

# far east



MAGAZINE OF THE COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES



**CONTEMPLATIVE  
COLOURING**

Stations of the  
Cross and Art

**GOOD FRIDAY IN  
THE HILLS OF BA**

St John's Passion in Fiji

**INTERFAITH  
SYNODALITY**

Building a Future  
Together



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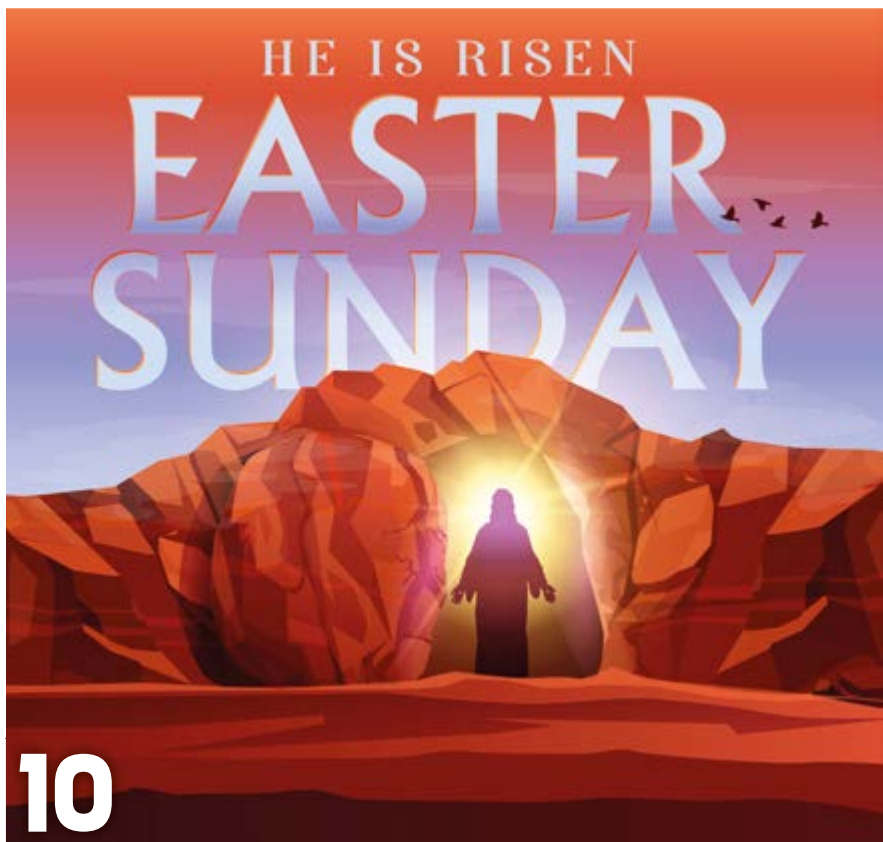
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## THE FAR EAST

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## THE PURPOSE OF THE FAR EAST IS

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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 Ann Gray

### Layout & Editorial Assistant

Breda Rogers

### Manager

Stephen Awre

### Original Design

Gabriel German Carbone

### Printers

Walstead Bicester, Oxfordshire

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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

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Young people in Fiji present the Passion on Good Friday in the hill parishes of Ba. Image: Fr Pat Colgan.



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# HOLY SATURDAY

Some months ago, a migrant friend here in Hong Kong texted me with the request that the Columbans hold her husband's ashes in our chapel until she could bring them back to his home country for burial in the family plot.

I was surprised that she did not want to keep the ashes in the house where she and her husband had lived for many years. When I asked her about this, she told me that she had no difficulty in doing so. However, many of her neighbours would not come to visit her if they knew that her husband's ashes were in the house, since they believed that it might bring them misfortune.

I understood then her dilemma and readily agreed to hold her husband's ashes in the Columban chapel.

Jesus' disciples hadn't prepared a grave for him since his violent death was unexpected. Moreover, the fact that the day following his crucifixion was a High Sabbath meant that there was no time to explore various burial options. Something had to be done and done fast.

At that moment, Joseph of Arimathea, who had been a secret disciple of Jesus, came to the rescue. Not only did he take the body of Jesus down from the cross and wrap it in a linen cloth, but he also provided a fine tomb for his burial. It was in fact the tomb that Joseph of Arimathea had

prepared for himself.

When Fr Charles Cullen left Ireland to begin his missionary life in China in 1921, he was twenty-five years old and full of life and vigour. However, within two years he died unexpectedly. During the following days, waves of shock and sadness spread over the Catholic community and his priest colleagues, not only because of his youth, but also because he was the first Columban to die in China. In their desolation, a local man came forward to provide a well-designed and carefully constructed coffin. This benefactor was not a Christian. Moreover, he had in fact prepared that fine coffin for himself!

This Easter my friend here in Hong Kong will take her husband's ashes from the Columban chapel and bring them back to his home country for burial. Even though she is a devout Buddhist, not only did she ensure that her husband received all the sacramental support of his Catholic faith throughout his prolonged decline and final illness, but she now wants to ensure that he receives a final Christian farewell with the hope of being re-united with him one day. ●

Fr Tim Mulroy

01. A depiction of the burial of Jesus in St Michael's church, Taoyuan, Taiwan, where Columban Fr Seok Jinwook ministers.





# STATIONS OF THE CROSS: COLOUR AND CONTEMPLATION

During Lent last year, Fr Jason Antiquera was able to recommence his art ministry after a two-year hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Those who participated in his Lenten Recollection were invited to pray and reflect on the Stations of the Cross through contemplative colouring.

The first community that came together in person to pray and reflect on their faith through visual arts were migrants: Filipino Catholics living in the Diocese of Daejeon. This was facilitated by Columban Fr Jude Genovia who works full-time in Migrants Ministry. Participants meditated on the passion, suffering and death of Jesus Christ through the Way (Stations) of the Cross.

The methodology was new for all of them. Instead of reading Scripture and saying prayers aloud, participants instead prayerfully gazed on an image of each station. They then applied colours slowly in a contemplative manner. While colours have their own cultural and religious meaning, participants were encouraged to choose a colour that reflected their personal experience and life. Each participant was personally guided on how to apply the colours and they came up with their own palette of colours which they applied to a moment in Christ's passion and death that resonated with their own faith journey. Each one followed their own pace, pulse and strokes in the colouring process. As a result, while two people may have opted to work on the same image and even with an identical colour combination, the outputs were very different, distinguishable by their unique brushstrokes.

The reflection and sharing that followed the colouring was rich and diverse and resonated with all involved. Through this

contemplative colouring, we were able to immerse ourselves in the passion and death of Christ. Sensitivity to suffering and death caused some to burst into tears as they shared. But they also felt supported by the workshop community as they connected with each other and with figures like Simon of Cyrene, Veronica, the Women of Jerusalem, Mary the mother of Jesus, the beloved disciple, and Joseph of Arimathea. We also got in touch with that part of ourselves that is like Pontius Pilate, the pharisees and the High Priests, the crowd and the soldiers.

One of the most obvious effects of the art recollection for participants was that it enabled them to release some of the heavy emotions they had locked inside themselves. Looking back on the process, I realise that in our lives we each have our own individual colour palettes and this was expressed in the colours applied to the images of the Way of the Cross during our Lenten Recollection.

Having created the colouring pages for the Lenten Art Recollection, it struck me that it might be useful to other groups, so I turned it into a self-guided colouring book titled, 'Way of the Cross: Colour and Contemplation' with a digital version for easy distribution. One of those with whom I shared the material was Columban missionary Fr Noel O'Neill, founder of Emmaus Rainbow Community which assists people with special needs in Korea.

