Upper Holloway and East Ham, in London, where I enjoyed a fulfilling ministry. Our various ministries were mostly focused

on social issues and supporting local communities. We had our difficulties but we persevered.

You helped me settle down. You welcomed me at your place in Whitby. You showed me how to live outside



01

my own culture and integrate and listen to the local people. It was you who introduced me to the London Underground - what an experience! We sat opposite each other on the Circle Line munching noisy pork crackle while other passengers looked at us. But we didn't care! We also secretly ate Fr Maguire's cooking apples with our precious salt.

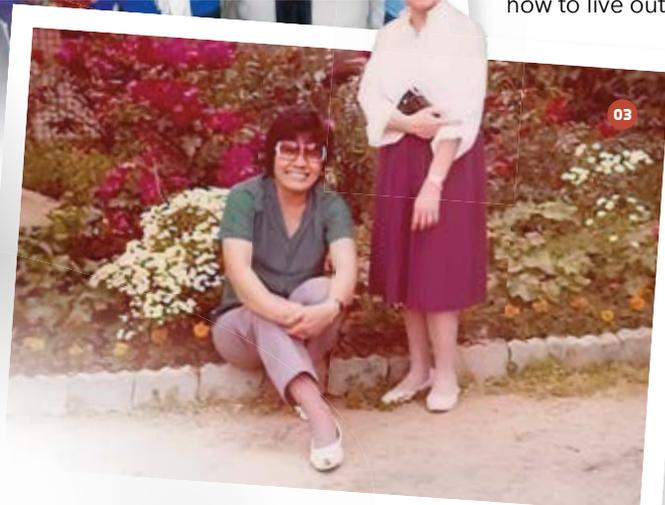
You supported my projects at my assigned parishes and even when our contracts expired we still supported each other. You made my wedding memorable by decorating the church and organising the liturgy. You were always there for me in my ups and downs. You always welcomed me at your accommodation in Barnet and we did bits and pieces with your projects and mine. We had good laughs and sad stories about home and family in the Philippines

We enjoyed each other's company. Amparo, you shared your talent, time and treasure with me and the rest of the Filipino community, with the parish community, the wider Barnet community and with many others we do not know of. You deserve a special place with the Divine Master. Go now in peace to the Divine Master my friend. Till we meet again. ●

Elena Venzon Wood is a former Columban Lay Missionary now living in Britain. Columbans Fr Ray Collier and Fr Bernie McDermott attended Amparo Abalos's funeral at Mary Immaculate and St Gregory's Church in Barnet. An estimated 120 people attended, half of whom represented the Filipino community and the rest represented the parish and the wider community of Barnet.



02



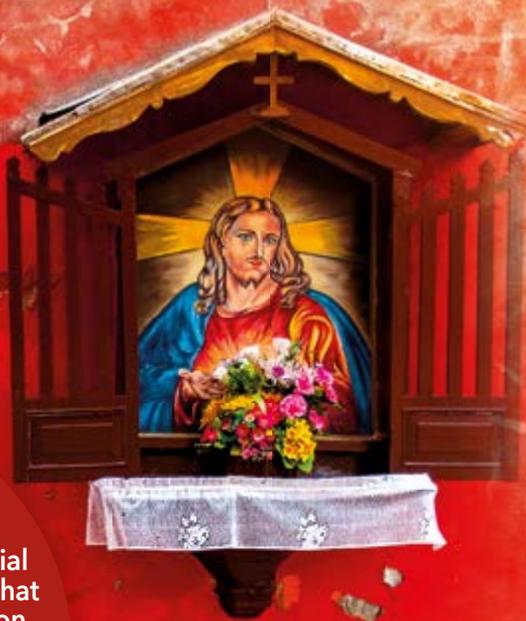
03

RIFONDAZIONE
COMUNISTA
SEZ. 7 MARTIRI



“Faith disturbs us and continually upsets the balance of our mental conceptions and our social structures. Bursting into a world that perpetually tends to close in upon itself, God brings it the possibility of a harmony that is certainly superior but is to be attained only at the cost of a series of cleavages and struggles coextensive with time itself.”

