

far east



MAGAZINE OF THE COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES

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TO JEJU**

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Immersion

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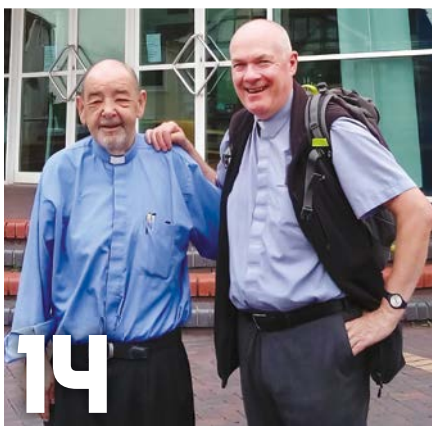
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THE FAR EAST

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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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Front Cover

Columban participants who attended the 'Raising Hope' Conference included Sr Anne Carbon, Congregational Leader of the Columban Sisters, who met Pope Leo XIV. Photos: Shutterstock, © Vatican Media, and Ellen Teague.



FROM TYBURN TO PERU

Oxford Street in London is the busiest shopping thoroughfare in Britain and one of the most famous in the world. At the top of Oxford Street, by Marble Arch, you have to cross a traffic island, where most passers-by will have their eyes fixed on the pedestrian traffic lights. However, if they were to glance down at the pavement under their feet, they'd see an innocuous-looking blue plaque indicating that this road island doesn't just have a traffic management purpose, but also marks a spot important in history and sacred to Catholics.

For this is the site of the infamous 'Tyburn Tree' gallows, London's main place of execution in Tudor and Stuart times. Amongst the numerous victims who suffered cruel deaths here were over a hundred who are recognised as martyrs by the Catholic Church, and who died for the faith during Reformation times between 1535 and 1681.

A little bit further along, in front of Hyde Park, if you keep your eyes peeled you'll see another plaque, this time on the wall pointing out the entrance to Tyburn Convent. Here, since 1903, a community of Sisters - the Adorers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus - have maintained perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, praying for all people but especially those of England and Wales, keeping alive the memory of the Tyburn Martyrs.

For some 25 years, Columban Fr Tom Ryan has served this community. He, more than anyone, is aware that present-day Catholics in this country come from a long tradition, a tradition sometimes only preserved by brave women and men giving their lives for their beliefs. It is this knowledge which inspires us to guard these beliefs and sometimes share them with people in other countries.

Tom did this for nearly twenty years in the shanty towns around the city of Lima in Peru. During much of this time, I had the privilege of performing the same ministry in a neighbouring area. Together with other Columban priests, Sisters and Lay Missionaries we were engaged in helping poor people build up Church communities from scratch.

For me, this sums up Columban mission. Conscious of the noble tradition we have come from, inspired by the stories of those who went before us and often suffered for Christ, we go out to disadvantaged parts of the globe to share the Gospel by the example of our lives. We are able to do this, thanks to you - faithful readers of the **Far East** who support us by your kindness and prayers. Thank you. ●

Fr John Boles
Regional Director, Britain

01. Fr John Boles blessing people after Mass in a shanty town near Lima, Peru in 1998.





PILGRIMS OF HOPE

Fr Peter Dong spoke to Cecilia Kim about an exchange programme for young people on Jeju Island as part of preparations for a global gathering of young Catholics next year.

Last August an exchange programme brought together young people from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong on the Korean island of Jeju. In all 47 people including priests, religious and lay missionaries, together with the young people, participated in this gathering as part of preparations for World Youth Day [WYD] in Korea in 2027.

Fr Peter met the group of young students at Jeju airport and brought them to the Columban house, which is situated close to one of Jeju island's tourist attractions, the famous 'Dragon's Head Rock'. After the opening Mass all the participants moved to Blessed Kim Ki-Ryang Memorial Hall in Hamdeok, his hometown. Blessed Kim Ki-Ryang was born in Jeju in 1816 and was martyred in 1867. "I was deeply moved as I listened to the life of Jeju's first martyr. There is a wooden cross in the hall where the young people participated in a ritual in which they wrote down the particular crosses they are carrying in their lives and nailed them to the cross. They were able to connect their particular difficulties with those of the Lord, and realise they are never alone in their suffering," Fr Peter recalled.

"Next morning we listened to a lecture by Columban Missionary Fr Michael Riordan who is currently in charge of the farm complex at St Isidore's. He spoke to us about the life and work of Fr PJ

McGlinchey from Ireland who founded St Isidore's Farm. Fr PJ was appointed to Jeju in 1954, immediately after the Korean War (1950-53) when the place was completely destroyed. However, he did not despair amid the ruins and devastation, but instead launched his ministry with the words of Jesus: "Whatever you did to the least of my brothers you did to me". For Fr PJ it was not enough to just preach the gospel; it was important to fulfil it practically by engaging with people's economic difficulties, their health issues, the lack of education for young people and women, and address the quality of life of the elderly, for whom he established a hospice. He saw the farm, where he raised pigs, sheep and cattle, as a way to help islanders improve their war-torn economy and improve their nutrition."

"Fr Michael introduced us to the farm, the racehorses and the retired older horses explaining that racehorses run from three to five years. When their racing days are over, they are expensive to take care of with the result that nowadays many of them are put down. He explained that as we humans have lives so also do horses and at St Isidore's good care is provided for sick or aging horses until they die of natural causes. We were invited to reflect on the relationship between people and heaven, with each other, as well as between people and nature. It is only when we understand and look after each other that true coexistence takes place. In the Garden of Grace we walked with Columban Fr Joseph Yang who is the current director of

01. Columban Missionary, Fr Peter Dong, (1st on right) with young participants in the exchange programme on Jeju Island, Korea.

02. Some of the young people meet the goats at St Isidore's Farm, which was founded by Columban Fr PJ McGlinchey, after the Korean War (1950-53), when Jeju was completely destroyed, as a way to help islanders improve their war-torn economy and improve their nutrition.

03. The young participants from Taiwan.

04. In the Garden of Grace Columban Fr Joseph Yang, director of the St Isidore Retreat Centre, distributes Communion.

02





the St Isidore's retreat centre. We reflected on Jesus's journey from the Annunciation to his Ascension."

"On the third day we visited Yongsu Shrine where Fr Kim Dae-gun [Andrea] celebrated his first Mass in Korea." He is also known as St Andrew Kim Taegon. He was the first Korean-born Catholic priest, and he is the patron saint of Korean clergy. He was martyred in 1846 during a period of intense persecution in Korea. On the 17th of August in 1845 Fr Kim was ordained a priest in a church near Shanghai in China and later he set forth for Korea on a ship called 'Raphael'. After three days a storm blew up, and the ship drifted for 28 days before ending up stranded in Yongsuri in Jeju. "On our faith journey when we sometimes come up against rough seas we need to hold each other's hands and stand shoulder to shoulder, so that no storm defeats us and we set sail again confidently," Fr Peter explained.

On the fourth day of the programme, the group visited the April 3rd Peace Park. It was built in 2008 to commemorate the South Korean state's atrocities towards civilians on Jeju Island before and during the Korean War. "We heard of the wounds and profound pain Jeju endured. The names of those whose lives were taken and are buried there will never be forgotten; hopefully they will produce peace."

"That night we celebrated a Cultural Night in which we sang songs in the same language, shared similar memories and while standing shoulder to shoulder we shared joy as we held each other's hands. It was a moment when our hearts were connected with heaven and earth becoming one. Our seeds of friendship and faith began to take root. I believe that this meeting will surely yield 'Autumn Fruits'. We will become pilgrims of hope with our hearts on fire as we convey this hope to all around us." ●



In 2019 Fr Peter Dong became the very first Chinese Columban priest. He currently serves the Chinese Community at Kwanghimun Shrine in the Archdiocese of Seoul and is a member of the Korean Regional Council.

This article was first published in Columban Frontier Mission Magazine and was translated by Noel Mackey. With thanks to Cecilia Kim.

