



From the General Council

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following issue of the *Columban
Intercom* by 15 January 2022

Seeking life-giving ways through chaos

from the editor

As I read Ellen Teague's blogs about her experience around the COP26 meeting in Glasgow, my mind wandered back to grassroots Catholic communities in Peru and other parts of Latin America living and expressing their Christian faith since pre-Tridentine Catholicism was introduced by Spanish and Portuguese missionaries in the 16th century.

They walk, sing, pray and chat following in procession the image of their patron saint as it does the rounds of their village, suburb or city. They proclaim their faith in God present with them, caring for them and guiding them.

Following the chaos of the 20th century, much of our world may have seemed to many to be enjoying a degree of stability, focussing on life and well-being.

However, it has become increasingly clear that we humans are being challenged to radically change the way we dwell on this planet.

The indigenous peoples of Australia insist that this is their land. However, their perspective seems to be radically different from that of peoples who have arrived in Australia during recent centuries.

The Aborigines feel that they belong to the land; they have a duty of care for the land. Their spirituality is rooted in the land and their relationship with it.

Maybe their way of being stewards of the earth contains a few gems for other peoples coming from a perspective of believing that the earth and all the life it sustains are ours to use as we see fit.

Then there is the chaos in the Catholic Church. Prior to Vatican II there was

a stability that, in some ways, had lost touch with a fast changing world, what has been described as a change of era.

Pope Francis has been developing a strategy to address this, the key to which is the "synodal way", which all of us are invited to join but, as one would expect, there is resistance.

Richard R Gaillardetz, professor of Systematic Theology at Boston University, oversaw the editing of *Cambridge Companion to Vatican II*, a book of 18 articles on the documents of Vatican II.

Frank Regan has commented on the article on mission by Steven Bevans SVD. Bevans has travelled the world working with missionaries and teaching in academia. His insights might help us navigate the chaos.

Recently, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, addressed the general assembly of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore.

He laid out an alternative strategy on abortion to the one that has been pursued by some of the country's bishops.

It is a subtle shift that does not overturn any existing teaching. Yet if put into practice, it would open up a more pastoral and less politicised pro-life path for the Church to follow (*The Tablet*, 18 November 21).

It is both a synodal and pastoral way forward, a way that could help through a variety of seemingly fraught issues.

Finally, the 2015 Columban song featured near the end of this issue has a heart of hope and joy.

*Peter Woodruff**A blessed Christmas to all Columbans*

Park Yosup Joseph (Korea)	Assigned to the Region of South America for FMA from 15 February 2022
Seong Yoseob Joseph (Korea)	Assigned to the Region of South America for FMA from 15 February 2022
Gonzalo Borquez Diaz (Korea)	Appointed as Vice Rector of Initial Formation in the Region of Korea from 23 November 2021 until 31 December 2024
Kim YoungIn Gregorio (Korea)	Appointed as Rector of Initial Formation in the Region of Korea from 23 November 2021 until 31 December 2024
John Boles (Britain)	Appointed as Director of the Region of Britain for a three-year term from 23 November 2021
Bernard McDermott (Britain)	Appointed as Vice Director of the Region of Britain for a three-year term from 23 November 2021
Dan Troy (CMU)	Appointed as Coordinator of the CMU for a three-year term from 23 November 2021
Kevin O'Neill (CMU)	Appointed as Vice Coordinator of the CMU for a three-year term from 23 November 2021
Ray Husband (Ireland)	Appointed as Director of the Region of Ireland for a three-year term from 23 November 2021
Padraig O'Donovan (Ireland)	Appointed as Vice Director of the Region of Ireland for a three-year term from 23 November 2021
Donal O'Keefe (Korea)	Appointed as Interim Director of the Region of Korea from 23 November 2021 until 23 January 2022
Denis Monaghan (Korea)	Appointed as Interim Vice Director of the Region of Korea from 23 November 2021 until 23 January 2022
Eamon Sheridan (MMU)	Re-appointed as Coordinator of the MMU for a three-year term from 23 November 2021
Kurt Zion Pala (MMU)	Appointed as Vice Coordinator of the MMU for a three-year term from 23 November 2021
Chris Saenz (USA)	Appointed as Director of the US Region for a three-year term from 23 November 2021
Bill Morton (USA)	Appointed as Vice Director of the US Region for a three-year term from 23 November 2021

A mid-term review

In the Society's tradition, among the principal purposes of an Inter-Regional Mission Units (IRMU) Meeting has been to provide the Region/Mission Units (RMU) leaders, and others, with the opportunity to give feedback to the General Council on its performance in relation to the Society's policies and General Assembly decisions.



These international leadership meetings have also been opportunities for the General Council to better understand the concerns, needs and hopes of the membership in relation to the future direction of the Society, particularly with regard to its personnel, resources and mission.

Since it has not been feasible so far to hold an IRMU Meeting during the term of office of this General Council, we decided to conduct a mid-term self-review in August and September.

We then distributed the outcome of that review process to RMU Leaders, the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Central Coordinator and the Bursar General, asking them to share it with others, and to provide us with feedback.

We requested feedback not just on the events of these past three years, but also on how members, lay missionaries and co-workers envisage the path ahead for the General Council, the Society and its various missionary endeavours.

Chris Saenz and Andrei Paz graciously agreed to collect and collate the various feedback. Earlier this month, their summation was distributed to RMU leaders, the JPIC Central Coordinator and the Bursar General.

Andrei and Chris also met over zoom with the General Council and Vida Hequilan, Coordinator of the Columban Lay Missionaries Central Leadership Team, to review their collated feedback.

It has enabled us to better understand the opportunities that we have seized as well as those that we have missed. It has made us more aware of the obstacles that impact on us both individually and as members of a team

While the summation of the feedback will help guide General Council during the remainder of its term of office, we found the review process itself to be a valuable exercise. It has provided us with several opportunities for personal and collective reflection, discussion and clarification about various matters.

It has enabled us to better understand the opportunities that we have seized as well as those that we have missed. It has made us more aware of the obstacles that impact on us both individually and as members of a team.

Thanks to the review process, we have also come to a greater appreciation of the importance of communication and collaboration with leadership across the Society.

One matter that the review process heightened—not only in what was said, but possibly also in what was not said, not only by those who participated, but probably also by those who were invited to participate but did not—is the ongoing impact of the pandemic on the lives of us all, on those around us, and on our various ministries.

The missionary vision and path that we outlined during the 2018 General Assembly has had to undergo major revisions as a result of the pandemic.

Moreover, if the United Nations Conference of Parties (COP26) on Climate Change does not result in immediate and significant changes in the manner in which the global community addresses the challenge of climate change, then there are likely to be even greater revisions to our way of envisaging and engaging mission during the coming decades.



Learning language as a missionary

A wounded planet

After a recent Columban Lay Missionary online prayer session, where many of us shared experiences of grief and loss, I was surprised how later that evening I felt tired and restless.

Tapping into the memories, the deeper places within can be a little draining. This experience took place in the context of the United Nations Conference of Parties (COP26) on Climate Change meeting taking place in Glasgow.

It was a reminder for me that we have wounded the planet we are living on and there is deep pain and loss there too. During the prayer session, many of us remembered the loss of loved ones, including pets, but today we are also lamenting the many species on the planet that have died.

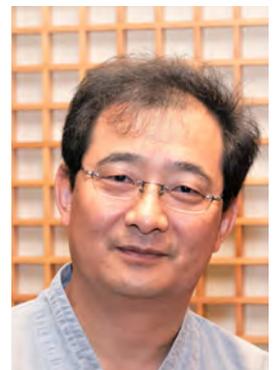
There is a profound sense of loss for so many species that have disappeared, many of them unnamed. Richard Rohr reminds us not to block the journey into grief, into the Mystery, into Universal Compassion, into the Universal Christ.

Jesus' life, death and resurrection reminds us that something must always die for something else to live. Rohr invites us to see Jesus as "the pattern that connects all things" and that is the hopeful message that carries me as I enter Advent.



Joseph, my son, how difficult it must be to speak to and understand people there!

This was my mother's statement to me on the telephone one day when I was in Peru. She, who had only an elementary school education, seemed to understand how much I would struggle with language in order to communicate with the people. Her memory of parish work with some foreign missionaries may have helped her to understand some of her son's challenges in Peru.



For some members of the Society for whom English is not a first language, the language barrier can be a daunting hurdle. That is because English is the dominant language—both inside and outside the Society—in many areas that relate to our missionary work. And whether we recognise it or not, language capability has a major impact on life, particularly on how ability is perceived by others.

It is true that those who speak English fluently have more opportunities to gain the attention of others. Therefore, without a doubt, it is necessary to work at and develop a capability in English in order to advance as a member of the Columban Society.

Learning a foreign language is difficult. As the saying goes, "there is no end to learning". We learn new words every day, and correct our expressions in accordance with grammatical rules that are quite often fundamentally different from our mother tongue.

Sometimes, I have wished that English had a word for an
continued on next page

EMAIL ADDRESSES FOR THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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GENERAL COUNCIL PORTFOLIOS

- Tim Mulroy** Personnel; Finance & Fundraising; Retirement; China Formation Committee
- Brian Vale** JPIC; IRD; Liaison with CLMCLT; Co-workers; GC secretary
- Joseph Kang Seung-won** Priest Associates; Society Invitation to Mission; Ongoing Formation; Intercultural Living
- Alvaro Martinez Ibáñez** Vocations & Formation; Communications & Mission Awareness; Ethical Conduct

From October 10 to 22, a group of 16 Columbans and one co-worker of eight nationalities gathered through Zoom for a workshop on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. This meeting was made possible by technology. Our connection covered 12 different countries, including the Union of Myanmar, Pakistan, Australia and Ireland.

The days were intense. We met around six hours a day. Some Columbans joined from Latin America or Ireland, so time zones were a challenge for all of us. However, everyone was faithful to the commitment to learning about prevention and safeguarding.

The Catholic Safeguarding Institute runs the course from Manila. We worked together, divided into clusters, and each team had a facilitator, who led us on our daily schedule and revised the advances on the workshop. The learning process was unfolding as a tripod of self-care, safe communities and safe ministries.

At the end of the 10 days, there was a strong sense of the importance of investing time and resources in prevention, because that will save lives.

I want to share some of the reflections of the participants

“Safeguarding of vulnerable persons is not that easy, as I experienced through listening, as well as on-hand activities provided by this workshop. Guided by the series of activities for self, I was able to appreciate how important it is to be kind, be aware and be connected with myself. These provided me with the foundation to have a safe community for a safe ministry. Listening to the legal side of dealing with the vulnerable was a huge slice to take home. A slice good to share with others” (Monaliza S Esteban, lay missionary).

“This workshop is a great tool for realising the intensity and gravity of the effect of sexual abuse in the Church around the world. I got the chance to look at my own knowledge and understanding of safeguarding through the input and sharing of the workshop. It

gave me a greater desire to advocate and promote a safe place of ministry for both the ministers and those we minister to. My most significant learning is the three key elements: Safe Self, Safe Community, and Safe Ministry. If we secure to practice and observe these three, we can be sure everybody is protected from any harm or abuse” (Angie).

“A most unique meeting of Columban priests, lay missionaries, and co-workers took place virtually under the guidance of the Catholic Safeguarding Institute of the Philippines... Unpacking all that is involved in preventing, spotting, reporting and justice/healing for the victims of Sexual Abuse was absorbing, confronting and emotional, but ultimately cathartic if we are to, ‘brick-by-brick,’ build a society and Church finally rid of this ‘scourge and idolatrous evil”

Joseph Kang: continued from previous page

expression used commonly in Korean. For example, in my understanding of the Korean word *aswipda* is an expression of someone’s regretful feeling towards another who has almost succeeded in something, but failed at the end. Google Translator offers, “It is a shame,” as the English equivalent. I understand the word *shame* as an expression concerning something I did that makes me feel embarrassed.

The word *aswipda* seems to be unique to Korean, and English does not have an equivalent word.

We realise there are many words and expressions that do not accurately convey our own feelings and thoughts. Our inability to use a different language in a natural manner can bring us back to a sense of being a child again. While such experiences can become a good source for mission stories to share with other people later in life, the experiences themselves are generally painful.

However, we are willing to engage the difficulties involved in making mistakes and the limitations of a good conversation with someone or understanding people in our mission country. We continue to put much effort into

(Pope Francis). One senses this will need to become a central feature of all initial and ongoing formation, as well as the conversation at many Columban tables for many years to come” (Pat Colgan).



Finally, I want to thank everyone who participated in the workshop and the leaders of the regions and mission units.

Making themselves available to dedicate 10 days to learning and sharing about the importance of safeguarding and creating safe environments in our ministries and houses as a way of bringing the Good News to the world is top be commended.

learning language and exploring different cultures in order to understand well and work alongside the people in our missionary fields.

It is true that language is important to do our mission. We meet people, learn their culture, and share our faith in God through language.

Thus, learning language and building up language skills is for us one of our priorities in doing God’s mission. It challenges a missionary to see their limitation in various situations and brings some feeling of both happiness and suffering. Therefore, the experience of learning a language is part and parcel of missionary life.

I close this reflection with a quotation from an apostolic letter that emphasises language in missionary work::

Among the attainments necessary for the life of a missionary, a place of paramount importance must obviously be granted to the language of the people to whose salvation he will devote himself. He should not be content with a smattering of the language, but should be able to speak it readily and competently (Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, 1919, no 24).

New assignments

Heartfelt congratulations to Lee Kyung-Ja Christina for her rotation assignment to the Region of Korea starting on 1 November 2021 and running until the completion of her current agreement on 14 November 2025.

Kyung-Ja has served in Ireland for more than five years and was involved with the Migrants and Refugees Ministry. We wish her all the best as she bids farewell to those whom she holds dear in Ireland and moves on to another chapter of her missionary journey in Korea.

Lay Missionaries Leadership Team

Jude Genovia is the new ordained member of the Lay Mission Leadership Team in the Region of Korea. Congratulations to Bill Morton for taking the role as the Lay Mission Coordinator in the United States Region. Thank you Jude and Bill for your willingness to accept the role. We are looking forward to working in partnership with you.

CLM Zoom call

Central Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Coordinator, Amy Echeverria, facilitated the workshop on *Living JPIC as Integral to our Missionary Vocation*, which was participated in by lay missionaries and ordained members of the Lay Mission Leadership Team. The workshop was conducted via Zoom on July 29 and August 3.

The workshop was an opportunity to share our passion and commitment to JPIC, which is manifested in the way we live and in our ministries. It was also an opportunity to get to know the comprehensive engagement of the wider Society in JPIC. Part two of the workshop will be conducted sometime in October.

Thanksgiving Mass and celebrations

Columbans in Hong Kong gathered for a Eucharist and dinner for Son Seon-Young Catharina and Kevin Sheerin to thank them for their dedicated service to the Central Leadership Team over three years and to bid them farewell to as they embark on new ventures.

Catharina will continue her missionary journey with the Columbans, but will first take her four-month home holiday in Korea, while Kevin will return to Ireland and begin a new life outside the Columbans.

Columban Lay Missionaries prayer gathering

On August 31, lay missionaries, ordained, students and co-workers gathered via Zoom to mark the inauguration of the new Lay Mission Central Leadership Team; Vida Hequilan, Sainiana Tamatawale and Brian Vale, who assumed office on September 1, and to wish them well in their new roles and every success as they lead the Columban Lay Missionaries into the future.

At the same time, they bade a fond farewell and expressed their deep appreciation to the outgoing team of Vida, who will continue in her responsibilities, as well as Son Seon-Young Catharina and Kevin Sheerin, who will leave Hong Kong, for their commitment over the past three years.

Prayers during the Covid-19 pandemic

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10)

In recent months, we have had some lay missionaries infected with coronavirus, as well as some members of our families, including those of our former lay missionaries.

The longer we are in this current predicament the clearer it becomes that we are all vulnerable. We continue to encourage everyone to be vigilant in looking after themselves and each other.

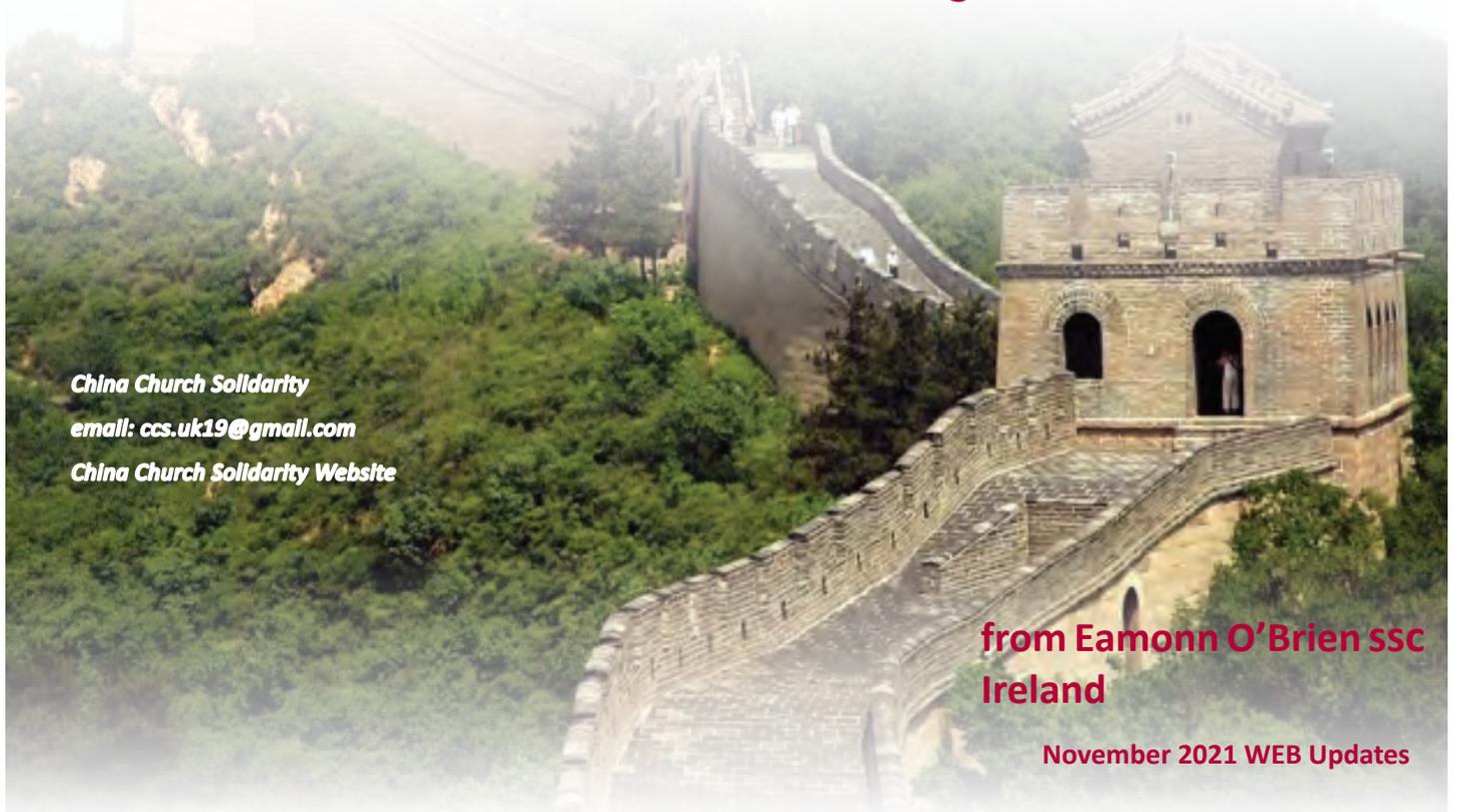
Let us remember those who are sick and those we have lost; may God's strength and presence give them comfort and peace. May it also soothe those who are in pain and suffering.



