



# Missionary Society of St. Columban

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## Circular No. 6/2021 (December 22nd)

### Christmas 2021

Dear Columban Conferees,

My circular this time last year had heading such as:

“A disturbed Christmas” “Aminiasi’s Ordination Postponed” “Tropical Cyclone Yasa makes landfall in Bua on the evening of Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> Dec. with wind speeds of 300kph” Well Thank God we are spared such anxiety thus far this year. But this time last year little did we know that during 2021 we would be locked down for the best part of 7 months from March until November. Fiji has done well re getting its population vaccinated during this year with 97.7% having got one jab and 91.8% fully vaccinated while lots have had their booster shots. The recent update (20/12/2021) of numbers with Covid were 5 and no deaths. Very good in comparison to the rest of the world – however with visitors arriving in Nadi since the 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2021 – there is fear, and the possibility of the new Omicron variant making its way into the country.

**Fr JJ Ryan Celebrates the Diamond Jubilee of his Ordination.** This celebration was held here in the Central House 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2021. On this day 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 1961, (60 years ago) 17 young men presented themselves for ordination to the Missionary Priesthood in the College Chapel in Dalgan Park, Navan, Ireland. The youngest of the class was Fr JJ – only 23 years of age who had to get a dispensation to be ordained at that age. After his ordination he was sent for further studies to Spain and Rome. He returned to Dalgan for a few years as a professor of Spanish and Canon Law. He then did a doctorate in Systematic Theology under Walter Kasper in Tubigen, Germany. He was then appointed to the newly established PRS College, Suva Point. He was the 1<sup>st</sup> Dean of PRS. This was followed by an appointment to teach at Turramurra, the Columban Seminary in Sydney and at the Pacific Mission Institute. He was there for about 15 year until Turramurra closed. Then for the last 20 years he was both parish priest and assistant priest in Labasa Parish. Due to Covid lockdown he has been here in the Central House since last Feb. Monday’s Celebration of his Diamond Jubilee was a simple one, with Concelebrated Mass at 12.00 noon. In attendance was our Staff here in Central House, a few parishioners from Labasa Parish with Fr Carlo Jung, now PP Labasa. Fr Paul Tierney, former PP Labasa was also present as was Fr Donal McIlraith. Fr John McEvoy was the main celebrant at Mass. After Mass the Labasa people offered their Savusavu to Fr JJ (Tabua, yagona, mats and dalo) The Columbans reciprocated with tabua and yagona as a ‘vakavinavinaka’ to the Labasa people. The Jubilee Cake was then cut by Fr JJ. The occasion coincided with our staff Christmas Party who provided a beautiful meal and a Diamond Jubilee Cake. Congratulations Fr JJ and God Bless You.

At this time of the year let us not forget the anniversaries to the priesthood of our recently ordained priests – **Fr Pat Visanti**, 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 2017 – missioned in Pakistan, **Fr Martin Koroiciri** 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. 2018, missioned in Chile, **Fr Teakare** 30<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019 spending the Christmas in his native Rabi, waiting for the borders to open to go on mission; **Fr Aminiasi Ravuwai** 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 2020, also waiting to go on Mission to Peru. Happy 1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of your ordination today Fr Aminiasi. Congratulations also to **Fr Donal McIlraith** who during this year celebrated the Golden Jubilee (50) years of his ordination.

The rest of this circular, will list the important events during the months of Oct – December 2021.

1. **Hindi Mass:** On Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct another Mass with hymns readings, homily and prayers of the Faithful in Hindi led by Fr. Frank Hoare and the Seminarians at the Formation House was live streamed on the Archdiocesan Facebook Page, received over 3000 hits.
2. **Closing the Season of Creation:** October 4<sup>th</sup> - the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, we celebrated the closing of the Season of Creation. At midday Fr Teakare Betero led the celebration of the

Eucharist for the office and domestic staff. Later in the afternoon Fr John McEvoy conducted a short prayer service of 'Thanksgiving and Praise of Creation' in the garden at the back of the Columban Central House. There was the blessing of fruit trees and the vegetables growing in our garden. An avocado tree was planted by all present to mark this significant occasion- the closing of the season of creation.

