



COLUMBAN CENTRE FOR CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

CCCMR Report to the Region of Oceania

10 August 2022

Introduction

I hope you are all keeping safe, well, warm and dry!

Interview with Interfaith Tour, by Sam Cherian



On Wednesday 29 June 2022, we were visited by four members of the InterFaith Tour program, a world tour of interfaith and interreligious initiatives for peace based in France. Sam and Kim participated in an interview as part of a study conducted by the group. The aim of the study was to inspire and engage youth to become agents of change through the creation and promotion of positive content and to document the role of interfaith initiatives in peacebuilding from an international standpoint. The group began their journey in 2020 and travelled to numerous countries around the world to carry out a total of 150 interviews. Participating in the study was an incredible experience for Kim and myself as it offered us the opportunity not only to be one of the interfaith organisations to represent

Australia but also to share our experiences from a youth and women's perspective. Given the large quantities of data they have collected, the compilation of the report might take some time but we will be notified once the report is out. For Interfaith Tour see: <https://bit.ly/3wnvBSv>.

Plenary Council of Australia, by Patrick McInerney



From 3-10 July, I attended the Plenary Council in my capacity as a *Peritus* (Advisor). Trevor Trotter, being a Major Superior, attended as a member. Noel Connolly was remembered as the public face of and protagonist for the Plenary in the early years of the Facilitation Team. 3 Columbans out of 30 in the country contributing to such an historic event! 10%! Columbans punching well above our weight! Just shows the esteem and reputation regarding mission in which we are held.

The *Periti* gathered in the 'bunker', a room on the floor below the Assembly Hall. We watched the event on a screen. We reflected among ourselves. We were available for conversations with members and officials and made the most of those opportunities at tea breaks and lunches. Some of us were invited to give 5-minute addresses to the Assembly on the theme of the day's discussion. I gave a presentation on "Mission", which was very highly acclaimed at the time and since with words such as "fantastic", "inspiring", "challenging", "up-lifting", "spot on", "just what we wanted" (all from one bishop!). My address is a foundational exhortation that lays the basis and direction for the Plenary (and all church life and action) in a trinitarian account of *missio Dei*. The text is published on the Columban website: <https://bit.ly/3JNmpMu>. If the voting members had listened and heeded the implications of what I said, they wouldn't have gotten themselves into a pickle that day!!!

My mantra about the Plenary was fulfilled: *“It didn’t do everything. It didn’t do nothing. It did something. And if everyone dislikes the outcome, then it did exactly what it could and should have done!”* That’s a bit simplistic! The Plenary was a very complex, long-drawn-out process over many years which brought together the vast diversity of the Australian church, not just geographically, but ages, cultures, theologies, states of life and understandings of and involvements in church and mission. Its successes and failures and their causes will be analysed over the coming months and years. The proof will be in the implementation.

From a CCCMR point of view, the Plenary did endorse interreligious dialogue. I would have liked it to have been more prescriptive e.g. mandating the setting up of IRD commissions in every diocese, and formation in IRD for every seminarian and church leader, but the Plenary chose instead to show general “support”. That’s fine. It gives us something on which to build. I give a more detailed report on the IRD content of the Plenary in the latest Interfaith E-Bulletin: <https://bit.ly/3peVQGM>

Columban Interfaith E-Bulletin out now



A Columban eBulletin focusing on interfaith dialogue. This issue highlights the establishment of a new Interfaith Commission in the Diocese of Parramatta and examples of interreligious dialogue with our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters.

The Centre has published its third Interfaith e-Bulletin, a new initiative that began with the October issue in 2021. The August 2022 issue is now online and features the establishment of a new interfaith commission in the Diocese of Parramatta, as well as examples of interfaith dialogue with our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters. Each issue presents on a theme. The first issue was on youth in interfaith; the March 2022 issue was about women in the interfaith sphere. Each issue consists of a mix of media,

including audio, video and written articles. The response to the publications so far is overwhelmingly positive. It is another effort by the Columbans to promote the interfaith apostolate to a Catholic audience. You can read the latest issue here: <https://bit.ly/3zPBDvS>.