Sainiana Tamatawale
Hong Kong
for the Lay Mission Leadership Team



China Church Solidarity Website



China Church Solidarity
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China Church Solidarity Website

**from Eamonn O'Brien SSC
Ireland**

November 2021 WEB Updates

Vatican-China Update

Vatican should talk to China—but not at any price; Pope wants to continue dialogue with China despite challenges; Vatican-China pact and Taiwan's diplomatic isolation.

Catholic Church Updates

14th International Verbiest Conference: Recordings (Please see the website home page); Big heart and wide horizon, the Hong Kong bishop-elect's coat of arms; China accelerates Sinicisation of Catholic Church; Macau Catholic university to admit students from mainland China; Maryknoll Sisters celebrate 100 years of ministry in China; New bishop ordained in China; China releases *kidnapped* Vatican-approved bishop; Promote lay catechists to be witnesses of Christ in today's society; The Social Apostolate: An important ministry in our Chinese province; Chinese bishop who braved Cultural Revolution dies at 99.

Protestant Updates

The pandemic's impact on Sunday school in China; China orders Christians to pray for Communist martyrs; The Church of Almighty God is banned in China for its anti-government stance.

China Today Updates

China's National Day is no cause for celebration; Fan Shouyi: The first Chinese person to tell of the West; On the significance of the Chinese understanding of technology in the context of the international discussion on environment; Europe stands with Taiwan, says visiting delegation; Confucius would have been a climate activist.

Religions Update

China is removing domes from mosques as part of a push to make them more Chinese.

Human Rights Update

Apple removes religious apps from App Store in China after complaints from officials.

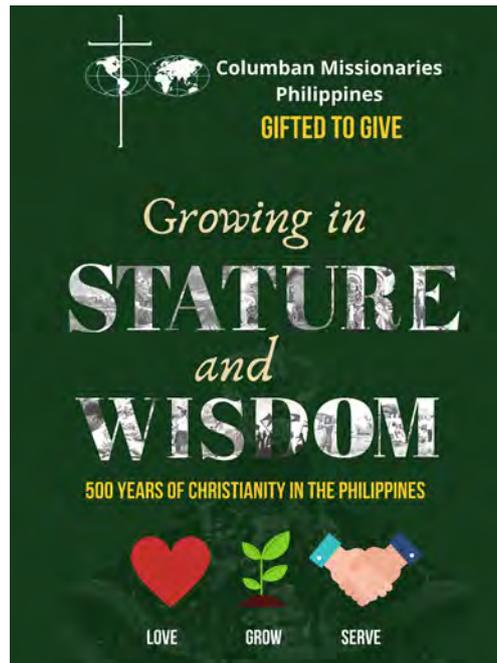
Click: <http://www.ccschina.co.uk/>

Sudden death and a surprise statue

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/43203>

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Quincentenary of Christian faith in the Philippines



This year marks the quincentenary of the arrival of the first Spanish Catholic missionaries in the Philippines and everything that that has entailed over the last 500 years. The Region of the Philippines has chosen to put together a simple collection of reflections by Columban priests, lay missionaries, students and co-workers in the region to mark this historical event.

These reflections endeavour to explore something of both the joys and the sorrows of what this event has meant for the Philippines over the last five centuries, and what it may mean for the Church's mission today and into the future. We hope you enjoy what we have put together here.

Paul Glynn
Director

Available at:

<http://columbanmission.org.ph/columban/500-years-of-christianity-in-the-philippines>

Climate pilgrims converge on Glasgow



Ellen Teague
co-worker
United Kingdom

Ellen Teague, a London-based freelance Catholic journalist, writes and campaigns on justice, peace and ecology issues. She was sponsored by the Society to go to Glasgow and report on COP26.

The following consists of excerpts of her blog published daily in full on the website of the Independent Catholic News, England: <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/>

Central Glasgow was ablaze with colour and vibrant with drumming as more than 500 climate pilgrims made their way through Saturday shoppers on October 30 to highlight the walking pilgrimages converging on Glasgow from around the United Kingdom and Europe for the Conference of Parties (COP26) on Climate Change.

Climate Justice Now appeared on many of the banners carried by the pilgrims and supporters. Among the newer initiatives was a group of Harry Potter characters leading a huge black serpent carried by 22 people with *Capitalism* written on its side.

A *Coat of Hopes*, comprised of several hundred patches of rainbows, flowers and other images, as well as messages of hope, attracted considerable media attention. Each patch had been lovingly prepared by local communities throughout the United Kingdom.

Helen Elwes, from Bristol, brought a large painting depicting Our Lady as a protector of creation, *Mother of Mercy*.

The Young Christian Climate Network (YCCN) *Relay to COP* had covered a 1,200-mile route from Cornwall since June.

The *Camino to COP*, which left London in early September, had covered 450 miles and both reported 'hundreds of conversations' and 'profound engagement with faith communities'. Both stayed at churches or with other faith communities, spoke at services and ran educational events.

"I never thought I would get all the way," said one Camino walker, "and I wouldn't have, without the amazing navigators, stewards, support drivers and fellow walkers, and our lovely host communities."

The *Climate Pilgrims*, who walked across the United Kingdom in advance of the summit's opening, were joined by pilgrims from Sweden, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Poland, all walking under the banner *Pilgrim's Walk for Future*. All aimed to lobby the COP26 climate summit for a fair deal for the Global South, while also "providing time for deep thinking and reflection upon the lives we lead, particularly our throwaway culture."

The walks touched hearts and minds along the routes and a much wider community through reports on Twitter and Facebook. There were supporters alongside them on Satur-



A double rainbow hung over Glasgow on the eve of the COP26 gathering.

day from such groups as CAFOD, Christian Aid, Tearfund and Operation Noah. One group of three religious sisters were Columban, Carmelite and the Sisters of St Andrew.

High-powered faith delegations will be in the summit itself, but they are aware they have the full backing of grassroots faith communities, demonstrating the depth of commitment for climate justice.

On a Saturday morning, Melanie Nazareth of the Camino to COP, one of the 12 people walking the whole route, reflected that the last day was in the rain and the group took delight in seeing so many rainbows.

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Josh Evans was clapped as he revealed the full extent of the YCCN achievement: 2,500 walkers—mostly young Christians—took part and were supported by 130 churches across eight denominations. Not only supported, but overwhelmed with hospitality. Everybody laughed as he reported that ‘on one day, a group of walkers received three breakfasts’

“Rainbows that are so close we can almost touch them where they touch the ground, and one where the colours appeared twice as if a double dollop of hope was needed.” She added, “The thought is in my head that maybe we are walking as work to make manifest a covenant with God.”

On the Saturday evening, the closing service of the YCCN Relay to COP was held at St George’s Tron, Church of Scotland, in a building decorated with fairy lights and the boat that the young walkers brought with them every step of the way. Its sails made from materials sourced from countries badly affected by climate change.

More than 28,000 small origami prayer boats collected along the way were on display. We had tea and cake on the way into the church, before settling into a truly joyful service of popular hymn music from the St George’s Tron Band and reflections on the Relay. Its co-lead, Josh Evans, was clapped, as he revealed the full extent of the YCCN achievement: 2,500 walkers—mostly young Christians—took part and were supported by 130 churches across eight denominations. Not only supported, but overwhelmed with hospitality. Everybody laughed as he reported that “on one day, a group of walkers received three breakfasts.”

The young walkers were thanked for being prophetic and inspirational by Martin Johnstone, the COP26 ambassador for Glasgow Churches Together. In the final prayer, co-lead, Rachel Mander, spoke of “the Lord who sets us out on crazy journeys” and bringing before the Lord, “all the people for whom this COP26 conference really matters.”

And this evening, many churches across the United Kingdom rang their bells between 6.00pm and 6.30pm to show support for climate action, particularly for the vulnerable communities in the global south that are already suffering terribly from the impact of a warming world.

Let’s hope the world leaders are listening!

We are not drowning, we are fighting

There were strong words from United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres. He warned that we are still “treating nature as a toilet” and “still careering towards climate catastrophe, with a rise above two degrees.” He suggested that “young people know it and vulnerable island states live it.”

He warned that “the sirens have sounded” and urged that countries must revisit their climate policies often. “This COP must be a focus for solidarity and richer countries to offer more overseas development aid,” he added.

This was picked up by Indigenous activist, Txai Suruí, from Brazil, who also felt that “Earth is speaking to us” and our targets for action “are not 2030 or 2050, but now.” She told delegates that in her Amazonian home “animals are disappearing, the rivers are dying and our plants don’t flower.”

Twenty-three-year-old Samoan climate activist, Brianna Fruean, described what it felt like to speak up for Pacific islanders whose homes and way of life are under threat from rising sea levels.

With a gorgeous flower in her hair and an equally gorgeous smile, she begged the political leaders in front of her “to have the political will to do the right thing because a two-degree temperature rise could mean the end, while 1.5 degrees means a fighting chance.”

She reported that the youth of the Pacific have rallied behind the slogan, “We are not drowning, we are fighting.”

But perhaps the most famous young climate activist, Greta Thunberg, voiced caution about expecting too much from COP26. Speaking at a *Fridays for Future* meeting of young activists near the COP26 site, she said, “Inside COP, there are just politicians and people in power pretending to take our future seriously, pretending to take the present seriously of the people who are being affected already today by the climate crisis. Change is not going to come from inside there.”

The Church

The Church has a close ear to local communities and a commitment to “hear the cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor,” as *Laudato Si* put it, which have both been worsened by our warming planet.

Meanwhile, grassroots groups were also campaigning today. Catholics on six continents united ahead of COP26 to push the *Healthy Planet, Healthy People* petition. I signed it some months ago myself, and Columban missionaries were amongst those promoting it. The petition was handed over to COP26 this evening during an interfaith event at St George’s Tron Church in Glasgow.

The church was packed with representatives of the *Laudato Si* Movement, Lutheran World Federation, Islamic Relief and others. More than 150 people joined online from as far afield as New York, Quito, Rome, Brasilia, Nairobi and the Holy Cross Church in Vancouver.

“The young, who in recent years have strongly urged us to act, will only inherit the planet we choose to leave to them, based on the concrete choices we make today,” Pope Francis said in his message to COP26, read out today in the main conference hall by Cardinal Parolin.

Lorna Gold, of the *Laudato Si* Movement, was one of those handing over the signatures of more than 115,000 individuals and 432 partners. The petition has been an initiative of the Movement to promote the implementation of the pope’s encyclical, *Laudato Si*.

A key call is to recognise human-induced climate change and biodiversity as part of one and the same crisis and to implement nature-based solutions. An accompanying letter

‘The young, who in recent years have strongly urged us to act, will only inherit the planet we choose to leave to them, based on the concrete choices we make today’



read, “It is our responsibility as Catholics to lift up the voices of the most vulnerable and advocate on their behalf.”

And let’s remember thousands of initiatives at a local level, ranging from a candle-light procession for COP26 in London by the Westminster Justice and Peace, to a COP26 poster displayed outside St Benedict’s Church in Garforth, to prayers for the summit’s success being said in parishes globally.

Greenwash?

The term *greenwashing* was heard over and over again. This is an environmentalists’ term for an organisation’s false portrayal of itself as environmentally friendly. Some activists contend that corporations and many governments participating in the climate summit are guilty of just that, by paying lip service to combating climate change while continuing with business as usual.

Despite the fact that greenhouse gas emissions need to drop sharply within the next few years, the world’s governments continue to support the fossil-fuel industry to the tune of US\$11 million per minute, according to a new analysis from the International Monetary Fund. Yet, pressure is building up for this to change, not least from the growing divestment policy of faith groups.

One day at the summit, the key theme was finance. Banks and asset managers representing 40 per cent of the world’s financial assets, involving 450 firms across 45 countries, pledged to meet the goals set out in the Paris Climate Agreement.

Responding to chancellor, Rishi Sunak’s *finance day* speech, Christian Aid’s Jennifer Larbie said, “This announcement does little to shift the dial now on the trillions still flowing into fossil fuel projects every day, with the deadliest of impacts borne by developing countries.”

Yeb Sano, a well-known environmental activist from the Philippines, said in a tweet today, to “beware of those supporting carbon markets, especially offsets, as a solution to the climate crisis.” He felt “they don’t grasp the true transformation required to fulfil the Paris goals.”

Carbon credits could, for example, be generated by planting trees or buying up existing forests, as a way to *offset* a dirty power project on the other side of the world or further oil development, such as Total, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

There was another contentious area revealed when leaders of more than 100 countries vowed to end deforestation

by 2030. Frontline communities want action well before that! But will world leaders stick to the promise made?

Regarding Brazil, it is expected that the motivation of the president, Jair Bolsonaro, comes more from his desire to claw back public support than to save the rainforest.

Deforestation of the Brazilian Amazon has soared since he took office in 2019. The Bolsonaro administration slashed funding to Brazil’s environmental agency, accused environmental non-government organisations of starting fires, and sacked the head of Brazil’s National Institute for Space Research when it released an unflattering report on deforestation. Not much sign then that the president has had an *ecological conversion*.

War causes climate change and climate change causes war

Militaries and the industries that support them are among the world’s largest polluters, but are often exempt from having to report and reduce their emissions that are causing global warming.

Below are some points made at a public meeting in central Glasgow:

- Dr Stuart Parkinson, of Scientists for Global Responsibility, asked: Does the United Kingdom government really prioritise tackling the climate crisis? If so, why does it spend over seven times more on its military than on its Net-Zero Strategy?
- Modern militaries are completely dependent on fossil fuels with no sign of realistic or practical Net-Zero plans. A fundamental question is: how should ‘defence’ look in a post-carbon, climate-changed world? As the richer nations, themselves responsible for the historic burden of greenhouse gas emissions, struggle to raise US\$100 billion in annual climate finance for poorer nations, it is worth noting that just one year of global military spending (US\$2 trillion) would deliver 20 years of international climate finance.
- Militaries are major greenhouse gas emitters and typically the largest energy consumers among any government agency. Because militaries have been excluded from compulsory reporting obligations since Kyoto, data

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on global military emissions is very limited. In spite of the scale of their emissions, the military's contribution to climate change impact is not part of official COP26 discussions in November 2021.

- A letter and petition has been sent to COP26 calling for military greenhouse gas emissions to be on the agenda for COP27 next year. Pax Christi England and Wales, Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, MAW, Peace Pledge Union and Scientists for Global Responsibility were amongst more than 100 groups that had signed.
- Since this summit is identifying key polluters, it is disappointing not to hear any mention so far of the world's militaries and climate change.

Climate campaigning needs *faith, hope and love*

Jo Siedlecka, of Independent Catholic News, and I headed off to *24-Hours for the Climate*, a global vigil for Catholics and people of faith to pray and advocate for the success of COP26, which was roughly halfway through.

Every hour, a prayer experience themed around God's creation and ecological spirituality and the story of a community impacted on by climate change was broadcast. In the first few hours, participants experienced prayer with Assumption Sisters, a *Laudato Si'* Liturgical Dance from the Philippines, a *River Guardians* presentation from a CAFOD partner in Colombia, a Prayer for Creation and Catholic Student Action in Myitkyina diocese in the Union of Myanmar, and a climate reflection from Columban missionaries in Chile and Peru. Of course, teaching from Pope Francis featured.

In the afternoon, Glasgow Churches Together presented *Wisdom from the Global South* and the Glasgow Catholic Worker highlighted its regular witness against nuclear weapons at nearby Faslane Nuclear Base. *Growing Our Future* was presented by Jesuit Missions.

Evening prayer was led by CAFOD and Columban International Youth Encounter. During the night, participants experienced *Praying for a climate of peace* with Pax Christi of England and Wales and *Voices from the margins* from EcoJesuits in the Philippines.

A Typhoon Hainan survivor spoke about *Fossil fuel companies killed my family* and Columban eco-theologian, Sean McDonagh, gave an interview, *Climate Change and the Churches*.

It was interesting that similar thoughts were echoed this afternoon by 24-year-old Ugandan climate champion, Vanessa Nakate. Speaking at a huge youth march and rally through Glasgow she said, "We need to continue holding leaders accountable for their actions. We cannot keep quiet about climate injustice. Three things should stay with us as we continue to organise and mobilise—Faith, Hope and Love."

Tomorrow will see even bigger marches throughout the world. Columbans in the Pacific archipelago of Fiji reported that "we have Catholic University Students from many campuses marching tomorrow in support of COP26, organised by our Mission Office, and the archbishop will be giving a keynote address."

