

MISSION



NEWS AND VIEWS

Columbans welcome Pope Francis

As Christians on a missionary pilgrimage, we are called to fan the sparks of hope enkindled by Christ living among us in sometimes yet unknown ways, into a fire in human hearts.



"Serve the poorest, the weakest, the least important" - Pope Francis

Columban Missionaries throughout the world join with Catholics in welcoming the joyful news of the election of Pope Francis. Like Simon, for whom the new name Peter had a deep significance, the new Pope's decision to assume the name Francis seems to indicate his strong desire to lead the Church in prayer, simplicity of life and the care of creation.

On March 19th, the feast of St Joseph, Pope Francis said in his Homily that, "The vocation of being a protector, like St Joseph, is not just something involving us Christians alone. It also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone. We are to be protectors of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment."

As a member of a Missionary Society, I believe that his words carry a special message. The vocation of the missionary Church is to discern the presence of Christ within all expressions of human life and to give that presence visible and tangible expression.

As Christians on a missionary pilgrimage, we are called to fan the sparks of hope enkindled by Christ living among us in sometimes yet unknown ways, into a fire in human hearts.

We pray that Pope Francis will be blessed abundantly with the gifts of faith and wisdom, compassion and zeal in being a witness of the Good News of Jesus Christ not only to Catholics, but to all peoples.

Fr Kevin O'Neill
Superior General
Missionary Society of St Columban

Donations Online
www.columban.org.au

AUTUMN 2013

The seven pillars



Four Columban parishes and one Diocesan parish in Chile are busily preparing to receive young pilgrims from Australia and New Zealand in July 2013 en-route to *World Youth Day* in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Fr Dan Harding is currently in Chile working on the programme with the parishes.

This programme will include seven key pillars:

- Faith Sharing
- Cultural Exchange and Friendship
- Pastoral Experience
- Mission
- A project in benefit of the parish
- An afternoon of sport and a BBQ
- A day of Visits to Important Sites



\$10 turns on the lights

In February 2013 the St Francis Xavier Parish, Montmorency Social Justice Group travelled to the Philippines to meet with Columban Fr Shay Cullen, the founder of PREDA (People's Recovery Empowerment and Development Assistance Foundation, Inc).

When the group met with Fr Shay, they discussed a Solar Light project that they were trialling with three other Philippines-based organisations. The feedback was positive. They felt solar lights cut back on the cost of electricity and those who didn't have electricity found it incredible.

Fr Shay said the lights would be wonderful for the indigenous families, the Aetas, whom he works with up in the mountains around Zambales where they have no electricity. The lights are long lasting and can be used as desk lamps, torches or to light up a room.

Montmorency Social Justice Group plan to buy 2,000 lights and divide them between three communities including: PREDA, Damayan Community Centre in Malabon run by the Good Shepherd Sisters and Val Smith-Orr an Australian volunteer nurse in Zambales who works with children with hare lips, cleft palates and people living with burns.

The lights are an Australian invention and cost AUD\$10 each which includes shipping costs.

To support the Solar Light project contact: Glenys Gayfer, Montmorency Social Justice Group on 0411 196 395 or email: glenys@kadasigaid.com.au.



Photo: Glenys Gayfer

The solar lights are checked before distribution.

Micro credit takes a lashing

Unrelenting floods and typhoons in Central Luzon, Philippines, last year made 2012 one of the worst years ever for KAZAMA* Grameen Inc (KGI).

In 1991 the micro credit scheme was set up by Columban Fr Sean Connaughton to provide credit services to low income and poor families. As at December 2012, KGI had 31,000 members and 180 staff.

The extensively damaged area hit by the typhoon was also the area of KGIs operation. Staff spent many hours carrying important documents and property to higher ground.

Their main concern was for the welfare of the 4,740 members who were adversely affected.

Families reported that they could seldom go out. "Only the farmers could work some days to plant - planting only.

Hence, no income." Staff from the Pampanga KGI branch rode on small boats to visit and assist affected members.

With rivers, lakes and thousands of acres flooded, produce was ruined. Nobody would buy wet rice or corn from the muddy fields. This is a serious issue for both KGI and its members who have outstanding loans. After consulting with the borrowers who could not pay their loans, KGI invited family members to assist. Approval was only given if all family members agreed to help.

Slowly life is resuming some normality, but it will take a long time to recover from this disaster.

Columban Fr Sean Connaughton recently wrote to thank benefactors for their continued support.

