



Columban Mission

The Magazine of the Missionary Society of St. Columban

June/July 2026

Missionary Strategies and Methods

C O N T E N T S

Issue Theme – Missionary Strategies and Methods



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The Missionary Society of St. Columban was founded in 1918 to proclaim and witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The Society seeks to establish the Catholic Church where the Gospel has not been preached, help local churches evangelize their laity, promote dialogue with other faiths, and foster among all baptized people an awareness of their missionary responsibility.



Mission Methods and Strategies

The mission of the Church flows directly from the heart of Christ. Before ascending to the Father, Jesus entrusted His disciples with a sacred task: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” (Matthew 28:19) From that moment forward, the Church has lived as a missionary community, seeking ways in every generation to proclaim the Gospel with wisdom, humility, and love. Mission methods and strategies are not merely practical tools; they are expressions of faith in action, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Throughout history, missionaries have adapted their approach to meet the needs of the people they serve. The early apostles traveled widely, preaching boldly in marketplaces, homes, and synagogues. Later missionaries entered unfamiliar cultures and languages, striving to share the Good News while respecting the traditions and dignity of local communities. Columban missionaries learned that successful mission work requires both fidelity to the Gospel and sensitivity to the human context in which it is proclaimed.

One essential mission strategy is presence. Living with a community, sharing in its joys and struggles, and listening with compassion creates trust and mutual respect. In this way, the Gospel is not presented as an outside message imposed upon others but as a living invitation encountered through genuine relationship.

Another vital method is witness through service. Columban missionaries have long recognized that proclaiming Christ involves caring for the whole person. Schools, hospitals, and charitable works have become powerful expressions of God’s love. When missionaries teach children, care for the sick, or defend the dignity of the poor, they reveal the compassionate face of Christ. These acts of mercy prepare hearts to receive the message of faith.

Inculturation also plays a crucial role in missionary strategy. Columban missionaries strive to learn local languages, appreciate customs, and recognize the seeds of truth already present in each society. Rather than replacing culture, the Gospel elevates and purifies it, allowing faith to flourish in ways that are authentic to the people who embrace it.

Yet perhaps the most important missionary method is humble accompaniment. Modern mission work increasingly emphasizes walking alongside others rather than simply instructing them.



Columban missionaries strive to learn local languages, appreciate customs, and recognize the seeds of truth already present in each society.

Columban missionaries today listen carefully, encourage local leadership, and help communities grow in their own faith and responsibility. In doing so, they reflect Christ the Good Shepherd, who journeys with His people.

All mission strategies must remain rooted in prayer. Without prayer, mission risks becoming merely a human project. With prayer, it becomes participation in God’s own work of salvation. Columban missionaries rely on the Holy Spirit to guide their decisions, open hearts, and sustain hope in times of difficulty.