There is episcopal involvement here too. The vigil will con-

He warned against just 'painting ourselves greener than green' and suggested that 'we must combine our words and actions and respond to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor'



Father Joshtrom Kureethadam (left) with Ellen Teague.

clude tomorrow morning with a Mass celebrated by Bishop William Nolan, of Galloway and president of the Scotland Justice and Peace, with the homily delivered by Bishop John Arnold, of Salford, lead bishop for the environment in England and Wales. We will then be blessed and sent forth for the Glasgow march. Hundreds of thousands are expected in Glasgow and London.

We are all environmentalists now

"We are all environmentalists now," the episcopal chairperson of the Scotland Justice and Peace said at Sunday Mass, "but we must put our beliefs into practice." Bishop William Nolan, of Galloway, was giving the homily at St Aloysius Jesuit church in Glasgow, which hosted a COP26 delegates' Mass halfway through the conference.

Bishop Hugh Gilbert OSB, of Aberdeen, chairperson of the Scottish Bishops Conference, was the main celebrant, alongside six out of the eight Scottish Catholic bishops and more than 20 priests.

Other concelebrants included the papal nuncio, Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, Father Damian Howard SJ, provincial of Jesuits in Britain; Father Roger Dawson SJ, superior of the Jesuits in Scotland; Father Gerard Mitchell SJ, parish priest of St Aloysius; and Father Joshtrom (Josh) Isaac Kureethadam, coordinator of Ecology and Creation at the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and a member of the Vatican delegation to COP26.

The Mass was ticketed, so I was lucky to get in! Meeting Father Josh was one highlight. Bishop Nolan's homily was another and he received spontaneous applause from the congregation. He warned against just "painting ourselves greener than green" and suggested that "we must combine our words and actions and respond to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor."

There were at least three references to these famous words of Pope Francis in his 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si*. Bishop Nolan warned against thinking that technology will solve the problem of climate change and suggested that we must fundamentally review our lifestyles.

“Are we citizens or consumers?” he asked; “Surely our purpose is more than consuming.” Drawing heavily on the Church’s social teaching he reminded the congregation, “Earth’s resources are finite and not just to be used by the powerful and rich.”

Scattered through the congregation were a lot of tired people from the previous day’s long climate march, which some have jokingly called *soggy solidarity*.

A special COP26 service featuring Christian Churches and organisations from around the world was held at the 12th century Glasgow Cathedral. The event, organised by Glasgow Churches Together, was attended by guests from countries including Australia, Fiji and Zimbabwe in a show of ecumenical solidarity for global climate justice.

Many of those who took part were from nations that are already bearing the brunt of climate change. Faith leaders contributing to the service represented the All Africa Conference of Churches, Pacific Conference of Churches, Anglican Communion, Catholic Church, Orthodox Church, World Communion of Reformed Churches, World Council of Churches, Eco-Congregation Scotland and the Scottish Church Leaders’ Forum. Representatives from the Young Christian Climate Network (YCCN) and the Camino to COP were also in the congregation.

A four-day *People’s Summit* was run from November 7 to 10 with sessions online covering such issues as *Extractivism Industries, Climate Colonialism and Community Alternatives* and *No Climate Justice without Social Justice*. An Operation Noah event saw leading faith thinkers and campaigners discussing fossil fuel divestment and climate justice. If you find such discussions fascinating, which I do, it is a feast of dialogue and advocacy before COP26 comes up with its report at the end of the week and the long-term work to tackle climate change will really get going.

Pacific islands

Filipinos marked eight years since Typhoon Haiyan devastated the Philippines. “We are still living in the same vulnerability, in the same trauma,” a Filipino delegate at the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow said.

Typhoon Haiyan was one of the most powerful tropical cyclones ever recorded. With wind speeds of up to 195 miles per hour, buildings in the Visayas were flattened and 6,340 Filipinos were killed. It heralded a new era of this kind of disaster.

The Philippines is a nation of islands in the Western Pacific where the more severe weather of a warming world will have, and indeed is having, a profound impact.

Speaking on the anniversary of the typhoon, Philippine Bishop Crispin Varquez, of Borongan, said that since so many calamities are related to climate change, he was asking the public “to hear the cry of our planet for common action to save our common home.” He urged Filipinos to heed Pope Francis’ call for *ecological conversion*.

Another nation in trouble is the Pacific island archipelago of Tuvalu, which has one of the most visually dramatic pavilions in the main conference centre at COP26, known as the Blue Zone.

It is displaying an art installation of polar bears wearing



Notre Dame Sister Dorothy Strang was murdered in the forests of Brazil in 2005. For 40 years, she had dedicated her life to bringing faith and justice to the peasant settlers.

life jackets standing on melting ice and a penguin strung up beside them. They are the work of Taiwanese artist, Vincent J F Huang, who was in the pavilion, alongside Tuvalu’s finance minister, Seve Paeniu, when I visited.

It is easy to presume that country delegates to COP26 are politicians divorced from the frontlines of the climate crisis. However, Seve Paeniu was very far from this stereotype. He told all who would listen that “we are living climate change” and feared for the fate of his low-lying atoll home and the population of 11,000 people.

“Islands are disappearing and we are literally sinking,” he said, standing before the exhibit. Huang showed some of his other work. One showed Michelangelo’s Pieta beside his own Pieta showing a polar bear cradling a dead penguin. Powerful stuff, demonstrating the link between melting icecaps and sea level rise.

Pacific islanders at risk of rising sea levels are struggling to be heard at the climate summit in Glasgow as the COVID-19 pandemic hampers long distance travel. Only three Pacific leaders, from Palau, Fiji and Tuvalu, have travelled to make speeches pressing for deep cuts in greenhouse gases by major emitters, the foremost of which are China and the United States. Usually, almost all the leaders of the 14 Pacific island states come to the annual talks.

The Glasgow summit was trying to keep alive the toughest goal of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Global surface temperatures are already up 1.2 degrees.

Pacific islanders want US\$750 billion a year in climate finance in the second half of the decade, far above unmet pledges by developed nations to provide US\$100 billion annually by 2020.

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Fossil fuel representation

Yet, unfortunately, the fossil fuel industry has a powerful presence at COP26, mostly behind the scenes. In fact, Global Witness reports that if the fossil fuel industry was a country, it would have by far the largest number of delegates—over 500 lobbyists. This is a real problem for a landmark conference that must listen most attentively to the voices of victims demanding urgent climate action.

It is to the credit of the Christian Churches and other faiths that they are lifting the voices of the smaller nations and communities and supporting their call for a just transition and divestment from fossil fuels. Operation Noah held an online event from COP26, *Fossil fuel divestment, climate justice and a just transition for all*.

Lorna Gold of the Laudato Si Movement said, “The impact of faith institutions that have divested has been very, very significant... they roughly represent 35 per cent of all institutions that have divested... and Catholic institutions make up a disproportionate number.”

The Pacific island nations had powerful support today from former president of the United States, Barack Obama. The 60-year-old, who grew up on the island state of Hawaii, spoke at COP26 to leaders and delegates from Pacific island nations. He described himself as an *island kid* and said the islands are now “threatened more than ever” by global warming.

Obama described island states as the “canary in the coalmine” for climate change, which will suffer the most catastrophic effects of global warming before other countries. Obama ended his speech with a Hawaiian proverb, urging people to unite to move forward. “It’s a reminder that if you all want to paddle a canoe you’d better all be rowing in the same direction,” he said, “and at the same time, every oar has to move in unison.”

Climate solutions need to be based around women

What an honour to meet CAFOD partner, Claudelice Silva dos Santos, walking alongside Maria Elena Arana of CAFOD at the Climate March in Glasgow. I was introduced to this smiling woman, waving to the young people hanging out of windows along the route, and had no idea then of the sacrifices she has made to protect the Earth and the poor.

A land defender from Pará, in the Brazilian Amazon, Claudelice has experienced intimidation and violence firsthand. Her brother and sister-in-law were both murdered 10 years ago for their resistance to illegal logging. She describes going through days when, “I couldn’t even get out of bed for fear of being shot because of the death threats I was getting.” And yet, she can say, “I overcame all this because we believe change is possible.”

Sadly, so many environmental champions only become widely known because they have been murdered. Sister Dorothy Stang and Berta Cáceres are two women that spring to mind. Both their lives and deaths were a witness to what Pope Francis calls “the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor.” Their martyrdom embodies the intimate connection between creation justice and social justice for the poor that is at the heart of Francis’ encyclical, *Laudato Si’*.

The theme that day at COP26 was *Gender*. Well, half the day! The United Nations reported that women and girls, par-

ticularly those facing intersecting inequalities, are disproportionately impacted on by climate change, but they are also critical leaders at all levels of climate action, from local communities to global forums.

Prominent young women activists, such as Greta Thunberg and Vanessa Nakate, have made headlines this week, but advocacy is just one area where women have been active.

On the Greenfaith webinar from Glasgow, some interesting statistics were highlighted. Women produce more than 50 percent of the world’s food, but have few rights over the land they tend.

They have vast indigenous knowledge of local plant species and links with weather patterns, helping them provide a wide variety of nutritious food for their families, but this knowledge is often overlooked by those outside their communities. Women and the girl child are traditionally responsible for water portage and securing fuelwood, which are both impaired by climate change.

Nearly 200 participants doubted whether COP26 could address the climate crisis successfully because “solutions need to be based around women”, a speaker from Indonesia commented. She felt COP26 is “too white, too male, too elite” and that “plans have locked out faith communities.” Women joining in felt it is simply common sense to protect and nurture the fruitful resources we still have, such as forests, and to put resources into clean renewable energy.

I also attended a COP26 Coalition People’s Summit event titled, *Feminist Pathways towards a Just and Equitable Transition*. Participants entered the online gathering from Zimbabwe, Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Thailand, Nepal, Estonia, the Netherlands, France, Italy, and the United States. And they had one thing in common. They were nearly all women.

I wondered why so many men have an allergy to the word feminist. There was a call for equality to be built into transition plans and for huge military budgets to be diverted to paying for a sustainable future. Wanun Permpibul, director of Climate Watch Thailand, called for “power to move from the hands of the corporates to the hands of those on the ground, especially women.”

In case you were wondering about the second half of the day’s COP26 programme, it was *Science and Innovation*, billed as “demonstrating that science and innovation can deliver climate solutions.” The United Kingdom government announced it will give £210 million backing for mini nuclear reactors “to hit net zero more quickly”.

Crunch time and getting crunched

Mary Robinson, of The Elders, was tearful as she told *Sky News* that “we are not aligned to 1.5 Celsius at the moment” although “to be on track for this is doable.” She felt political commitment “needs a crisis mindset that cares about the future of humanity and our beautiful world.”

A frustrated Robinson blamed the leaders of Brazil, Australia and Saudi Arabia in particular of not being in crisis mode and accused the last as consistently taking the language of gender and human rights out of international climate agreements.

Saudi Arabia is part of the huge fossil fuel lobby at COP26, and she wanted this challenged. She hoped peoples on the

frontline of climate change and transition would be listened to more seriously. She also hoped Greta Thunberg would be proved wrong in her view that the conference would simply be *Blah Blah Blah*.

It was crunch time as the first draft of the COP26 declaration was made public and the summit moved into its final days. The dichotomy between the powerful and the vulnerable was evident. It was Transport Day at COP26, and leading car manufacturers were given a platform to air their promises. Volvo called electric vehicles “a core part of future planning” and Uber wanted to “clean up urban transport”.

Meanwhile, the London Mining Network was tweeting from a protest outside the conference entrance. Indigenous and mining activists gathered in the cold under the banner, *SAY NO to dirty mining our way to clean energy*. Speakers from Indonesia, Guyana and the Philippines, as well as representatives of the Neskonlith and Nuxalk First Nations called for the energy transition to be centred on “human rights, community consent, transformative solutions.”

We should be aware of the complexity around the issue of what eco-theologian Thomas Berry called the *great work* of transitioning. My family is very proud of our electric car, but I now know that a huge increase in mining of lithium—used in electric cars—is controversial.

Mapuche Indians in Chile report that extensive lithium mining is already destroying areas used by nesting flamingos and community agriculture and they want to regain control of their land and food production.

They are trying to resist being crunched in the world’s system and reject such terms as *green extractivism* and *climate smart mining* that are now commonly used by mining corporations. There are no benchmarks to measure these concepts. The mining protesters do not want to become *sacrifice communities* in the name of addressing climate change and providing car manufacturers with the raw materials to make their transitional vehicles.

Indigenous representatives also delivered a letter to the United States Consulate in Glasgow, host of his nation’s delegation, demanding it “build back fossil free”. They left the letter in the door and an oil rig on the front steps!

On transport, there were three sectors: ground transportation, maritime transport and aviation. Of these, planes are especially problematic.

Not only do they produce greenhouse gases, including water vapour, they release them high in the atmosphere, where their climate impact is magnified. More needs to be done to reduce the need for travel and to improve local public transport.

Under the Paris agreement of the 2015 (COP21) summit, countries did not have to include international aviation or maritime emissions in their national contributions. There was no direct mention of cars either, leaving those emissions to countries to address in their individual action plans.

There are no easy answers. A coalition of 346 organisations from 78 countries issued a joint statement warning that “the hydropower industry is gearing up for a massive greenwashing effort to present its destructive product—which has been shown time and again to destroy ecosystems and communities—as the pathway out of our predicaments.”



Greta Thunberg

While highlighting the harm of dams—from exacerbating methane emissions and jeopardising freshwater species to violating the human rights of affected communities—the statement emphasised that, “free-flowing rivers and natural lakes have immense value for the welfare of the ecosystems they sustain, humankind, and survival on the planet.”

And it is not only in the global south where you find disempowered communities facing economic and military might. Glasgow has seen several *Toxic Tours* showing that within a few miles of the COP26 conference are the offices of Teekay Shipping—an oil and gas shipping company—and two banks that fund fossil fuels—PG Morgan Chase and Barclays Bank.

Close by is the Strathclyde Pension Fund, Scotland’s richest pension fund, which is estimated to have £800 million-worth of investments in fossil fuel companies. Further afield, the Grangemouth oil refinery complex on the Firth of Forth is the largest climate polluter in Scotland. Its gas flares and cooling towers are visible across the Scottish Lowlands.

The Mossmorran Petrochemical facilities—operated by Shell and ExxonMobil—output significant greenhouse gas and cause ill health to the local community.

Faslane, the home of Britain’s expensive and dangerous nuclear weapons, is only 26 miles from Glasgow. The city itself has also seen a demonstration outside BAE Systems because, in the words of one protester, “our governments have allowed spending on arms to outstrip spending on climate solutions.”

The mismatch between political pledges and what is happening in the natural world at this crucial period drew the British prime minister, Boris Johnson, back to COP26, travelling by train this time! While he was back at the summit The Climate Coalition, the United Kingdom’s largest grouping of campaigners on climate change, called for finalising a deal that keeps 1.5 degrees Celsius alive, protects nature and delivers finance to support those on the frontline.

“We need to power on through the blockages,” Johnson said. However, he stopped short of spelling them out as Mary Robinson did in the morning.

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Is pork barrelling the future for democracy?

Mike Seccombe

The Saturday Paper

submitted by

Peter Woodruff ssc

Australia

This article was first published in the print edition of The Saturday Paper, Australia, on 6 November 2021, under the headline, Berejiklian 'rorts' nothing on the Morrison government's.

It describes in some detail the corruption of process under the present Australian Federal Government

Rort is an Australian expression for *trickery* or *financial dishonesty*.

In her final press conference as premier of the Australian state of New South Wales to announce her resignation following the revelation she was under investigation by the Independent Commission Against Corruption, Gladys Berejiklian wanted to make one point categorically.

"I have always," she said, "acted with the highest level of integrity. History will demonstrate that I have always executed my duties with the highest degree of integrity for the benefit of the people of New South Wales."

In her evidence before the Independent Commission, she made the same point, over and over, sometimes combatively, sometimes plaintively. She stressed it to the media after she left the commission: she had always acted in the best interests of the people.

To believe such a claim, you have to believe, as Berejiklian apparently does, that the election of a Coalition government is in the best interests of the people, regardless of how much pork barrelling has to be done to achieve that result.

The extent to which she conflated the interests of the people with the interests of her government was most obvious when she was questioned over her promise to her secret lover, Daryl Maguire – after he had resigned in disgrace from his seat of Wagga Wagga—that she would "throw money at Wagga, don't you worry about that" to ensure it was retained by the Liberal Party.

And throw money she did—to the



A dejected state premier, Gladys Berejiklian, at a hearing of the Independent Commission Against Corruption

'It's not something the community likes... but it's an accusation I will wear,' she said. 'It's not unique to our government. It's not an illegal practice. Unfortunately, it does happen from time to time...'

point where, as counsel assisting the Independent Commission, Scott Robertson, noted, the contest for the seat was being seen less as a by-election than a *buy-election*.

He asked whether the phrase "throw money at Wagga" meant spending money to win, regardless of the merits of individual projects. Berejiklian said projects could be both beneficial to the community and of political benefit.

Except that in the case of two projects of particular interest to the Independent Commission, championed by

Maguire, there was strong evidence they were not of benefit to the community. They had been assessed by public service experts and found not to stack up on a cost–benefit basis.

One of the grant applications, from a gun club for \$5.5 million, was subsequently massaged into acceptability by private contractors brought in at taxpayers' expense.

In her evidence, Berejiklian made no bones about pork barrelling. Rural and regional New South Wales was, as she put it, "on fire" with hostility towards

This week, Berejiklian's successor, Dominic Perrottet, ordered a review of the government's processes for awarding taxpayer-funded grants, saying he did not share her views on the practice, and promising that, in future, allocations would be made according to 'key principles of transparency, accountability and probity'

her government around the time the grants were made. It had to be bought off.

How better to respond to the insurgent Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party—which had recently won another by-election, for the (nearby) seat of Orange—than by throwing money at a gun club.

And as for due bureaucratic process designed to ensure the money was well spent, she said that “often in elections” announcements were made outside normal processes, even against departmental advice.

In essence, her response to suggestions she had engaged in corrupt conduct was that her behaviour was not corruption—it was politics.