On Holy Thursday, Fr Noel gathered







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members of the Emmaus community and together they coloured their Way of the Cross. Later, Dr Chun Yung Hui, who is a director of a school of art, judged the art works. Then on Easter Sunday during the Mass, a presentation was made to honour the colourful drawings. For our Emmaus friends, the activity was an experience of labour followed by celebration of the resurrected Christ. The reflection of bright and warm colours reflected the colours in the rainbow that symbolises the community.

The digitised copies of the Stations of the Cross can be reproduced by individuals as well as those facilitating groups. It was designed in a way that it can be easily printed on an A4 page. Anyone who is not able to do it with a group can thus do it by themselves in their preferred space and at a time that is convenient as a contemplative prayer through art. There is also no pressure to finish the entire stations in one go, that is the beauty and flexibility of the material.

The idea of colouring the Stations of the Cross as a reflection was done in response to the question: what can I do for our Lenten Art Recollection? Since the Catholic faithful are drawn to devotion, I decided to work on the Stations of the Cross. However, it is often too wordy, so I asked myself: how do we meditate on it with less words and instead immerse ourselves in image and colour? Is there a way that people can reflect on Christ's suffering and also their own sufferings without becoming overwhelmed? Can they ground themselves in beauty and also hold their vulnerability? How can I facilitate people to do the devotion in their own time, space and, to a certain extent, their own way?

The work that followed was demanding: from drawing fourteen different yet

harmonised templates of the Stations of the Cross to drafting guidelines for the colouring procedure and the reflection questions. I wanted it to be available as a self-guided activity. I have chosen the mandala shape due to its spiritual character and universal meaning of wholeness. Every part of the making of 'Way of the Cross: Colouring and Contemplation', was driven by a pastoral response to God's desire for humans to experience wholeness and renewal of life beyond the cross. The colour palette we choose to fill the Way of the Cross is the colour of our life and of our very selves united with that of Jesus of Nazareth. Our passion and suffering have become one with that of Christ our redeemer. In this sense, even difficulties, hardship and darkness become ways to God who saves us. ●

Fr Jason Antiquera is a Columban missionary from Binalbagan, Negros Occidental in the Philippines. He spent time in Korea and Peru as a seminarian. Ordained in 2015, he then went on mission to Korea where he has since worked to share the mission of God and the Gospel of joy through Art Ministry.

01. Columban missionary Fr Jason Antiquera leads an Art Lenten Recollection in 2022 with members of the Cheonan Filipino Catholic Community in Daejeon Diocese, Korea.
02. Participant colouring the Way of the Cross and writing his reflection.
03. Guidelines and a sample page of the Korean language version of 'Way of the Cross: Colouring and Contemplation'.
04. Members of the Emmaus Rainbow Community finished their Way of the Cross workshop on Holy Thursday and Columban Fr Noel O'Neill presented awards on Easter Sunday.

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# LIVING HIS

"I'm a kind of an educator, in the widest sense, just not in the classroom."

He teaches people about ideas and values. "Values are terribly important," he explains. "The people we work with, like lawyers, are not allowed to just give a class. What they do is listen and help people to organise their struggle [for their rights] in a more effective way."

When I met Fr Peter, he was back in Ireland for the first time in five years. He doesn't need to think for long when you ask him what he has missed most about home.

"Obviously things like family and friends, but to tell you the truth, the thing I came home for this time, and I have absolutely enjoyed it, and felt it, is to be able to walk on green grass. To be able to look at the beautiful countryside. To be able to look at mountains, to be able to see Lough Mask and Lough Corrib. To go for a day's fishing. To be able to put your face up to the rain. Because where I live, there's no rain. I live in a coastal desert. These are the things that you miss. I've had a great life, I've had a wonderful life, and great friends," he continues. "You get to meet so many people and you get to see so many places."

We have been talking for almost an hour, and having heard

Columban missionary, Fr Peter Hughes, is REPAM's co-ordinator of indigenous and human rights. REPAM is a Church network that promotes the rights and dignity of people living in the Amazon. He spoke to Mike Finnerty of the **Mayo News** about his life as a missionary and turning eighty.

Imagine becoming a Columban Missionary at the age of 17 in the Ireland of the early 1960s. Then, imagine a short time later leaving for Latin America and remaining there for almost 60 years, helping the people of Peru in any way you can. This is Fr Peter Hughes' story.

It is a story of a young boy who was born and bred in Ballinrobe and how he has spent his entire adult life trying to educate and listen to some of the indigenous people in one of the poorest places on the planet. In recent years, he has been highlighting the climate change emergency through a project which works to defend and protect the Amazon rainforests and eco-system. The Amazon produces 20 percent of the world's oxygen and 20 percent of the world's drinking water.

When you meet him, Fr Peter insists he is "nothing special by any means. I don't think of myself as doing good things for everybody else, it's not like that. I have a job to do and I'm trying to do it as best I can." He is an environmental activist and a man who tries to help those who cannot help themselves. Or as Fr Peter puts it himself,





# BEST LIFE

about the trials and tribulations faced by the people of Peru and the indigenous tribes in the Amazon Basin, and the challenges

he helps them face on a daily basis, you wonder what his definition of 'a good life' is? Especially when many people reading this would feel that living and working in a third world country for six decades – in a city that is located on a desert coast, where it hasn't rained heavily since 1969 – would represent anything but 'a good life'.

"It's about bringing about change and witnessing change," he replies.

"Looking at people, changing their attitudes, growing into a different way of thinking, and having the power to be able to do something about it."

As for the future, Fr Peter (or 'Padre Pedro' as he's known in Peru) intends to keep doing what he's doing "for as long as I have the health, with the help of God. And that's going to be the deciding factor about what's going to happen," he said. "If I get some more years to live, that decides everything. For me, I wouldn't understand, or appreciate, retiring. Maybe keep on doing something in a smaller way would be something more like it. I hardly noticed turning 80," he said.



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"Age is totally unimportant, it's irrelevant. It's about how you feel, about how you are. And there's no such thing as perfection. That's a bad word. Everybody has his or her own struggles. Good days, bad days, not so good days. Life is like that. And when we're down, we have to try and get up again and begin again."

"Use the talents that we have. Every person has gifts. Every person has amazing things to contribute. And I think leadership is allowing people to have gifts. Leadership is trying to create situations where people can use and grow into their own gifts, whatever they are."

"I'm the co-ordinator of indigenous and human rights for REPAM, this network that is in existence for the last number of years," he adds. "It's a going concern, but it has to expand and grow and help people, so it's important."

How would he like to be remembered? "I'd like to be remembered as another person from Ballinrobe. From Mayo. Another person, who grew up here, has friends here. Nothing more than that. That's more than enough." ●

Courtesy: **Mayo News**  
Adapted by Fr Cyril Lovett

01. Fr Peter Hughes (left) with some indigenous leaders who took part in the 2019 Synod on Amazonia. Image: Amy Echeverria.

02. Irish Columban priest Fr Peter Hughes has acted as an advisor to the Instituto Bartolome de las Casas and CELAM, the collegial council of Latin American bishops. He works for REPAM, the Pan-Amazonia Ecclesial Network, and helped the network prepare for the Synod on Amazonia in Rome in October 2019. Image: CAFOD.

03. CAFOD volunteers attending a 'Power To Be' event with speaker Fr Peter Hughes in Warrington, Wigan in 2017. Over a hundred CAFOD volunteers organised events across England and Wales to call for action on climate change and show support for renewable energy. Image: CAFOD.

04. Part of a shanty town on the side of the Andes Mountains in Cerro San Cristobal, Lima, Peru. Image: Shutterstock.

05. Lough Mask, close to Ballinrobe in Co Mayo, where Fr Peter Hughes grew up. "To be able to look at the beautiful countryside. To be able to look at mountains, to be able to see Lough Mask and Lough Corrib. To go for a day's fishing. To be able to put your face up to the rain. Because where I live, there's no rain. I live in a coastal desert. These are the things that you miss." Image: Shutterstock.