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The Hong Kong Sunday Examiner spoke to Columban Missionary Fr Michael Cuddigan on the occasion of his retirement from ministry after five decades. Here are some extracts from the article.

"It is time to harvest my life experience," said Fr Michael Cuddigan, a dedicated Columban missionary, as he prepared to retire and return to Ireland after serving over a decade in Hong Kong. As he reflected on his priesthood, he acknowledged the profound transformation the Lord has worked through him – from being a young, nervous deacon relying on books, to a priest who touches hearts through genuine sharing of experiences.

Ordained in 1971 at the age of 24, at the Columban seminary in Dalgan, he embarked on long and varied missions. His first assignment took him to the southern Philippines, serving village parishes and also as a hospital chaplain and campus minister. After leaving in 1983, he served in Australia and New Zealand, eventually returning to Mindanao a decade later, focusing on vocation ministry and retreats.

Reflecting on his priesthood, Fr Cuddigan said, "The past 54 years as a priest has given me different life experiences—the good, the bad, the ugly, the beautiful ones. And now I speak out of them." He emphasised the power of personal stories in delivering meaningful homilies, as open sharing of human imperfections and faith amidst trials can encourage others in similar situations.

His early homilies were hindered by over-reliance on books and a lack of confidence. Now, with decades of experience, he relies on heartfelt communication rather than scripted notes, which resonates more with his audience. "So I suppose as a young man, I was Michael the cleric. Now I am more Michael, the human being," he said.

Fr Cuddigan was assigned to Hong Kong in 2013. He was the assistant parish priest of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception until 2017. In recent years he served as the rector of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel ministering to many migrant workers from the Philippines. ●





A COMMUNITY OF COMMUNITIES

Former Editor of the *Far East* magazine Fr Alo Connaughton spoke to Peruvian Columban Fr Gabriel Rojas about his parish *Los Santos Arcángeles* where the challenge has been rapid growth.

I was born in Cajamarca in the north of Peru in 1969. I was first introduced to the Columbans by Michael Garnett, an English diocesan priest who worked for a time with the Columbans and who worked in my parish. I joined the Columban formation programme in 1995 and was ordained a priest in December 2013.

My mission assignment was to Pakistan. We had parish ministries and as a young priest that is where most of my energy went. The Columbans in Pakistan put a lot of effort into education especially for girls. For a while I was director of three schools which were essentially run by the local Franciscan

Sisters and St Paul Sisters. Our second focus was on health. We offered basic health services in the parish, but we often brought people to clinics and frequently paid the bill with money from our benefactors

in the UK and Ireland.

Today I am the parish priest of *Los Santos Arcángeles* in Peru. It is a densely populated parish of 50,000 people on the edge of Lima. Part of the parish has well developed areas with nice shops and houses; other areas have houses more or less finished; and the rest of the parish has half-built houses or dwellings that are little better than shacks. Some parts of the parish still don't have water, electricity, public transport or paved streets.

Almost all the people that live here are migrants from other parts of Peru and some fairly recent arrivals. About 95% would identify themselves as Catholics. The parish has four younger Columban priests which sounds good but presently we have 18 communities in the parish, each one with its own chapel while new communities in six more areas are in the process of building a chapel. All of these 24 communities have sub-groups and during the week there are multiple meetings with groups, assisted activities, educational events, funerals - to mention a few. All would like to have a Sunday Eucharist.





You could very easily become overwhelmed by the challenges a parish like this presents if you remained with the ways of the past. New thinking is essential. For example, it often happens that at the last moment a priest is unavailable for Sunday Mass. If he has not arrived 10 minutes after start time the community leaders take over. They lead the opening prayers and the Sunday readings, provide a commentary on the readings followed by prayers of the faithful and a communion service. Every Sunday some of the communities have this kind of celebration.

Nearly all the community leaders have groups that meet during the week for a prayerful reflection on the readings of the coming Sunday - *Lectio Divina*. This enables them to offer a reflection when Sunday comes. *Lectio Divina* is a very ancient practice done in groups. The people who take part may have very little religious education but, from their own life experience, and the help of the Holy Spirit, they have wonderful insights into the meaning of scripture.

We have put a lot of work into preparing local community leaders. January/February are summer months here when summer schools take place. The Archdiocese of Lima runs courses, and we also organise ones locally to save on time and bus fares. Up to 500 people can take part. These encounters offer a space to reflect on present day understanding of

the faith, Bible interpretation and social doctrine of the Church.

We have also put a lot of work into the youth and children. At the moment we have about 300 young people participating in some leadership roles in our 26 communities - many of them are university students. They are full of life and help with many different programmes and projects such as the First Communion and Confirmation programmes for hundreds of children and young people each year - they share their faith with their peers.

For many years now the Archdiocese of Lima has had an acute shortage of priests and Sisters. There is little sign that this will change even though this is a city with a high level of participation in the Church. But there are plenty of lay people willing and able to take leadership roles. We Columbans rejoice when we see so many lay people doing this, and we promote it. However, I fear that some of the local clergy do not see things this way. Sometimes there is not much available space for laity in the clerical mindset.

Music has always been a big part of my life. I play traditional instruments, *zampoña* (sort of pan pipes) *quena*, guitar and mandolin. I formed a music group *Memorias* in 2002. The membership has changed over the years, but we have made seven CDs. I write poetry and lyrics and try to communicate a message through the medium of music. We incorporate traditional music - even a little from Pakistan.

I'll admit there have been times when I felt a bit down and asked myself: 'What am I doing here?' Then it might be a simple thing like the joy I see in a sick person because I visited that makes me grateful for the gifts that I have been given. I meet God in the people that cross my path and I say to myself, 'It is good for me to be a priest.' In some ways it is they that made me a priest and keep me reminded that this is what I am. ●

A native of Ballinacree, Co Meath, Fr Alo Connaughton was ordained in 1969. He worked in poor areas of Santiago in Chile and was Editor of the **Far East** for 10 years. He later served on mission in Burma and taught philosophy & theology at Seangtham College in Bangkok, Thailand and in the National Seminary in Beijing in China. He is retired in Ireland.

01. + 02. Celebrating the parish anniversary in traditional dress.
03. The poor of the parish help the poor.
04. Columban Missionary Fr Gabriel Rojas from Peru.

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To play one of Fr Gabriel's compositions scan this QR code:



FROM MANILA TO MISSION



Columban Missionary Sr Virginia Mozo spoke to Sarah Mac Donald about her vocation, mission in a number of countries, and how St Columbanus's message continues to resonate today.

The legacy of St Columbanus "spans cultures, lands and eras". He is "a unifier" according to Sr Virginia (Virgie for short) Mozo. She was "blessed" to have taken part in a pilgrimage in the footsteps of St Columbanus in 2024, the very year that the Columban Sisters were celebrating their centenary. In the Italian town of Bobbio, where the Irish saint died in 615AD, Sr Virgie felt the spirit of St Columbanus was very much alive. "He is the saint of migrants, pilgrims, and all God's creation. He unifies not only Europe, but also Columban Missionaries from many diverse cultures on mission in many different countries."

Sr Virgie has just completed a term as part of Columban Sisters leadership team in the Philippines. Although the overall membership of the congregation has declined in recent years, she highlights the fact that there are young women from Myanmar and the Philippines currently in formation. "I believe there is a future for the Columban Sisters. It will be different from my own formation - a sign of the times. It may be more collaborative with lay people doing some of the formation work. We are a synodal Church."

Recalling the hope she felt as a young woman contemplating religious life, she believes that hope remains alive in others today. "There are two kinds of fears: fear of the known and fear of the unknown. The same is true in terms of vocations and religious life - there is the known and the unknown. I feel there are young people who will respond in the same way I responded 40 years ago. They might be fewer but there are still vocations." That is why she continues to work with young people in the Philippines and has opened up the Sisters' chapel in San Juan to students in the nearby



parish “to get to know them.” Last year she and Sr Sophia gave retreats to more than 400 secondary students. “It was so powerful – young people want to be heard and seen.”