“With Morrison, we’ve got this quite different model of politics, which is about patronage, which is about giving money to people who support me, stripping resources from people who don’t support me.”

A J Brown, professor of public policy at Griffith University, points out that the spending of public money “purely or primarily to win office or re-election” is not just pork barrelling, but a form of “indirect political bribery”.

A report released last week by the Tasmanian Integrity Commission drew the same conclusion: “... pork barrelling of groups of people could be just as unethical as bribing an individual for their vote”.

But Berejiklian sees nothing very wrong with it. She said as much in November last year, when she conceded that \$140 million in grants to councils approved in the nine months before the March 2019 state election amounted to pork barrelling.

“It’s not something the community likes... but it’s an accusation I will wear,” she said. “It’s not unique to our government. It’s not an illegal practice. Unfortunately, it does happen from time to time...”

Her then deputy, John Barilaro, who quit politics days after Berejiklian resigned, was even more brazen at the

last election, happily adopting the moniker “Pork-barrel-aro”.

This week, Berejiklian’s successor, Dominic Perrottet, ordered a review of the government’s processes for awarding taxpayer-funded grants, saying he did not share her views on the practice, and promising that, in future, allocations would be made according to “key principles of transparency, accountability and probity”.

Assuming he is sincere, this would be a welcome reversal of a worrying trend. Despite Berejiklian suggesting this kind of electoral bribery has always happened and that everyone does it, the reality is that it is happening on a far larger scale in recent times, and her side of politics is the worst offender.

Case in point is the Morrison government at the last election.

Brown sees that campaign as a low point in Australian public administration. The Morrison government shovelled hundreds of millions of dollars into various dodgy grant schemes, with no oversight or eligibility criteria.

There was more than \$100 million in sports grants, overwhelmingly directed to electorates either held by the government or marginal enough that they hoped to win it for them. Analysis by the Auditor-General found 73 per cent of the funded projects were not recommended by Sport Australia. Worthy projects missed out. Instead of allocating money on the basis of need, Sport Minister, Bridget McKenzie, in consultation with Morrison’s office, allocated it with the aid of a colour-coded spreadsheet.

McKenzie ultimately paid a price for the so-called *sports rorts* affair, briefly losing her place in the ministry. But that was because she was a member of a gun club that received a grant, not because of her role in the wider scandal.

Then there was the \$660 million commuter car parks scheme, which saw \$389 million allocated just one day before Morrison called the

election. Two-thirds of the money went to projects in Melbourne electorates the government deemed vital to its re-election. In at least one case, Morrison authorised the use of \$15 million of taxpayer funds to upgrade a car park simply by issuing a press release.

These are just two programmes the audit office has examined. Investigations by journalists and political opponents have pointed at other programmes, such as the Safer Communities programme, Building Better Regions Fund and the Community Grants programme, which delivered money disproportionately to government or marginal seats. Billions of dollars were involved, in total.

Brown is appalled at the assertion that a mere media release, absent of any due consideration of the merits of a project, “in and of itself gives legal authority, and it has to be done”. He says, “It’s just bizarre.”

Lindy Edwards, a senior lecturer in international and political studies at the University of New South Wales Canberra, says it is part and parcel of a “quite different style” of politics that eschews policy substance and traditional sources of policy advice in the bureaucracy, while “thinking more about the announcement and how the announcement makes them look”.

She says when she worked at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, “the mantra was ‘good policies are good politics.’” That’s changed.

“I think what we’re seeing at the moment is completely divorced from that,” she says. “With Morrison, we’ve got this quite different model of politics, which is about patronage, which is about giving money to people who support me, stripping resources from people who don’t support me.”

Of course, Berejiklian was right when

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she told the Independent Commission both sides of politics have resorted to pork barrelling.

One example frequently referred to by those who would suggest it has always been this way is the original “sports rorts” scandal that took place during the prime ministership of Paul Keating (1991 to 1996).

It involved grants handed out through the Community Cultural, Recreational and Sporting Facilities Programme, which had been initiated by Labor Right power-broker, Graham Richardson, and inherited by his factional colleague, Ros Kelly.

In December 1993, an Auditor-General’s examination could find no documentation to support the allocation of \$30 million worth of grants. The opposition, then led by John Hewson, claimed the money had been funnelled into Labor seats ahead of that year’s election.

At a senate inquiry, Kelly admitted she had allocated funding solely on the basis of verbal advice from her staff, with the aid of a “great big whiteboard” in her office, which was subsequently erased.

In some ways, the circumstances of Kelly’s sports rorts and the recent programme run by McKenzie were remarkably similar—although McKenzie had better technology available to her to compose her colour-coded spreadsheets.

But there were also significant differences. In the latter case, there was a documented process showing McKenzie overrode departmental advice—and also that the prime minister’s office was deeply involved.

But the biggest difference was the consequences. In the face of public outrage, Kelly lost her ministry and subsequently quit politics. At the resultant by-election, held a year after the scandal began, Labor lost with a 16.1 per cent swing against it.

Public anger endured.

In the more recent case, Morrison commissioned a report from Australia’s top public servant, the head of the Department of the Prime Minister and



Australian prime minister, Scott Morrison, on the offensive in the lower house of parliament.

Cabinet and former chief of his personal staff, Phil Gaetjens.

Morrison released only a summary of it, which flatly contradicted the Auditor-General’s conclusion that money was allocated for political purposes. In due course McKenzie returned to the ministry and to cabinet. Morrison made the political calculation that the public had moved on.

Terry Moran, head of the prime minister’s department for three-and-a-half years from 2008 to 2011, is troubled by these developments.

“The internal checks and balances—which are not well understood – have started to break down,” he says.

It is not just that the government is prepared to subvert traditional process by using unprecedented amounts of taxpayer money to party political ends; it is that it has become dangerous for public servants to insist proper process be observed.

“What’s happened at the federal level is that if you’re not accommodating of ministers, you’re endangering your job,” Moran says. “If you won’t take the nods and nudges to favour one proposal over another, and provide advice accordingly, you’re endangering your relationship with the minister. That used not to be the case.”

Moran sees two big dangers in this. The first is to the quality of policy-making. “The public service is strong when it’s got people who can get things done,

and also people who can think ahead—strategic thinkers. And right at the moment, large parts of the public service in Canberra are short of people who can think ahead or are brave enough to say what they think.”

The second danger is that the public will lose faith in the political process. Indeed, Moran sees this manifesting already. The fact that there has not been a “stunned public reaction” to the revelations of massive pork barrelling reflects “the prevailing view of politicians that the community has—they don’t trust them”.

He says one only has to look to the United States to see what happens when the electors become convinced that government is beholden to sectional interests, and that they are missing out: they gravitate to “populist insurgents”.

“So,” Moran says, “it’s not just bad practice in running often very expensive programmes—although that’s important enough—but it’s ultimately a means of undermining the public’s faith in politicians and how they run the country.”

Michael Keating, who headed a number of federal departments including Finance, and who ran the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet through the original sports rorts scandal, offers historical perspective on the relationship between the government and its public service, and the balance

‘The public service is strong when it’s got people who can get things done, and also people who can think ahead—strategic thinkers. And right at the moment, large parts of the public service in Canberra are short of people who can think ahead or are brave enough to say what they think’

between bureaucratic independence of, and responsiveness to, government.

Of course, he says, ministers should have discretion in how public money is spent; it is they who are elected, not public servants. In general, the responsibility of public servants is to give their best advice and then keep their counsel if that advice is not heeded.

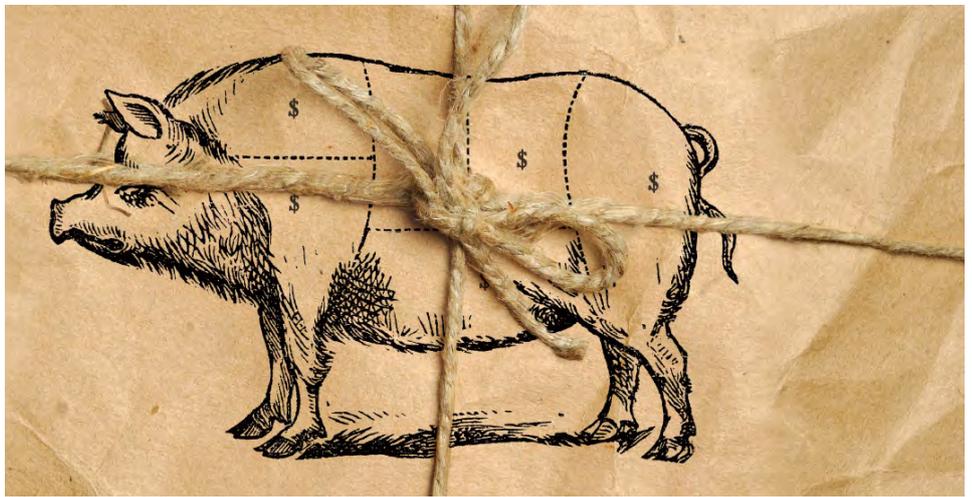
“But I think if the government breaks the law, your responsibility goes further,” he says. “In relation to things like sports grants, there are legal requirements. You really have to establish the criteria by which the grants are going to be allocated. Then the assessments against those criteria should be in writing. And if the minister decides to overrule, then he’s required to report to the minister of Finance, giving reasons.

“I think, personally, the minister of Finance should be required to report all such instances. That’s not a requirement, I think it should be... “In the end, I think you’ve got to be prepared to put your job on the line where the law’s being broken. You’ve got to insist that the minister follows the law. And I think in the old days, we would have. I’m a former secretary of the Department of Finance, and we thought we had a special responsibility for insisting the laws be adhered to. We had a lot to do with creating the law. “And in those days, ministers would have supported us. I’m bloody sure Peter Walsh and Ralph Willis, who were ministers I served under, would have supported me.”

But Scott Morrison has little apparent regard for frank and fearless advice or traditional notions of bureaucratic independence. He made that quite clear early in his prime ministership, both directly to departmental secretaries and publicly.

In an address to the Institute of Public Administration Australia in August 2019, he emphasised that the public service was to focus on delivering on the government’s priorities, and be more “responsive” to ministers and the “quiet Australians”. The subtext was clear: shut up and do as you are told.

“This,” Keating says, “is a different sort of government to the (previous prime ministers) [Malcolm] Turnbull or even the [Tony] Abbott governments in that respect. Morrison has a very different approach.”



... one only has to look to the United States to see what happens when the electors become convinced that government is beholden to sectional interests, and that they are missing out: they gravitate to ‘populist insurgents’

Morrison’s comments about the role of the public service were made just ahead of the release of a comprehensive review of the public service, headed by businessman, David Thodey, and commissioned when Malcolm Turnbull was prime minister.

Michael Keating made submissions and had discussions with Thodey.

“I think he was persuaded that there was a degree of fear, which affected policy advice,” he says. “He made a number of recommendations, for want of a better phrase, to strengthen the position of public servants. And the government assiduously dumped a lot of them.”

More power has since been shifted from the bureaucracy to ministers and, worse, to ministerial advisers—commonly inexperienced in the ways of government and highly ideological.

Says Martin Parkinson, who was secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet under the former prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, and who followed him out the door after the Morrison coup: “This has been a problem for quite a period of time [but it] has gotten worse. There are way too many staffers with way too much power.”

The intercession of staffers—who are neither elected, nor independent—has fed distrust be-

tween ministers and bureaucrats. “In a Westminster system, it is quite clear that the most senior adviser to a minister is the secretary of the department,” Parkinson says. “And yet you get staffers who think that they have the power to direct bureaucrats. And unfortunately, I think there’s been not enough spine shown by bureaucrats.”

In summing up all that is increasingly wrong with contemporary political practice—the pork barrelling, the corruption of process, the autocratic behaviour of ministers and their staff—Parkinson searches for the right word.

“I just think there’s a much lesser understanding,” he says finally, “of... public probity.”

Probity is of course the quality of having strong moral principles. Perrottet promised it this week. Until she appeared before the Independent Commission, it was widely assumed Gladys Berejiklian had it.

It is not, however, a word many would associate with Morrison. And it certainly could not be attached to the actions of his government, which for corruption of processes and politicised allocation of funding hugely overshadow what is being investigated in New South Wales.

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Military absent without leave from COP26

Charles Rue ssc

Australia

Three realities

- The United States military is one of the largest polluters in history. It emits more climate-changing gases than most medium-sized countries. Its *defence* budget makes up about 40 percent of the US\$2 trillion of worldwide military expenditure.
- And the Conference of Parties (COP26) host, the United Kingdom, has the fifth largest military budget in the world. France reports on none of its military emissions. Even Norway is queuing up to buy the new-generation F-35 fighter jet, which reportedly burns 5,600 litres of fuel an hour, about equivalent to 1,900 cars.
- Australia is not exempt. Its 2021 military budget was \$44.62 billion, an increase. Sadly, its aid budget is decreasing, a mere one tenth of that spent on *security*, while its Pacific neighbours look for food and energy technologies, not submarines, and value a nuclear free status.

Reports to COP26 about the impact of militaries on climate change are largely missing. Following the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, most nations agreed not to report. Partial reports began after COP21 in Paris in 2015, but are often disguised under other headings—transport, overseas military activities or outsourcing to oil-rich regions and the like.

Ultimately, little can be done to green our militaries. Consumption and competition are at the military heart, whether armies are waging war, or marking their activities as *defensive*.

The big word is *security*. Its mindset rests on fear of neighbours and creating rivals, and can never be satiated. Climate solutions based on economic and military power only add fuel to the current climate threat.

There is some good news from Glasgow about coming to grips with the climate crisis—agreements to protect forests, cut carbon and methane emissions, and helping poorer countries to finance green technologies.

However, leaders at COP26 did not seem capable of looking to the culpability of the military in making the global climate crisis worse.

People of good will and faith need to challenge the negotiators and, thankfully, many did so in Glasgow.

Sixty years ago, Pope John XXIII started the modern emphasis of popes promoting peace. Most recently Pope Francis, writing on the human family in *Fratelli Tutti*, urged all



Countries are excused from including pollution from military activity in their carbon audits.

people to *dream of a renewed meeting of hearts, dialogue, justice and peace*.

In 2015, writing *On care for earth our common home* (*Laudato Si'*), he called for courage from all spheres of society and members of the human family to work together in facing the global climate crisis.

Pope Francis invites all people to *feel at home* on a shared earth (*Laudato Si'*, 151), and urges us to grow *a culture of shared life* (192).

References:

Military pollution is the skeleton in the west's climate closet

Johnathan Cook

8 November 2021

https://www.jonathan-cook.net/2021-11-08/military-pollution-climate/?fbclid=IwAR29uno_VoU_ShETQ2j_MTVfghiNZ-JOXkY2zex1RaGh6bKOaONFOe3hM1U

Russell Woodhouse
former Columban
Aotearoa/New Zealand

It has been 33 years now since I left Brazil and continued on a personal mission in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Born and raised in Maffra, East Gippsland, Victoria, Australia, I attended the seminary in North Turrumurra, Sydney, for a number of years.

My Overseas Training, as it was then called, was a two-year stint in Pakistan with classmate Dan O'Connor (from Hokitika), before returning to Australia in 1985. After completing further studies, I was ordained in 1986.

Two years later, I left the ordained ministry and went to Aotearoa/New Zealand. Since then my focus has been on supporting the indigenous Māori people through learning the Māori language and joining in the community life, especially at times of bereavement and memorials.

I initially lived in Ruatoki, Bay of Plenty, and participated in the local bi-lingual school, which was the first of its kind and set up in 1978. It was there I first learned *te reo Māori* language, which I then strengthened through teaching in a *Kohanga Reo* (Māori pre-school) and in a bi-lingual room in Turangi Primary School.

For the past 26 years, I have worked in Tongariro Prison in a variety of roles, the past five as an ecumenical chaplain. I have focussed on a ministry with Māori prisoners, especially helping them to reconnect with their *whanau* (pronounced *far-no*, meaning extended family, including tribal links), *whenua* (pronounced *fair-noo-ah*, meaning land) and *whakapapa* (pronounced *far-car-par-par*, meaning ancestral genealogy).

In my understanding, to be fully Māori means to have an ongoing connection with the extended family, including tribal links, land and ancestral genealogy. Without this, Māori prisoners have experienced ongoing alienation and trauma, partly as a result of colonisation and partly because of a compromised lifestyle.

They often have addictions to alcohol and other drugs, experienced violence, and been abusive in their personal partner relationships.

Along with my wife, Te Waiora Stirling Woodhouse, I work at the prison. *Te Waiora* (whose name means *Living Water*) is a tutor in literacy and numeracy. She is from the East Coast and has connections to five different tribes covering the North and South Islands.

She has many years' experience working as a teacher in Kawerau, and for a time in Minyerri, an aboriginal community south east of Katherine in the Northern Territory, Australia.

Two years ago, Te Waiora was called to have her *kauae moko* (chin tattoo) carved into her face.



Russell and Te Waiora Stirling Woodhouse.

The design represents two of her *kaitiaki* (guardians), the *ruru* (morepork or native owl) and the *whai* (stingray).

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Eighteen months later, I was also called to share in a *tā-moko* (a face-tattoo) to show my support for my wife, and as a recognition of my life lived with Māori over the past 33 years.

I have written a number of Gospel songs during my life, and one of the latest has the theme of Jesus' *pepeha* (pronounced *pair-pair-har*, identification of who you are).

When Māori introduce themselves, they classically refer to the prominent landmarks of their mountain, river, sea, *waka* (canoe/boat), *tupuna* (ancestor), *marae* (meeting place with an ancestral house and dining house) and tribe, all which identify where and who they come from.

I encourage Māori *paihere* (pronounced *pie-hair-lair*, a contemporary uplifting Māori word for *prisoner*, which acknowledges the inherent *mana* [pronounced *mar-nar*, or dignity of each person incarcerated, regardless of the crime committed) to refer to their own person as a way of identifying not only with their own heritage, but also the Incarnate Word of God.

Mount Tabor was his mountain, and the Jordan his river, he loved the Sea of Galilee, and David his ancestral king... from the town of Nazareth, and Mary was his mother, and Joseph was his papa, and Jesus is his name... the Son of all humanity, "the Father and I are one", the Son of all humanity, so may your kingdom come, and may your will be done.