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# THE LORD is HERE

Sr Lucia So writes about living in Ballymun, a disadvantaged area in Dublin, where the Sisters serve the community through recycling and clean-up projects and where every Easter the three local catholic churches come together for the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday.

I have heard it said quite often that Ballymun is not a good area to be living in. When I was preparing to move here, I asked myself, "Should I be afraid?" Then a familiar phrase came to me, 'The Lord was here before you arrived'. Yes, God was here with his people in the Ballymun community before my arrival.

Now I thank God for granting me the past thirteen years of journeying together with the community here, especially during the time of the Covid lockdowns. During that time, elderly people were the most vulnerable ones and they had to confine themselves to the house and were advised not to go out. Families, friends and neighbours had to visit them outside on the road or in the garden. They needed help with shopping for their food and supplies and the delivering of all kinds of messages. They experienced much love, concern, kindness and goodness.

When the restrictions were lifted, this elderly group were then able to come out to the park to enjoy a walk and admire the flowers and trees and meet their families, neighbours and friends face to face once again. I am grateful to the City Council for maintaining the parks so well as I could see people full of life there: parents with the children relaxing in the meadows, the different kinds of games being played in the fields. Even the wildlife was blooming - families of birds in the sky and fish in the ponds - all creatures were joining their

lives together as the Creator's Symphony, singing their praises to God.

Some time ago, I joined the Ballymun Tidy Town group of volunteers. We were soon out on the road every week in the local car parks and fields, picking up litter, weeding and planting seeds. It was quite a challenge at times, especially when the weather turned nasty. But having said that, it was also very rewarding to see how we were transforming the environment. And it was a good experience to work as a team serving the community.

In Ballymun we also have a group of Sisters from different religious congregations who come together from time to time to pray, reflect and share life together. One day one of the Sisters had an idea - 'Why don't we collect discarded cans and plastic bottles for recycling?' Soon, with cooperation from the local people we started this project. In addition, we received financial support from the local supermarket and the local council. This project continues to develop and is very successful so far. All of us who are involved share the same vision of caring for the earth and our environment as well as nurturing a community spirit.

Every year in Ballymun the three catholic churches come together for the celebration of Good Friday when we have the Stations of the Cross outdoors. Each of the churches is visited by the people taking part in the procession. During the





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procession, we sing and reflect on how Jesus suffered and sacrificed for us. Each time, the Station which touches me most is when Jesus meets His mother and the women. My heart feels drawn especially to Jesus telling the women not to cry for Him but to cry for their children instead. I am usually moved by this because I remember the sorrowful and suffering mothers of Ballymun crying for their children who are addicted to drugs and alcohol, and some who have been lost to suicide or illness.

Nowadays there are not too many churches that have bells ringing to call people together to pray in the church. But some faithful people have bells ringing in their hearts, calling them together as God's family when the time for Mass arrives. I feel so honoured that I can sit among this faith community to listen to the Word of God and receive the Eucharist as we share life in Ballymun. Together we pray for all the intentions and needs of the world and the community of Ballymun itself. When we pray for the dead or attend a funeral, I quite often feel connected to the historical Ballymun and thank God for all those senior people who shared their lives and contributed so much to this community.

Now I believe that God has a plan for us in Ballymun as I can see the community here expanding. These days, there are so many happy and joyful faces of children under the loving care of their parents - on the streets, on the bus, or in nearby schools and shops and also inside the church. Under the same sky, God is here and sending his blessing and love to each family, especially the Ukrainian families who are now joining us in this community.

The Lord is truly here. ●

Sr Lucia So is a native of Hong Kong where she served on mission, as well as in Mainland China. For the last several years she has been working in the Columban Centre in Dublin.

01. View of Ballymun prior to the demolition of the much-criticised tower blocks. Image: Shutterstock.
02. The natural world of Ballymun which has been transformed by local groups. Image Sr Lucia So.
03. A group of Sisters from different religious congregations come together from time to time in Ballymun to pray, reflect and share life together. Image Sr Lucia So.
04. "God has a plan for us in Ballymun as I can see the community here expanding." Image Sr Lucia So.
05. Holy Spirit church, Ballymun. Image Sr Lucia So.

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# LENTEN CONVERSION JOURNEY

Fr Tim Mulroy recalls a difficult conversation with a Columban in the USA which provided some insightful Lenten lessons.

During the months leading up to his eighty-seventh birthday, on several occasions, Fr Paul White had gone from the hospital to a rehabilitation centre and then returned to the Columban house a few weeks later. This time, however, as he prepared to leave the hospital, the doctors were uncertain as to what the future held for him since he was too weak to undergo physical therapy at a rehabilitation centre. He was discharged, therefore, to a long-term care facility where physical therapy was available a few times each week.

The care facility, though bright and clean, was an old building. Fr Paul's bedroom, which he shared with another resident, was rather small, with little space for his personal belongings. Since he was fussy about his food, he seldom found the meals there satisfying.

After he had spent a few weeks there, it was clear to everyone around him that his overall condition remained poor and that he would be in need of nursing care

for the remainder of his life. On the other hand, Fr Paul, always an optimist, was eagerly telling staff and visitors alike that he was making good progress and felt well enough to return to the Columban house.

Therefore, after supper one evening I decided to visit him at the care facility in order to clarify his situation. As I drove along my heart was heavy, since Fr Paul had contributed in many ways to our community and had enlivened it with his storytelling and playfulness. I was concerned that he would feel rejected to learn that his Columban colleagues could no longer support him in our community. I was also anxious that he would be disappointed to hear that the care facility would become his new home.

My visit began with the usual inquiries about the events of that day. Then, after a brief pause, I informed Fr Paul that I wanted to talk to him about a serious matter, and proceeded to tell him about the concerns of the medical staff, the risks