When Sr Virgie was on her first mission assignment in Chile in the 1980s, she was initially based in Renca in Santiago along with Srs Angela McKeever, Kate Midgley, and Patricia Sweeney. They accompanied people in four different chapels. Sr Virgie’s chapel was in Valle Azapa, where she set up four choirs for the local children, young adults and adults. “I really felt so at home with the people, journeying with them in their pains and struggles.” After three years in Renca, she was assigned to the south of Chile where she worked with Sr Catherine Hurley, a former Superior General, and a sibling of the Hurley brothers who were Columban Fathers. The local bishop asked her to become the diocese’s Youth Coordinator. Though she found the role very fulfilling, she trained up young people in preparation for handing on the position. “I believe in youth helping youth. I told them I won’t be here forever – you are the future. Out of those young people I trained, three became priests, and two became religious.”

In 1997 Sr Virgie returned to the Philippines and this enabled her to spend time with her father before he died. “It was a privilege to be with my father. He influenced me a lot.” Virginia Mozo grew up in a comfortable home in Manila. “I came from a big family, eight children. I’m number four,” she recalled. “Seven girls in a row and then the youngest is a boy.” It was a “tight-knit” and loving environment. Her father, a banker, belonged to the Aglipayan Church while her mother, a teacher, came from a very Catholic family. Faith permeated family life. “We went to mass and said the rosary every day at six o’clock.”

After school Virgie worked in banking while her boyfriend was an architect. One day she told him, “I think I have an inclination to enter religious life.” He responded generously, “If you’re happy, I’m happy for you.” In the wake of their split she came across the Columban Sisters through an ad in a magazine. When she told her mother she was interested in joining the Columbans her mother was less than enthusiastic. But Virgie persevered and did her initial formation in

Mindanao which was experiencing a major drought linked to El Nino while the region was also greatly troubled by terrorism. Her father predicted, “Virgie will return after a week.” She didn’t!

After her father’s death, Virgie spent two years in Pakistan in the Diocese of Hyderabad. “It was challenging: learning a new language and adjusting to the weather and cultural differences.” Then a need arose in the US region for a Sister to do promotion work and Sr Virgie went for one year but stayed for 10 years. “I felt so at home there. In summer time I was on the East Coast and in winter time I was on the West coast. I had a network especially in Boston.” However, when her mother fell ill she asked to return home. Sadly not only Sr Virgie’s mother died but her eldest sister also passed away not long afterwards. Having grieved for her mother and sister, she was asked in 2018 to undertake, with Sr Kathleen Mary O’Riordan, an exploration of mission in Mexico on the US border. There she was involved in art therapy for up to 80 children aged five to 15 years old. The children were living in camps for migrants from Central America, Honduras, Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela and Haiti. However, as the COVID pandemic erupted she left for the US. “Crossing the border for El Paso (Texas) where the Columban Fathers are, it really hit me, I am a migrant. All I had was two plastic bags.”

Back in the Philippines she lived for a year in the shadow of the Sierra Madre mountain where she responded to *Laudato Si’* and the Columban Sisters’ pledge to care for the earth. “I felt called to this place.” But it was not to be. She was beckoned to a leadership role within a year. Adaptability and selflessness are essential qualities for a missionary, they are qualities Sr Virgie has in abundance. Little wonder that at a 50-year school reunion, a former classmate told Virgie that even as a teenager she “had no doubt” that she would enter religious life. ●

Sarah Mac Donald is Editor of the **Far East** magazine.

01. Sr Virginia (Virgie) Mozo sitting in the Columban Sisters Motherhouse in Magheramore, Co Wicklow.
All photos: Sarah Mac Donald.
02. Srs Virgie, Kathleen Mary O’Riordan, Lucia So and the former parish priest of Luxeuil, following the unveiling of a plaque commemorating Venerable Robert Schuman at St Columban’s Abbey in Luxeuil in 2024.
03. *Laudato Si’*: Sr Virgie exploring the beautiful flowers and trees in the grounds of Magheramore.
04. Srs Virgie Mozo, Ha Suk Shin, Kathleen Mary O’Riordan, Lucia So, and Ann Gray – who walked in the footsteps of our patron, St Columban, as part of their Centenary celebrations. They are standing in front of a statue of St Columban in the grounds of St Columban’s Abbey in Luxeuil in France.

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NEEDED NEW WORDS

Fr Bobby Gilmore looks at the roots of the words 'xenophobia' and 'genocide' and asks if the word 'vericide' should be added to our lexicon to describe the death of truth.

Fr Bobby Gilmore campaigns on migrant issues. Ordained in 1963, he worked in the Philippines from 1964-1978. From 1978 to 1992 he was Director of the Irish Emigrant Chaplaincy in Britain. On returning to Ireland from mission in Jamaica in 1999, he founded the Migrants Rights Centre Ireland www.mrci.ie

01. Stacked human skulls from the Killing Fields genocide in Cambodia.

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PILATE ASKED; "WHAT IS TRUTH?"

Frequently one hears the expression, usually after some atrocity; "it is difficult to find words to describe what happened here." But words are all there is to communicate. If there are no words or word to describe a particular event someone will try and invent a specific word that adequately describes what has occurred. Such was the case in the invention of the words xenophobia and genocide. They are words that describe incidents in the past but which are becoming more frequent in modern times such as the appalling events perpetrated by political leaders and regimes in Myanmar against the Rohingya people, in Ukraine, the Armenian population in Nagorno Karabakh, and the Palestinians. Both xenophobia and genocide arose from two events, one in nineteenth century China and the other in twentieth century in Europe. In China the Qing dynasty was in decline. Colonising empires saw this as an opportunity to insert themselves and claim spoils from the disarray. Naturally, Chinese people seeing European invaders benefit while they themselves experienced deprivation were resentful. This turned to general hostility against all foreigners. Out

of this hostile atmosphere a paramilitary group emerged intent on ridding China of all foreigners.

The aim of the *Boxers* was bolstered by the general destitution in rural areas due to flooding and crop failure. Attacks by the *Boxers* on foreigners were indiscriminate and included missionaries, mercenaries, merchants and marketeers irrespective of whether they were British, Portuguese, German, French, Dutch, Russian or Japanese. News of this anti-foreign aggression left the western metropolises and media grasping for words to describe these incidents. Eventually, a mishmash of words of Latin/Greek origin were cobbled together from 'phobia' meaning fear, with the Greek word 'xenos' meaning foreigner, and introduced in French as *xenophobia*.

Nazi atrocities during World War II were, according to Winston Churchill in a 1941 broadcast, a crime without a name. In 1944, Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish lawyer, argued that new terms were needed for the unprecedented mass murder and extermination of the Jews. Raphael was born into a Jewish tenant farming family in what is today Belarus in 1900. Borders in that area were constantly changing as they are today. His tenant family were mistreated by landlords and experienced severe antisemitism. Later, as a state prosecutor in Poland and Ukraine he became aware of the persecution and death of Jews, Christians, Armenians and others in the Ottoman Empire. He noted they were persecuted and killed because of their ethnicity, religion and culture, because of who they were. There was no agency to investigate and bring the persecutors to justice for killing their own people.

This concerned him so much that while living in Warsaw he campaigned for the setting up of a global body to investigate and punish crimes against humanity. He called for a special agency to be set up to try nations for crimes against specific ethnic groups because of their nationality, culture and beliefs. He made proposals at many conferences but these were ignored as Hitler was coming to power in Germany. After the invasion of Poland by Hitler, Raphael Lemkin decided to leave. He made his way to Sweden suffering deprivation along the way. Later, he made his way to the United States. At university there he campaigned for legislation for those

Xenophobia

who committed mass persecution, ethnic cleansing or extermination against groups. However, there was no word to describe these atrocities.