In my prison ministry, one of my achievements has been to successfully include first names of all prisoners in the national daily Face-to-Name counts of prisoner-location in all prisons in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

I felt this was a way of humanising the prison-setting, enabling officers with a practical tool to use first names when speaking with prisoners, and thereby encouraging more peaceful relationships.

Along with Te Waiora, I have ongoing contact with the Columban Mission House in Lower Hutt, with Michael Gormly, Don Hornsey and other Columbans who reside there. We all look forward to continuing the mission in Aotearoa for another 33 years!

In my understanding, to be fully Māori means to have an ongoing connection with the extended family, including tribal links, land and ancestral genealogy. Without this, Māori prisoners have experienced ongoing alienation and trauma, partly as a result of colonisation and partly because of a compromised lifestyle

Seamus Egan SSC

2 February 1943 to 21 October 2021

*I will walk in the presence of the Lord
in the land of the living*

(Psalm114)

Seamus Egan was born in Ballybrehony, Claremorris, on 2 February 1943.

Educated at Murneen National School and St Colman's College, Claremorris, he came to St Columbans in Navan in September 1960.

He was ordained priest on 21 December 1966.

In 1967, he was appointed to Chile, as his older brother Pat had been seven years previously.

After language studies, he was assigned to San Luis Parish in a particularly poor section of Santiago.

Due to his talent for group process, in 1976 he spent two years in Worcester, Massachusetts, the United States, studying Clinical Pastoral Education. He graduated as an accredited supervisor. On his return to Chile, he spent four years supervising the First Missionary Assignment of two groups of Columban seminarians.

During that same period, he was also assigned to work with a group of 15 lay-led chapel communities, known as Diaconias, along with two other priests. The role of the priests was focussed on formation and lay empowerment.

Towards the end of this time, Seamus suffered the first of a series of periods of ill-health. As part of his recuperation, he returned to Ireland and spent some time in Balcurris Parish, Dublin, Ireland.

Returning to Santiago, he worked in Maria Missionera Parish in Renca and Corazon de Maria Parish in Valparaiso. Ill health forced him to return to Ireland in 1997.

Seamus was known as an intelligent man with a searching mind, extremely insightful, sensitive and a good judge of character.

Over his years in Dalgan and more recently in the nursing home, we remember Seamus as a gentle, conscientious priest, a good listener, a quiet unassuming person, who bore his illness with extraordinary patience.

Seamus died on the morning of 21 October 2021.

May he rest in peace.





Cambridge Companion to Vatican II

edited by

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Boston University*

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Frank Regan

**former Columban
England**

Those of us who remember the Second Vatican Council as a gut-stirring event might enjoy this volume. It is an interesting compilation of 18 articles on the documents of Vatican II. Of particular interest to Columbans is the document on Mission. Academic but accessible.

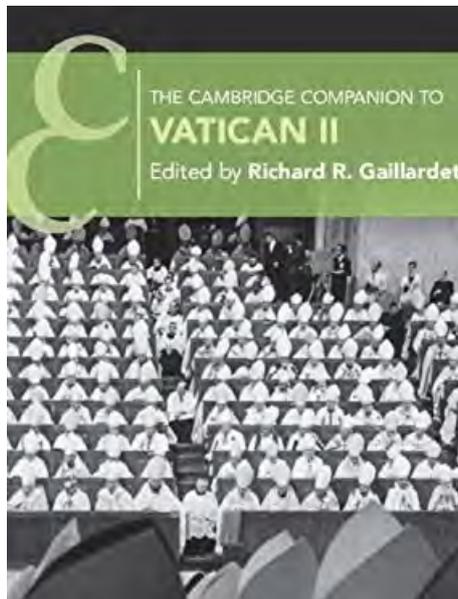
Looking at the Columbans 55 years on from the Council, it is remarkable how much change has occurred in mission. First of all, the physiognomy of missionaries is changing rapidly. This includes the Columbans. The white western male is disappearing to be replaced by missionaries from the global south. The *home* regions are heading for extinction—their only vestige being their retirement and convalescent facilities, sustained by lay personnel. More recent ordinations, scarce though they be, are from the global south.

The status of the missionary is changing. More and more there is an increasing number of laity in mission, many of them opting for permanent membership.

At the General Assembly of 1994, a Filipino lay missionary from Pakistan asked the Columban clergy to dance with her, to engage with laity in mission. I was there and can remember.

I could feel the general consternation and almost hear the gnashing and grinding of teeth and dentures.

The clergy-laity divide still causes some toe-stubbing on the dance floor.



Can the society survive in a viable and ecclesially authentic way as an exclusively male, clerical organisation? Be that as it may, Vatican II heralded the Church as *a community in mission*.

The physiognomy of the universal Church is changing also. Between 1980 and 2012 the world Catholic population surged by 57 percent to 1.2 billion. Growth in Europe was six percent in Africa 238 percent. African seminaries are bulging. Five Nigerian priests are here in the Plymouth diocese.

It reminds me of my Uncle Bill, recently ordained (1933) for Elphin. He spent five years

in Glasgow before getting a place in his own diocese.

Pope Francis has visited Africa four times and has created 10 African cardinals in only eight years. Pope John Paul II created only six. The future of the universal Church lies in Africa. By 2050, there will be one billion African Catholics, principally from Nigeria, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

There may be trouble ahead. The African Churches tend to be misogynistic and homophobic. Ten of them are rooted in countries where homosexuality is a crime. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has repeated its refusal to bless same-sex marriages in accordance with African pastoral practice.

Mission was a deeply felt concern of many bishops who were at the Council. Indeed, the author of the article on Mission, Stephan Bevans, Professor of Mission at Catholic Theological Union, proposes that Vatican II's ecclesiology was characterised as *a communion in mission*.

This coheres extremely well with Pope Francis' understanding of Church

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as community of missionary disciples.

Professor Bevans sets out to explain his understanding of Mission under three headings: the Council was a missionary council; the bishops understood Mission as rooted in the mission of God and constituted not only by witness and proclamation, but also by commitment to inculturation, justice and dialogue.

A missionary council

Stephan Bevans begins this section, citing theologian Patrick Granfield, who pointed out that at Vatican II ecclesiology “shifted dramatically from the sociological to the biblical, from the jurisdictional to the sacramental, from the sectarian to the ecumenical, from the papal to the episcopal, from the hierarchical to the collegial”. The reader will judge how successful and widespread that shift has been.

Certainly, there has been a shift in the Church’s renewed awareness of being communion, people of God and mystery (a reality imbued with the presence of God). The bishops at the Extraordinary Synod of 1985 concluded that “the ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of the Council’s documents”.

At the core of the Council’s deliberations was a concern for the Church as sent for the life of the world. This in turn leads to the insight that the Church is *a communion in mission*.

The communion’s inner reality is oneness in God. The communion’s spiritual energy thrusts it into the world. *Lumen Gentium* cites St Cyprian, who wrote that the Church is “a people made one by the unity of the Father, the Son and the holy Spirit”.

And *Ad Gentes* states that “the Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit”.

The vision of John XXIII

Pope John intuited that the Church had to effect an arduous transition from an era of post-tridentine theology and culture to a new era in which the Church would be better equipped to proclaim and give witness. He hoped for a new Pentecost. He eschewed the need for a restatement or further clarification of Church doctrine.



General Assembly at the Second Vatican Council.

His concern was pastoral: how will the Church advance into an age clearly more secular, autonomous, sceptical and seduced by the chimera of progress.

John was helped by Leon-Josef Cardinal Suenens. He submitted a memo wherein he indicated the need for an over-all plan for the Council, a basic idea, a guiding thread that would be seen by all above the maelstrom of schemata, committee meetings and floor debates that could obscure the workings of the Spirit.

The pope asked Suenens to flesh out his idea. A month later, the Belgian cardinal came up with a suggestion that the council focus on the Church *ad intra* as evangeliser, teacher, sanctifier and community at prayer. The *ad extra* aspect would focus on questions around the family, contraception, religious freedom, relations between Church and state.

Sixty years later, we see how much the situation has changed. Suenens’ schema is basically Euro-centric and middle class.

Ad intra, the Church has been inflicting harm on itself in the form of clericalism (the dark side of the priesthood, Pope Francis), abuses of power, sexual exploitation, institutional misogyny and homophobia.

Ad extra the Church is facing world poverty, catastrophic climate change, environmental degradation and movement of peoples. Mission is an ever more challenging demand in today’s world.

The interpretative key

The Extraordinary Synod of 1985 stated that the *Constitutions on the Liturgy, the Church, Revelation and the Church in the Modern World* form the *interpretative key* to unlock and let flow the substance and meaning of all the documents in their totality.

The theme of Mission is conspicuous in each of the four Constitutions. The oft-quoted paragraph 10 of *Sacramentum Concilium* states that the liturgy is the summit of the Church’s activity and the font of its evangelising energy. The document is sensitive to liturgy within the cultures of the *mission lands* as it finds anchorage and expression in the varied and diverse cultural contexts.

The document, *Lumen Gentium*, contributes a brief tracing of the history of salvation as the work of the Trinity, which culminates in the pouring out of the Spirit upon the disciples.

Thereupon they receive “the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God”.

Dei Verbum, on Revelation, speaks in terms of proclamation to the entire world so that all may believe, hope and love.

Doubtlessly, *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) is its greatest achievement. It redefines what the Church considers its missionary vocation.

We all remember its opening lines: the joys, hopes, grief and anguish of the world is shared by all followers of Christ.

The bishops offer the Church's service to all humanity and calls humanity to its deepest self. Its basic theme is, in the words of Pope John, "the Church of Christ the light of the world".

Paradigm shift

That well-worn phrase will have to serve to express a major change in our mission model. Before the model was one of conversion of the pagan world. To conquer the world for Christ was the ideal; to bring Christ to where he was not.

Vatican II brought about a radical change in the attitude of the Church to the world. The 19th century saw the Church alienated from the surrounding culture. The rise of revolutionary and democratic aspirations, the emergence of atheistic Communism and anarchy, the appearance of the theory of evolution and natural selection—all militated against a Church the world saw as retrograde and obscurantist.

This confrontation was epitomised by the issuing in 1864 of Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors*: 80 articles condemning modernity. The last article stated that the pope would not "adapt himself to progress, liberalism and modern culture".

Vatican II, in contrast, recognises key values of modernity, viz. the dignity of the human person, human equality and autonomy. The Church offers its solidarity with the contemporary commitment to human rights. It values human activity, promotes responsible citizenship and recognises the autonomy of secular institutions. The world and modernity are no longer the enemy. Rather they are the areas of human endeavour to which the Holy Spirit invites to mission.

Culture

Vatican II called for a revised appreciation of culture as expressive of a people's identity and way of life. One of the *sins* of mission was the displacement of native culture to be replaced with Western culture and religion.

The tradition of Justin Martyr, Cyril and Methodius and Mateo Ricci was long forgotten.

Pope John wanted to stir memories of that tradition, because it had confidence in the *logos spermaticos* (Justin Martyr), the seed of the word, lying si-

lently in the soul of the culture, waiting to find echo in the words of a Church open to the human, religious and artistic wealth of a culture.

In 1659 the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith issued an instruction on missionary activity in China. It warns against cultural imperialism:

Make no endeavour and in no way persuade these people to change their rites, habits and mores... Indeed, what would be more absurd than to introduce Gaul, Spain, Italy or some other part of Europe to China? Bring not these things but the Faith, which neither rejects nor harms the rites, nor customs of any nation provided they are not perverse... Therefore, never interchange the practices of these people with European practices; rather with great diligence become accustomed to their practices.

Therein lies a challenge to a Church in mission: how to lay aside the accoutrements of Western culture with its Christian basis and biases to take aboard the culture of other peoples.

That challenge is being met through dialogue of life and faith, which advances the inculturation of the faith. But there is a long way to go!

Gaudium et Spes reflects extensively on culture, both on so-called *higher culture* composed of philosophy, history, science, and popular culture where dialogue and inculturation take place face-to-face. The document acknowledges the *diversity of cultures*. The Church is not tied to any one culture. It has received the mission to every people, become a participant in the people's culture thereby "enriching both itself and the culture themselves".

Persuasion in a new mode

One could argue that Vatican II had more style than substance. Its style was pastoral and missionary. Absent substantially was even one canon which began with the words, "whoever says... and ended with "anathema sit". There was no threat or intimidation.

Pope John had more confidence in the mercy of Christ than in the severity of threat. Thus, the style becomes the substance:

mercy, compassion, solidarity, eagerness to share, not impose, the Good News.

Baptised for mission

All Christians are the People of God, equal in dignity, with one common vocation: to follow Christ the Way in Mission. There is no caste division as occurs when hierarchy and clergy make themselves present and take control.

The People of God, friends in Christ, are a missionary people. They exercise a common priesthood first in the liturgy, second in the world to which all are sent to proclaim and live the Gospel.

Beyond conversion

To state it starkly: Mission is no longer about conversion to Christianity. It is no longer the realm of *foreign missions* carried out by specialist personnel. Mission is the participation by the Church in the Mission of the Triune God.

Mission is constitutive of the Church, not just an auxiliary activity. If mission ceases, the Church ceases to be Church.

There is a certain tension endemic to mission as ecclesio-centric, over against mission as world-centric.

The Church will always invite to conversion and to enter the fold. But the Council is also attentive to a world in need of healing. That implies that the Church is to immerse herself in the secular realm and to involve herself in the promotion of human welfare.

The Church is mother who loves all God's children. *Ad Gentes* 9 states in part that missionary activity is "the manifestation of God's plan, its epiphany and realization in the world and in history".

Here the Council fathers break with a long theological tradition. By saying in *Lumen Gentium* 5 that the Church is "the seed and the beginning of the kingdom" the council declares that the Church and the kingdom are not identical—a radical discontinuity.

More than conversion

Gaudium et Spes resolves many of the ambiguities connected to its under-

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standing of mission. They are inevitable in its attempts to revisit, revisualise, redefine mission as an activity beyond conversion.

Mission places the Church at the service of humanity. The mission to evangelise is central, but it occurs in the midst of a world in constant flux, conflict, metamorphosis and violence.

The Church herself will someday have to confess to the ongoing violence—physical, psychological and spiritual which it has inflicted within its own sanctuary.

For there is no other way to denounce the permanent misogyny, the stubborn homophobia, the weaponisation of some teachings for political gains, the cover-up of child abuse and institutional clericalism.

A growing reception

In the years since Vatican II the importance of Mission as foundational and constitutive of the Church has been firmly established.

Pope Paul VI made reference to *Ad Gentes* describing mission as “linked to evangelisation” in its “most intimate being”.

In his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the finest papal statement on mission of the 20th century, he laid great emphasis on the mission to evangelise and to the challenge of inculturation, the patient process in which the Church becomes incarnate, clothing itself in the garments of other cultures.

Pope John Paul II called for a *new evangelisation*. He was scarce on detail and his focus was more on Western Europe.

The same holds for Pope Benedict XVI who established the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation. It became another cog in the curial wheel, another title in the Vatican *nomenclatura*.

In the finest mission reflection since *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Francis mentions the new evangelisation only 12 times. He speaks of the Church as a “community of missionary disciples”.

Remarkably, he wants a Church “suitably channelled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation”.

It is a little appreciated fact that the best missionaries are laity who are also immigrants.

The United States became a Christian country due to the Irish and Italian Catholic immigrants to the east coast and to German and Scandinavian Lutherans to the great plains of the west.

Spanish and Portuguese brought their faith to the southern Americas. Philippine workers have erected the first Catholic Church on the Arabian Peninsula.

There is a dark side to that history with genocide at its core. Sufficient atonement will never be made. Nevertheless, Christianity—not always brilliantly—has been at the heart of the history of the native peoples.

Catholic ecclesiology has awakened to the dynamic, missionary nature of the Church, as well as to the ecclesiological heart of mission.

We live in a world which is in a long process of urbanisation and globalisation.

Both are secular energies with little or no concern for faith or Church. At the same time, the history of the movement of peoples continues, rarely voluntarily.

Rising levels of poverty, violence, interreligious hostility, and a deepening ecological crisis constitute challenges to mission rooted in faith in the inspiration of the Spirit.

Our hope is in the Gospel vision of Christ, who proclaimed life in abundance. But Christ also asked whether when the Son came again would he find faith on the earth.

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The documents are replete with missionary language and goals. The Church grateful for the advance of science and the beauty of artistic creation.

The Church wants to involve herself in issues of family welfare, culture, justice and world peace (despite support-

ing chaplaincies that implicitly extol militarism).

“Outside the Church there is no salvation” is an ancient and hallowed phrase, but not used by the Council.

A model of mission based on dialogue gradually emerged. Just prior to that, the Church for the first time spoke of the right to freedom of religion and worship. Implied in that new stance—for the Church was never an advocate of religious freedom—is the acknowledgment that outside the Church grace flows through other Churches and world religions.

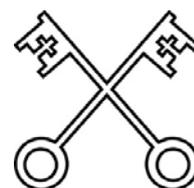
The Jewish and Muslim traditions share a great deal held sacred by the Christian tradition. The world religions are embraced by the Church because they “often reflect the ray of that truth that enlightens all men and women”. Even atheists who seek God and/or follow their consciences bathe in the same baptismal waters even though not baptised themselves.

The importance is found in the depths of the Trinity. In the Trinitarian community there are no religious divisions, there is no religion.

In the Gospel of John, we witness Jesus in dialogue with a Samaritan woman. It is the only example we have of Jesus in interfaith, interreligious dialogue. He looks forward to the day in which the peoples will come together to worship in spirit and in truth.

Dialogue will awaken in the Church a vivid interest in other cultures, other practices of cult, other ways of cultivating the spirit, the inner depths, all finding their meaning in the quest for God.

Insofar as Dialogue is sacramental, it points to grace manifesting itself in the world, in the world’s religions, in the world’s cultures, in human searching, and in the struggle for justice, peace and wholeness.