'The Drama of Atheist Humanism'
by Henri de Lubac



In our modern world many people who were born Catholic and Christian

proclaim that they are now atheist. On the other hand, many who never embraced the Christian faith have severed all ties with atheism and Marxism and suffered and endured prison and torture because of their conversion and immersion into a powerful witness of faith and love. There have been many heroic converts to Christianity over the centuries. One of these was Tatiana Goricheva. She lived during the Soviet Era in Russia. She was a very capable lecturer in electronics at the University of Leningrad.

In her autobiography, Tatiana relates the story of her exceptional discovery and her conversion to the Christian faith. She describes how she gave up the Marxism/Leninism which she learned in her youth once she discovered the existence of God and His self-revelation in Jesus Christ and in his Church.

For this she was dismissed from her university lectureship and interned in a work camp in Kazakhstan, after which she was deported. But Tatiana wasn't put down by this treatment. On the contrary she radiated new life because of her new-found belief in a loving God, which gave her new impetus and transformed her whole life. Why did she suffer so much and abandon the way of life she was educated in and lived up to then? She herself said, "My aim was to be cleverer, more capable and stronger than others. But no one had told me that the supreme thing in life is not to overtake or get the better of others but

to love." Isn't that the secret of life no matter what one believes?

In the Gospels, Jesus left us two great commandments: to love God above all things and to love others as we love ourselves. It sounds simple but may not be easy to do. At times we can find many reasons why we feel we can't love God because we can't see Him. And at times it may be too much of an effort to love others because when we look at them or live with them, we only see the differences between us. But the way of the Gospels moves in rhythm with the heartbeat of the Man-God who brought the culture of mutual love and self-gift even to death into our world. The truth of every other person lies in the fact that each one is my brother or sister for whom Christ died.

Our modern world is mostly the product of science and technology. Faith in many cases has been reduced to probable opinions. But what is this Faith? What is the Good News? It is the wonder of humankind risen in the Resurrection of Christ as the victory of God. St Paul exhorted the new believers, "to walk in love as Christ loved you and gave Himself for you". He also reminded them of their deepest identity as 'God's work of art' created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning He had meant us to live it. ●

Sr Abbie O'Sullivan

01. The entrance door to a local Communist party office in Venice, Italy flanked by an icon of Christ. Image: Shutterstock

JESUS WASHES THE FEET OF THE DISCIPLES

In those days, it was the custom for the host at a meal to have a servant ready to wash the hot and dusty feet of his guests.

While the disciples were seated at the supper table, Jesus stood up, took off his outer garment and wrapped a towel round his waist. Then he poured water into a basin to wash the feet of each of his disciples. When he reached Peter, however, Peter was horrified.

"Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" he asked him.

"At the moment you don't understand what I am doing," Jesus told him, "but it will become clear soon."

"Never!" said Peter. "You shall never wash my feet!" Peter was shocked. It was unthinkable that Jesus should perform such a lowly task.

"If you do not let me wash your feet," said Jesus, you cannot belong to me."

Then Peter understood. "Then, Lord, don't just wash my feet - wash all of me!"

"No, you are already clean," said Jesus. Then he looked around the table. "But not all of you are." He knew one of them had evil in his heart and would soon betray him.

"I have given you all an example to follow," he said. "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet like any ordinary servant, then you too should be servants of each other and be prepared to wash each other's feet." ●

Read also: [John 13:1-17](#)