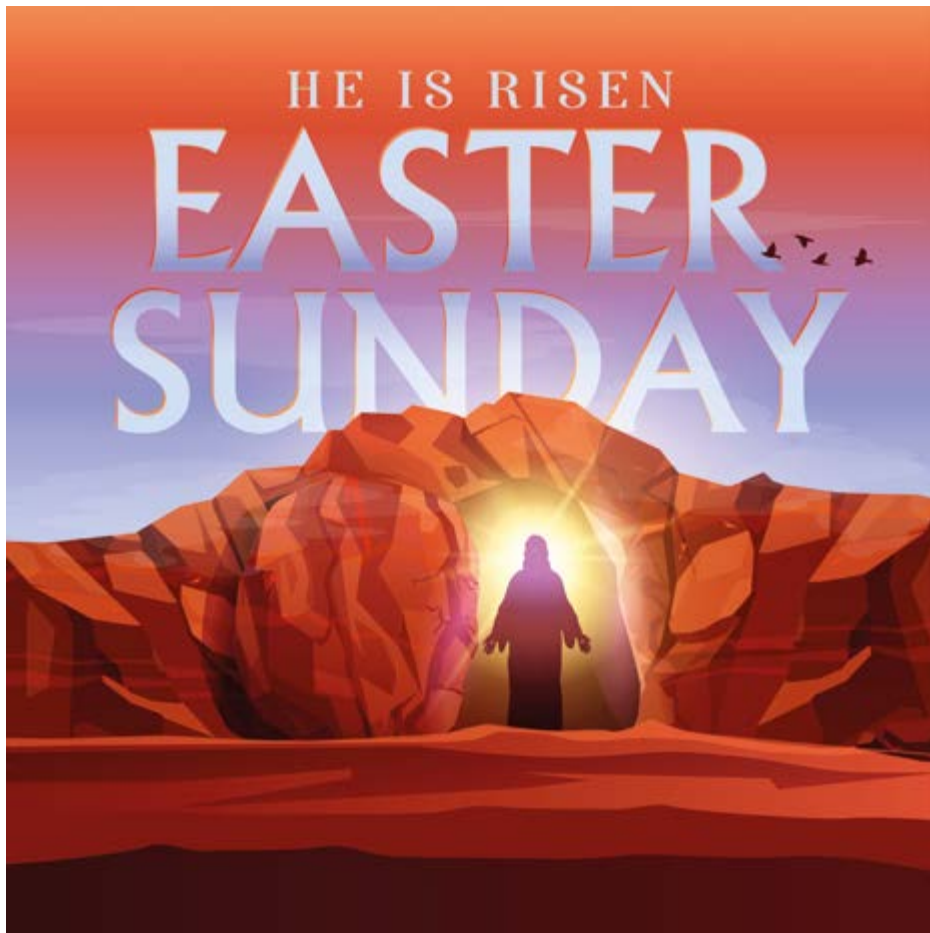


associated with his limited mobility, and the inability of the Columban community to provide for his long-term needs in our house. I finished by telling him that I had made the decision that he was to remain in that care facility, but that the Columban community would continue to visit him on a regular basis. Then I paused and prepared myself for an outburst of sadness and anger.

After a moment of silence Fr Paul looked around his small room and responded, "I'm fortunate to have everything that I need here. Think about all those refugees who have to leave their homes and don't know where they are going. They carry only the clothes on their backs and are unsure about their next meal. Here I have a comfortable bed, three meals each day, and people who respect me. What more can I ask for? I've had a good life and am content to stay here."

I was astonished! Instead of Fr Paul reacting with frustration because he could not get what he had hoped for, he expressed appreciation for the blessings he was already enjoying. Instead of blaming others, he graciously accepted the limitations of his situation.

Later that evening I shared with Fr Paul about the concern and anxiety that I had felt before visiting him. He listened attentively to me with a sad facial expression. However, I soon discovered that he wasn't feeling sorry for himself, but rather that he was pained to realise that in an indirect way he had caused me distress. Whereas I had expected that our evening would finish with me trying to comfort Fr Paul for having crushed his dream of returning home to live with the Columban community, instead it finished with him reassuring me that I had made the right



decision about his care and well-being.

Having spent the final six months of his life in that care facility, Fr Paul entered his heavenly home. Now as I ponder the meaning of Lent, I find myself cherishing the memory of that evening with him. As I do so, I desire to fast from blaming others for my limitations, and instead strive to accept my human frailty. I also want to abstain from complaining, and instead focus on my blessings. Finally, I am trying to refrain from self-pity, and instead show greater compassion for those who are less fortunate than me. Thanks to Fr Paul's example, I now have a deeper understanding of my conversion journey during this Lenten season. ●

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. He was also Regional Director in the US.

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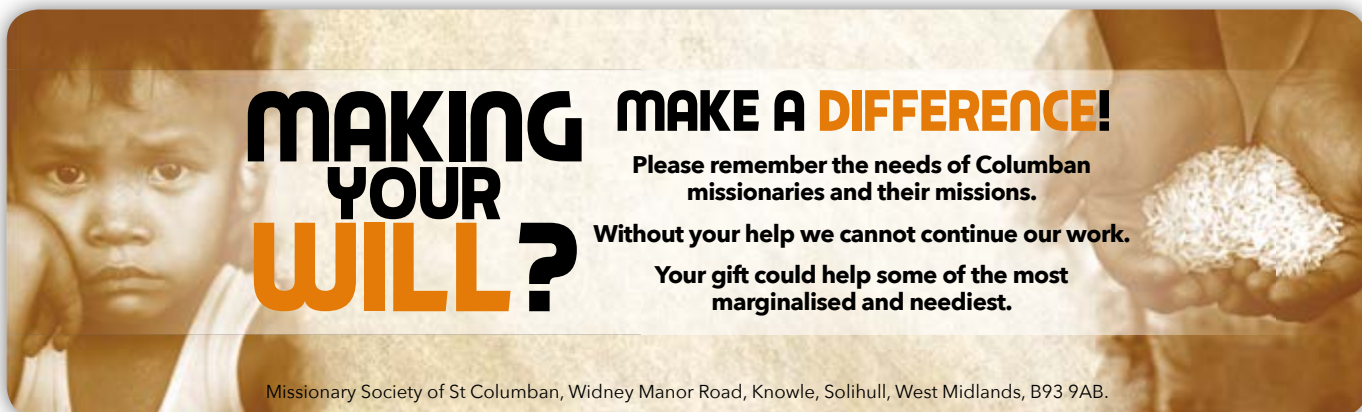


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01

# GOOD FRIDAY IN THE HILLS OF BA

Last Easter, Fr Pat Colgan marvelled at that way young people in Fiji presented St John's Passion, shaking liturgical niceties by their realistic performance.

**T**he Fijian translation of Good Friday has always struck me; it is literally 'Day of Death'. No massaging, no theological euphemisms, just saying is 'as it is'. Preparations for this day are taken very seriously in Fiji, and the Way of the Cross or the dramas through which people mark the day are often long, physically challenging and emotional.

That was the case last year in the five highland villages of Ba. On Wednesday morning, forty young people started carrying the cross in silence along a 20-mile stretch of tough and parched roads linking their villages. They were accompanied by parish catechists from each village who gave teachings each night on the meaning of Holy Week. Some young people from other Christian denominations also took part.

Having 'farewelled' the parishioners of Ba Town at 6am as they began their own Way of the Cross walk, and knowing that the other section of the parish - the four coastal villages - had also been on the road since 5am, I headed up the hills to Navala, to conduct five baptisms and to admit 12 young people into our Sacrament of Confirmation Programme.

By 9am, we were ready to witness

the 'Highland Youths' rendering of the Passion of St John, which interwove the 14 traditional Stations of the Cross. The life-like shouts of the soldiers and the physical mistreatment of Jesus abruptly brought us back to that day in Jerusalem some 2,000 years ago.

Dressed in uniforms culled from cardboard boxes, with a few wearing Fijian Army fatigues, they pushed Jesus up the hill of the village, where he met his mother and the weeping women, fell down and stood up again three times, was helped briefly by Simon of Cyrene, and was finally divested of his clothes right down to his undergarment, at which point he was hoisted over the village on a cross.

At one point, I had to make sure that the nail hammering was not an actual crucifixion. Nevertheless, the young man portraying Jesus had to squeeze his legs between two narrow slats, which was very painful for him, but he did it. After 'death', he was taken down from the Cross into the arms of his mother from where the soldiers took the body and carried it into the sacristy for 'burial'.

Rather than all adjourn to wait for the liturgical Service of the Passion at three o'clock, I asked that we keep going. In





place of individual confessions, a service of communal repentance was led by the catechists. Villagers had written down their sins, and watched as they went up in flames before the altar.

The Liturgy of the Word followed, and I decided to let the young people, who had learned their parts off by heart in their drama, also conduct the proclamation of the Gospel – through the same Jesus, Peter, Pilate, crowd etc.

This was a powerful 'retake' of what we had already seen. My homily noted that while the Stations of the Cross (and the other three Gospel writers) emphasise Jesus' physical suffering on Good Friday, the Gospel of John poses a number of awkward questions to us: Who is Jesus for you?; Do you (like Peter and the others) also deny knowing him when the chips are down?; Who is really on trial here – Jesus, Pilate or you?; What king (meaning power

structure) do you choose in your life?; Is it that which is based on violence, patronage and the size of one's army, or is it one whose only weapons are integrity and truth?

