

far east



MAGAZINE OF THE COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES

MARCH/APRIL 2025



WAY OF THE CROSS

Parishioners
on the Streets

CATHAL'S JOURNEY

Pakistan Immersion

FAITH IN ACTION

Young people
Respond

04 Way of the Cross on the Streets

Last Easter Fr Colin McLean staged a contemporary Way of the Cross. He recalls how it brought the reality of Jesus' suffering and death to a deeper level for parishioners.



04

06 Stitch By Stitch

Columban Lay Missionary Lilibeth Sabado writes about her journey of discovery, service, connection and healing through embroidery and shared stories with migrant women on the US/Mexico border.



06

08 Under the Narra Tree

Sr Minerva Danganan recalls the time she spent living and building friendships in a community of Christians and Muslims in the Philippines.

10 The Columbans, the Saint and the Hermit

Columban Co-Worker Adam Williams got much more than he bargained for on a sentimental visit to the Welsh land of his forebears, writes Fr John Boles.



15

12 Cathal's Journey

Last year Cathal King travelled to Pakistan to visit his uncle, Columban Fr Tomás King. He recounts how his travels deepened his understanding of Pakistan's complexities.

14 Lent and St Kevin

Fr Tim Mulroy recalls a legend concerning St Kevin's devotion not only to God but also to the natural world which has a special resonance for Lent.

15 Holy Thursday's Radical Ceremonies

Lent concludes with Holy Thursday's ceremonies. Columban Sr Kathleen Coyle reflects on Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet and final meal with them.

16 Easter Strike

Fr John McEvoy remembers a challenging Easter for his parish in Fiji and the role of the Stations of the Cross in bringing the community together in their battle for justice.



08

18 My Faith

Conrad Maguire spent time with the Columbans in Dalgan as he completed his St John Paul II Award. He shares some of his journey back to faith.



10

20 Faith in Action

Abi Yendole is this year's Columban Faith in Action volunteer in Britain. She writes about the fruits of interfaith dialogue she witnessed in the Irish Region during a recent visit.



16

19 Obituaries

21 Stories from the Bible

22 Children's Section

23 Nature: The Elusive Hare



20

THE FAR EAST

Published seven times yearly by the Missionary Society of St Columban (Maynooth Mission to China).

THE PURPOSE OF THE FAR EAST IS

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.

far east

Annual Subscription

£15 UK
£25 Europe
£35 World

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

Columban Websites

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

Follow us

X: @fareastmagazine
Facebook: www.facebook.com/fareastmagazine

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

Cathal King, nephew of Columban missionary, Fr Tomás King, exploring the Hopper Valley and Black Glacier in northern Pakistan. Photo: Cathal King.



IN TIMES OF DISASTER - TRUST!

An air of anxiety is with us. ‘Disaster’ is a word that occurs frequently in the media here in Japan. Politicians use the word when canvassing for votes. The predicted disasters include stronger and more frequent typhoons, causing surging floods and house-crashing landslides. Television news readily supplies graphic images.

Seismologists predict a massive earthquake and super high tsunami waves. The Nankai Trough, which skirts the east coast off Tokyo and Yokahama, is due to slip soon, they tell us. An earthquake measuring 7 on the Richter scale and a tsunami will follow. “Prepare now!” we are told.

North Korea, our close neighbour, is arming. They test missiles that can reach Japan. The government’s response is: “Let us arm ourselves with more defensive weapons.” Russia still occupies Japan; the Kuril Islands have remained occupied since 1945 though Japan claims these northern islands as Japanese territory.

In this sad atmosphere of anxiety the message of Jesus is so important: “Fear not! I am with you.” Jesus is the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy: “When you pass through the rivers they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire you

will not be burned. For I am the Lord your God... You are precious in my eyes and I love you... Be not afraid, for I am with you.” (Isaiah 43:2)

In a time of disaster we are called to trust our God who loves each of us. That is Christ’s message that I give to my people at Mass - especially on the two Sundays of the year when Yokohama City holds its ‘Disaster Prevention Exercise’.

Our community held that exercise recently. After Mass a whistle blew, the candles were extinguished, and the community, using designated exits, filed out with their hymn books covering their heads. We all gathered in the church yard. It had been raining before Mass; but the rain stopped and the sun shone again.

“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.” (Hebrew 13:6) ●

Fr Barry Cairns

Fr Barry Cairns was born in New Zealand in 1931. He trained as a Columban missionary in Australia before going to Japan in 1956 to serve on mission.

After eleven years in parish work in Japan, he then spent the next 13 years on the staff of the Columban seminary in Sydney before he returned to Japan in 1983. At 94 he continues to serve in a parish in Yokohama City.

01. ‘Jesus calms the storm,’ from the Church of the Birth of the Virgin Mary, Prcanj, Montenegro. Image: Shutterstock.