3. **Virtual Morning Tea – for the Office Staff in Oceania:** On the 13<sup>th</sup> October - despite the distance and restrictions, Columban Office Staff, Co-workers, and priests working in the three offices of the Region of Oceania met each other for the 1<sup>st</sup> time by Zoom. It was great to see each other and to hear what others are doing in the different countries - Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji during these challenging times. Some had returned to work while others were working from home. It was a most enjoyable and valuable experience for all our coworkers and office staff.
4. **Death of faithful CCIM Members: Julie Toganivalu** was a friend and a loyal Columban Companion. She supported the Columbans in most of our events and ordinations over the years. Julie was one of the chief organizers on the Committee with Fr Donal McIlraith for our celebration of 1400 Anniversary of St Columban's death in 2015 and the same again when Columban's celebrated the centenary of their foundation in June 2018. We were saddened by her suddenly and untimely departure and sympathized with her family. Her funeral Mass at Cathedral of Sacred Heart Cathedral was held on Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> October, followed by cremation. **Margaret Eyre**, Nadi and a very staunch CCIM support in Tamavua Parish at the starting of the CCIM. She was buried in Lautoka. Sympathy was also expressed to Paulo Bale, ex Columban Lay Missionary, on the death of his two brothers Esava Sipiriano (Catechist in Nadivakarua, Kubulau, Bua) passed away on the 18/10/21 and **Farasiko Tikobua Paula**, Parishioner of Holy Family Parish Labasa, died on 18<sup>th</sup> Nov 2021. Both were laid to rest in their village of Nadivakarua, Kubulau Bua. **Joseph Nair:** (Nakasi) from the Indo Fijian Community and a longtime friend of the Columbans. His wife Tara taught many Columbans Hindustani over the years. Joseph a carpenter by trade – did lots of maintenance work on Columban houses. Joseph's Requiem Mass was celebrated in St Vincent de Paul Parish Nausori on Wed 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec followed by burial in Nasinu cemetery. May they rest in peace.
5. **Mission Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> Oct 2021:** Our teams, students, co-workers, lay missionary were out in the parishes around the Suva area promoting Columban Mission by selling our Columban Calendars. The sale of our Wall Calendars and Art Calendars are always well received in the parishes in Fiji especially in our Fiji Parishes. But CCIM members in other parishes love to sell our Calendars too. The selling goes on for some Sundays after Mission Sunday. Thanks to all for giving up their time to reach out in this way and to all who buy our Calendars. Thanks to Pat Colgan for dropping off the Calendars to the parishes on the Coral Coast and in the West, and to Joe Vasa for distributing them to CCIM members in the Northern Parishes.
6. **Vocation's Webinar:** On October 30<sup>th</sup> our Formation Students conducted a second vocation webinar this year. Twenty (20) young men from Kiribati joined. They gathered at the Sacred Heart College, Tarawa to be part of the webinar. The students came from King George V High School, St Louis High School, St Mary's College, Sacred Heart College and Kiribati Pastoral Institute. Ietawa our student from Kiribati was mainly instrumental for these students coming together. Unfortunately, only one joined from Fiji who attended the previous webinar.
7. **Schools Reopen:** November 1st – Schools in Fiji reopened for years 12 and 13. Students were required to be vaccinated. Priority was given to this group because many of them are preparing for university entry or vocational training and thus are at an important point in their academic career.
8. **November 6<sup>th</sup> – COP 26 March:** Catholic Students from the various FNU (Fiji National University) campuses throughout Fiji decided to hold a Rally at 'My Suva Park' on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> Nov in union with the hundreds of thousands of youths from all over the world praying for and supporting those attending COP 26 in Glasgow. They were calling for the same thing as World Leaders in Glasgow which is a reduction in carbon emissions, political determination and

action against global warming and climate change. (Keeping 1.5 degrees alive). police intervened and stopped the students from proceeding to 'My Suva Park' on the context that they had no police permit to march. The Groups supported by the Columbans had their gathering in PRS where prayers were said and hymns sung and a very inspiring talk on the effects of Climate Change in the Pacific delivered by Mariana Waqa, (Pacific Council of Churches). The event got widespread publicity because of the police action.

9. **Our Seminarians:** November 8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup>. Term 3 Exams commenced for our Seminarians at PRS. PRS Graduations followed on 17<sup>th</sup> November. Paula Suka & Elia Poasa started their holidays on the 18<sup>th</sup> Nov with their families in the North and in the West, while Ietawa Naaiti and Pio Tuari remained back to attend English classes until they left for Rabi on the 13<sup>th</sup> Dec. At the request of the Society Leader, our students, joined other Columban student in Manila and Korea and made their own short video with a simple Christmas message wishing us all a Happy Christmas. The links are: <https://youtu.be/Eo41O2HdlHU> <https://youtu.be/KeaFuuYawUY>  
<https://youtu.be/xysV0OvaP3Y> <https://youtu.be/D7F8rZ0KemU>

**Ratu Pio Daurewa** decided to leave the Formation Programme while Francis Xavier is finishing off College Assignments before he goes to Raiwaqa Parish for pastoral experience in January. **Uakeia** has also left the Formation Programme in Manila and is waiting to return to Kiribati. Both Pio and Uakeia are wished well for the future. Thank Your Pio & Uakeia for your honesty. God Bless You.