Eventually, from his language studies he came up with two words: *genos* from Greek meaning race or tribe and *cide* meaning killing. Combining them he invented a new word: *genocide*. Returning to Europe in 1945 he reunited with his brother to discover that all his immediate family had perished in the Holocaust. Energised by this terrible loss he continued his campaign to have the crime of genocide recognised internationally. His pleading bore fruit. In 1948 the United Nations passed the Genocide Convention. Like xenophobia, genocide became a single word to describe specific incidences of intolerance, depravity and extermination.

Presently, probably more than ever before, the death of truth is apparent. All kinds of words are used to justify falsehood such as alternate reality, false data, fake news, lies etc. One could say that such was always the case. However, in an age of technological expertise the spread of falsehood, fake news, invention of alternate

reality has become a daily tsunami. This torrent leaves people little time to fact-check. What has become apparent is the death of truth. Should one word suffice to explain this phenomenon? Would *veracide* from *vera* meaning truth and *cide* meaning death be an appropriate word to accompany genocide and xenophobia? Untruth, falsehood, alternate reality, and lies are spirit-destroying, they kill trust, hope, confidence, belief - and even the possibility of belief. The death of truth is doing to trust at every level what carbon dioxide is doing to the atmosphere. Democracy, like the planet, is at risk. ●

“ Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth.”
(Cor. 1 13-16)

“ The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction and the distinction between true and false no longer exist.”

Hannah Arendt, 'The Origins of Totalitarianism'.



SCHOOLS MEDIA COMPETITION 2025

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"BECOMING A REFUGEE IS NEVER A CHOICE, BUT HOW WE RESPOND IS."

(UN Secretary-General António Guterres)

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RAISING HOPE



In the first of a new series on biodiversity, Columban co-worker Ellen Teague reports on the 'Raising Hope' Conference in Castel Gandolfo and explains how protecting and restoring biodiversity is a mission priority of the Columbans.

Magnificent cypress and umbrella pine trees towered over us as we walked through beautifully sculpted eighteenth century gardens. It was an early evening last October and I was visiting Borgo Laudato Si', part of the papal residence at Castel Gandolfo, near Rome. A 136-acre eco-project at the site was inaugurated by Pope Leo XIV the previous month. He said caring for God's creation, "is a demanding but beautiful and fascinating task, which is a primary aspect of the Christian experience."

Borgo Laudato Si' puts into action the principles described in Pope Francis' 2015 Encyclical, **'Laudato Si' - On Care for our Common Home.'** It hosts over 3,000 plants belonging to 300 different species. A new vineyard promotes biodiversity, comprising various vine varieties, constituting a wine which symbolises communion in diversity. A solar farm produces clean energy, and courses are offered on *Laudato Si'*, organic farming, sustainable practices, and ecological leadership training.

Alongside me were 450 participants from around the world attending the 'Raising Hope' three-day conference nearby, organised by the *Laudato Si'* Movement. It celebrated the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, focusing on how the Catholic Church might continue responding to Francis' landmark socio-environmental

letter. Other Columban participants were Amy Echeverria, Columban International Coordinator for Justice, Peace and Ecology, based in the US; Adi Mariana Waqa, Columban Partnership Coordinator in Australia; and Sr Anne Carbon, Filipina Congregational Leader of the Missionary Sisters of St Columban, based in Ireland. I represented the Columban Justice, Peace and Ecology mission in Britain. Protecting and restoring biodiversity is a mission priority of the Columban Fathers and Sisters.

The day before, a beaming Pope Leo joined us at the conference, thanking God for, "the gift we inherited from Pope Francis," and he warned that the environmental challenges today are greater than 10 years ago. Before him was a block of ice from a Greenland glacier that slowly melted over the conference duration. It represented the "cry of the Earth" and, as Pope Leo blessed it, he asked that the water, "awakes our hearts and cleanses our indifference."

Pope Leo fully supports the call for "ecological conversion" pioneered by Pope Francis. He asked: "God will ask us if we have cultivated and cared for the world that He created, and if we have taken care of our brothers and sisters. What will be our answer?" Arnold Schwarzenegger - known for his roles in high-profile action films, turned climate champion - was there. We cheered when he suggested, "I'm standing next to an action hero!" Pope Leo turned to us and said, "you are the action heroes."

What did the Columban team learn at



02



the conference? "The conference was a profound reminder of our shared call to care for creation," reflected Sr Anne Carbon; "a sacred gathering marked by renewed hope, courageous dialogue, and Gospel-rooted action for our common home." She found, "meeting global environmental leaders, many of whom I had only encountered online, and speaking with them in person was deeply inspiring." Sr Anne, who was chosen to meet Pope Leo commented, "these encounters stirred a stronger sense of collective hope and deepened our shared commitment to stand in solidarity with Mother Earth and with all those working for transformative change."

The conference underlined the link between climate change, biodiversity, water depletion, environmental emergencies, migration, conflict and human development. In his talk Pope Leo stressed, "the impact of our actions on our human brothers and sisters, whilst not shying away from the calling to wider communion with the whole of Creation." Afterwards, Bishop Gerardo Alimane Alminaza of San Carlos, Chair of the *Laudato Si'* Programme of the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines, told me about the Church's campaign to stop a new fossil fuel extraction project ruining a hot spot of biodiversity, threatening clean water and livelihoods.

How we can better communicate climate change and biodiversity loss was an important conference issue. Amy Echeverria underlined Pope Leo's call to move from a focus on data on environmental crises to focusing on speaking to people's hearts and this might spur more people to action. Mariana Waqa suggested we need to highlight people's lives, cultures and stories, saying, "identities, cultures and traditions are under threat in the Pacific Region." Originally from Fiji, she was moved by young men of 'Pacific Artists for Climate Justice,' singing of a love for God's creation and showing, "the

human heartbeat in countries at the front line of climate change and biodiversity loss."

Sr Anne felt that, as someone from the Global South, her presence, "helped build bridges of understanding and cooperation between the Global South and North." Addressing environmental breakdown, "calls for all of us to act together in a spirit of listening, cooperation, and shared responsibility, recognising our deep interdependence." And the Church is a powerful player. Yeb Sano, Chair of the Board of the *Laudato Si'* Movement, suggested that, "faith communities have the power and moral compass to campaign for the political will to turn the climate crisis around."

The Columban team were hugely impressed by the atmosphere of hope at this conference. Lorna Gold, Executive of the *Laudato Si'* Movement, summed it up: "It was a glimpse of a different future where we step out of our excuses, the million reasons to stop and go backwards, and act; we have been gifted this beautiful planet and we wish to live authentically and build God's kingdom amongst us."

In Britain and Ireland our annual Columban Schools Competition in 2024 took the theme, 'Biodiversity Matters,' and the hundreds of young people told us that biodiversity does matter to them. And young people see the Church as being influential in protecting the diversity of life on Earth. Columban grounds at Solihull (Britain) and Dalgan (Ireland) are being rewilded and we have campaigned to promote stronger legislation to protect the environment.

I returned from the 'Raising Hope' conference deeply convinced that Columban mission is part of something greater than ourselves and our immediate partners. I am so proud that the Catholic Church is bringing its resources and wisdom to the shared journey of nurturing God's creation. ●

Ellen Teague has worked for the Columbans since 1990. She is Editor of the Columban newsletter, *Vocation for Justice*, and she runs the media desk of the Justice, Peace and Ecology (JPE) team in Britain.

01. Pope Leo XIV listens as Arnold Schwarzenegger addresses the 'Raising Hope for Climate Justice' conference at Castel Gandolfo, Italy to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'*. It was organised by the *Laudato Si'* Movement and the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. Photo: Shutterstock.
02. Sr Anne Carbon, Congregational Leader of the Columban Sisters, with Dr Lorna Gold, Executive Director of the *Laudato Si'* Movement. Photo: Ellen Teague.
03. The Columban team who attended the conference: Adi Mariana Waqa, Ellen Teague, Sr Anne Carbon and Amy Echeverria. Photo: Ellen Teague.
04. Ellen Teague, Adi Mariana Waqa and Amy Echeverria with the block of ice from a glacier that was blessed by Pope Leo at the conference. Photo: Ellen Teague.