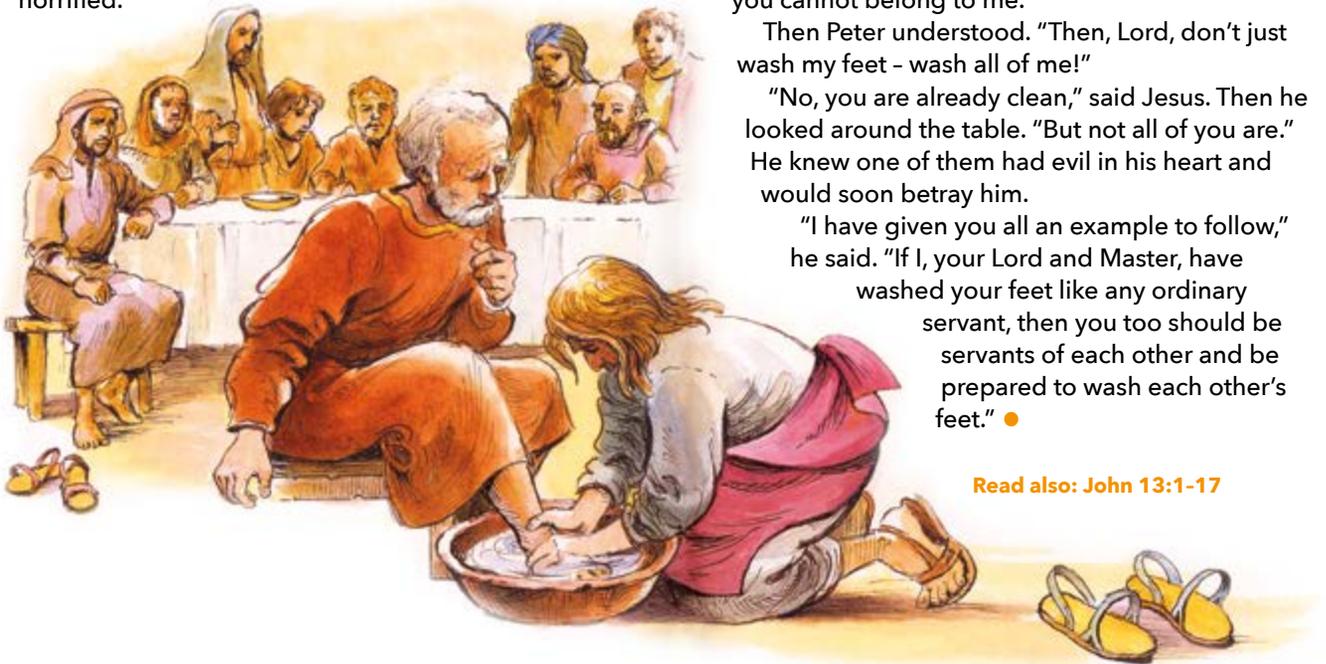


Illustration by Val Biro from One Hundred Bible Stories for Children. Published by Award Publications Ltd.

BIBLE QUIZ

NUMBER
98

1 In Jeremiah ch.18, was Jeremiah instructed to go down to a house of a carpenter, a potter or a tent-maker?

2 Did the Lord send Samuel on a journey to Socoh or Bethlehem to find Jesse and his sons?

3 In Luke ch.10, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, how many people travelled along the road?

4 In Acts ch.8, following the first persecution of the church, the apostle Philip travelled to which city?

5 In Acts ch.16, in Paul's vision was he invited to make a journey to Macedonia or Thessalonica?

6 In Revelations, ch.1, which island was John exiled to when he wrote this book?

£15 vouchers for the first three correct entries received!

Consult your Bible, answer the questions above and send your entry to: Bible Quiz N° 98, St Columban's, Widney Manor Rd, Solihull, West Midlands, B93 9AB, before 29th April 2022.

Bible Quiz N° 96 Winners: Jean Hindle, Preston • Enda Smyth, Winchester • Ivan Stevenage, Thornton Heath.