10. **Christ the King Parish, Ba:** On Sunday, November 21st, 2021, Feast Day of Parish - Archbishop Peter Loy Chong conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation on 34 young adults. On the same day, the parish celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of their new Church. A day of celebration, thanksgiving and remembering the events of the parish over these years.
11. **St Columban's Day November 23<sup>rd</sup>** Here in the Central House the staff, students and coworkers joined in Mass led Fr Teakare, followed by yaqona and the usual social and dinner together. **In Holy Family Parish Labasa** there was a celebration in St Columban's Sector, with Mass at 6.00pm followed by a social evening. **In Pius X Parish Raiwaqa** – the feast day was be marked with morning Mass at 8.30am and lunch for the parish staff at midday. St Columbans Community (5b) Vatuwaqa had their own evening celebration attended by Teakare on behalf of the Columban here in Suva. **In Ba Parish** – the evening celebration in Votua Village where the Church of St Columban is located had to go without the celebration of the Eucharist, since Fr Pat Colgan was involved in a road accident on his way home from a priest's meeting in Naiserelagi on the same day. Apart from serious damage done to 3 cars – thank God no one was injured.
12. **Aggregation of Columban Student 30<sup>th</sup> November:** Congratulations to our Fijian seminarians in Manila on the Renewal of your Aggregation (Iowane Naio and Antonio Seeto – for 2years) and our former FMA student Kyaw Zaw who served in Fiji for 2 years renewed for – 1 year and to Mosese Yacalevu on his First Aggregation – Temporary Membership of the Society (3 years). On Sunday evening December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at the Columban Central House, Nasese, Nbwi La Aung (Francis Xavier) renewed his temporary membership of the Society of St Columban for one year. The oath of membership was administered by Fr John McEvoy and witnessed by Fr Frank Hoare on behalf of Fr Paul Glynn Regional Director and Finbar Maxwell Rector of Formation in the Philippines. This simple ceremony was held in the Central House, during the Student's Holy Hour.
13. **Closing of the Year of St Joseph 8/12/20 – 8/12/21:** On Tuesday 8 December 2021, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the parishioners of the parishes of St Joseph the Worker, Tamavua and St Joseph the Husband of Mary, Naililili came together to mark the closing of the year of St Joseph with a Mass in the FMF National Gymnasium. It was 150th year since St Joseph was declared Patron Saint of the Universal Church. Pope Francis wrote an Apostolic Letter 'Patris Corde' to commemorate the occasion. Fr Donal McIlraith published this Letter in a booklet form

which was distributed to all attending Mass at the National Gymnasium by the staff of the Columban Mission Office, Nasese.