Vatican II called for a revised appreciation of culture as expressive of a people’s identity and way of life. One of the sins of mission was the displacement of native culture to be replaced with Western culture and religion

Sean Brazil SSC

14 January 1932 to 8 October 2021

Sean Brazil was born in Dublin on 14 January 1932. He attended Synge St Christian Brothers School before joining the Columbans in Dalgan in 1948. Ordained there in December 1954 he went to Korea in 1955.

Sean was a man who liked a challenge and was ready to test his limits in any assignment. That was true of his days in athletics with the Donore Harriers, on the golf course and in every ministry he undertook.

His ministry in mission began as an assistant in one of the oldest Columban parishes in the southwest coastal town of Mokpo.

Within two years, he ventured 60 miles out into the South China Sea as the first pastor of Huksan (island). Within two years, incipient tuberculosis hospitalised him on the mainland, but he recovered and was reassigned to the parish of Pius X in Mokpo City until his home vacation in Ireland.

On returning to Korea, he was first assigned to the Leper Colony for people suffering from Hanson's disease of Sorokto for a short period, before he was transferred back to his starting point, but this time as the pastor of Holy Cross parish Mokpo. He was there from 1964 to 1970.

After his next vacation in Ireland, he was assigned to Seoul Archdiocese to serve the migration of people from the rural areas. He started a new parish in the area of Sangbong Dong with about 1,200 Catholics. He later began a second parish in Chang Dong.

Both parishes started on an empty building site, with a tent to offer the first Masses. These parishes grew quickly and indeed both of them soon become four parishes. Whatever about the hard work involved, he would not want it forgotten that was when he won the 1974 American Express Pro-Am with a Taiwanese professional.

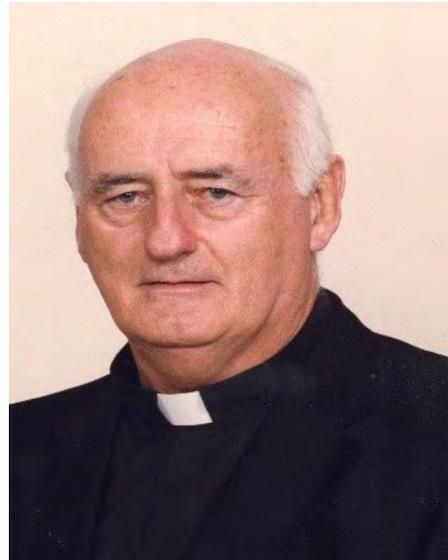
Back from his next vacation, he was asked to go to the Suwon city of Sung-Nam from 1978 to 1982. At that time, there were two parishes in the city with a Catholic population of about 6,000. In 15 years, it had grown into five parishes, with a Catholic population of 32,000.

It was at the end of that four-year term he was given the job of manager of the Far East Office in Ireland and a chance to put his organisational skills to work in a new setting. He also brought those skills to his role as captain of Royal Tara Golf Club when they were extending the course.

In 1990, he was hoping to get back to Korea, when he was asked to go to California instead to take over the Korean Ministry in Orange. Over 20 years, the dream of having one Mass in Korean in the whole diocese became 12 Masses offered in Korean each Sunday.

Sean returned to Ireland in May 2002, but only after he tried learning enough Spanish to conduct mission appeals in local parishes. Gradually, ill health took its toll on Sean, but as we had come to expect, he kept active to the very end and died peacefully in the Nursing Home in Dalgan on the 8 October 2021.

May God reward him for his generous life of service to others and may he rest in peace.



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Gerry Bellew SSC

15 March 1938 to 28 September 2021

Gerard Bellew was born in Dundalk on 15 March 1938. He was educated in the CBS primary and secondary schools in Dundalk before joining the Columbans in Navan in 1955. He was ordained on 20 December 1961.

His first appointment was to post graduate studies in University College Dublin, while also acting as dean at St Columban's House of Studies in Templeogue, Dublin.

In 1965, he was appointed dean of the major seminary in Dalgan Park and in the early 1970s, taught English literature both in Dalgan and Kimmage.

In 1977, Gerry finally got his wish for a mission assignment and went to Santiago, Chile, in March of that year. For the next 43 years, he made his home there, only returning to Ireland due to deteriorating health in February 2020.

In Chile, he was assigned to the parish of El Olivo in the Northern Zone of the Archdiocese of Santiago where he was to spend the next 11 years. When the parish was handed over to the archdiocese in 1988, he became parish priest of the neighbouring parish of Nuestra Señora del Rosario.

Gerry ministered there until he retired from active pastoral work in 2018. Throughout his ministry, he collaborated closely with three archbishops of Santiago, Juan Cardinal Francisco Fresno, Carlos Cardinal Oviedo and Francisco Cardinal Javier Errazuriz, occupying key positions of leadership in the archdiocese.

He became episcopal vicar of the Northern Zone in 1988 and continued in that role until he was named director of the Pontifical Mission Society (Wold Mission) in Chile.

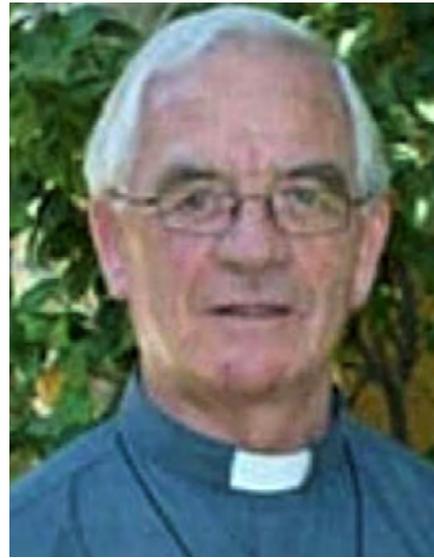
He was later appointed Episcopal Vicar for Religious, a position he held for several years. He was vice director of the Chilean Region from 1992 to 1996 and welcomed the first group of Viatores Christi Lay Missionaries from Ireland in the late 1980s.

During the papal visit to Chile, he was master of ceremonies to Pope John Paul II at the youth event in the National Stadium in Santiago. There, he navigated a particularly difficult situation in a ceremony filled with tension between the Military Government of General Pinochet and the suppressed voices of the youth of Chile.

Gerry brought with him to Chile the teaching experience of his early years in Dalgan and Kimmage. He implemented the Family Catechesis Programme of the Chilean Church and empowered laity to be proactive in the life of the Church. He was a promoter of Basic Christian Communities and actively supported the struggle of the poor and oppressed for justice and their basic human rights.

Gerry died in the Columban Nursing Home in Dalgan on 24 September 2021. His many years of love and service will long be remembered with gratitude by the people of Santiago.

May he rest in peace.



Chile's ambivalent presidential vote

Dan Harding ssc

Chile

On November 21, Chile held an inconclusive first round of voting for the next president.

There will be a run off between two candidates from the far left and far right on December 19.

As the hours dragged on after the closing of booths at the first round of voting in the November 21 Chilean presidential election, it became apparent that no outright winner would emerge. The election evolved as the most uncertain of the past three decades, eclipsing the ambivalence of even the one at the conclusion of the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in December 1989.

For the last 16 years, the traditional parties of centre left and centre right have alternated in government with each successive election. However, today, the country is far more polarised than it has been in recent history.

The far right candidate, José Antonio Kast (radical right, neo-liberal capitalism, anti-migration), is taking votes away from the centre right candidate, Sebastián Sichel.

At the same time, the far left's Gabriel Boric (Communist/radical left) is stealing them from the centre left candidate, Yasna Provoste (Christian Democrat in coalition with the traditional Socialist Party), for whom I would have cast my vote had I been in Chile. Personally, I hope she wins.

Both *centre* candidates have lost support in recent polls to the radical extremes of both sides.

The traditional *centre* parties, both left and right, have been bleeding support for some time, as people have become more radicalised in an era of social protest increasingly demanding reforms in pensions, health care, education and other areas.

This has been exacerbated by the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans, Haitians and refugees of other nationalities (now numbering 1.5 million, or eight percent of the population), together with the collapse of the economy and loss of 40,000 lives due to Covid-19.

I believe it would be a great shame for Chile if one of the extreme, radical candidates from either side won. This would prompt a big backlash from sympathisers of the losing side and leave the country more polarised, unstable and violent than ever. I heard recently from a Chilean man living in Melbourne that unfortunately, Chile alternates between "political extremes".

By November 22, Jasna Provoste, from the centre left, and Sebastián Sichel, from the centre right, had conceded defeat. Among the seven candidates, José Antonio Kast, from the far right, collected 28.2 percent of the vote. He will join Gabriel Boric, from the far left, who gleaned a 25.3 percent share, in the run off.



Gabriel Boric

José Antonio Kast

With over 80 percent of votes counted, there is no possibility of an outright winner (50 percent plus one) emerging from the first round, so a second round of voting is now scheduled for December 19. The two candidates from the extreme left and right will go head to head.

Both will try to make alliances and promise all kinds of concessions to the centre parties. Christian Democrat, Jasna Provoste, has said she is willing to see what Boric has to say, because "we must not permit the advance of fascism that José Antonio Kast represents."

There will be a new *el presidente* in government for the coming four years. However, many people remain fearful, wondering whether it will be the chaos of Jair Bolsonaro's Brazil, or the United States of Donald Trump.

Kast, who has shown a preference for the style of military dictator, Pinochet, referred to the upcoming run off as a choice between liberty and Communism, a dig at the alliance formed by his opponent with the Communist Party.

I believe it would be a great shame for Chile if one of the extreme, radical candidates from either side won

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A homily for the feast of St Columban

Sean McDonagh ssc

Ireland

Delivered at Bangor Abbey

Good evening and thank you for inviting me here to preach at this Columban service in Bangor Abbey.

As a Columban missionary, it is a great privilege for me to join with you in this ecumenical celebration of the life and legacy of St. Columban—particularly his sensitivity to all God’s creation, which is very much needed in today’s Churches and world.

Everything in nature is interdependent and interrelated. All people are my sisters and brothers, and all creatures are my companions and care, and respect should mark how I deal with them.

Unfortunately, many Christians, down through the ages, did not believe in kinship or compassion between human beings and other creatures. According to St. Augustine, “reason has not been given to animals and so, by the most just ordinances of the Creator, both their lives and their deaths is subject to our use.” Thomas Aquinas was even more convinced that animals had no ethical value. He wrote, “We have no duties of charity, nor duties of any kind to the lower animals, as neither we have for sticks and stones.”¹

This view of creation that holds the world is inert, or even dead, and humans can simply use nature for almost any purpose, was also held by both Martin Luther and John Calvin.

Luther’s contrast between the kingdom of Heaven, which operated under God’s grace, and the kingdom of the World, which operated under God’s wrath, intensified the split between the *material* and *spiritual* dimensions of the Earth, which was already deeply embedded in Western culture and religion.

As a result, this kind of Christianity emphasises individual redemption out of the world. It seldom reflects that the damage humans are causing to the earth is almost universal.

In early Irish Christianity, the beauty and wonder of the natural world were respected, and celebrated. A prime example of this sensitivity to other creatures is found in St Ciaran of Sairghir, who founded his monastery in the fifth



Bangor Abbey in County Down, Northern Ireland, was founded in 558 AD.

century. His fellow monks included humans, but also wild animals such as foxes, badgers, wild boars and wolves.

St Columban, mystic, monk and missionary was finely attuned to beauty and wonder of the natural world. In a sermon, he wrote, “If you wish to know the Creator, understand creation,” Columban wrote excellent Latin—*Intellige, si vis scire Creatorem, creaturam*.

Anyone visiting the sites of Columban’s monasteries is struck by the beauty of their natural setting. Like other Irish saints, finding God in creation came naturally to Columban. Many legends grew up around him in Luxeuil. Squirrels and doves were depicted playing in the folds of his cowl.

Columban is telling us today that our Christianity must move from an exclusive concern for human salvation and include real concern for the Earth and God’s creation. We need to see the earth—not just as a resource for human needs—but as the source of life itself, to be cherished by all. That is possible today with the enormous increase in scientific knowledge about the natural world. Today, we can buy books on flowers, birds and other creatures in many shops.

Ethically, every being has rights that should be recognised and cherished. They have the right to be and the right to fulfil

their role in the renewable processes of the Earth community. Trees have tree rights; insects have insect rights and even rivers have rights. And we humans must recognise these rights.

Our Christian faith must face the two issues that are central to the Earth and our planet. These are climate change and the massive destruction of biodiversity. Climate change received a lot of publicity in the run-up to and during the United Nations Conference of Parties on Climate Change (COP26) in Glasgow in October and November this year.

Many people were disappointed with the outcome of COP26. It failed in the words of United Nations secretary-general, António Guterres, to keep the goal of 1.5 degrees Celsius alive, to accelerate the decarbonisation of the global economy, and to phase out coal.

It also has not raised sufficient money among rich nations to allow poorer nations to adapt to climate change and steer their economies away from burning fossil fuels in the future. But, at least, the public did hear the arguments put forward so that they can judge for themselves how successful it was.

Unfortunately, another COP15 on Biodiversity took place in Kunming, China, from 11 to 15 October 2021. This gathering did not receive the same level of publicity as COP26, though its message is extraordinarily serious.

We are living through the sixth greatest period of extinction since life began 3.8 billion years ago. The last time something similar happened was 65 million years ago when a meteor crashed into the Gulf of Mexico and produced high levels of volcanic activity and significant amounts of carbon dioxide, which led to the extinction of many creatures, including the dinosaurs.

A study carried out in 2010 by The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), estimates that

- *one in five mammals,*
- *one in four plants,*
- *one in three amphibians and*
- *one in eight birds* are in danger of being pushed over the precipice of extinction.²

Twenty years ago, the famous Harvard biologist, Edward O Wilson, stated, that *The quenching of life's exuberance will be more consequential to humanity than all present day warming, ozone depletion and pollution combined.*³

Unless we tackle biodiversity loss seriously, we could lose a million species in this century. This would be a disaster for every generation of humans and other life-forms who will live in this world, and it will impoverish the planet forever.

The Christian Churches, as midwives of God's reign, must speak the truth about global environmental destruction in a much more forthright and unambiguous way.

The Churches should be encouraging new ways of living that are much less destructive than those we have in place in our fossil fuel-addicted world. Care for the earth should be at the heart of our doctrine, worship and practice.

For almost four centuries, the post-communion prayer in the Roman Missal prayed, "teach us to despise the things of earth and the love the things of heaven. In Latin, *Oremus. Doceas nos terrana despiciere at amara celestia.*

Focussing on creation will have us standing with the victims, including the suffering Earth, and with other species

against corporations and others that are currently destroying the world.

People of faith, whose lives are directed by a spiritual perspective should be the most deeply motivated to respond to the challenge presented by the current bleeding of colour from the rainbow of life's diversity.

People of my age are aware that across all the Christian Churches, young people do not attend services regularly, yet many young people are dedicated to fighting climate change and protecting biodiversity. If we in the Churches move our emphasis away from redeeming people out of the world and focus instead on serving all the creatures on this earth—many of these young people may be happy to join us in liturgies where we thank God for the beauty and wonder of creation. And, St Columban's writings will help us in this endeavour.

As a Christian, I am not without hope for the future. With members of many faith communities across the island of Ireland and inspired by the writings of Columban, I know that we can work together from within our rich and diverse traditions to celebrate and protect the diversity of species and protect planet earth.

In the Gaelic that Columban would have spoken, *Ni Neart Go Cur Le Cheile*—There is strength in unity.

END NOTES

1. RICHABY, J, *Moral Philosophy, Ethics and Natural Law*, Longmans, 1901, London, pages 2 and 119. A recent study by RSPB, Birdlife International and the Czech Society for Ornithology reports that we have lost 600 million birds since 1980, 97 million yellowtails have been lost, 75 million starlings and 75 million skylarks.
2. BARKHAM, Patrick, *Wake-up call: 600m decline in European bird numbers since 1980*, The Guardian, 16 November 2021, page 19.
3. WILSON, Edward O, *Vanishing Before Our Eyes*, Time Special Edition, April/May 2000, page 30.



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Focus on Venezuela and migration

Dan Harding SSC

Chile

Forced migration of millions of Venezuelans across Latin America, including into Chile and Peru

Introduction

Venezuela's on-going humanitarian, political and socio-economic crisis of the last few years has forced almost six million Venezuelans out of a total population of 30 million to abandon their country.

In recent years, hundreds of thousands of them have settled in Peru, estimated to be around 1.2 million, and in Chile, somewhere between 450,000 and 600,000. Thousands have arrived to live in Columban parishes in the cities of Lima and Santiago, as well as in the twin cities of Iquique and Alto Hospicio.

In Santiago, Columbans participate in a network of migrant organisations in addition to operating two Migrant Houses of Hospitality, one for 18 men and another for six women with four young children.

Recently-arrived and homeless Venezuelan families with children have also been given temporary accommodation in parish meeting rooms, until they can find employment and another place to stay.

Venezuelans in Chile and in Peru have received great support and welcome from many local people, as well as meeting with intolerance and xenophobia from a few others.

Syrians make up the largest group of forced migrants in the world, but according to the Brookings Institute in Washington DC, Venezuelans only receive 10 percent (\$265) per capita in 2020 of what is offered to the Syrians (\$3,150) in international funding (*The Guardian*, July 2021).

Those forced to flee a collapsing nation often have to take illegal and



Venezuelan refugees crossing over the border into Colombia.

The exodus of Venezuelans fleeing repression and shortages of food, medicine and other supplies represents the largest migration crisis in recent Latin American history

dangerous routes, and are often at the mercy of drug smugglers, people traffickers, guerrilla armies and criminal gangs, especially as borders in other Latin American countries are becoming increasingly militarised.

Hunger is stronger than closed borders, criminal gangs and fear of Covid-19. If my family did not leave Venezuela, they would not eat

Testimony of Venezuelan migrant

In 2021 alone, 18 Venezuelans have so far died crossing the Andes Mountains from Bolivia into Chile. The dead range from babies to the latest victim of two weeks ago, a 64-year-old man.

Due to the on-going Venezuelan humanitarian crisis and its impact on Columban mission and parishes in Chile and Peru, we are offering this *Focus on Venezuela and the Migrant Experience*.

Why leave Venezuela?