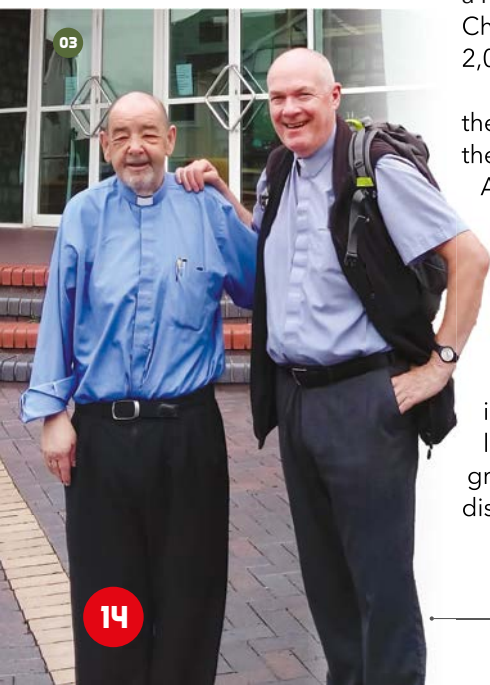
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FLIGHT OF THE PELICAN

Fr John Boles explains how the pelican became the symbol of a centuries-old Christian tradition in a township of South Wales.



Ask anyone what they know about Bridgend in South Wales, and they will almost certainly mention the rugby team. Bridgend Ravens (formerly Bridgend RFC) have been stalwarts of Welsh rugby for 145 years. However, just a mile or so away, lies St Mary's Catholic Church, with a history that goes back nearly 2,000 years.

Christianity arrived in South Wales with the Romans. During the chaotic days of the break-up of the Roman Empire and the Anglo-Saxon invasions, Christianity clung to Britain's western fringes, including the shores of the Severn Estuary.

Tradition has it that St Patrick came from these parts. Moreover, just a few miles from Bridgend lie the remains of St Illtud's Monastery, perhaps the most important centre of Celtic spirituality and learning of the 5th century, and Christian gravestones from the period have been discovered in Bridgend itself.

Fast-forward seven centuries and the

Normans arrive on the scene, bringing with them a different style of monasticism courtesy of the Benedictines, who built the magnificent Ewenny Priory on the edge of Bridgend. The old priory church survives to this day, a glorious example of Romanesque architecture. Ewenny dominated Christian life in the area throughout the rest of the Middle Ages.

It was during the medieval period that we first encounter the pelican used as a Christian motif. According to legend, the mother pelican feeds her chicks from blood pecked from her own breast, a belief based on the habitual way a pelican shields its famous long beak in its front parts. Early Christians saw in this a metaphor for the Paschal Mystery and Eucharist of Jesus: just as the mother pelican gives life to its offspring by the shedding of her blood, so Christ redeems God's children by the shedding of His blood and gives them eternal life through the receiving of his blood at communion time.

In 1536 Henry VIII dissolved Ewenny Priory, along with all the other monasteries of England and Wales. The property was purchased by the Carne family who, despite Henry's takeover of the Church, managed to retain their Catholic faith into the reign of Elizabeth I. Their coat of arms was the pelican.

As it turned out, the vulning or self-wounding pelican was soon to become a true symbol of Bridgend's embattled Catholic population, for troubled times lay ahead. This area was one of the few parts of Wales that hung on to the faith and paid a heavy price for doing so. During the 17th century, Saints John Lloyd and Philip Evans were active in the locality. Both were arrested in 1678 on properties owned by the recusant Catholic Turbevill family. The Turbevill family would later become proprietors of Ewenny. Both saints were eventually hanged, drawn and quartered at Cardiff during the hysteria of Titus Oates's 'Popish Plot'.

In the first part of the 19th century the faith was rekindled by the arrival of immigrants from Ireland. As there was no church in Bridgend, they periodically assembled outside the 'Coach and Horses' tavern and trekked the twenty miles or more to receive the sacraments in Cardiff. Eventually, a member of the local gentry who had converted to Catholicism - Captain Iltid Nicholl - came to the rescue and offered to buy the site of an old sawmill and build a church. This was St Mary's, which opened in 1855.

The congregation was soon swelled by immigrants from another quarter - Italians, who came to work in the local quarries. The rocks around Bridgend include a

rare and valuable formation known as quarella. Quarella stone is more commonly found in Italy, hence the attraction for skilled quarrymen from that country. Unfortunately, this chapter took a dark turn. At the outbreak of the Second World War, many of Italian origin were rounded up as 'enemy aliens'. Tragically, a number later found themselves aboard the ill-fated 'SS Arandora Star', which was en route to internment camps in Canada when it was torpedoed by U-47 off the coast of Ireland on 2nd July 1940. The ship sank with the loss of over 800 lives.

All this rich and sacred history came to a head in the 1990s when it was decided to build a new church on the same site. Courageously, the diocese chose to base the design and ornamentation of the church on the symbol of the pelican, which by then had become so representative of the community's sufferings and triumphs. When I visited St Mary's to deliver a Columban appeal, the current parish priest Fr Tim McGrath enthusiastically pointed out every example. "Here is the pelican, on the doors of the church; here it is again on top of the tabernacle; see, we've even got it as the parish logo on all our correspondence," he enthused.

However, he left the best until last. Taking me outside, he pointed out the crowning glory. It turns out that the whole church had been designed in the same symbol. "Look", said Fr Tim, "the building looks just like a pelican with its beak in its breast and its wings outstretched!" Perhaps the comparison isn't immediately apparent to the untrained eye. Yet, as the Gospels teach us, sometimes the 'eyes of faith' count for more than the 'eyes in the head'. ●



Columban Missionary Fr John Boles is from Stockport. Ordained in 1996, he served on mission in Peru. He is currently Regional Director in Britain.

01. Built in 1998, St Mary's church is built to look like a pelican with its wings outstretched.
All photos: Fr John Boles.
02. The logo of St Mary's Bridgend: a pelican superimposed on the church.
03. Columban Fr John Boles (right) with Fr Tim McGrath outside the pelican church.
04. Ewenny Priory was founded in 1141 by the Benedictines on the edge of Bridgend.

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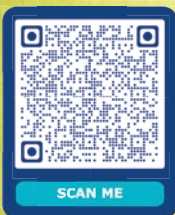
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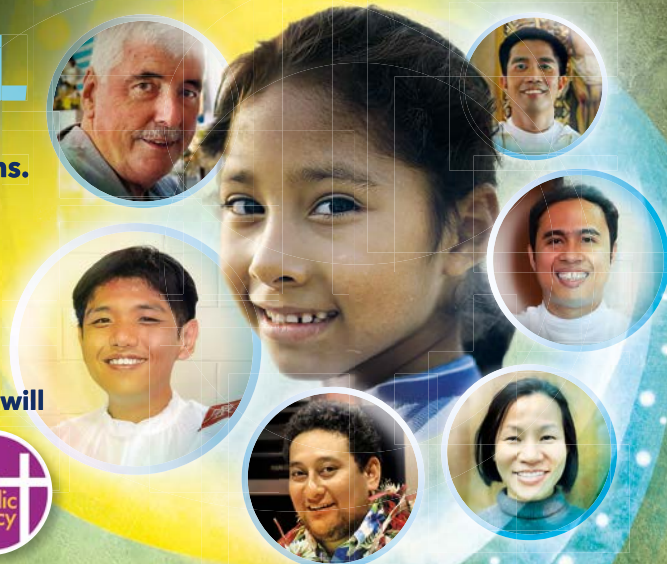
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BUILDING RESILIENCE

A Columban Missionary, whose identity is protected due to the challenges of life in Myanmar, writes about her mission to rebuild a community that has lost everything, through organic farming, sacred spaces and much needed food.