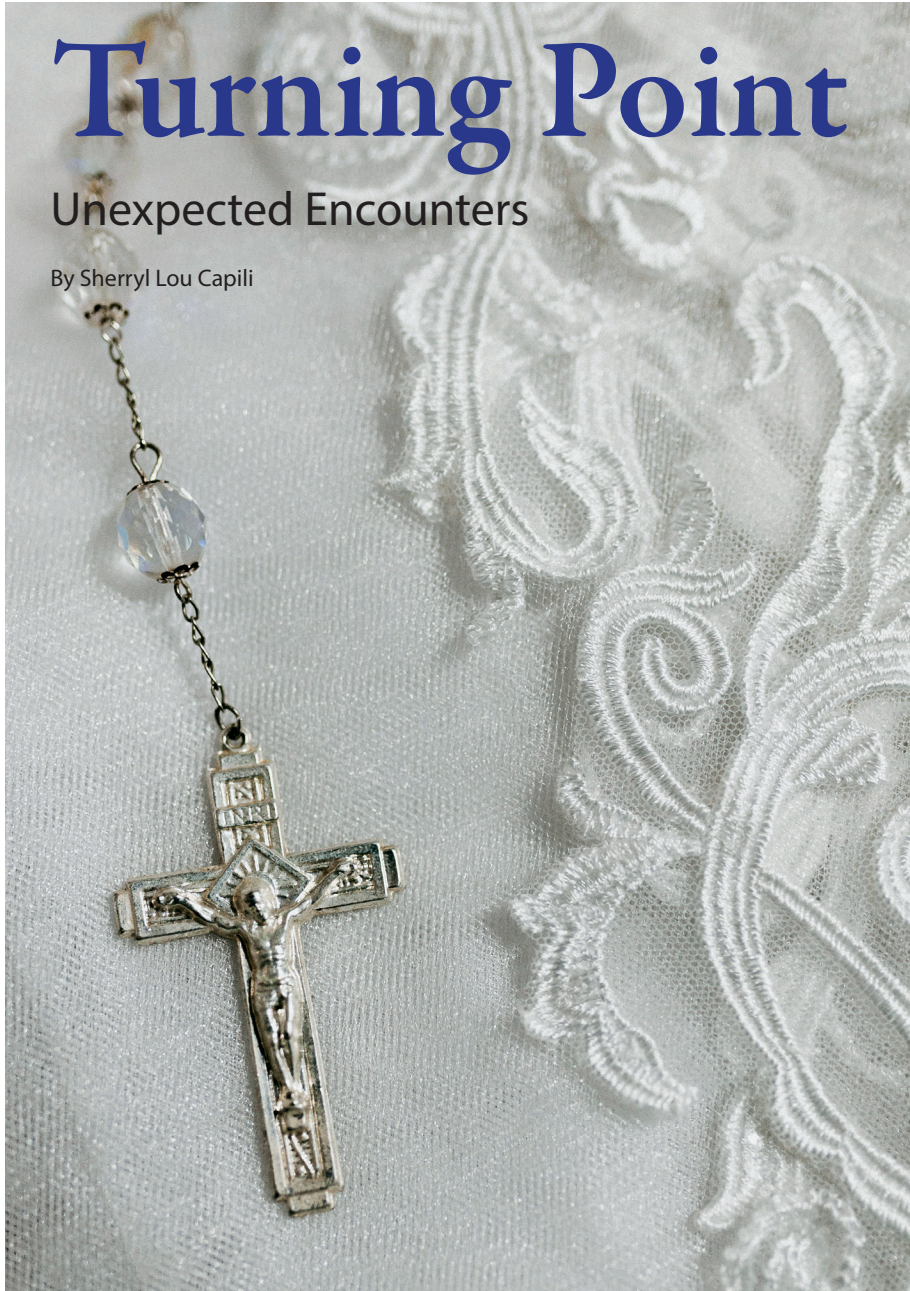
Ultimately, the success of Columban mission does not depend solely on methods or strategies. It depends on love—love for Christ and love for the people He calls us to serve. When missionaries act with faith, humility, and compassion, their efforts become instruments through which God’s grace reaches the world. In this way, the Church continues her sacred mission, carrying the light of the Gospel to every nation and generation.

Columban Missionaries

Turning Point

Unexpected Encounters

By Sherryl Lou Capili



Hi, my name is Sherryl Lou Capili. My first assignment as a Columban lay missionary was in Taiwan, where I served for thirteen years. One story from my mission that I will always treasure and never forget is my encounter with the daughter of a Filipino immigrant. She was one of our Sunday school students and this happened eight years ago.

One Sunday, while the immigrant mothers were having their monthly meeting, this girl, named Chou Ting-Yu,

was left in my care in the office because there were no other children for her to play with. She was seven years old at the time. She sat beside my desk and began browsing through the books on my table. One book that caught her attention was a guide to praying the rosary.


She asked me, “Can I borrow this?” I was surprised because I thought children might find praying the rosary boring. But she insisted, so I said, “OK, it’s up to you.” She then asked what the book was about. I explained and

took out a rosary from my bag, slowly teaching her step by step how to pray it.

To my surprise, she already knew the basic prayers, so it wasn’t difficult for her. She was already on the second mystery when she stopped, apparently tired and catching her breath. She asked me, “Do I have to finish all five mysteries?” I told her, “Since you’re new to this, it’s up to you. You can stop and continue later.”

But I was amazed at her enthusiasm—she kept praying the rosary. People entering the office noticed her, and as her teacher, I felt so proud and moved. Seeing her like that inspired me to find creative ways to help children become more interested in prayer.