Much-Needed Break, by Patrick McInerney



My 2021 Christmas break was disrupted by COVID and by Plenary and CCCMR work. I felt I was dragging my heels all year to catch up. Accordingly, I kept the last week of July and first week of August free from commitments and took a much-needed break from the office. I had a unit on the south coast near Bateman’s Bay all to myself for the fortnight. It was quiet and peaceful and no demands. Of course, I had my laptop and did some personal, Columban and CCCMR work online – there were a couple of unavoidable zoom meetings – but on the whole, I took the

clear and strong advice of nature which a mob of about 20 wallabies delivered daily to the back yard of the house, as per the above image. Their message was: *“Lie down and rest!!!”*

His mistake left her speechless!!

My wife asked me to pass on the *Lip Balm*, instead, I gave her super glue by mistake.

She is still not talking to me.





Farewell! from Sam Cherian

Hello everyone! I pray that you are all doing well and staying safe.

Unfortunately, it is time for me to bid farewell. It was my intention to continue with the work that we were doing but due to unexpected circumstances (relating to my visa), I will be leaving CCCMR at the end of this month.

Coming into the interfaith space as the Youth & Networking Coordinator was a challenging yet rewarding experience. During this past year, I have met inspiring individuals who work tirelessly to promote interreligious dialogue in their community despite the challenges they face. Through the different community events that I attended, I had the opportunity to discover new cultures and traditions and learn a great deal about different religions like Islam, Judaism and the Baha'i faith. Thank you for welcoming me

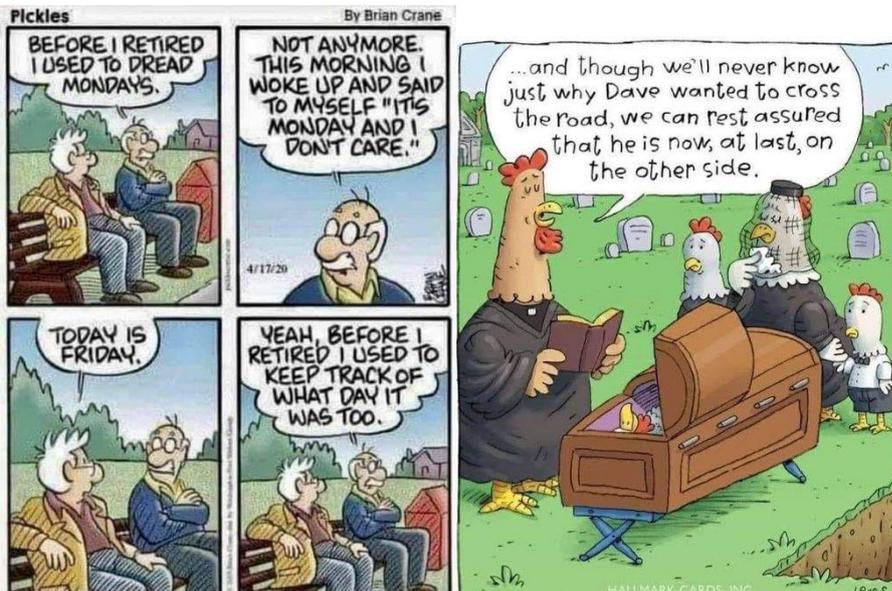
into the Columban family. Though I could not meet a lot of you in person, the support that our team continues to receive from all of you goes a long way. Working with Youth PoWR and the Centre has helped me grow professionally and personally. The biggest takeaway for me is that despite our differences, we are all interconnected. Our faiths and cultures share a lot in common especially with regards to the values that we are taught to live by. I will continue promoting interreligious dialogue in my own way. Thank you. Do stay in touch.

Conclusion

Refreshed after my break at Long Beach, and Kim and Sam refreshed after a break from me, the Centre is again back in full swing. With the backing of the Plenary, we look to promoting and practicing interfaith in Parramatta, Sydney and beyond.

We will miss Sam. We wish her all the best in her new job. We look forward to seeing her ongoing involvement in interfaith around Sydney. We sowed the seed; others will reap the harvest. Blessings on your life and work!

Patrick McInerney



The Institute of Unfinished Research has concluded that 6 out of 10 people