Two young men then held up two crosses for the rite of veneration, and we ended with Communion which was returned to the house in the village where it had 'slept' the previous night. After the Liturgy, we retired to drink kava which lasted until exactly 3pm, at which time the village fell silent to mark the hour of Jesus' death. Afterwards we had lunch.

Last year's 'Day of the Dead' or Good Friday remained in my memory for many days. I continue to marvel at the ingenuity of the Fijian people, particularly the young people, in taking this story to themselves and presenting it in a way that shakes one's liturgical niceties, returning it to the physical, messy and ultimately loving day that it was. ●

Belfast-native Fr Pat Colgan was ordained a Columban in 1994. He spent 18 years in Fiji before he was appointed to the Society's General Council in 2012. He has since returned to mission in Fiji where he is parish priest of Christ the King in Ba.

- 01. The Way of the Cross on Good Friday in Ba, Fiji. Photos: Fr Pat Colgan.
- 02. 'Jesus' in the arms of his mother, 'Mary'.
- 03. The burning of the congregation's sins on Good Friday.
- 04. A post Passion hymn to Our Lady by the young people of the highland villages of Ba.

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# THE YATSUSHIRO MARTYRS

One of the great centres of Japanese Christianity in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries was Yatsushiro. Columban missionary, Fr Harry O'Carroll writes about the 11 Yatsushiro martyrs commemorated by the Christian Martyrs' Park in the city.

**T**here are just 431,000 Catholics among Japan's population of 125 million. However, within 50 years of the arrival of the great Jesuit missionary St Francis Xavier in Kagoshima on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1550, it seemed like Japan was well on its way to becoming a Christian country.

At that time one of the great centres of activity was Yatsushiro in the southern part of Kumamoto Prefecture on the island of Kyushu. This was due mainly to the fact that the Lord of the area, Augustine Konishi Yukinaga, was a Christian. In 1599 the population of Yatsushiro town was about 30,000. It is thought that many of them were Christians as at least 14 churches were built. Today there is just one Catholic church and about 150 Catholics!

The Battle of Sekigahara on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1600 was a decisive moment in Japanese history, pitting forces from eastern and western Japan against each other. Augustine Konishi Yukinaga fought with the western forces who were defeated. As a general on the losing side it would have been normal for him to have taken his own life but being a Christian he would not do that. He was captured and executed. His lands and castles were forfeited and given to Lord Kato Kiyomasa, an eastern general who began to persecute Christians.

Many of Konishi's retainers fled. However, two of his Christian Samurai refused the order to reject their faith or leave Yatsushiro.

Their names were John Minami and Simon Takeda. Lord Kato was furious and ordered that they both be beheaded and their families crucified. Because John Minami was so influential in Yatsushiro he was taken to Kumamoto for execution. Having reached Kumamoto he informed Lord Kato that his loyalty must always be to the Lord of Lords (like St John Fisher and St Thomas More). He was beheaded on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1600, the first martyr from Yatsushiro. He was 35.

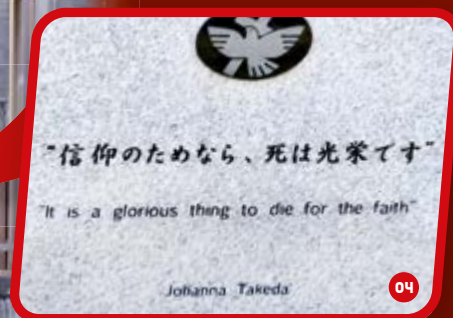
Simon Takeda's non-Christian friends suggested he should pretend to give up the faith. He refused. They tried to get his mother Johanna to reason with him but she responded to their pleas by stating, "it is a glorious thing to die for the faith!" Simon Takeda bade farewell to his family and called on the services of the 'Jihi Yaku' or 'mercy men' to prepare spiritually. They were laymen who visited the families, teaching, praying, encouraging and preparing people for death. There were three such men in Yatsushiro: Michael Mitsuishi, John Hattori and Joachim Watanabe.

Simon Takeda became the second martyr from Kumamoto before dawn on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1600. As his mother Johanna knelt beside his body she said, "How blessed you are my son and how well you offered your life to our Lord! How blessed am I to be the mother of a martyr!" The two families of John Minami and Simon Takeda were also crucified.

02

01





03

But there were still many Christians in the town and so the demands of the officials that they recant their faith became more strident. As missionaries were not allowed into the area it became the task of the 'mercy men' to encourage the faithful and keep the flame of faith burning. This they did to such good effect that there was a great sense of unity and the numbers of Christians began to grow again. In fact even the man who had executed Simon Takeda became a Christian. The officials consulted with Lord Kato about the situation and he ordered that the three 'mercy men' be imprisoned until they die and their properties confiscated.

Following their death, the remains of the 'mercy men' were gathered up and buried in a communal grave but they were later secretly brought to Nagasaki. Subsequently, when Christian missionaries were expelled in 1612, all the Yatsushiro martyrs' remains were brought for safety to Macao. There they were placed in the Church of St Francis Xavier.

In 1995 the relics of the Yatsushiro martyrs were returned to Nagasaki. On 24<sup>th</sup> November 2008, these eleven martyrs were among the 187 Japanese martyrs declared blessed in a great ceremony in Nagasaki. When I was appointed to Yatsushiro Parish

I wondered why those relics were not preserved here in Yatsushiro. The reason, I learned, is that they had been mixed up with the relics of some other Japanese martyrs and so it is not possible to distinguish one from the other. All one can say is that among this small collection of bones are the relics of some of the Yatsushiro martyrs. They are on display in the Jesuit Twenty-Six Martyrs Museum on Nishizaka Hill in Nagasaki.

To commemorate the beatification of the Yatsushiro martyrs, the bishop of the diocese bought a plot of land near the execution ground. But it remained undeveloped due to a lack of funds. However as the Columban Fathers prepared to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their founding, and as Columbans have been working in Japan for almost 70 of those 100 years, the Society generously agreed to fund the development of the plot into the Martyrs Park.

The work was completed in time for the Martyrs' Festival the following year when the bishop of the diocese, Dominic Ryoji Miyahara, Fr Leo Schumacher, the Columban Superior in Japan, the priests of the area and a large number of local Christians turned up for a special Mass and blessing of what turned out to be a beautiful park, worthy of the martyrs' memory. ●

Fr Harry O'Carroll is from Ireland. He was ordained in 1969 and currently works in Japan.

01. Columban missionary Fr Harry O'Carroll at the Martyrs Park in Yatsushiro, Japan.
02. Japanese Christian martyrs: In November 2008, Pope Benedict XVI beatified 188 Japanese martyrs, including the 11 martyrs of Yatsushiro.
03. The park is dedicated to the remembrance of the faith of the martyrs of Yatsushiro and in prayer for a future without prejudice, discrimination or conflict.
04. The words of martyr Johanna Takeda: "It is a glorious thing to die for the faith."

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# COLUMBAN MARTYRS

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# INTERFAITH SYNODALITY

Fr Patrick McNerney is the Director of the Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations in Australia. He explains why Interfaith Synodality needs to be put into practice.

Ever since his election, Pope Francis has been promoting synodality as the path “which God expects of the Church of the third millennium”. The word synodality comes from the Greek preposition συν (syn = with) and the noun ὁδός (odos = path). It means following a path together, walking together.

A synodal church is laity, priests and bishops journeying together, listening to and learning from each other in mutuality and equality, based on a common baptism. However, if the Church is truly synodal, its members must also journey together with believers from other religions – with Buddhists, Baha’is, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and Sikhs – and other worldviews. They must listen to and learn from them, showing the exact same respect they show their fellow Christians, for they are equally God’s beloved created, “in the image and likeness of God” (Gen 1:26).

The Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations puts interfaith synodality into practice when it invites a Jewish Rabbi and a Muslim woman scholar to share their hopes and expectations of Catholics. Interfaith solidarity can be ordinary actions like cleaning a cemetery, teaching and promoting interreligious dialogue, or the

dramatic martyrdom of laying down one’s life for others.

Interfaith synodality is Christian and Muslim women working together on issues such as health, illiteracy, unemployment, domestic and communal violence, sharing hospitality, and providing shelter. It is fostering universal fraternity, where all are sisters and brothers. It is also women finding new ways to influence male-led religions. Christian-Muslim relations are especially important as Christianity and Islam are the world’s two largest religions, and Muslims set to outnumber Christians before the end of the century.

“There is no alternative: we either build the future together or there will not be a future,” Pope Francis said in Abu Dhabi on 4th February 2019. Some 84% of the world’s population identify with a religion. 33% of the world’s population are Christian. Interreligious dialogue is how the Christian 33% engage with the other 51% who are religious believers, just over half of the world’s population. It’s as simple – and as complicated – as that!

There are many reasons for dialogue. There is the very practical one, that we all share this one planet and we need to get along. There are also common beliefs



which unite us across some religions. For example, the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) all believe in the one God who is Creator, who speaks to us in scripture, and who is a merciful judge - but we each understand those divine blessings differently!

Ultimately, each religion must find in its own traditions reasons for dialogue that are convincing to its followers. As a Christian, for me, the most compelling reason for dialogue is the Holy Trinity. God is a community of infinite, eternal love between the Father and the Son which is the Spirit. God is dialogue! This love between the three Persons overflows in creation and redemption. We are made "in the image and likeness of God" (Gen 1:26), that is, in the image and likeness of relations, of dialogue. We are made for dialogue with God, with each other, with all our sisters and brothers.

I cannot truly be a Christian if I do not reach out in love and service towards my sisters and brothers of other religions whom God also loved, created and redeemed through his Son. Interreligious dialogue is believers from different religions relating to

each other. In recent decades, with waves of migrants seeking a better life, the relative ease of international travel, and refugees fleeing famine and conflict, believers from different religions are now living, working and playing side-by-side in cities and towns across Britain and Ireland. This mixing of people from different religions is unprecedented.

In this new situation of religious diversity, or perhaps more accurately, of religious proximity, interreligious dialogue is simply following the Gospel command of "love your neighbour" (Mk 12:31). How we relate to believers from other religions, whether across the fence in our physical neighbourhood or online in our virtual neighbourhood, is interreligious dialogue. Whatever our faith, let us all be 'synodal'. Let us journey with our neighbours and together serve those in need in our society, growing a just, fraternal, harmonious and resilient society. ●

*Adapted from an article written for **Bridges**, a newsletter published by the Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations.*

Dr Patrick McNerney is Director of the Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations in Sydney where he has worked since 2002. He was ordained a Columban priest in 1978 and from 1979 to 2000 was assigned to Pakistan. He is a graduate of the Pontifical Institute for the Study of Arabic and Islamics (PISAI) in Rome and holds a Masters in Theology from Melbourne College of Divinity and a Doctorate in Theology from the Australian Catholic University.

- 01. Pope Francis attending an Interreligious gathering in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo on 14 January 2015. Image: Shutterstock.
- 02. Columban missionary Fr Patrick McNerney with Jewish and Muslim faith leaders. Image: CCCMR.
- 03. Image: Shutterstock.



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# REST <sup>in</sup> PEACE



Fr Charles Meagher



Sr Stephanie King



Fr Desmond Morrison

**Fr Charles (Charlie) Joseph Francis Meagher** was born in Killarney, Co Kerry on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1935. He was educated at Presentation Convent, Presentation Brothers, and St Brendan's College, Killarney. He came to Dalgan Park in September 1954 and was ordained a priest on 21st December 1960. Assigned to the Philippines in 1961, his first appointment was to Gingoog City and after a year to St Michael's Parish, Iligan City, until 1967. From 1968 to 1972 he served as parish priest of Ozamis City where he pioneered Pre-Marriage and Marriage Enrichment Programmes.

In 1973 he participated in the Richmond Fellowship Course in London, and following this he was assigned for a year to the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR) in London. At the request of Bishop Eamon Casey, he followed this with a year working for Trócaire in Ireland.

Returning to the Philippines in 1976, Charlie was assigned back to St Michael's Parish, Iligan City, where he served until 1981. When Mindanao was divided into two Districts, Charlie was elected District Superior of Cagayan de Oro from 1981-1985. Subsequently he was appointed Vice-Director of the Region (1986-1990) and Director (1990-1994). Central Administration then appointed him Formation Coordinator for the Society (1996-2000).

Due to the precarious health of his sisters and some health problems of his own, Charlie asked for an appointment to Ireland where he managed the Society website for some years. He died in Our Lady's Hospital Navan on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

**Sr Stephanie (Marjorie Ann) King** was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1930 in Boston, Massachusetts. After training as a nurse, she joined the Columban Sisters in Hyde Park in 1952. Following First Profession in 1955 she was assigned to Korea and arrived there in 1956.

For the next 28 years, Stephanie ministered in all the medical facilities of the Columban Sisters in Korea - Chuncheon, Mokpo, Samchok, Cheju and Sokcho. From 1974 - 1977 Stephanie was back in the USA serving in the Columban Seminary in Silver Creek. Later, she worked in the development office until 2002, when, due to health issues, she retired from active ministry. In this next phase of her life, she developed her craftwork talents and her finished products were the

most popular at the Silver Creek Festival and other fundraising functions. In 2015, Stephanie made the big decision to leave her own country and family and retire to the Motherhouse in Magheramore. Despite her profound deafness, she was always very much at the centre of community life and will always be remembered for her goodness, warmth and kindness. When she received her cancer diagnosis, like all events in her life, she accepted it in peace. When Stephanie got the news that the treatment was not working and that palliative care was commencing, she said, "every day that I live now is a gift from the Lord and I will live it gratefully and leave the rest in His hands". She died on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022.

**Fr Desmond Morrison** was born in Dublin on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1925. He grew up in the Waterside, Derry, studied in the local primary school and St Columb's College before going to UCD where he gained a degree in Civil Engineering in 1945. The following September he joined the Columbans in Dalgan and was ordained on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1951. A doctorate in Canon Law from St Patrick's College Maynooth followed in 1955. The Superior General, Tim Connolly, encouraged him to develop his engineering skills by working with a well-known architectural firm, Corr and McCormick in Derry, where he got practical experience in building methods and procedures, equipping him for the construction of churches, presbyteries and schools on the missions. When he was appointed to the Philippines in 1956, Bishop Paddy Cronin put him in charge of building in the new Prelature of Ozamis.

He had a number of parish assignments in Misamis Occidental and Lanao and in the early sixties where he introduced natural family planning in pre-marriage courses. He became involved in promoting the Billings Method of Natural Family Planning and this apostolate became his main focus from 1979 onwards, based in Corpus Christi parish Iligan City.

As a canon lawyer he was asked to help in the Marriage Tribunal in Cagayan de Oro Archdiocese and in Manila. Des had a reputation for being compassionate and practical in relation to marital problems. He died on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2022, Columban's Day, and was buried at Loyola Memorial Gardens, Sucat, Parañaque.



# REST <sup>in</sup> PEACE



Fr John Smyth



Sr Ruth Duckert



Fr Michael Irwin

**Fr John Smyth** was born in Wood Cottage Straide, Foxford, Co Mayo on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1938. He attended Straide National School and subsequently De La Salle Secondary School in Castlebar. He was ordained on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1962 after which he went to Korea.

Appointments to the Cathedral in Chunchon Diocese and placements in Wonju, Mukho and Kang Neung followed. During these early years he had to deal with the grief and loss of both parents with no immediate communication at the time.