From that day on, during the following Sundays, our main activity became praying the rosary. I tried various methods to teach them, and we would pray together every Sunday. If it weren’t part of the plan, the children would ask, “Are we not praying the rosary today?” So I would adjust my lesson plan, and we would pray the rosary. We continued this for several months.

Looking back, that simple moment with Zhou Ting-Yu became a turning point in my mission. It reminded me that even the smallest gestures—like sharing a prayer guide or teaching a child to pray—can spark something profound. Her quiet determination and genuine curiosity deepened my own faith and reaffirmed the importance of nurturing spirituality in young hearts. That experience continues to inspire me today, reminding me that mission work is not just about programs or plans, but about being present, listening, and allowing God to work through the unexpected encounters that shape our journey. 

Sherryl Lou Capili is a Columban lay missionary from the Philippines. Currently, she serves as the Coordinator of the Columban Lay Missionaries Central Leadership Team and is based in Hong Kong.



Help Future Generations with a Donation Today

Your gift helps people break the chains of addiction through Columban programs like the Rebirth Rehabilitation Center in Myanmar (formerly Burma).



Thanks to the generosity of the Columban donors we were able to complete and open the first residential center in the country for women suffering from addiction. In addition, the program provides vocational education training to help young men obtain jobs. We hope to expand this program and offer the men and women who come here a path productive employment and ongoing recovery.

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Belem and Brick Kilns

Creation Spirituality

by Amy Woolam Echeverria

As hundreds of international catholic environmental advocates and faith leaders headed to Belem, Brazil, for the annual UNFCCC COP meeting (COP30) I was headed to Pakistan. It felt a bit counterintuitive to be headed away from this significant climate change summit as it marked the 10th anniversary of both the Paris Agreement and the release of *Laudato Si'*. The global Church had been organizing for well over a year to prepare for a robust presence in Belem. Columban missionaries have been engaged in these climate change summits continuously since their origin in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Why would I choose to be anywhere other than Brazil?

It is precisely for these reasons that I felt confident in my decision to

visit Pakistan at that exact same time. Having seen over the decades the slow but steady growth in the Church's taking up of care for the earth and multilateral government negotiations through the U.N., I could see how clear our collective voice has become in calling for key commitments like: a just transition from fossil fuels to sustainable energy; finance for mitigation and adaptation to climate catastrophes; and the recognition of environmental debt owed by industrialized nations to nations gripped with financial poverty, climate violence, and migration. The Holy See delegation had a vocal and visible presence in Belem along with several Bishops from the Global South, and numerous catholic institutions and religious orders. I felt my efforts were

better served by going to Pakistan to bear witness to the reality of life there, especially through the lens of the cry of the earth and the cry of its most vulnerable people.

Having heard many stories by Columban missionaries in Pakistan, I anticipated deep economic poverty, fragile yet harsh landscapes, and a kind of pervasive violence that comes with systemic injustice. Some things I did not anticipate were the grace and dignity of the women in the village who carried clay water pots on their heads as they floated along the canals, the colorful and intricately painted trucks that moved people and goods from place to place on highways and roadways pocked with gaping holes, and the warm and curious faces of the children who eagerly ran to meet me in the villages to proudly show off their knowledge of the English language. Celebrating Mass in the village at sunset with goat and sheep milling about and by the light of a single cell phone flashlight under the stars all brought me closer to biblical scenes like the Nativity or the road to Emmaus in a way that reading the stories a thousand times never could.

All the while I was there, I felt the urgency of COP 30. For example, one day we visited a typical brick-making kiln that is largely worked by Christian Pakistanis, who are considered unclean and the lowest of the low in society. The work is hard, messy, and exhausting. A typical family of grandparents, parents and children, perhaps 6-7 in total, working eight hours a day combined might make \$3 USD. This means that children are not in school and that grandparents are working well beyond what their bodies can endure. When the heavy rains flood the fields, the kiln is closed because they cannot keep the ovens fired when the ground is submerged. As storms and flooding increase due to climate breakdown, families are out of work for longer and



Healing the sick



Women and the charpai



Sunset Mass

forced to go deeper in debt to their employers and landowners.

