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MAGAZINE OF THE COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES

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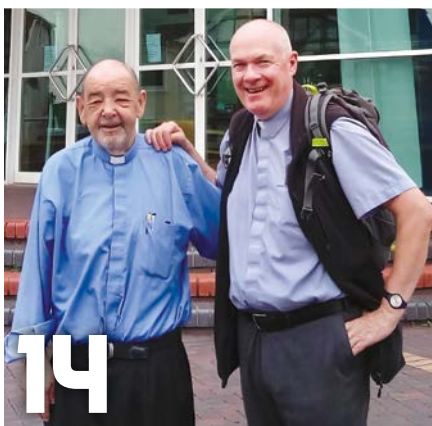
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THE FAR EAST

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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.

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.

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





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 Cecila 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. ●