Following further language studies at Yonsei University, he was appointed parish priest of Yang De Kwang in Chunchon Diocese. He was then appointed to the Archdiocese of Seoul where he served in Thung Chun Dong on the western edge of the city and next to Mok Dong where with the help of the community he built a beautiful church.

Following that he was assigned to a new parish of Tobong dong in the northern suburbs. While under construction he lived on site in the basement, a feat remarked on by Cardinal Kim at the blessing and opening.

He was then appointed to the Korean Community in Chicago where he served with great kindness and commitment for 23 years. He next moved to Los Angeles near Westminster for the next eight years before returning home in June 2022. He had completed 60 years of uninterrupted missionary service. He died on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and was laid to rest at St Peter's and Paul's Church in his native Straide.

**Sr Ruth Duckert** was born in 1933 in New York, the eldest of five children. With her interest in and gift for Early Childhood Education, Ruth was assigned to our kindergarten school after her First Profession in 1958. She began preparing for work in the nursing field. Upon graduation, she was assigned to the Philippines where she worked in the Pope John XXIII Centre and Clinic in Olongapo City from 1969 until 1980.

As well as attending to the medical needs at the Clinic, Ruth also took care of a Residential Centre for young pregnant women. Here, she was involved in placing many young children for adoption, giving careful attention to a multitude of details, especially the suitability of adoptive parents.

On her return to the USA, Ruth was involved mostly in fundraising and promotion work, as well as part-time pastoral care until she began her retirement in 2012. Then, in 2016, Ruth's life took a different turn as her health deteriorated and she came to Ireland to retire fully. She was then called to live out her missionary commitment in a different and more challenging way as she gradually lost her independence and became more and more vulnerable.

Throughout her life, our Columban communities were also always enhanced and enriched by Ruth's inimitable sense of humour and fun. We all loved and very much enjoyed her companionship. She died on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2022 and is buried in Magheramore.

**Fr Michael Irwin** was born in Ballingarry, Co Limerick on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1936. He was educated at Ballingarry N.S. and St Munchin's College, Limerick. In 1954 he entered St Patrick's College, Maynooth and was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Limerick in 1961. He volunteered to work in Peru with the Missionary Society of St Columban and spent the following years in Lima, serving in the parishes of Villa Dolores and Santa Cruz. On holidays in Ireland, he helped out in Bruree and on his return to Lima, Michael served until 1975 in El Montón. In 1978 he joined the Society of St Columban and was assigned to Chile. He served for the next 22 years in San Marcos, Puente Alto, Bajos de Mena and San Rosario.

From 1989 he also served very successfully as a part-time Regional Bursar. In August 2003 he was appointed to pastoral work in the Diocese of Limerick. Over the next thirteen years he helped in various parishes in Ardagh, Patrick's Well, Coolcappa/Kilcolman, and Pallaskenry until his retirement in 2016 to Kilteragh, Dooradoyle, Limerick. He lived very simply and was an excellent preacher.

As his health deteriorated, Michael moved to the Columban Nursing Home in Dalgan. He died suddenly in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Navan, on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2022, where he had been briefly confined after a fall.

May they rest in peace.

# Nothing is so beautiful as Spring – When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush...

From 'Spring' by Gerard Manley Hopkins

**E**ven the weeds in spring delight the heart of the poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins. After the dark days and cold winds of winter, spring touches the hearts of us all. Spring is the season of primroses, daffodils, lambs and bright green leaves; the season of growth and new life. In our experience we know that growth involves change and we can have a tendency to resist change.

The season of spring is also the season of Lent - a reminder of the 40 years the people of Israel spent in the desert before they entered the promised land; a reminder of the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert in prayer and fasting before he began his public ministry. The desert was a place of challenge and struggle both for the people of Israel and for Jesus, when he faced temptation during this time of solitude.

Lent invites us to enter into some level of solitude and reflection symbolised by the desert. It is a time when we make a conscious choice to change: 'I will spend time each day in quiet prayer; I will do without something that I really like, such as chocolate or alcohol, in order to give to those in need.' In other words, I renew my baptismal commitment to follow Jesus, to allow his love to change me so that I may become more like him.

As for Jesus, so for us the symbol of the desert represents the challenging, the painful aspects of life's journey. The garden, as contrasting symbol, stands for the goal of that journey. It symbolises heaven.

After his time in the desert Jesus, filled with the Spirit, began to preach the Good

News and to live a life of unconditional love among the poor, the broken, the suffering. He brought healing and hope to those rejected by the society of his time. He challenged the powerful, who were oppressing the poor, knowing that this would lead to his death. On Good Friday his cross reminds us of his love for all of us 'even unto death.'

After the long sorrow of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, we, together with Mary Magdalen, have the opportunity to meet Jesus in the garden of the Resurrection - the place of joy and wonder. The poet Patrick Kavanagh describes this moment, as seen by the farmers of his native Monaghan, in a beautiful springtime image:

*...Yet sometimes when the sun comes through  
a gap  
These men know God the Father in a tree:  
The Holy Spirit is the rising sap,  
And Christ will be the green leaves that will  
come  
At Easter from the sealed and guarded tomb....*

Like the poet, who could see within nature the beauty of the Trinity, may we too meet Christ both in the poor and oppressed people of our world, and in the light shining through trees, the music of the thrush, the stillness of starlight. Let this accompany our prayer as we journey through Lent to rejoice in the risen Christ this Easter. ●

Sr Patricia Byrne





## THE LAST SUPPER

It was the feast of the Passover, and Jesus knew he would soon die and return to his father in heaven. During their last supper together, Jesus warned his disciples that one of them would betray him. "I tell you," said Jesus, "it would be better for that man if he had never been born."

Then Jesus took some of the bread they were going to eat and blessed it. He broke the bread and handed it to his disciples. "Take this and eat. This is my body."

Then he took a cup of wine and gave thanks. "This is my blood, the new covenant," he said, "which shall be poured out for many so that their sins will be forgiven."

He passed the cup round for them all to drink. "From now on," Jesus told them, "I shall not drink wine with you

again until I share the new wine with you in the kingdom of my father."

After supper Jesus took his disciples out of the city. As they walked he told them, "You will lose faith tonight and desert me."

Peter protested, saying, "Even if everyone else loses faith, I won't!"

But Jesus answered him, "Before the cock crows twice tonight, you will disown me three times." ●

**Read also: Matthew 26:17-29; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-38; and I Corinthians 11:23-25.**

## BIBLE QUIZ

NUMBER  
105

1 In Luke ch.11, who requested, "Lord teach us to pray"?

2 In Matthew ch.26, who swore, "I do not know the man"?

3 In Acts ch.17, whose address began, "Men of Athens I see that in every way you are very religious"?

4 In Genesis ch.27, was it Joseph, Isaac or Abraham who said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau"?

5 In John ch.2, who gave this instruction to servants at a wedding, "Do whatever he tells you"?

6 In Daniel ch.2, which king said, "I have had a dream and my mind has been troubled to know what the dream was"?

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Consult your Bible, answer the questions above and send your entry to: Bible Quiz N° 105, St Columban's, Widney Manor Rd, Solihull, West Midlands, B93 9AB, before 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

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# WORD SEARCH

Match these words with their correct spaces. They can be found straight across or down:

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COOKIES  
CHICK  
HEN  
BASKET  
RABBITS  
EGGS  
FLOWERS  
SWALLOW  
WILLOW