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WORD SEARCH

Find these words in the puzzle. They can be found straight across or down:

- BASKET
- CHICK
- CHOCOLATE
- HUNT
- CARROT
- LAMB
- EGGS
- BEANS
- TULIPS
- APRIL
- GRASS

"Happy Easter day"



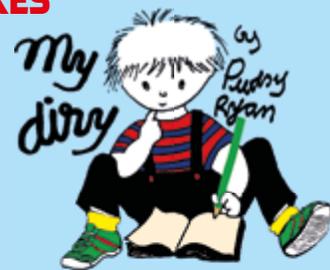
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Q	L	A	M	B	K	S	B	O	B
Y	C	H	O	C	O	L	A	T	E
L	Y	G	R	A	S	S	S	L	G
C	W	B	E	A	N	S	K	R	G
D	M	N	D	H	R	H	E	S	S
R	L	Q	Q	H	U	N	T	M	N



PUDSY'S DIRTY - FIND THE 10 SPELLING MISTAKES

At school the other day Ms Flinn was saying pay attentshun cept I did'nt know why cos I was telling my fren Bump about when cuzzin Conor showed us his new gizmo thing that can show all the stars and planets and everything. And Bump asked cud you see them rockets and satellites and planets crashing into one another like that movie we had last year? And I was saying coarse you could cept there was a problem. When Conor switched it on nothing happened becos it would'nt work. And even if he kept pressing buttons and talking at it nothing happened. And

he said the gremlins must have got into it. And I wanted to ask him if these gremlin fellas have two legs and bump and squeak and everything cept he was so cross I was afraid to. And Bump said could gremlins be like the virus that we have to keep our masks on for. But just then Ms Flinn was saying I see some of our class are gone off into outer space! As I was saying Lent and Holy Week and Easter are coming so start your essay right away and mind your spelling and I was thinking these gremlin guys are causing me trouble too... and what was that about an essay?



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

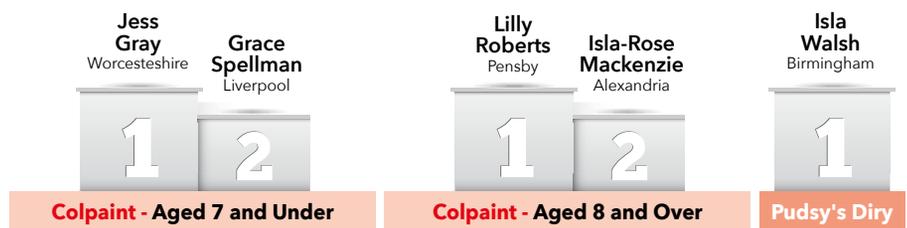
Rewrite the story and send to Pudsy's Dirty, St Columban's, Widney Manor Rd, Solihull, West Midlands B93 9AB, before 29th April 2022.

HA! HA!

1. What kind of jewelry does the Easter Bunny wear?
2. Why shouldn't you tell an Easter egg a joke?
3. What happened to the Easter Bunny when he misbehaved at school?
4. How does the Easter Bunny stay healthy?
5. How many Easter eggs can you put in an empty basket?
6. What kind of stories does the Easter Bunny like best?
7. What do you call a sleepy Easter egg?

1. 14 Carrot Gold
2. It might crack up!
3. He was eggspelled!
4. Eggs-ercise, specifically!
5. Only one—after that it's not empty anymore!
6. The ones with hoppy endings
7. Eggs-austed

COMPETITION WINNERS DECEMBER 2021



The Persistent Pygmy Shrew

By Elizabeth McArdle



If you are walking along a grassy or woodland area and suddenly see a tiny brownish, creature with a pointy snout, chances are it will be a Pygmy Shrew. It is easy to confuse this wee creature with a rodent, but its pointed snout tells you that it is a shrew.

Pygmy Shrews move in a rapid, jerky fashion and don't worry, you have not scared them, nor have they had too much strong coffee: it's just that their lives are lived in the fast and furious lane. With their hearts beating at 800 to 1,300 times per minute (the average human heartbeat is 60-100 beats per minute) they work around the clock to fill their tiny but very demanding bellies. No food for as little as two hours could mean death for them and to survive, a Pygmy Shrew must eat more than its own body weight each day. Please do not attempt this at home!

Their scrummy, delicious diet consists of small, earth creatures such as beetles, spiders, caterpillars, snails and earthworms. The extremely tough exoskeleton of some

of these creatures is overcome by iron deposits on the tips of Pygmy Shrew's tiny teeth. These iron deposits protect their teeth from wear and tear while crunching, for example, on the extremely hard shells of beetles.