WAY OF THE CROSS ON THE STREETS

Last Easter Fr Colin McLean staged a contemporary Way of the Cross. He recalls how it brought the reality of Jesus' suffering and death to a deeper level for parishioners.

In 1972, at the Cultural Centre of the Philippines in Manila, I saw my first version of the rock opera, 'Jesus Christ Superstar', which starred Boy Camara as Jesus. It was also the first time I had seen any presentation of Jesus wearing trousers rather than a biblical robe. I was totally captivated. Little did I know then that I would direct a modern, street version of the Way of the Cross almost yearly from 1974 to 2024 in Manila in the Philippines, in Melbourne in Australia and in Salvador in Brazil.

My reasoning for maintaining the modern dress was twofold. If Jesus was born now instead of more than two thousand years ago, he would probably be wearing jeans and a t-shirt. In Matthew's Last Judgment text, the king (Jesus) utters the words: "Insofar as you did it to one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me." You did not have to see Jesus in that person, just helping someone in need was enough to guarantee the Kingdom. So Jesus today sees himself in each one of us and in the clothes we wear today.

In August 2023, I celebrated some masses in St Therese's parish, Essendon. I broached the subject of presenting a Way of the Cross in the streets of the parish on Good Friday 2024 with the parish priest, Fr John Hannon. He gave me the go-ahead, provided that I organise the cast. That would not be an easy task considering the scarcity of youth at Sunday masses.

One Sunday, for the homily, I showed some slides of the Way of the Cross I had directed in the 1980s in the parishes of Northcote and East Brighton. At the end of mass, I distributed a written survey to gauge what parishioners of St Therese's and Our Lady of the Nativity parishes would think about such a modern Way of the Cross. The feedback I got was very positive, so I decided to give it a try, though I was wondering how I was going to start organising a cast.

At the parish's 10:30 mass on another Sunday, I was sitting in the pew behind a family of five, the mother and father, two sons and a daughter. Jesus must have

given me a nudge because as the mass concluded, I reached forward and tapped the father on the shoulder and asked, "Could I talk to you and your family for a few minutes after mass?" He agreed and I met them outside the church. When I told them I was looking at the possibility of doing a Way of the Cross in St Therese's parish, they told me they had seen my slides and were very impressed with the idea of a modern version. That's where it started! So, Robert, Jenny and their three children became my first cast members. They then recruited others. However, we still didn't have a 'Jesus'. I had approached three possibles, but for one reason or another they couldn't do it.

It was getting closer to Holy Week when Robert informed me they had found a guy prepared to play the role of Jesus. I was relieved. The following Sunday I was at 10:30 mass at St Therese's when a young man walked in and sat a few pews in front of me. His appearance and demeanour left me thinking, "He would make a good Jesus", but I couldn't approach him, because Robert had told me they already had found a guy.

After mass, I joined Robert, Jenny and their family outside in front of the church. To my amazement, Robert beckoned the young man I had seen at mass to come over. He was going to play 'Jesus' in the Way of the Cross. It was all falling into place. Realising that we could only rehearse after the 10:30 Sunday mass, due to weekend commitments of most of the cast, we decided on narrations rather than dialogues. As it happened, we were able to rehearse only twice before Good Friday.


On Good Friday morning, some of the cast were nervous, because they had only had two rehearsals, and especially when they saw that more people than we had expected had turned up to accompany the Way of the Cross. But we need not have worried. All the feedback from those who accompanied the Way of the Cross on the streets on Good Friday last year were overwhelmingly positive. Quite a number of people were reduced to tears.

Fr Colin McLean is Australian. He began his missionary life in the Philippines. He was appointed to Brazil in 1984 and worked with African-Brazilians for over 30 years. He served the people of Tide Island and other island communities off Salvador in northeast Brazil before retiring to Australia.

All photos: Fr Colin McLean.

To make a comment on this article go to

 facebook.com/fareastmagazine

 [@fareastmagazine](https://twitter.com/fareastmagazine)



As well as the street version, Fr John Hannon led the traditional Stations of the Cross inside the church for those who preferred a more traditional approach, and for those with less mobility who could not walk the route of the outdoor presentation. Both options of the Way of the Cross brought the reality of Jesus' suffering and death to a deeper level for all of us who participated. ●



MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST COLUMBAN ANNUAL REPORT

Columban Missionaries build bridges and foster mutual understanding through encounters with people of other cultures and religions. Our commitment to live in solidarity with those on the margins of life, and to care for our common home, are ways in which we participate in God's mission.



SCAN ME

Explore how your generous contributions to the society have supported many of our projects and programmes in our fifteen mission countries.

Scan to download the report or e-mail office@columbans.co.uk to request an e-copy.



COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES BRITAIN



2024