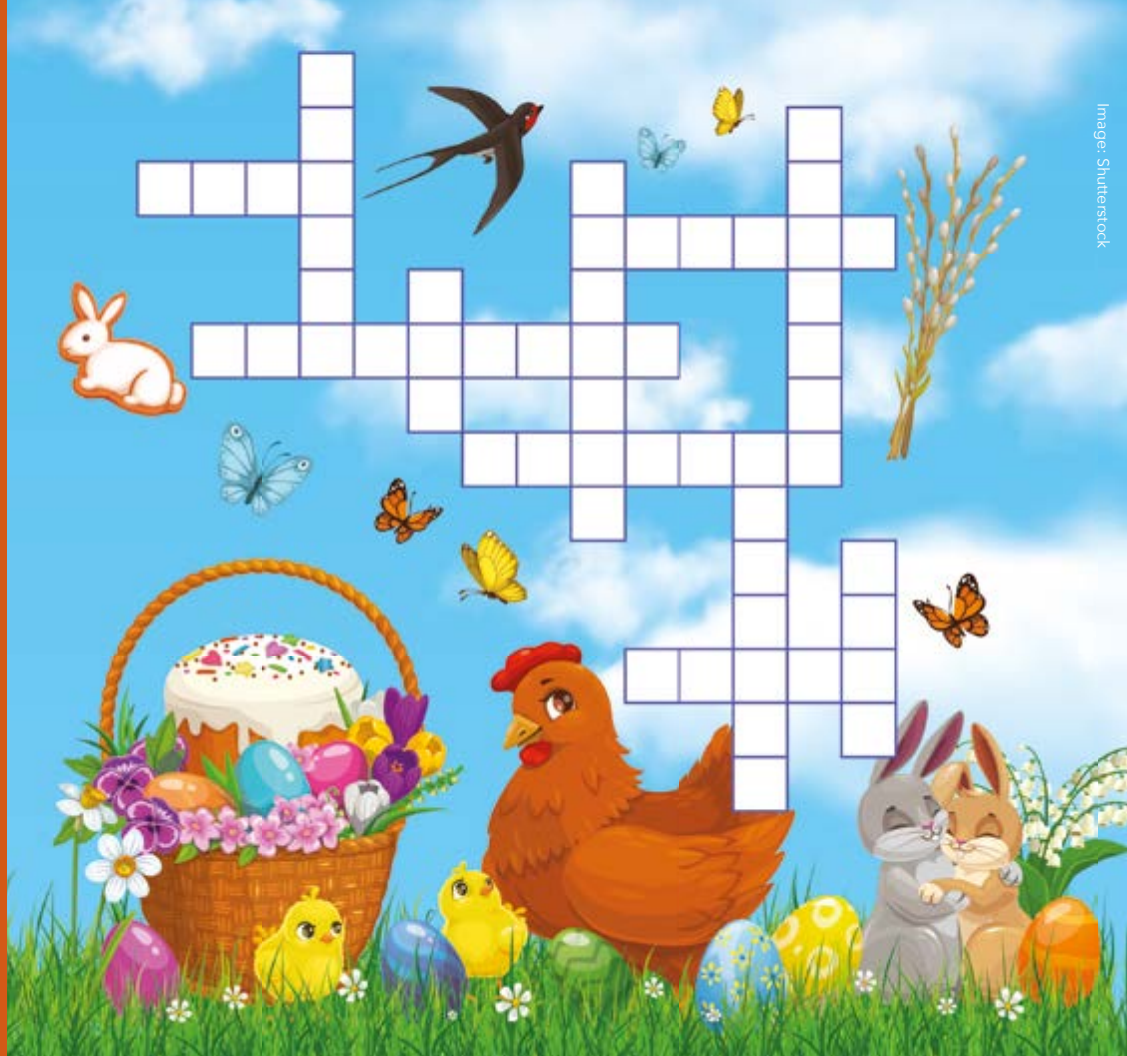


Image: Shutterstock

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

The other day at school Ms Flinn was saying we must be ready but I forget what for because I was thinking of our football matches and we must be aful clean and polished. Oh! that was it we hafta be ready for Easter and we all sed yes Ms because it was the holidays we were thinking of. And I was telling my fren Bump our cuzzin, will take us up those hills except we have to walk up. And Bump said if we didn't go up we cud'nt come down again and that's where all the fun is slippin and sliding and everything. And I was saying

to myself just fab but Ms Flinn was looking down and saying something about essays and hard words and so much to be done for Holy Week and Easter and we all shouted out yes Ms except I couldn't remember there was so much! And when our mammy's old aunt Mamie was visiting I was telling how we hafta do so much that I was confused. And she said I'm not surprised because your heads are full of nonsins. And I'm wondering wud'nt that be a mighty essay and maybe Ms Flinn would be charmed.. but only mebbe....



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 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023.



1. How do you write a letter to an Easter Bunny?
2. What do you call an Easter Bunny with a bad memory?
3. What do you call a mischievous egg?
4. Did you hear the one about the house infested with Easter eggs?
5. What kind of stories do Easter eggs like to tell their children?
6. What day does an Easter egg hate the most?

1. Use hare-mail!  
2. A hare-brain!  
3. A practical yokker.  
4. It needed an eggs-terminator!  
5. Yolk tales.  
6. Fry-day!



## COMPETITION WINNERS



DECEMBER 2022

Lucy Handley  
Walsall

Freddie Seaman  
Tyne & Wear

Sophia Northolt

Joseph Peacock  
Wiltshire

Sophie McDonald  
Glasgow

1

2

1

2

1

Colpaint - Aged 7 and Under

Colpaint - Aged 8 and Over

Pudsy's Dirty



# Wonderful Water Spiders

By Elizabeth McArdle



01

**H**ave you ever heard the phrase “living in a bubble”? This phrase describes someone who is out of touch with the realities of everyday life and lives in their own world. The extraordinary spider which we are now going to investigate, spends most of its life in a bubble. However, the above phrase does not apply to it at all because it faces its everyday challenges head on and is always in touch with reality.

The water spider is the only spider in the world which lives underwater for its entire life. Its habitat includes freshwater ponds, lakes and slow streams where submerged plants are found in abundance. Tiny hairs cover the water spider’s body and these hairs trap air bubbles which are taken underwater and released into a web which the spider spins among the submerged plants. This creates a bigger bubble, which becomes the spider’s home and the spider only leaves to collect more air or to hunt for food.

In late autumn, it seals its bubbly home from the inside and hibernates for the winter months. What a very clever spider it is, considering that it measures only 10-15 mm (0.4-0.6 ins) in length. Because the spider breathes air, frequent trips must be taken to the surface to replenish the air supply in the bubble. However, scientists have now discovered that the underwater web it uses to store the air can take oxygen directly from the water. What a miracle this is and it points to how all of nature is indeed a miracle.

Spring is in the air and the water spider is waking up. It is time for us to wake up too and get outside to look for more miracles. You will find many because the evidence of God’s handiwork is everywhere. Enjoy it all and be grateful for every moment spent in the wonderful outdoors. ●



Image: Shutterstock

01. Water spider in web underwater.

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# THE LETTER: A MESSAGE FOR OUR EARTH

**Caring for our common  
home starts with you!**

Pope Francis published his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* in 2015. It encourages us to see how "everything is connected." The way we treat the Earth, our common home, is a reflection of how we treat each other. Caring for each other means caring for the home we share. 'The Letter' is an incredibly moving documentary about Pope Francis' call to action on climate change. His message is even more urgent today.

YouTube Originals

## THE LETTER

A MESSAGE FOR OUR EARTH

*Watch  
it here*

[theletterfilm.org/watch](http://theletterfilm.org/watch) 🔍

Produced by Oscar-winning producers Off the Fence (My Octopus Teacher) and the Laudato Si' Movement. It was directed by the Emmy and BAFTA-winning documentary film director, Nicolas Brown. The Letter explores indigenous rights, climate migration, and youth leadership in the context of climate action. The highlight of the film is the dialogue the protagonists have with Pope Francis.

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And he said to them,

“Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.”

Mark 16:15

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