In 2020, I became a *Laudato Si'* Animator, a journey that prompted me to reexamine the painful reality of my own family's history in the Philippines. In 2001, a flood-control project initiated by our local government altered the course of a river, devastating our agricultural land. What had once been a fertile source of livelihood for generations was buried under layers of sand, leaving my family powerless and resigned to our fate. At the time, we did not question what had happened, we simply endured. But as my understanding of the ecological crisis deepened, I saw our personal loss reflected in a much larger, global reality: human actions, driven by neglect, greed, and short-term interests, were inflicting irreversible damage on the Earth, uprooting lives, and severing people from their ancestral lands. This realisation ignited in me a renewed sense of mission.

In 2022, upon my return to Myanmar after the Covid pandemic, the Archbishop of Mandalay invited religious groups to collaborate in response to the urgent needs of the vulnerable and homeless families who had fled their villages due to the ongoing conflict led by armed groups.

Our missionary community responded to

this urgent call. These families had lost everything. With their homes burned to the ground and their livelihoods destroyed, they faced an uncertain future. When health care systems collapsed, patients had no access to proper treatment. Schools in the conflicted areas were burnt down and universities and colleges were closed. Young people lost their future. Many have gone abroad.

As I listened to their stories, I recognised echoes of my own family's suffering in the Philippines. We shared a deep, painful bond: the experience of being uprooted, of losing the land that had sustained us. In this moment of profound connection, I felt called to act, not only by providing comfort but by empowering these families with knowledge and hope. I introduced them to *Laudato Si'* and the idea of cultivating organic gardens - a tangible way to reclaim life from loss, to heal both the land and the soul.

At that time, the parish, with limited resources, could only provide midday meals for about 600 people, but by nurturing the soil, we could take steps towards food security, sustainability, and dignity. Our first initiatives led us to expand into Integral Ecology - guiding and teaching parents and their children on caring for the environment in every way possible. Once a week we hold





faith-sharing among the eco-ministry core group, where the mothers usually share their lived reality of having to leave their villages and be separated from their sons who are living in the forests, fighting for the restoration of the country's democracy.

Last year we completed three years of cultivating organic vegetables. The produce from our organic gardens is shared in the common kitchen to be consumed by all the families. Altogether, we now have five different organic gardens and a small livelihood project within the compound of the Marian Shrine. The support we receive from our bishop and the parish priest encourages us to continue.

As we journeyed together, something extraordinary began to unfold. Beyond the struggles of displacement, we were building something new - a resilient community bound not just by suffering, but by solidarity, faith, and the determination to rise again. I saw new needs emerging: the need for companionship in grief, for safe spaces to share pain, for healing and spiritual renewal. In response, we created a faith-sharing group, where people could express their


sorrow, pray together, and find strength in their collective faith. Over time, these moments of worship became sacred rituals woven into the fabric of our celebrations during the Season of Creation, Christmas, and New Year.

Through this journey, I have come to a profound realisation: we are deeply interconnected - not just with one another, but with all of creation. Our wounds, both personal and ecological, are reflections of a greater imbalance, a fractured relationship with the Earth and with each other. Healing must happen on every level. As we work to restore the land, we must also mend the wounded human relationships caused by conflict, displacement, and injustice. Only when we realign our lives with God's vision for creation - rooted in love, justice, and stewardship - can we truly reflect the beauty and grandeur of our Creator. With unwavering faith, we press on, believing that even in the darkest moments, God's grace sustains us. We are co-pilgrims, walking this sacred journey together, committed to healing, renewal, and the restoration of our Common Home. ●

- 01. Villagers share their learning about care for the earth from Pope Francis' ground-breaking encyclical, *Laudato Si'*.
- 02. Preparing the ground for planting: "we now have five different organic gardens and a small livelihood project within the compound of the Marian Shrine."
- 03. At work in the ecology garden.

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– St Columban

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Missionary Sisters of St. Columban





PRAYER IN THE CITY

Fr Barry Cairns

Fr Barry Cairns was born in New Zealand in 1931. After ordination in 1955, he went to Japan in 1956. At 94 years of age he still serves in a parish in Yokohama City.

I live in the centre of Yokohama, a city of 3.8 million. I am surrounded by concrete and tall buildings. I see little natural greenery. But on a windowsill in the sun I have a container in which I sow seeds. To see the green shoots come up out of the soil touches me. I feel joy, hope, wonder!

God makes things grow. This has a beautiful influence on my prayer. As one Sister from Papua New Guinea summed it up: "We pray better after feeling the soil between our toes". Have we in the West lost that earthly touch that so helps prayer?

The connection between nature and contact with God is deep within the genes of Japanese people. Here is a modern hymn that is the most popular in our liturgy. This hymn has an ecumenical background. The words were written by

Protestant Pastor Beppu, and the melody by Catholic musician, Mr Takita. Notice how the first line of the hymn puts the Gospel scene into a context of nature.

Prayer and God's created nature are connected.

"Just as the fragrant breeze gently blew over the mount in Galilee, and You Jesus spoke, Cause me too to hear Your words of love.

As the waves and wind blew so strongly in the storm on the lake:

You Jesus said: 'Fear not, it is I'.

Cause me too to hear your words of strength.

As dusk was enveloping on the road to Emmaus, You walked and Talked to that discouraged couple, Cause me too to hear Your words of life." ●

Image: Shutterstock

OBITUARIES

REST in PEACE



Fr Derek Fergus Patrick Harris

Fr Derek Fergus Patrick Harris was born in Dublin on 25th June 1937. He was educated at Presentation Sisters, and Christian Brothers Schools, Dublin, at primary level and at Cistercian College, Roscrea at secondary level.

He came to Dalgan in September 1955 and was ordained priest on 20th December 1961. In 1962, he was appointed to Korea, where after language studies he was assigned to Soyangro, Chuncheon and later as assistant in Inje, Kangwando. From 1968-1969 he served at Kimhoa, Kangwando, then from 1969-1973 he served at Hyotjadong, Chuncheon and from 1974-1978 at Simkikdong, Incheon. During the years 1978 - 1982 Derek was appointed to promotion work in the Region of Ireland and Britain. He returned to Korea in 1982 and was appointed to the District

of Chuncheon. In 1986 he was appointed to the Korean Apostolate in the United States and served in several districts over the next ten years. In 1996 he was assigned to the Region of Australia/New Zealand on Mission Awareness and Promotion, and this was followed in 1998 by an appointment to the Region of Ireland.

Derek was a keen sailor and was well known among the sailing community. He served as a crew member on several interesting voyages around Ireland and Britain and was always sought out to bless new boats. As his health deteriorated in recent years, he was admitted to the Columban Nursing Home in September 2023 and he died in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, on 22nd of September 2025.



Sr Eileen Roe



Sr Maureen McGinley



Sr Philomena O'Sullivan

Sr Eileen Roe was born on 21st September 1929 in Lisduff, Kells. She attended National School in Ballinlough and later the Technical School in Kells, after which she worked in a post office. She entered the Missionary Sisters of St Columban in Cahiracon on 24th September 1949 and professed First Vows on 22nd April 1952. In the next few years, Eileen qualified from St Vincent's Hospital, Dublin as a Registered Nurse and also completed a course in Cathal Brugha Street. She then spent a number of years in our different communities in Ireland, including six years in Dalgan Park. She professed her Final Vows in 1957. After a year in the USA, Eileen was assigned to Peru in 1965. She served in several areas of Lima for almost forty years. With Sr Ita McElwain she set up a clinic to respond to those with tuberculosis. Eileen worked in the clinic from early in the morning and then she spent the afternoon visiting the sick and their families, educating them about nutrition and hygiene. In her last years in Peru Eileen worked in a centre where basic medicine could be obtained at much lower cost than in pharmacies. In all her ministry, one of Eileen's most significant experiences was the murder of Sr Joan Sawyer in Lurigancho prison in 1983. It was traumatic for her and all the Sisters. In 2003, Eileen left Peru after almost forty years of service. Assigned to Magheramore, she responded to the pastoral needs of the Sisters in our Nursing Home. Known for her gentle way, as her own health declined, she moved to the Nursing Home. On 19th August 2025, Eileen died peacefully in Loughshinny Nursing Home.