Maybe the producers of the James Bond movie series had the Pygmy Shrew in mind when they created the popular henchman 'Jaws'. He had stainless steel teeth.

From the giant elephants to the tiniest insects, all of life is valuable in God's eyes. It is never too late to head outside to appreciate it all, whatever the size. There is so much to see and do. Keep a special eye among the leaf litter just in case a Pygmy Shrew is darting about on its endless search for food. ●

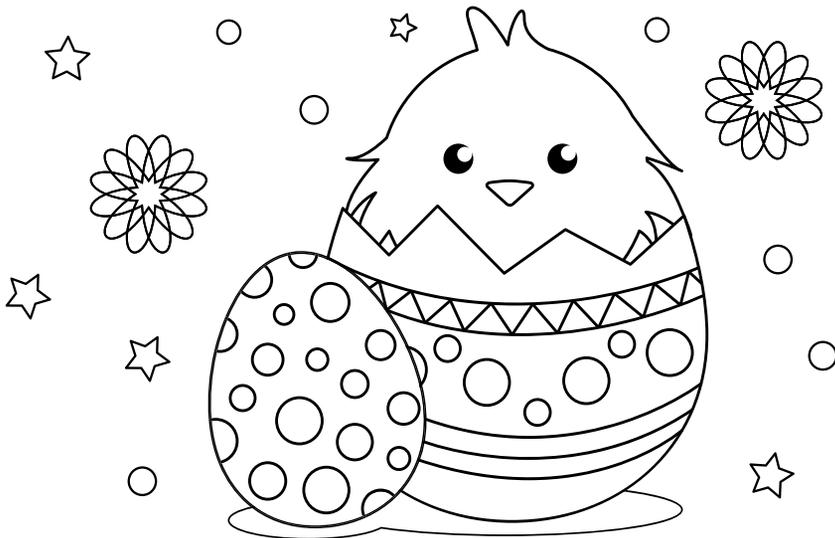
01. A Pygmy Shrew foraging.

Image: Shutterstock

WIN A VOUCHER WORTH £15/£10!

HAPPY EASTER

Colpaint



Colpaint

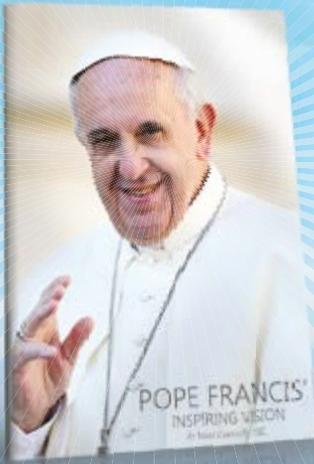
Colour the drawing and send it with your name and address to: COLPAINT, St Columban's, Widney Manor Rd, Solihull, West Midlands, B93 9AB, before 29th April 2022.

Name:

Age:

Address:

FOUR PRIZES TO BE WON!

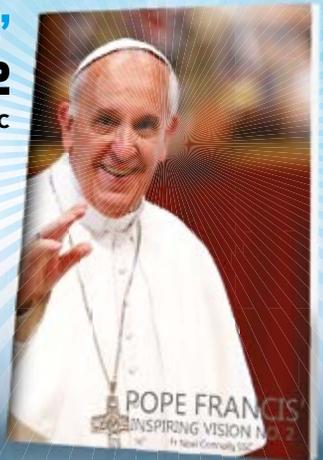


POPE FRANCIS' INSPIRING VISION

Fr Noel Connolly SSC

POPE FRANCIS' INSPIRING VISION n°2

Fr Noel Connolly SSC



Fr Noel Connolly (1945-2020), a Columban missionary from Australia, was inspired by Pope Francis to write two booklets to accompany us on our journey of faith and life as people who are called to be part of God's mission. Drawing on his 50 years of experience as a Columban missionary, Fr Noel offers us a concise and practical guide to Pope Francis' inspiring vision for the Church.