*Kazama is a combination of Grameen groups in Kalookan, Zambales and Manila.



Photo: Mariou Conception

KGI branch staff rode on small boats to visit and assist affected members.

Violence and killings in Mexico

Photo: Fr Peter Woodruff



Once known as the murder capital of the world, Mexico's Ciudad Juárez saw a 40% decline in murders in 2012. Between January and September, 681 murders were reported there, while not a low number by anyone's count, the murder rate is still down from 1,571 during the same time in 2011.

An excerpt from an interview with Fr Kevin Mullins by Fr Peter Woodruff on how a parish community in a poor suburb of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico becomes a source of life for the broader civic community.

"I have seen so much drug related violence and killing and yet families seem to be so resilient. It's as if they grieve 'on the run.' They quickly get back into life with a dogged determination. They do not let violence perpetrated by others destroy their lives.

It seems that everyone knows about the violence in Juárez but I see and hear the untold story of creativity, commitment to family, to work and to parish.

The rhythm of parish life seems to support families in their daily lives.

It is as if the relentless progress of the liturgical calendar, with its seasons and cycles, reflects, supports and steadies people as they take on their lives.

I have found that men, women and youth want to participate; they want to do things together.

They can also laugh in the midst of tragedy. Even though we do experience fear and see our hands trembling after being close to dangerous violence, we then find a way to make light of our situation. It's inexpensive therapy I guess but I could not want for a better place to be a missionary priest."

Video Reflections on Mission

A series of reflections on mission presented by Columban Fr Noel Connolly.

Watch/listen to videos: www.columban.org.au/videos



- 1) Becoming a truly multicultural Church
- 2) The Kingdom
- 3) The Kingdom as a radical message
- 4) Missionary Virtues: Humility
- 5) Encounter with mystery

News: Columban Mission Institute (CMI)

The Columban Mission Institute incorporates three centres of mission focus:

The Centre for Christian/Muslim Relations

The Centre for Mission Studies

The Centre for Peace, Ecology and Justice

Mission Studies

Fr Pat McInerney is currently teaching an online course on Islam at Broken Bay Institute (BBI).

Fr Noel Connolly is also at BBI teaching a module in the online course on the Theology of Religious Education.

Christian-Muslim Relations appointment

Ashleigh Green began her employment with CMI in January. Her role is to build relations with Muslim women and with youth. She is currently studying media and communications. We welcome Ashleigh.

To contact Columban Mission Institute:

Ph: (02) 9352 8001

Email: cmi@columban.org.au

2014 Columban Art Calendar on the press



2014 Columban Art Calendar

\$10.50 (incl. postage)

To order:

Ph: (03) 9375 9475

www.columban.org.au
calendar@columban.org.au

Columban News



Vale - Fr Charlie (Charles) O'Mahony

Fr Charles O'Mahony died in his sleep in his 95th year at Caritas Christi Hospice, Kew in Melbourne on February 10, 2013. He was a kind and generous priest and will be sadly missed. May he rest in peace.



Fr Francis (Frank) Ferrie

Fr Frank Ferrie travelled from Korea to be with his sister Joan Cate before she passed away on March 5, 2013. Joan worked with the Columbans for over 30 years and will be remembered fondly. May she rest in peace.



Fr Trevor Trotter

Fr Trevor Trotter has returned to Brisbane after working for six years on the General Council as Vicar General. He is currently working in the Archdiocese of Brisbane three days a week in a variety of roles as well as co-ordinating promotions for *The Far East* magazine. We welcome Trevor back to the region.



Fr Anthony (Tony) Cox

Fr Tony Cox has been appointed as Executive Officer of Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia (CVMA). The offices have been relocated from Parramatta, NSW to Essendon in Victoria. In addition to this new role, Tony is still working as School Chaplain at Penola College and Sacred Heart, Altona.



Fr Paul McGee

Fr Paul McGee recently retired as Co-ordinator of the Columban Centre for Promoting Communion with the Church in China. A farewell was held for Fr Paul in December to thank him for his contribution to the Columban Mission Institute over many years. Paul will now focus his energies on pastoral ministry to the Chinese community.



Fr Tien Xuan Nguyen

Fr Tien Xuan Nguyen returned to Australia in January to visit family friends. He has now returned to Japan where he is working as Regional Bursar and House Manager in Tokyo.



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St Columban became 'A Wanderer for Christ'. One of his greatest sayings summarises his life and his work, 'Let us be of Christ not of ourselves'.