The day we visited the brick kiln, there was a young girl of about ten or twelve years old. She was sick and could not work. The family could not send her to the doctor because they could not leave work and even if they could, they had no money to pay for transportation, the doctor's visit, or medicines. The family asked for a prayer and blessing from the Columban priest who was with me. As we gathered around her, all the Biblical stories of unjust landlords and healing the sick took on new depth for me.

It can feel despairing when governments haggle endlessly over the wording of different targets and commitments. It can feel enraging when industries like fossil fuels spend billions on lobbying to ensure their interests are protected. It is true that reforms are desperately needed at these U.N. summits. It is true that they are never ambitious enough to protect biodiversity and human life. It is true that if we were to disengage from the process, then any hope for the family working the brick kiln in Pakistan to rise above their oppression would dissolve as quickly as the mud in a typhoon.


As we turn our gaze to the environmental advocacy landscape in 2026, the UN Biodiversity Summit (COP17) in October in Armenia begs our attention. Just as Catholics have now robustly taken up the UN Climate Change summits, we need to encourage the Church to engage in the Biodiversity Summits. This year, countries at COP17 are expected to update their national plans of action to protect and restore biodiversity. It is a year of accountability.

If you are interested in learning more, visit the Convention on Biological Diversity's website and look up who the representatives are for your country's delegation and contact them with your advocacy concerns and asks, including holding them accountable to their progress in implementing the national blueprint. Urging bishops and other church leaders to speak out in support of care for the earth, as was done at COP 30, From Belém, a global synodal voice for ecological conversion — CIDSE, is another important way to lift our voices.

Finally, in December 2025, we shared highlights of joy and celebration over the past year, as well as some of the challenges we continue to face. As I listened to people, I was inspired by

the way our Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation (JPIC) and Interreligious Dialogue (IRD) team members are bringing the mission priorities to life in their local, national, and international contexts. I heard stories of creativity, integration, ongoing ecological conversion, and deepening of creation spirituality. I heard renewed energy, hope, and desire to try new approaches in engaging young people, families, and policymakers.

I want to thank the Columban missionaries in Pakistan for their warm hospitality and the invitation to serve as their annual retreat guide. The focus was on creation spirituality, which offered a powerful framework to explore spiritual principles like communion, willingness, and listening, along with spiritual movements, including from ego to ego, from fear to freedom, and from knowledge to Mystery.

Thank you to all involved in JPIC and IRD. May the Spirit continue to nurture and guide our commitment to care for people on the move and the earth. 

Amy Woolam Echeverria is the Society's international JPIC coordinator; she lives in the U.S.

Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord

Fruit of Ministry

by Fr. Carlo Jung Euikyun

In 2005, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published a pastoral guide titled *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, recognizing anew the vocation of the laity within the Church's mission and concretizing collaboration with clergy. This document can be considered a crucial pastoral foundation that foresaw the spirit of "synodality" emphasized by Pope Francis.

The preface of the guide begins:

Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord is a resource for diocesan bishops and for all others who are responsible

This is the life of a missionary. Even when physically tired, the spiritual joy of sharing and serving in the Lord's name is the true fruit of ministry and the peace that God gives.

for guiding the development of lay ecclesial ministry in the United States. For several decades and in growing numbers, lay men and women have been undertaking a wide variety of roles in Church ministries. Many of these roles presume a significant degree of preparation, formation, and professional competence. They require authorization of the hierarchy in order for the person to serve publicly in the local church. They entrust to laity responsibilities for leadership in particular areas of ministry and thereby draw certain lay persons into a close mutual collaboration with the

pastoral ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons.

This short preface encapsulates the direction the Church must pursue: clergy and laity working together as partners in cultivating the Lord's vineyard—this is the Church's true identity as it journeys toward the term synodality, now frequently heard in the Church, refers to a spirituality of accompaniment—listening to one another, attending to each other's joys and sufferings, discerning together, and walking together. Pope Francis envisioned a "listening Church," a "Church in the world," where every member of the faithful actively participates in community life.

At Holy Family Parish in Fiji, where I serve, we also prepared various programs to encourage active participation by the laity in celebration of the Jubilee Year of Pilgrims of Hope. Pastoral council members divided into zones and visited the homes of inactive parishioners, sharing prayer, comfort, and warm companionship.