Order Now! Copies of Fr Noel's booklets are available from the Columban Mission Office in Solihull. Price includes postage.

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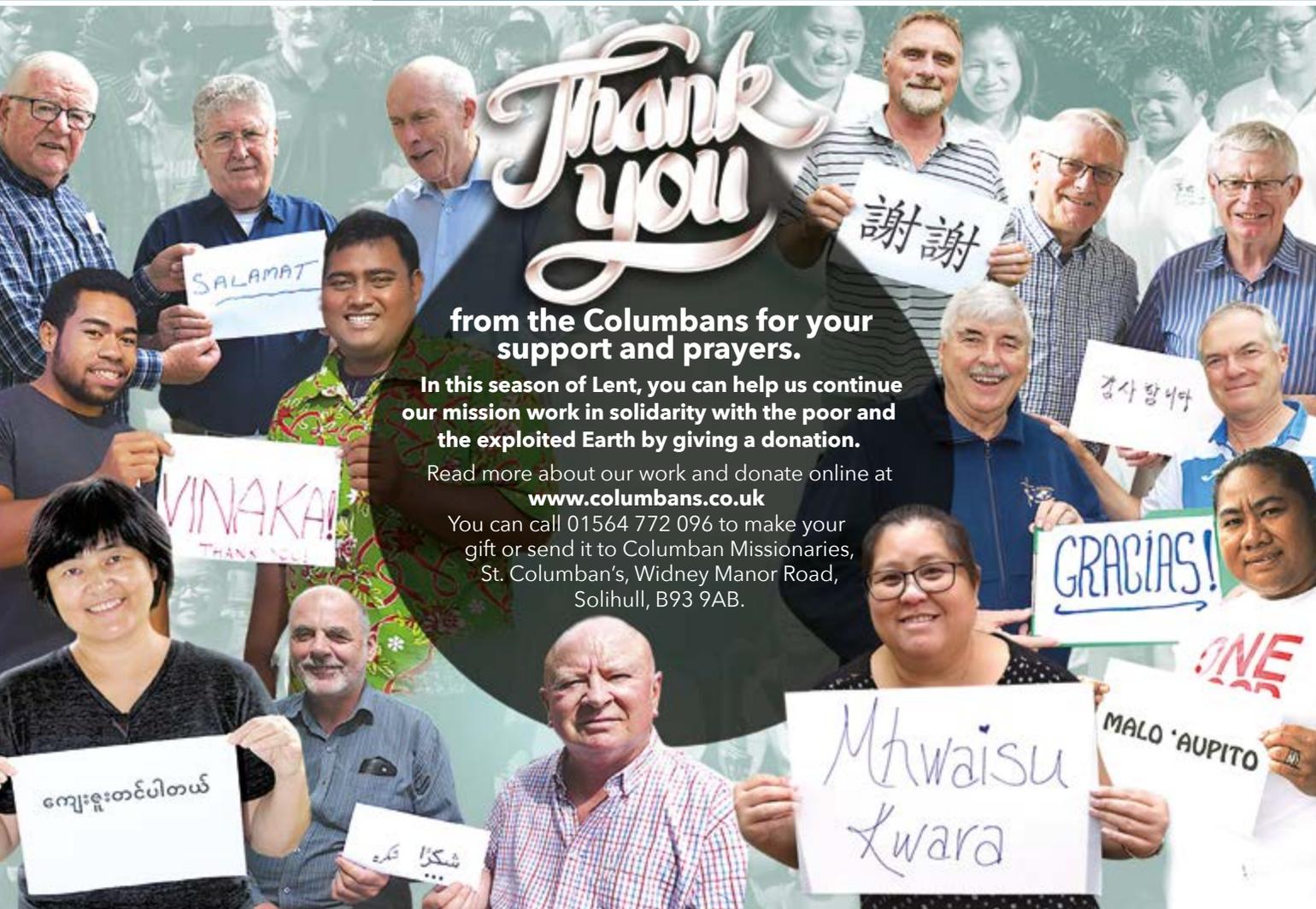
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