A voice from inside Venezuela

Hello, my name is Carlos. I am 62-years-old and live in Venezuela. May God bless you all.

In 1999, we began what many people call "the Chavez Phenomenon". Chavez, a military officer, had attempted a military coup in 1992.

It failed, but he got involved in poli-

tics. Due to the popular discontent with all the traditional political parties, which supported the capitalist system, Chavez was elected president of Venezuela in 1999 with a large majority.

His political party had been formed, more or less, during the election campaign. He received his support from workers, students and the socio-economically disadvantaged members of society.

Once Chavez, whose government was socialist, was installed as president, he began a series of measures that led to a serious rupture with those who held economic power in the country and had maintained previous governments in power.

This led to a profound economic crisis, because it was this wealthy group that controlled the economy.

Chavez expropriated much of their private property and business, and redistributed the money in loans to cooperatives amongst the poor and many individuals. Much of this money was lost forever and never repaid to the government.

In the beginning, Chavez' government was lucky with the petroleum bonanza, with the highest prices being paid in the history of Venezuela, making it an extraordinarily wealthy nation.

As a result, the Chavez government soon became a *populist* government, giving out indiscriminate donations, subsidies and finance to all kinds of groups and individuals.

Chavez then began expropriating private companies and businesses, and handing them over to their workers. Sadly, this failed due to corruption and the fact that many workers felt no sense of responsibility for the businesses concerned.

All of this led to many ill-considered decisions, an enormous waste of money and resources, and widespread corruption from many new members of government.

It is my personal opinion that Chavez never imagined the enormous victory at all levels of government he achieved when elected and the immense power that went with it.

Within two years of the beginning of the Chavez government, the price of petroleum, fixed by consumer nations, fell to its lowest level in Venezuelan his-



Food lines in Venezuela

Countries with a capitalist system, especially the United States, then initiated economic sanctions against Venezuela. Supposedly, these measures were against the leaders of the Revolution, as the government is called here in Venezuela, hoping that the suffering of the ordinary people will lead them to rise up and overthrow the government

tory, from almost US\$250 per barrel to less than US\$10.00 per barrel.

This led to a serious economic crisis, exacerbated by the enemies of the government with economic power and wealth, and connections with the United States.

Countries with a capitalist system, especially the United States, then initiated economic sanctions against Venezuela.

Supposedly, these measures were against the leaders of the Revolution, as the government is called here in Venezuela, hoping that the suffering of the ordinary people will lead them to rise up and overthrow the government.

The bad management of the economy by the government, which continued to be *populist*, plus the economic sanctions imposed by the United States,

was then aggravated by the arrival of coronavirus.

All of this has turned Venezuela into a chaotic country where more than 50 percent of the population now lives in extreme poverty.

Its middle class has disappeared, leaving the only ones with any amount of money those connected with the government.

Levels of crime and unemployment are at levels up in the clouds, and sanctions promoted by those with economic power have led to hyperinflation and the seizure of Venezuelan resources outside the country.

Venezuela is an extremely difficult country to live in because of the low purchasing power of our money. If you have a job, your entire monthly salary might allow you to buy one kilo of maize

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flour for Arepas, our staple diet, plus 25 grams of coffee and 500 grams of white cheese, which we eat for breakfast.

We also have our health services in crisis, affected by the United States sanctions, which supposedly do not affect medicines, but in reality, affect all aspects of medicine.

Also, we are barely producing any petroleum, because the system of refineries, production and commercialisation of petroleum and all its by-products, was previously operating with technology from the United States, which no longer operates.

This means that if you have a car, there are long queues and waiting periods to buy petrol, which is extremely scarce. As all public transport has literally disappeared, those that have a private car that still operates, have no option but to use it as a vehicle for public transport.

The unavailability of petrol for cars and great scarcity of spare parts in the country makes this extremely difficult as well.

The education crisis, plus the pandemic, has led to a whole generation of students not being educated. Consequently, large numbers of young people spend a lot of time on the streets. This can lead to many social problems.

The crisis in Venezuela has affected all types of people. This is reflected in the migration crisis, which was initially instigated by opposition to the government.

But, since then, it is the young people asking themselves, "What will I do? There is no work! Why do any study?" Even those who have graduated with university degrees are selling food and other wares as street vendors.

Venezuelan migrants in other Latin American countries can get a salary in one week that would take three to four months to receive in Venezuela.

In fact, much of the economic power that remains in Venezuela comes from relatives sending money back home from other countries. This is what keeps many families alive and allows them to buy food and other basics.



Homeless Venezuelan families are living on the beach in Iquique.

While a basket of food for a family in Venezuela costs around 500 bolivars (our currency) a month, the average monthly wage is between 12 to 20 bolivars. No wonder there is so much hunger and malnutrition in Venezuela.

Due to having one of the highest inflation rates, if not the highest in the world, six zeros were recently cut off the bolivar currency. Previously, even to buy a small item, it would cost millions and millions of bolivars.

Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch is an international non-governmental human rights organisation. The following are excerpts from its 2021 report on events in 2020 in Venezuela.

Venezuela is facing a severe humanitarian emergency, with millions unable to access basic healthcare and adequate nutrition. Limited access to safe water in homes and healthcare centres has contributed to the spread of Covid-19.

"In September, a fact-finding mission appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council found high-level authorities responsible for atrocities that they believed amounted to crimes against humanity.

"The government of Nicolás Maduro and its security forces are responsible for extrajudicial executions and short-term forced disappearances and have jailed opponents, prosecuted civilians in military courts, tortured detainees, and cracked down on protesters.

"They used a state of emergency implemented in response to Covid-19 as an excuse to punish dissent and intensify their control over the population.

"The exodus of Venezuelans fleeing repression and shortages of food, medicine and other supplies represents the largest migration crisis in recent Latin American history.

"Many Venezuelans abroad remain in irregular status, undermining their ability to obtain work permits, send children to school, and access health care, while making them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

"Between 2016 and 2019, police and security forces killed more than 19,000 people, alleging 'resistance to authority'.

"The Human Rights Council, analysing open sources, found 2,000 individuals had been killed in security operations between January and August of 2020.

"Many of these deaths may constitute extrajudicial executions, according

Venezuela is facing a severe humanitarian emergency, with millions unable to access basic healthcare and adequate nutrition. Limited access to safe water in homes and healthcare centres has contributed to the spread of Covid-19

to the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights.

“Venezuela’s health system is in collapse, leading to the resurgence of vaccine-preventable and infectious diseases. Shortages of medications and health supplies, interruptions of basic utilities at healthcare facilities, and the emigration of healthcare workers have led to a decline in operational capacity.

“The World Food Programme estimates that one out of three Venezuelans is food insecure and in need of assistance.

“Based on data collected prior to the pandemic, the 2020 National Survey of Life Conditions reported eight percent of children under five acutely malnourished and 30 percent chronically malnourished, or stunted.

“In the most vulnerable neighbourhoods, 14.4 percent of children under five are malnourished, Caritas, a non-governmental organisation, reported in July.

“Many families are having difficulties feeding older children, in part due to the decline of school meal programmes.

“School attendance, which had already decreased due to the humanitarian emergency, has declined further because of Covid-19 restrictions. In-person classes, suspended in March, remained suspended at the time of writing.

“As a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Venezuela votes regularly to prevent scrutiny of human rights violations, including in Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, Belarus, Burundi, Eritrea and Iran.”

Amnesty International (Venezuela report for 2020)

The continuing human rights crisis in Venezuela saw further reports of extrajudicial executions, excessive use of force and unlawful killings by the security forces during the year.

“The United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela established there were reasonable grounds to believe that crimes against humanity have been committed in Venezuela since 2014 and that President Maduro and senior military and ministerial figures ordered or contributed to the crimes documented in its report.

“The Office of the High Commission



The massive wave of Venezuelan refugees arriving in Peru and Chile.

for Human Rights documented 16 cases (of torture), reporting the use of methods including beatings, electric shocks, asphyxiation and sexual violence.

“The humanitarian emergency continued and deepened. Prevailing conditions, including the continued shortage of basic services such as water, electricity and fuel; a weakened health infrastructure; and difficulty in accessing medicines and food, were aggravated by Covid-19 and seriously hampered people’s ability to cope with the containment measures imposed to curb the pandemic.

“Health services continued to deteriorate. Shortages of basic medicines, which were unaffordable for most people, intensified. Lack of access to adequate health services seriously impacted on the state’s response to Covid-19.

“In July, the National Survey of Living Conditions reported that 96 percent of households in Venezuela were in income poverty and 79 percent in extreme income poverty and unable to purchase the basic food basket.

“In February, the World Food Programme reported that 7.9 percent of the Venezuelan population was severely food insecure, 24 percent (seven million people) were moderately food insecure and one in three people were food insecure and needed assistance, classifying the situation as one of the 10 worst food crises globally.

“The National

Survey of Conditions of Life stated that only one in four households had running water every day, while the majority had access to running water in their homes only on certain days of the week (59 percent) or several days a month (15 percent).

“The most vulnerable sectors of the population continued to be forced to look for sources of water supply from water trucks, wells and springs.”

Stories of Migration

Miguel’s Story

Hello, my name is Miguel, a Venezuelan migrant in Chile. I decided to leave Venezuela with my heart all wrinkled up, because it is not easy to leave my family there.

“But, like many others, I felt obligated to do so, because remaining in Venezuela, you cannot help your loved ones. Remaining in Venezuela, you cannot grow and develop as a person, due to the great economic crisis there.

“It is not a secret, but everyone knows that the Venezuelan government has implemented economic policies that do not work and, as a result, many people, including myself, have had to emigrate from Venezuela.

“To migrate from your own country is not easy. I first migrated to Peru,

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where I remained for three years. I then decided to migrate to Chile. I reached Chile through Bolivia.

"I travelled in a group, walking through the desert, including with a four-month old baby in the freezing early hours of the morning, in temperatures well below zero.

"As a migrant, you are confronted with many challenges. You arrive in a different country, with a different culture and you do not know what awaits you.

"I profoundly thank God that in Chile, he has placed me in the hands of very good people, who have opened their doors and hearts to me. I now have a job and am able to send money to my loved ones back home. Migrating is very difficult, but not impossible."

Santiago's story

My migration odyssey really began in 2003 when I graduated from high school. I wanted to study in the humanities area at university, even though you never earned a good salary in this area.

"Eventually my parents decided to make a great sacrifice and pay for a university education, the first person in my family to do so. I ended up studying Business Administration and Accounting.

"After graduating in 2008 and several temporary jobs, I started working in a private medical clinic in 2012 at the administration level. At this time, the conflict between the Venezuelan government and the opposition, as well as the United States became more intense. This led to a United States economic blockade on the Venezuelan economy.

"While this blockade badly affected the economy, it did not do as much damage as the mismanagement and repression by the government, which started to manipulate the constitution, all the laws, judicial powers and elections, in order to stay in power, at all costs.

"Venezuela therefore fell into the worst crisis of its history. I was in an excellent job, but it was no longer sustainable. I realised I had to migrate from Venezuela. It was a very hard decision, because I come from a really close and affectionate family.

"My youngest brother migrated to



A refugee making a living in Chile's informal economy.

Then, the second two weeks were hungry months, with my elderly parents out on the street...

Colombia first and from there onto Chile. After he was in Chile for eight months, he invited me to come to Chile, so we could both send money back home to support our family. At that time, I had been given a government job with a high salary, which, due to the lack of purchasing power, was totally useless.

"The basic monthly salary now in Venezuela is approximately US\$1.50, which cannot cover the most basic items. It was for this reason I decided to migrate from Venezuela. This was in 2018.

"I remember Christmas that year, when even though I was receiving a 'high salary' (totally useless!), we went hungry, because we had no food to place on our Christmas table. What I earned barely helped cover the first two weeks of the month.

"Then, the second two weeks were hungry months, with my elderly parents out on the street, trying to sell things to earn a little money.

"My trip to Chile was by bus, through three countries. It was difficult, because I had such little money and had to be really careful. My reception in Chile was difficult, because I arrived at a time when the welcome to migrants was beginning to wear out.

"And it was noticeable that certain nationalities were unwelcome and being discriminated against. I eventually

found some work and, little by little, have been able to regularise my residency visa.

"In my opinion, Chile still remains a good option for the huge wave of Venezuelans leaving the country. While there is some xenophobia here, it is noticeable that it is growing more strongly in Peru and Ecuador."

Marcela's story

This is my story since leaving Venezuela. My three children had no food, nothing to eat, no diapers and there was no work.

"With my three children, we crossed into Colombia and from there began a seven-day trip to Peru. We suffered cold, heat and hunger during those seven days in order to arrive in Peru.

"I was highly emotional when I arrived in Peru, with great expectations of having a much better quality of life there. However, a great feeling of deception soon took over.

"My children could not even study in public schools, because they were undocumented foreigners. My eldest daughter suffered greatly from the xenophobia, and refused to leave our rented quarters for fear of abuse. We were called bad people, who had come to take away jobs from the locals, and thieves.

"After three years of surviving all of this in Peru, I decided to leave my three children with their father in Peru and go onto Chile, to try to find a better quality of life for us there. Once established in Chile, my husband and three children would then reunite with me.

"The journey from Peru to Chile was very difficult and it is a good thing that my children were not with me. Many people took advantage of the few possessions that we, as a group of Venezuelan migrants, had with us.

"We were tricked, lied to and swindled. We were sold bus tickets that never existed. We had to walk through the Atacama Desert in the full sun of daytime and the freezing cold of night.

"But when you have faith, you can do many things, and even greater things yet. God never abandons us. I am highly motivated about getting ahead and bringing my husband and three children here. Faith can move mountains and everything in this life is possible."

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was established by the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organisation in 1988.

Its objective was to provide governments at all levels with scientific information that they can use to develop climate policies.

Any report drawn up by scientists also had to be approved by the governments of the member countries, which in 2021 numbers 195. When its first report was published in 1990, some politicians attempted to water down its findings.

Here we look at three countries:

Britain

People are asking if Britain is leading by example in tackling climate change. In September 2021, Boris Johnson admitted that “as recently as 2015 global leaders were driven by a primitive fear that the present ambient warm weather is somehow caused by humanity; and that fear—as far as I understand the science—is without foundation.” According to Johnston, “The facts change, and people change their minds.”

Unfortunately, this excuse by the prime minister is untrue, because in 2015 the International Panel on Climate Change was clear that human activity, especially the burning of fossil fuel was the main cause of climate change.

One of the first requirements of those who wish to talk about climate change is to tell the truth about what is happening, something that Johnston finds exceedingly difficult.

If Johnston had taken the time to listen to Margaret Thatcher’s speech to the United Nations 1989, where she



A 2015 painting depicting the anticipated end to coal mining in Britain as pits closed up on a wide scale.

... this excuse by the prime minister is untrue, because in 2015 the International Panel on Climate Change was clear that human activity, especially the burning of fossil fuel was the main cause of climate change

outlined the dangers greenhouse gases pose for planet earth, he may have been more circumscriptive. *The Guardian* believes that Johnston’s newfound interest in climate change is partly due to the influence of his wife, Carrie Johnston.

Helping financially poor countries tackle climate change

The G7 is an inter-governmental meeting of seven of the richest countries in the world.

At the summit in Cornwall in June this year, Johnson promised to protect the natural world and seriously tackle climate change. Unfortunately, he has not committed any new funds to promoting these issues.

The other G7 leaders repeated their intention of keeping the rise in global temperature to no more than 1.5 de-

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Withered crops rotting in parched earth were a common sight during recent droughts in the United States.

degrees Celsius. However, none of them come forward with any cash commitment.

Sufficient money is not being made available to poor countries and the United Kingdom's decision to reduce overseas aid from 0.7 percent to 0.5 percent is a clear indication that it is not willing to help developing countries in this time of crisis.

Rich countries should be willing to help poor countries to avoid opting for petrochemical era fuels and move instead to a global green industrial revolution that could transform all our lives for the better.

In September this year, the Foreign Office in London revealed that there would be cuts of more than 40 percent to the foreign aid budget, because of the hit to the economy by Covid-19. The budget in East Africa, once seen as a priority for British aid, has shrunk from £240 million in the last financial year to a mere £107.5 million, despite the serious famine in Yemen.

In 2009, at the COP in Copenhagen, rich countries pledged £100 billion a year in climate finance by 2020. That target has never been met. Asking poor countries at the Glasgow summit to undertake serious climate action, while giving them less money to pursue clean energy strategies, does not make sense.

John Sauver, executive director of Greenpeace in the United Kingdom, has been quite critical of this position.

"Despite the green soundbites, Johnson has simply reheated old promises and peppered his plan with hypocrisy, rather than taking real action to tackle the climate and nature emergency," he noted.

Britain's leadership at the Glasgow summit will also be undermined by tell-

ing countries, such as China and India, they need to reduce their dependence on coal, while the British government is hoping to get permission to open a new £160 million Woodhouse Colliery project in Cumbria, estimated to provide 532 jobs in an area with high levels of unemployment.

The International Energy Agency has stated clearly that the exploitation and development of new oil and gas fields must stop this year and no new coal-fired power stations be built if the world is to stay within the safe limits of global heating and meet the goal of net zero emissions by 2050.

The British government is also interested in exploiting the new Cambo oil field situated 125 kilometres to the west of the Shetland Islands. This is a large field containing over 170 million barrels of oil.

Opening it up would deepen the climate crisis for decades. The government says the original licencing approval for the site goes back to 2000, but the reality is that every country needs to transition from fossil fuel to renewable energy as quickly as possible.

In addition, the government should lead the way in developing renewable energy in areas such as offshore wind farms and wave power.

During the coronavirus pandemic, 35,000 workers, normally associated with the oil industry around Aberdeen, lost their jobs. All of those will need work in renewable energy in the next few years.

In September 2021, despite serious concerns about climate change, barriers to the expansion of the Heathrow airport were cleared by the British government. It is estimated that the new runway will boost Heathrow capacity

by 50 percent, allowing it to fly 280,000 extra flights a year.

China

China, which has the largest carbon footprint in the world, has pledged not to build coal-fired plants in other countries and to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2060. At present its factories and industries are experiencing a serious shortage of electricity.