Sr Maureen McGinley was born in Scotland on 11th July 1948. Before completing her education she had already developed an interest in the Columban Sisters after watching a film on our mission. She entered the Congregation in Magheramore in 1966. Three years later, she professed First Vows. Before Final Vows in 1975, Maureen gained her SRN in Whipps Cross Hospital, London. After qualification from the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in Stanmore, she was assigned to Hong Kong. In the Ruttonjee Sanatorium, Maureen nursed patients with Tuberculosis. After a few years, she was assigned to the clinic in Fan Ling near the border with China, and she also taught at Sunday School in St Joseph's parish on Hong Kong island. Three years in Scotland promoting the Congregation's mission was followed by a year's study in Chicago. Returning to Hong Kong, Maureen became a founding member of AIDS Concern, a care programme for those affected by HIV/AIDS. It countered the false information and fear that

surrounded the disease. Maureen was also at the forefront of advocating for young people infected with HIV through blood transfusions. Enlisting the support of Chris Patten, Governor of Hong Kong at the time, she secured school places and financial compensation for them. In 1995 Maureen was awarded an MBE for her medical and welfare services. She continued her work for those affected by HIV/AIDS setting up the Society for AIDS Care (SAC) - the first non-governmental organisation in Asia to offer direct patient care services to those living with HIV/AIDS. After a term as a member of the Congregational Leadership Team in Birmingham, Maureen returned to Hong Kong to work in Maggie's Cancer Caring Centre. As her health began to fail, she returned to Magheramore. She never forgot her Scottish roots and remained committed to those rejected and on the margins of society. She died peacefully in Loughshinny Nursing Home on 4th October 2025.

Sr Philomena O'Sullivan was born in Curra-Bower Co Cork on 2nd February 1929. By the time she had completed her education in Loreto Fermoy, she had developed a great interest in the Chinese mission and entered the Columban Sisters in Cahiracon in 1947. After professing First Vows in 1949, she completed training in Mercy Hospital, Cork and a further year's training in Tuberculosis in Brompton Hospital, London. After Final Vows in 1954, she set out for mission in Korea as one of the second group arriving there. The Korean people were in urgent need of medical care in the aftermath of the Korean War. Philomena went to Chuncheon where Bishop Quinlan had invited the Columban Sisters to open a day clinic. Here Philomena and Sr M. David responded to the needs of 400 patients each day, many of them emaciated children and malnourished fathers and mothers. Over time, Philomena also served in Mokpo and Cheju Island. The medicines collected by the Sisters in the US and the assistance of the US army in Chuncheon, enabled Philomena and the Sisters to offer crucial care and save many lives. Following a severe stroke, Philomena returned to Ireland, where she made a great recovery. Returning to Korea, she became involved in an outreach to those with leprosy and those attending AA meetings. After celebrating her Diamond Jubilee, Philomena returned to Magheramore, before gradually moving into the community Nursing Home. She was awarded the Cork Person of the Month in 2017. Her Korean friends never forgot her. She died peacefully in Loughshinny Nursing Home on 13th October 2025. May they rest in peace.

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A HIDDEN LIFE

During my time in Korea, I cared for patients suffering from Hansen's disease, more commonly known as leprosy, a word we rarely use nowadays due to the stigma attached to it. I worked in a small 30-bed hospital with an Outpatient Skin Clinic. The doctor interviewing me highlighted that it was an infectious disease, but also stressed that if I was to be of any help to the patients, I would first have to overcome my fear of getting the disease.

Every week our mobile clinic visited a different health centre in the province, to review our patients and supply them with their monthly medicines, after which we called to the leprosy villages nearby, taking back with us those in need of hospital care. Fear of catching the disease meant that these communities were isolated, and those with visible signs, such as deformities and missing eyebrows, experienced much rejection from the wider community, which added greatly to their anguish and distress.

Some coped by rejecting all outsiders, with a 'them and us' world view where anyone who was not 'one of us' was excluded; while others, through their own struggles and difficulties, identified with those facing rejection for different reasons, and embraced their sufferings as their own. In addition to these, there was a whole variety of ways of responding to the deep negativity that goes with feelings of rejection.

'John' is a man whose hidden life was a source of inspiration for mine as I express here:

*He sat there in the sunlight staring into space,
his unseeing eyes steady, in their fixed gaze.
I looked at his stumps of hands and down at his
mangled feet, and marvelled at his composure,
and obvious inner peace.*

*Gently I addressed him, calling him by name,
'John, I have your medicine', and he smiled up at
my face.
But before I could bend down to him, his body
moved in prayer
as with his crippled hand he blessed himself as a
child does, with care.
If ever a man had cause to curse surely, it was he.
But John took life as a blessing and so in his heart
was free.
Blind, his vision was clearer than many a sighted
soul,
And the radiance of God's life in him, only a few
have had the joy to behold.
That night I went to the chapel and knelt before
my Crucified Lord,
But His was no strange presence for in His
features, John, I saw.*

Today, we hear very little about Hansen's disease (leprosy) except in Bible stories. It has been replaced by other fears, HIV/AIDS, SARS, COVID, drug and alcohol addiction, immigrants, and those whose views differ strongly from our own. What better time than the beginning of a New Year, to have the courage to face and name our own personal fears and not allow them to lead us to reject or belittle others who are different from us in health, colour, race, gender, politics or religion. Jesus reminds us, 'Treat others as you would like them to treat you.' (Luke 6:31) What a friendlier and peaceful world it would be, if respect and tolerance shaped our relationships with each other and between nations. ●

Sr Roberta Ryan

**World Leprosy Day takes place
on Sunday 25th January 2026.**

JESUS CALLS HIS FIRST DISCIPLES

After his time in the desert, Jesus went down into Galilee to begin his mission to tell people all about the coming of God's kingdom. Walking along the shores of Lake Galilee, he saw two boats moored. Jesus stepped into one boat, which happened to belong to Simon and his brother, Andrew. He asked them to take him out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds that had followed him.

When he had finished speaking, Jesus told Simon to take the boat out into deeper water and throw out their fishing net. "Master," said Simon, "we've been working all night, but have caught nothing. However, if you want me to, I'll do as you say."

So Simon and Andrew took the boat out once more and cast their fishing net into the sea, just as Jesus had instructed them. Immediately they caught so many fish that their net was too heavy to

pull into the boat. Their friends, James and his brother John, had to bring their boat over to help them.

After they had struggled to haul in their miraculous catch, Simon fell at the feet of Jesus. He was completely overwhelmed by what had happened.

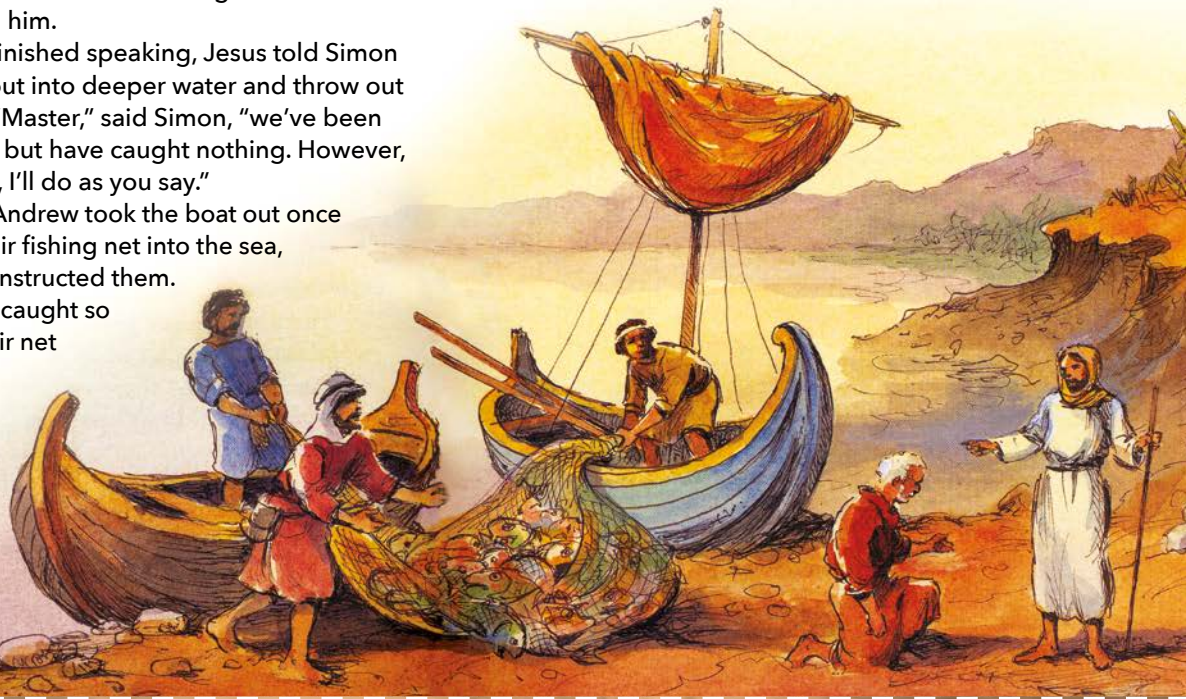
"Leave me, Lord," he said, "for I am a sinful man."