One evening, after returning from a Mass at a remote area, I noticed it was nearly 2 a.m. We had spent the evening laughing, crying, and sharing stories of faith and life with parishioners, losing track of time. On the drive back, the pastoral council president said, "Father, my body is exhausted, but strangely, my heart feels full." That moment struck me: This is the life of a missionary. Even when physically tired, the spiritual joy of sharing and serving in the Lord's name is the true fruit of ministry and the peace that God gives.



Fr. Jung with parishioners during the Corpus Christi Sunday procession

"It's not only priests, nuns, or lay missionaries sent abroad who are 'missionaries.' Everyone who is baptized is a missionary." This was the message I shared in a homily during Mission Month. Our homes are small worlds. Within them are people we must understand, forgive, and embrace with love. Even if we cannot go abroad, we are called to be "domestic missionaries" who share the Good News in our homes, workplaces, and communities. Every smile we offer, every word of

Within them are people we must understand, forgive and embrace with love.

encouragement, every warm gesture of holding someone's hand—these are moments when Christ's love is made present. That is the beginning of the Gospel, and that is the vineyard God has entrusted to us.

Therefore, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* is not just a pastoral manual—it is a story of vocation given to all faithful. As "pilgrims of hope" journeying toward



Fr. Jung (seated center) with the lay leaders during the community visitation and community



Fr. Jung with members of the Columban Companions in Mission in Fiji

the Kingdom of God, we are invited to lead one another, learn from one another, and live united in love. The Church does not belong to a few; it is a community built and borne together by all, with Christ's love always at its center. We are all missionaries, laborers in the Lord's vineyard. When the Lord calls us and we call each other, His vineyard will grow wider, and its fruits will be ever more abundant. **CM**

Columban Fr. Carlo Jung Euikyun is from South Korea. He lives and works in Fiji.