This shortage has meant that its political leaders are encouraging their industries to mine and burn coal, despite their commitments to lower their carbon dioxide emissions because of climate change.

Currently, tax incentives are being drafted to promote the building of coal-fired power plants. Regulators have encouraged Chinese banks to lend money to the coal sector of the economy even when they breach greenhouse gas levels, which were introduced in response to climate change concerns.

In October this year, the Chinese premier, Li Keqiang, emphasised the importance of a regular supply of electricity after various areas in China had been plunged into darkness. In the context of the climate change debate, Beijing's renewed embrace of coal on the eve of COP26 was causing alarm.

The Chinese head of state, Xi Jinping, stated his country would increase the strength of its nationally determined contribution before COP26 begins.

However, he had not signalled whether he would attend the meeting in Glasgow in November or not.

As this is a world meeting, having Xi present at the talks was of vital importance, since China is among the world's top emitters of carbon.

The United States, in fact, has the

Asking poor countries at the Glasgow summit to undertake serious climate action, while giving them less money to pursue clean energy strategies, does not make sense

While there were many excellent presentations from credible scientists, whose writings had been peer reviewed, the organisers also gave a platform to at least four participants, who were either in denial about climate change or believed it was a good thing

largest per capita carbon footprint at 16 tons, while China has the largest population, but its per capita emissions are far lower.

Xie Zhenhua, China's envoy on climate change, points out that China has agreed to strengthen its commitment to promoting renewable energy in the country over the next 10 years and to scale back of the use of coal.

United States

The United States experienced severe weather in many areas of the country in this year. June was the hottest month ever recorded. The Pacific Northwest experienced an extraordinary heatwave with temperatures reaching 100-degrees Fahrenheit.

Drought in the western United States set a 122-year record. Farmers, ranchers and indigenous people all suffered extensively from the drought with little end in sight. These tinder dry conditions led to wildfires.

California had the worst ever, destroying vast areas of forest and many properties. Hurricane Ida devastated areas. Eleven people drowned in their basements in New York.

In response to these events, the president, Joe Biden, vowed to increase the ability to respond to extreme weather by significantly lowering carbon emissions. In October, he had two bills pending on Capitol Hill, which included money for infrastructural work and social programmes.

The bills include large amounts of money to tackle climate change by investing extraordinary amounts in renewable energy.

One of the people blocking the legislation from going through the senate was Joe Manchin. For over 30 years, Manchin has made money out of Enersystems Inc, a coal brokerage company he founded in 1988—now run by his son. Manchin has publicly objected to the clean energy provisions in the US\$3.5 trillion bill that is before the Congress and supports building gas-fired power plants.

The frustration of someone like Joseph Aldy, who helped craft the climate change bill of the former president, Barack Obama, is understandable.

He finds it fascinating that the national energy policy is being drafted by a representative of the fossil fuel industry, rather than climate change scientists."

Manchin does support some climate control methods, as long as the policies allow for the continued burning of coal, oil and gas.

In 2010, Manchin opposed Obama's bill, because it was bad for West Virginia, a coal-producing state. In 2021, Manchin plans to amend Biden's Clean Energy Performance Programme, worth almost US\$159 billion, which is designed to replace most of the country's gas and coal-fired power plants with wind, solar and nuclear over the next decade.

Writing in the *New York Times*, Christopher Flavelle makes the point that while Manchin is blocking Biden's bill, his state of West Virginia is openly exposed to severe weather and serious flooding.

He claims, "New data shows that the people of West Virginia stand to suffer disproportionately, as climate change intensifies.

Unlike those in other flood-exposed states, most residents in mountainous West Virginia have little room to relocate from the waterways that increasingly threaten their safety."

It is important to emphasise that not dealing with global warming will be much more costly than dealing with it now.

Finally, "If Biden's bills don't come to pass, then the United States will be coming to Glasgow with some fine words but not much else," Rachel Kyte, the dean of the Fletcher School at Tufts University and climate adviser to the United Nations secretary general, said.

Climate change and the Churches

The Catholic Church gave poor leadership on the dangers of climate change during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.

I attended many COPs on climate change during the 1900s and the 2000s and found precious little participation by the official Catholic Church at these important events.

One of the first places where Pope John Paul II discussed climate change was in *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation*, which was published on 1 January 1990.

Unfortunately, Pope John Paul mixed up climate change with the gradual depletion of the ozone layer when he claimed that "the gradual depletion of the ozone layer and the related 'greenhouse effect' has now reached crisis proportions as a consequence of industrial growth, massive urban concentrations and vastly increased energy needs" (Number 5).

In May 2007, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace organised a two-day seminar on climate change, which I attended with more than 80 other people.

While there were many excellent presentations from credible scientists, whose writings had been peer reviewed, the organisers also gave a platform to at least four participants, who were either in denial about climate change or believed it was a good thing.

One of these was Craig Idso, an adjunct professor and chairperson of the Office of Climatology at Arizona State University.

He was chairperson of the Centre for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change, an institute whose stated mission was to "separate reality from rhetoric in the emotionally charged debate

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that swirls around the subject of carbon dioxide and global change.”

Many of us wondered why the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace invited these climate sceptics to this meeting, given the scientific position that was taken by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change at that time.

In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI published a social encyclical, *Caritas et Veritate* (Love and Truth). There was no mention of climate change in that document, although it was published four months before the United Nations’ Climate Change conference in November/December 2009 in Copenhagen.

Now, just over a decade later, climate change is seen by the Catholic Church as one of the greatest challenges to both humans and the planet.

The document, *Fate of Mountain Glaciers in the Anthropocene*, published on 11 May 2011 by the Pontifical Academy of the Sciences, marks a huge breakthrough in the Vatican approach to climate change.

It states that the warming of the Earth is unequivocal. The working party that produced the report included glaciologists, climate scientists, meteorologists, hydrologists, physicists, chemists, mountaineers and lawyers.

The document states, “Human-caused changes in the composition of the air and air quality result in more than two million premature deaths worldwide every year and threaten water and food security—especially among those bottom three billion people.”

It stresses the need for immediate bold action. “We appeal to all nations to develop and implement, without delay, effective and fair policies to reduce the causes and impact of climate change on communities and ecosystems, including mountain glaciers and their watersheds, aware that we all live in the same home.”

Everyone on the planet has some responsibility to deal with climate change, but those who caused the problem in



Craig Idso’s mission is to separate reality from rhetoric in the emotionally charged debate that swirls around the subject of carbon dioxide and climate change.

the first place, particularly people in the developed world, must act first and help developing countries to cope with climate change.

The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* was published in 2004. Chapter 10 is devoted to safeguarding the environment. It is one of the slimmest chapters in the book, running to a mere 15 pages. Chapter 6 on human work has 27 pages.

The document does not include an important talk given by Pope John Paul where he calls for an *ecological* conversion. In that book, there is only one paragraph on climate change and one on the destruction of biodiversity.

Cardinal Pell—a climate denier

In his articles in *The Sunday Telegraph* and the *Catholic Weekly*, George Cardinal Pell, at that time archbishop of Sydney, had dismissed climate change.

In a public lecture delivered in the United States in February 2006, he said that:

Some of the hysterical and extreme claims about global warming are also a symptom of pagan emptiness, of Western fear when confronted by the immense and basically uncontrollable forces of nature.

Belief in a benign God, who is master of the universe, has a steadying psychological effect, although it is no guarantee of Utopia, no guarantee that the continuing climate and geo-

graphic changes will be benign.

In the past, animals and even humans were sacrificed in vain attempts to placate capricious and cruel gods. Today they demand a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.

In early 2011, Greg Ayers, head of the Bureau of Meteorology in Australia, painstakingly examined the scientific claims that Cardinal Pell made in a letter written and tabled at a Senate hearing in Australia. Critics of the cardinal point out that his climate scepticism is based on the work of a geologist called Ian Plimer.

However, Plimer’s data has been thoroughly debunked by Barry Brook and Ian Enting, a mathematician at the University of Melbourne and one of Plimer’s own colleagues.

Instead of responding to Ayers’ critique of his arguments, Pell accused Ayers of being a “hot-air specialist”, even though Ayers has 140 peer-reviewed articles to his name and Pell does not have even one peer-reviewed scientific paper.

After the publication of the encyclical, *Laudato Si’: On Care for our Common Home*, Cardinal Pell publicly criticised Pope Francis’ decision to place climate change at the top of the Catholic Church’s agenda.

He told the *Financial Times* that the Church has “no particular expertise in science.”

This is an extraordinary statement given the damage that climate change is causing in terms of extreme weather and rising sea levels.

If the average global temperature reaches three degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the damage to humanity and the rest of creation will be enormous and long-lasting.

The World Council of Churches

In 1983, the World Council of Churches Assembly in Vancouver adopted a process focussed on *Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*, through which Churches were encouraged to work

We appeal to all nations to develop and implement, without delay, effective and fair policies to reduce the causes and impact of climate change on communities and ecosystems, including mountain glaciers and their watersheds, aware that we all live in the same home

together on the three inter-related themes.

Many Churches became increasingly focussed on environmental concerns during this period, adopting policy statements and initiating education and advocacy activities on specific issues.

This process culminated in a World Convocation on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in Seoul, South Korea, in 1990, which I attended.

The conference came up with 10 theological affirmations and specific covenants for action linking economic inequity, militarism, ecological destruction and racial injustice, as well as the theological, ethical and spiritual basis for affirming and sustaining life in its fullness.

The World Council of Churches has given courageous leadership on climate change and other ecological issues through its teaching in *Sign of Peril, Test of Faith; Accelerated Climate Change*, which was published in 1994.

In that document, it presented theological and ethical reflections on climate change and made it crystal clear that dealing with climate change would require profound changes in every aspect of human life—transport, accommodation, industry and agriculture.

In *Solidarity with Victims of Climate Change*, published in 2002, the Council argued that the ecological, economic and political aspects of climate change ought to be assessed from a justice perspective, especially in the light of the growing global gap between the rich and poor.

In March 1996, the then president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Roger Cardinal Echeagaray, wrote to the presidents of the episcopal conferences in the industrialised countries acknowledged that the World Council of Churches had taken a leading role in drawing the attention of its member Churches to the relationship between climate change and human activity.

He encouraged local Catholic leaders to examine ways in which they could cooperate with any Council-inspired initiatives in their countries. Unfortunately, precious little happened. Until the Paris Conference on Climate Change of 2015, the Catholic Church played a minimal role in the various annual COP gatherings.



Sean McDonagh

Laudato Si'

Paragraph 23 of *Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home* makes it clear that “there is a very solid scientific consensus indicating that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climate system.”

In the same paragraph, Pope Francis makes it clear that human beings need to change their lifestyles, as well as their patterns of production and consumption in order to seriously combat climate change.

In paragraph 25, he points out that the poor, who did little to cause climate change, will be most affected by it.

He writes, “Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services, such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources that can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited.”

In 2019, Pope Francis endorsed the limiting of temperature rise to 1.5-degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels recommended by the Paris COP21 in 2015.

That same year, he declared a *climate emergency*, because he believed that “future generations stand to inherit a greatly spoiled world. Our children and grandchildren should not have to pay the cost of our generation’s irresponsibility.”

Given the seriousness of the crisis, every parish needs to set up a climate change committee and work with other Christian

Churches and religions to address this critical issue of our time.

Such a context of support, at local and national level, will make it possible for people to implement the radical changes needed in our lifestyles, which are demanded by this new report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The time to achieve this is extremely short.

In September this year, a report from the United Nations warned us that fossil fuel emissions have reached their pre-pandemic levels. Among the findings are that power and industry are almost at the same level as in January 2019.

According to the United Nations secretary general, Antonio Guterres, “this is an alarming appraisal of just how far off course we are.”

In this short paper on the perils of climate change, I outline the enormous damage that climate change is causing to our planet, in terms of extreme weather, including droughts and floods, and the rise in the level of our oceans.

I go on to assess the efforts that various countries are putting in place to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and, in the light of this, it was never easy to be optimistic about the probable success of COP26 in Glasgow.

Some highly important leaders were absent, including Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia, and Xi Jinping, head of state and the secretary general of the Chinese Communist Party.

Biden came to Glasgow, but without having nailed down a bill that would underpin the development of clean energy in that country.

Britain, in partnership with Italy, is leading COP26, but as outlined earlier, its record at home is poor and its unwillingness to raise its overseas development aid signals an unwillingness to help poorer countries adapt to climate change.

The tragedy is that we have so little time to change our ways and a failure will be a disaster for humanity and planet earth for ages to come. Future generations will not forgive us.

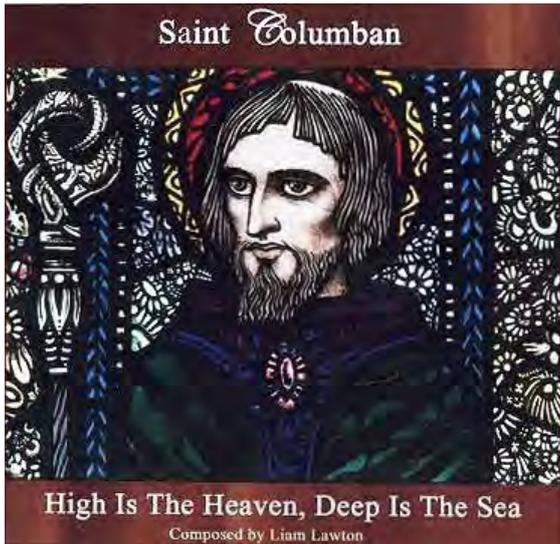
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Columban hymn hits a high note

submitted by
Liam O'Callaghan

Pakistan

Columban eBulletin Archive, 23 September 2014



The year 2015 marked the 1,400th anniversary of the death of St Columban. As part of a series of initiatives to mark this special anniversary the Columbans commissioned composer, Liam Lawton to write and record a hymn that calls to mind the contemporary Columban concerns of Justice, Peace, Care for the Earth and Reconciliation between peoples.

Saint Columban (Columbanus) an “illustrious Irishman who left his own country for voluntary exile, willed and achieved a spiritual union among the principal European countries of his time. He is the patron saint of all those who now seek to build a united Europe.”

Robert Schuman
*a founder of the European Union
Congress on Columban
Luxeuil July 1950*

Credits

Composed by Liam Lawton
Arranged by Mark Cahill
Performed by The Prague Philharmonic Orchestra
Choir: Voices of the Ireland Chamber Choir

Access a performance of the song on this website

<https://www.columban.org.au/catholic-mission-files/mp3/Columban-Missionaries-High-is-the-Heavens-hymn.mp3>

Access the words and sheet music on this website

<https://www.columban.org.au/catholic-mission-files/pdf/news/high-is-the-heaven-satb-piano-score.pdf>

High is the Heaven, Deep is the Sea

*High is the Heaven, Deep Is The Sea
High is the heaven, deep is the sea
Wide is your wisdom that calls us to be
Formed in your Spirit that we might reveal
Love is your dwelling, love is your dwelling,
O eternal mystery*

*And what of the world that it may reflect
The presence of God, this beauty on earth
Wise be the soul who longs to respect
The Creation of God from its birth to its death,*

*And what of the heart that yearns to be true
In care for another, in love for the poor
Embracing the wounds that long to be healed
In a harvest of love, in earths lonely fields*

*And what of the soul that searches for peace
Wearied from toil, yet burdened in sleep
Drink deep from the well in silence refined
Where hope is revealed and love is the sign*

*And what of the time that passes away
While only God's love for all still remains
For all things shall pass and all things know
change
For we are but Pilgrims, still finding the way*

*And what of our Joy that our hearts should know
The harvest of saints, gathered and grown
The gift to our day from cells hewn in stone
Columban of God, your name we make known.*

The most famous Irishman that ever lived

His pastoral sensitivity is evident in his rules for clergy and laity living outside the monastery. At that time in Western Christianity, his introduction of private confession and penance was a welcome relief to many Christians in several parts of Europe

Jim Mulroney SSC

Australia

In 2015, the government of Ireland marked the 1,400th anniversary of the death of St Columban with the minting of a memorial stamp in honour of the monk who was once described by Pope Benedict XVI as one of the all-time most famous sons of the Emerald Isle.

Despite the papal pedigree of the laudatory author of the remark, a history professor from Boston College, Damian Bracken, begged to differ somewhat, saying during a seminar at the Columban Mission Centre in Dublin, "Columban is not one of the most famous, but the most famous Irishman that ever lived. Full stop!"

Columban is the first Irish person to articulate a sense of what it means to be Irish. In the letter which he wrote to Pope Boniface in 613 AD, he wrote, "We Irish." The Irish were not held in high esteem in continental Europe during the Roman Empire and even after the collapse of the Empire. Columban and the monks who followed him to Europe in the sixth and seventh centuries changed that perception radically.

Europeans accept that during the sixth and seventh centuries the light came, not from the East, but from the West.

Within a generation after his death, Jonas of Susa, a monk at Bobbio, wrote the *Life of Columbanus*, a testimony to the importance of Columban's legacy in Europe. Bracken comments, "This is another first: Columbanus is the first Irishman to be the subject of a biography."

He is also Ireland's first man of *letters*, since he is the first Irish person from whom we have a written document.

Of the Irish monk who laboured in Europe and made such an impact on it in the sixth and seventh centuries, Bracken says that "shrines, towns and landmarks across Europe bear Columbanus' name and testify to the widespread diffusion of devotion to the saint."

In the middle of the ninth century, a biographer of St Gall, a colleague of Columban, acknowledged the debt of his people to Ireland saying, "whence the splendour of such light came to us."



A memorial postage stamp minted by the Irish government in 2015 to mark the 1,400th anniversary of the death of St Columban.

'Columban is not one of the most famous, but the most famous Irishman that ever lived.

Full stop!'

He goes on to say that the light of Christianity has shone westward to Ireland through missionaries such as St Patrick.

Between the sixth and eighth centuries this light shone in the opposite direction, as Irish monks rekindled the faith in Europe. In that sense, this later tradition is a reflection of Columbanus' belief that the conversion of his homeland on the edge of the world led to the spiritual and cultural enrichment of the West.

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COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES

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