

Online Columban International Youth Encounter 2021
January 15, 2021 (Peru)
January 16, 2021 (Fiji Islands, Britain, Pakistan, Myanmar, the Philippines)

Last January 16, 2021 we hosted our first online Columban International Youth Encounter which gathered 24 young people and seven young Columban missionaries and co-workers from six different Columban mission areas. The opening prayer was led by Louie Ybanez where he quoted Pope Francis from Fratelli Tutti and played the Make me an instrument song. The welcome and introduction remarks was given by Kurt Pala.

The next hour was spent on the cultural presentations made by the participants about their respective countries which was facilitated by Erl Tabaco. The group was later divided into breakout rooms for sharing and reflection on the following questions: (1) What did you learn and appreciate about yourself during the time of the pandemic? and (2) How do you feel about this gathering? What are your expectations for the next gathering? The sharing session was facilitated by Marjorie Engcoy. The participants were also asked to write down their comments and suggestions for the next gathering. The closing prayer was led by Micheal Javier where he asked the participants to say the Lord's Prayer in their own languages as he recites the prayer in the Kachin language (one of the major languages of Myanmar).

We hope that this gathering will be a space to meet and encounter the "other." And that this would be the beginnings of an encounter that leads to friendship. We have seas and oceans between us, huge time differences but through technology we are able to gather and meet online.

The experience of Covid19 has led us to even greater isolation and wall-building. Pope Francis exhorts us, "Isolation, no; closeness, yes" (No. 30). "In the hope that in the face of present-day attempts to eliminate or ignore others, we may prove capable of responding with a new vision of fraternity and social friendship that will not remain at the level of words." We need physical distancing but not social distancing. We need to look out for each other. Finally, St. Columban also reminds us that "A life unlike your own could be your teacher."

The greatest challenge for the session was the huge time differences between the countries which meant some participants had to stay up late into the night while others had to wake up early or even very early in the morning. We had young people from Britain waking up at three in the morning to join the encounter and young people in Peru staying up until 12 midnight. But the whole encounter was fun and informative.

First Online CIYE 2021 Facilitators/Animators

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| 1. Marjorie Engcoy (Fiji) | 4. Kurt Pala (Myanmar) |
| 2. Erl Dylan Tabaco (Peru) | 5. Micheal Javier (Myanmar) |
| 3. James Trewby (Britain) | 6. JR Ramirez (Philippines) |
| | 7. Louie Ybanez (Pakistan) |