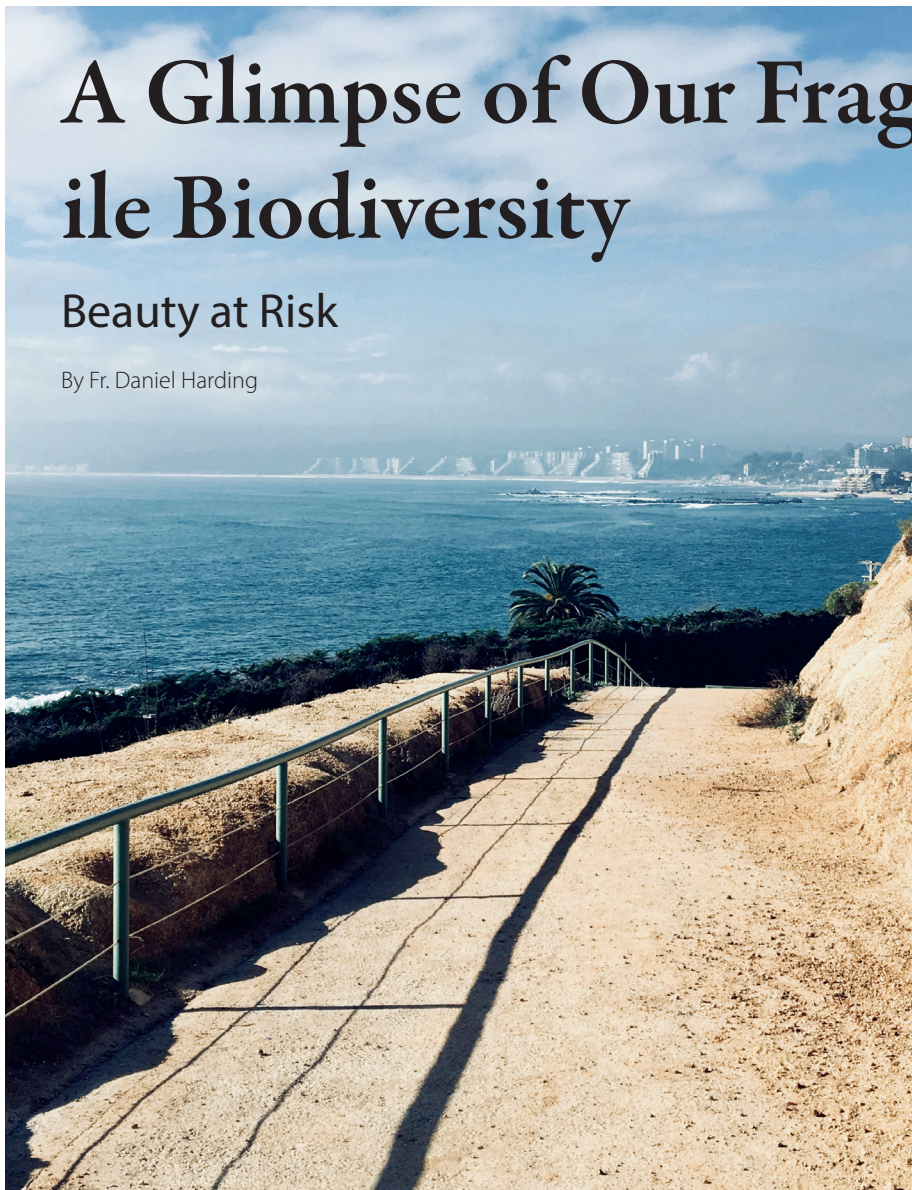


Parish Council members planting a tree during the Season of Creation

A Glimpse of Our Fragile Biodiversity

Beauty at Risk

By Fr. Daniel Harding



Lydio Mangao from the Philippines and Juan Pablo Ro from Korea are newly arrived Columban seminarians participating in their “First Mission Assignment” (FMA) in Chile. It was part of their orientation program and conducted at the Columban house in the seaside town of Algarrobo, on the Pacific Ocean, located 75 miles southwest of Santiago.

Because of its location, the Columban house at Algarrobo serves as a center for understanding the rich biodiversity of the local area and the various threats it faces. The defining feature of the ocean at Algarrobo, as well as along the entire coast of Chile,

Peru, Ecuador, and extending to the Galapagos Islands, is the Humboldt Current. This current carries cold, low-salinity water from the sub-Antarctic, flowing offshore up the west coast of South America, making it one of the richest marine ecosystems on Earth. It also significantly cools the climates of Chile, Peru, and Ecuador.

In addition to being a center for understanding the local area’s biodiversity, the Columban house also serves as a venue for retreats, courses, formation, various meetings, prayer, and rest.

As the Columban house overlooks the Pacific Ocean, it wasn’t long before Lydio and Juan Pablo spotted a large

pod of Risso dolphins swimming offshore. Bottlenose dolphins can also be seen at Algarrobo.

Just a short walk from the Columban house, you will find the “Islote Pajaro Niño,” a small offshore island that was declared a Nature Sanctuary in 1978. The island is home to separate colonies of over 2,000 Humboldt and Magellan penguins. It is the northernmost limit for Magellan penguins.

Sadly, Humboldt penguins have been listed as endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Since 2013, there has been a significant decline in the number of Humboldt penguins on the island.

Also present on “Islote Pajaro Niño” is a colony of Chungungos, or Marine Nutrias (otters) (Lontra feline), which are native to the coasts of Chile and Peru. Unfortunately, the IUCN has placed Chungungos on the red list of endangered species as well. The island is also home to over twenty species of migratory birds.

Both the penguin colonies and the Chungungo colony can be observed using binoculars from the walking track around the point, which is a short distance from the Columban house. At this very spot, overlooking the island, developers have proposed building a complex of three tall apartment buildings. Residents are leading an energetic campaign to block this development.

In recent years, the biodiversity of Islote Pajaro Niño has significantly declined due to an increase in recreational activities from the nearby yacht club, including boating and water sports. Algarrobo is widely regarded as “The Nautical Capital of Chile,” known for a diverse range of water sports such as sailing, surfing, and diving. Overdevelopment is also a serious threat to biodiversity. A large apartment complex in another area of Algarrobo boasts the second-longest

swimming pool in the world, exceeding half a mile in length.

Just a short walk from the Columban house is a small bay featuring the beautiful beaches of Canelillo and Canelo. Despite the very cold waters from the Humboldt Current, Lydio managed a brief swim here while other swimmers opted for wetsuits.