14. **The Mission Office Staff:** **Desmond Makubuna** is new in the Mission Office. He started work on 11<sup>th</sup> October as our new IT and Web Officer. He was educated at Marist Brother's High School and at the University of the South Pacific. In 2020 he graduated from USP, with a Computer Science and Information System Degree. He has a vast understanding and knowledge of IT and Web Design. **Vitalina Vukinagauna** will be leaving us on the 31<sup>st</sup> of Dec. We are sorry to see her go, since she has vast experience of the Columban World and its workings. We are grateful for her loyal services over the many years she has been associated with us as Lay Missionary, Lay Missionary Co Ordinator and for the last few years as Mission Office Co-Coordinator. Vinaka vakalevu Vitalina. **Appraisals:** All the Office Staff had their appraisals recently and are ready to sign **new Contracts** at start of the New Year. Thank you for your ongoing cooperation and good will towards us. The show could not go on without your commitment to us
  - **IRD Desk:** November 10<sup>th</sup> the various faith groups had a Tiktok challenge as how to prevent global warming by reversing forest degradation and by reducing CO2 Emissions created by Fossil Fuels. The objective of the exercise was to get young people of different faiths thinking as how they can contribute to the above ideals by means of the Tiktok challenge. If they are aware of what is going on going and the destruction happening in the world because of global warming – they would be good disciples to their peers of the new and younger generation.
  - **JPIC Desk - work and involvement from September to December 2021** Since the launch of the Season of Creation on September 1<sup>st</sup> JPIC work has been nonstop. With the buzz of COP 26, JPIC involvement with the Regional and Global Columban Society has been very active bringing issues from our local perspective on Biodiversity. Our involvement with Environmental Justice focusing on extractions in Fiji and its devastating effects and Climate Change are two urgent issues we are responding to with our networks and communities including the UN. I have been able to visit the 3 Columban parishes in Fiji and have just completed our Disaster Preparedness Operation with Caritas Archdiocese of Suva for the whole of Vanua Levu. It has been tiring but rewarding. (Tevita Naikasowalu – Columban JPIC Coordinator).
15. **Fr Felisiano Fatu:** on December 13<sup>th</sup> – Fr Felisiano Fatu arrived in Nadi from Manila to await his travel home to Tonga in March 2022. He is currently on 14 days quarantine at a resort in Nadi till 27<sup>th</sup> December. He intends to finish his studies here in Fiji Welcome home Fr. Felisiano.
16. **Fr Frank Hoare:** Vicar for Evangelisation in the Archdiocese of Suva and Member of COPAS (Council of Priest Archdiocese of Suva, after many years of sterling service to the above, he has announced his retirement from these posts. On November 14<sup>th</sup> when he facilitated the last SCC Leaders meeting via Zoom. He spoke on the topic **Synodality in Small Christian Communities**. Before the meeting ended, he announced his 'itatau' farewell to them as he was retiring from the Evangelization Commission.
17. **Synod of Synodality of Bishops, Rome 2023:** Is the in terminology these days – Parishes and most church organisations are striving to be synodal. Archbishop Peter Loy Chong had training workshops in the 3 Divisions of the Archdiocese to train parish leaders and priests who will spread the news and prepare for this forthcoming Synod in 2023. Our priests and parishioners are all involved. The Regional Director of Oceania is proposing that we have Synod of here in Oceania. (So, there is no escaping)!!!!
18. **The review of the Structures in the Region of Oceania** proposed by General Council has been completed. Thanks for your cooperation during this process by answering the 2 questions put to us by Peter Cranko, facilitator, and your participation and sharing at our Fiji County meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. A very comprehensive report on what came out of the survey was presented by Peter Cranko to the Regional Council Oceania on 30<sup>th</sup> Nov. The Report was discussed and accepted by the Regional Council and submitted to Tim Mulroy, Society Leader, Hong Kong. I am sure everyone will receive a copy of this report in due course. Two recommendations re a more simplified Structure for the Region of Oceania were put forward. The following are a summary of the 2 Reformatations

19. **Recommendation 1:** Structural reform. Currently there are two tiers of governance – Regional Level and Country Level. It is recommended that this be replaced with a single Regional Council. As for the current management structure, it could be replaced by the Regional Business Manager becoming responsible for managing all administration offices across the Region. The governance structure would be responsible for all governance across the Region and would comprise five ordained Columbans plus the Regional Business Manager as follows: – The Regional Director and Vice-Regional Director would be appointed by the Society Leader (generally from separate countries). – Each country would vote for one Regional Councillor. – If the Regional Director is from Australia, then the 4th Councillor would be from Fiji and if the Regional Director is from Fiji, then the 4th Councillor would be from Australia. – The Regional Business Manager would be appointed by the Society Leader. The regional administration would be led and managed by the Regional Business Manager who would manage the administration offices in each of the three countries.

20. **Recommendation 2:** A Columban Synod for Oceania That the Society Leader call for a Columban Synod for Oceania (CSO) and appoint a Steering Committee to design and manage the process. The purpose of the CSO would be to foster transformative change through exploring the region's future aspirations and hopes i.e., what we want for the next 10 years in terms of Columban life and mission and the most appropriate use of our personnel and resources in this regard. Issues to be addressed by the CSO Steering Committee's process design include: Ensuring succession planning is attended to as a priority so that the younger members of the region, particularly those from Pacific Islands have clear pathways into leadership. Ensuring the voices and views of those under 70 are given prominence in those conversations since they will be the ones to carry the mission forward. Facilitating a discernment that starts with listening to the spirit, in a structured process that brings a diverse group of lay and ordained Columbans together in an inclusive, nonhierarchical space.

21. **Finally, may I wish you all a very Blessed and Holy Christmas and a New Year full of Hope.** I greet in a special way our Pacifican Missionaries as follows: Fr. Iowane in Peru, Fr. Martin and Fr. Vincent in Chile, Fr. Pat Visanti in Pakistan, Fr Taaremon in Taiwan, Mosese, Saula, Naio and Uakeia in Manila, Lanieta, Latai and Mereani in Cagayan, Sophia and Ling in Britain, Sainiana in Hong Kong, Fr. Willie in Kiribati, and Fr. Napa in Tonga May the Good Lord protect and keep you all safe – wherever you are on Mission.



John McEvoy (Nasese – 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 2021).