"Do not be afraid," said Jesus. "From now on you will be fishers of men."

At these words, all four men immediately left everything - even their boats full of fish - in order to follow Jesus. ●

Read also: **Matthew 4:12-23**

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



BIBLE QUIZ

NUMBER 125

- 1 In Genesis ch.25, who was the patriarch Isaac's favourite son?

- 2 True or False? In Isaiah ch. 1, the Prophet Isaiah was the son of Hilkiah?

- 3 In Matthew ch.20, whose mother asked Jesus to place her sons next to him in heaven?

- 4 In 2 Samuel ch.12, how long did King David and Bathsheba's first child live?

- 5 In Ruth ch.1, what was the name of Naomi's daughter-in-law who remained in Moab?

- 6 In Exodus ch.4, who was the brother of Moses?

£15 vouchers for the first three correct entries received!
 Consult your Bible, answer the questions above and send your entry to: Bible Quiz N°125, St Columban's, Widney Manor Rd, Solihull, West Midlands, B93 9AB, before 27th February 2026.

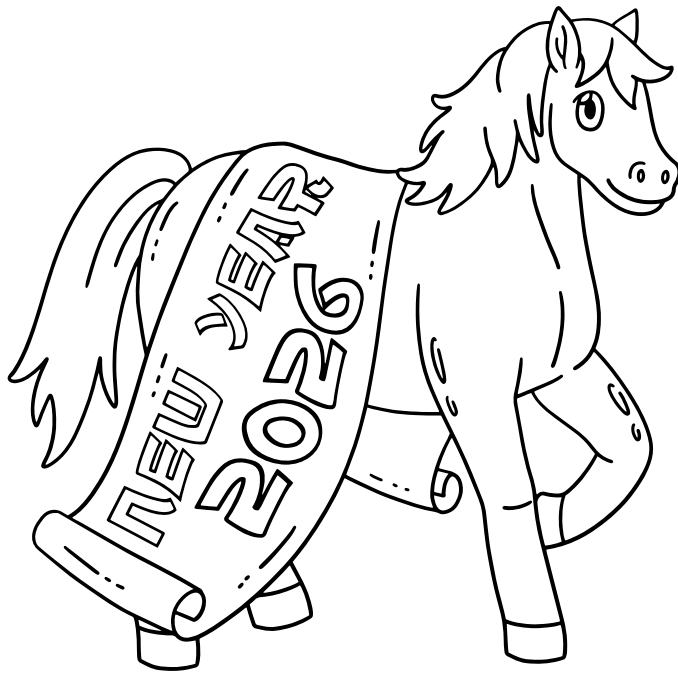
Bible Quiz N° 123 Winners: Enda Smyth, Hampshire • Robbie Ellis, Essex • Janet Berrie, Leicestershire.

Name: _____

Address: _____



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 27th February 2026.

Name:

Age:

Address:

FOUR PRIZES TO BE WON!



WORD SEARCH

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

- DOLPHIN
- CRAB
- LOBSTER
- STARFISH
- JELLYFISH
- WALRUS
- SEAL
- MANATEE
- SWORDFISH
- TUNA
- MARLIN
- NARWHAL
- ORCA
- WHALE
- SHARK

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

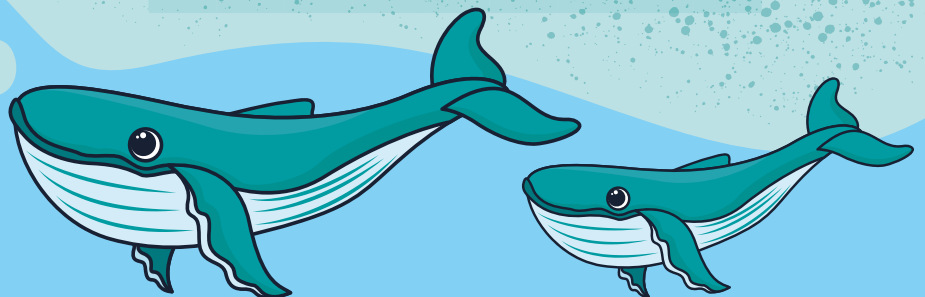


Image: Shutterstock

House Sparrow



Tree Sparrow



The Tree Sparrow

By Elizabeth McArdle

The tree sparrow is often considered to be the country cousin of the more familiar house sparrow. While the house sparrow loves the hustle and bustle of concrete towns, tree sparrows are more at home in natural surroundings, preferring to live in open woodland and farmland where hedges and shrubberies are abundant. They form small gregarious flocks and, it always pays to take a closer look at any sparrow flock, as often times it may include some tree sparrows.

The million-dollar question is; how do you tell a tree sparrow from a house sparrow? Although, they are close cousins, there are differences. Tree sparrows are slightly smaller and have a rich chestnut crown. The key

difference is that tree sparrows have a black spot on each cheek and funnily enough, this can create the impression that they are wearing headphones.

Tree sparrow nests are built between April and early August in tree hollows, cavities in farm buildings, hedges and dense shrubbery. They consist of an untidy bowl-shaped construction of loose grasses, twigs and straw and are lined with hair and feathers. Mother and father tree sparrow rear up to three broods each year. The support of both parents in caring for their eggs increases the chances of a successful hatching. After 14 to 20 days, the chicks fledge and leave the nest, but their ever-watchful parents still care for them until they become independent and learn to survive by themselves.

How blessed we are to have these charming little birds to enrich our lives, and indeed they do. However, to find them we have to make the effort to get outdoors and pay attention to all of God's creation. What is so exciting is that you never know what wonders you will encounter and if you look really, really carefully, you might see a tree sparrow. ●



Images: Shutterstock

** Due to the editor's error, the article in the November 2025 issue about the House Sparrow was illustrated with an image of a Tree sparrow. Here we provide images of both for clarity.

HA! HA!

1. How do astronauts host a New Year's Eve party in space?
2. Where did medieval people go to celebrate New Year's Eve?
3. Did you hear about the kittens that got into a New Year's fight?
4. What is a cow's favourite night of the year?
5. What's the easiest New Year's resolution to keep?
6. Why do you need a jeweller on New Year's Eve?

1. They planet.
2. Knight clubs.
3. It was a cat-tastrophe.
4. Moo Year's Eve.
5. To be yourself.
6. To ring in the new year.

COMPETITION WINNERS NOVEMBER 2025



Robin
Vaughan
London

Orlaih
Glasgow

1

2

Colpaint - Aged 7 and Under

Raven-Rose
Priest
Eastbourne

Ruth
Shaw
London

1

2

Colpaint - Aged 8 and Over

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And Jesus said to them,

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 5:16



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