Following on from the two beaches, one walks for 15 minutes along a dirt track with a rocky sea front on one side and steep slopes on the other. In springtime, the slopes burst with color from various native Chilean wildflowers. During the orientation program, the Quiscos, a type of cactus (*Echinopsis chilensis*), were beginning to bloom, as was the Chagual (*Puya Chilensis*), with its large flowering stalks poised to open.

Amidst the flowers, it's easy to spot two multi-colored species of beautiful native Chilean lizards, members of the genus *Liolaemus*, which is the most common and diverse genus in Chile. Meanwhile, sea eagles soar overhead.

Local ecological groups continue to battle against developers wanting to build high-rise apartments with sea views on these slopes.


At the end of the track, you arrive at a 30-metre-high single granite rock known as Peñablanca, which becomes an island at high tide. It was declared a nature sanctuary in 1982. On this guano-covered rock, hundreds of marine birds, including migratory birds from the northern hemisphere, nest and rest. There are also pelicans, various species of cormorants, several types of gulls, and many other species.

On the southern side of the rock lies a colony of sea lions. From the shore, you can look across to the colony and hear their calls. Chungungos also frequent the rock. Numerous species of algae thrive in the waters surrounding the rock and are washed up at high tide. Beautiful orange, red, and yellow lichens blanket the rocks above the high tide mark.

Returning to the Columban house, one can walk for 10 minutes down



to Fossils Beach, considered one of the most important, if not the most important, paleontological sites in Chile. This beach is the only area in the entire South American Pacific region with rocks that are 70 million years old. Here, a significant quantity of animal, mollusc, and plant fossils have been discovered at low tide. Notably, in April 2024, the relatively intact remains of a 23-foot-long *Elasmosaurus*, dating back 70 million years, were found. These dinosaurs thrived during the Jurassic era. Once again, this area faces threats from developers who want to construct a wharf across the rocks to promote tourism. Local groups are actively opposing this proposal.

The visit to Algarrobo provided Columban seminarians Juan Pablo and Lydio with a glimpse of the immensely rich yet fragile biodiversity found in this local area. It also demonstrated how easily this biodiversity is threatened by human activities, particularly economic interests. 



Columban Fr. Daniel Harding lives and works in Chile.



The head of the family saying his prayer intentions during the church group

Faith in Action

How Kachin People in Myanmar Practice Their Faith

By Michael Javier

In the midst of their constant struggle for justice and peace, the Kachin people never cease to amaze me with their faith, not only in the way they practice it through words, but also especially through actions.

At the Columban Central House, we receive many event invitations each week. Most of these are prayer services for birthdays, wedding ceremonies, funerals, various anniversaries, and thanksgiving. Yes, they hold a prayer service for any life event, and they invite most Catholics to pray and celebrate with them.

Apart from these events, there are also prayer services held in every household in the community. These are usually conducted by four different groups at different times every Sunday. These groups are the *Nawku hpung* (church group), a group of young and

adults together; the *Kawa La hpung* (fathers' association); the *Num hpung* (mothers' association); and the *Ramma hpung* (youth group). This tradition of house-to-house prayer began with just one group. However, the large number of people who joined made it impossible to visit every household in the community. So, they decided to split into four groups. In the Philippines, it is quite similar to our Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC), where prayer services are held in different houses.

Having been invited by these groups and having participated in their services, I noticed a particular order or steps they follow. First, the Catechist announces the names of the host families in each group before the Eucharistic celebration ends, so the faithful know which household to go to. When they are gathered in their

respective places, the Catechist asks the head of the family to write or say their prayer intentions, most of which are for thanksgiving, prosperity, good health for each family member, and peace. Then, basic prayers are said, followed by worship songs and the reading of the Gospel, or any other readings for the day. Someone then shares their reflection on the reading.

Sometimes they would ask me to share my own reflection, drawing on my personal experience. As I am not very fluent in their local language, someone would translate some of the English words I used so they could understand the message I intended to convey. The Catechist will now offer the prayer intentions of the host family, followed by the praying of the Holy Rosary and the singing of songs for the offertory. It ends with a final prayer



Michael with the fathers' group sharing a meal after the prayer service



Michael with the fathers' group sharing a meal after the prayer service



Fathers' group prayer service

and a prayer to the guardian angel. The whole service usually takes an hour or less. It is common for the visitors to stay for a while to share snacks or a meal prepared by the host family. At this point, something wonderful can be observed. With the help of some neighbors, food will be prepared in the kitchen. The mother usually cooks the food while the children are tasked with serving the food to the visitors.

Thus, the prayer service is not just a way to connect with God but also a way

to connect with one another, particularly with those who don't attend church regularly for whatever reason. Here, no one is discriminated against. The leader would ensure that everyone is invited and informed in advance, whether or not they attend Mass regularly.

This communal celebration can also be observed during major parish celebrations, where everyone partakes of the food prepared, regardless of one's status in the community and in the church. Despite the uncertainty

brought by the ongoing internal conflict, the people remain faithful to God, to the Church, and to one another. They truly enriched my faith. Working as a lay missionary in this Kachin land, I feel truly blessed.

May their prayers be heard and answered by our Creator, through Jesus Christ and Mary! **CM**

Michael Javier is a Columban lay missionary from the Philippines. He currently lives and works in Myanmar.



The Path of Patience and Joy

Beauty and Promise

By Febie Gonzales

I write in memory of a student, Bart (not his real name), who suffered from epilepsy and struggled to speak. He wore a bib because of excessive saliva and needed help with eating and drinking. He was very playful, happy, and joyful.

Every day, he arrived at the center where I work, with the handles of his plastic bag looped around his wrist, filled with biscuits and sweets, alongside his backpack. He would settle into his chair like a king, happily playing with his plastic bag. No one

dared to make him stand up because once he did, it marked the start of an eventful day.

During mealtimes, he was always fed after all his classmates had finished eating; otherwise, he would roam around, grabbing and eating their food. I had no problem whenever he sat quietly, but once he stood up and started running around, that marked the start of my busy day running after him. Around three o'clock in the afternoon, an hour before going home, he would become very restless and excited. He would look for bread and never wanted to go home without taking a piece, often getting inside the office to grab something to eat before leaving for home.

One day, he saw me standing while feeding one of his classmates, he came over, picked up a chair, and offered it to me. This simple gesture amazed the teachers and his classmates.

He was such an energetic and joyful boy. He often made himself fall to the ground, lie there playing, and then get up to run again. One time, while I was trying to stop him from running, we accidentally fell over. Luckily, I wasn't injured. There was also a time when I tried to give him water, and he spat at me and threw away the plastic cup I was holding. With mixed feelings, I cried and asked myself why I was dealing with such a person. I even felt that I didn't want to look after him anymore.

However, he also showed kindness. One day, he saw me standing while feeding one of his classmates, he came over, picked up a chair, and offered it to me. This simple gesture amazed the teachers and his classmates.

Moreover, every time I took him to the toilet for his personal needs, the

I saw how he grew up and lived joyfully despite his pain and disabilities. He reminded me that true joy and strength often come from the most unexpected people.

teachers reminded me to always wear gloves and wash my hands properly.

I later discovered that he had a skin condition, and sometimes his skin would bleed, with dried blood sticking to his clothes which made me feel very sorry for him. Another moment that deeply touched me was when I saw one of his seizures; he needed a long time to recover and would lie on the floor until he felt better. During those times, our priority was to ensure his safety. He seemed to endure a lot of pain, yet his joyful disposition never changed.


I also observed the deep bond he shared with his mother and how lovingly she cared for him whenever she visited the center. When his mother passed away, he was transferred to another facility, and from then on, I did not hear any news about him until one night, when he visited me in my dreams. He was transformed into a handsome man, well-dressed, and smiling at me. When I asked my colleagues about him, they told me that he had passed away a few months after his mother died. I felt very sad when I heard this news about him. But I believe he is at peace now and free from suffering and pain.

Bart was the person who first taught me to explore the meaning of patience and compassion, and the profound influence of living a joyful life. I saw how he grew up and lived joyfully despite his pain and disabilities. He reminded me that true joy and strength often come from the most unexpected people. Despite his struggles with epilepsy, difficulty speaking, and physical

limitations, Bart lived each day with pure happiness and a contagious energy that touched everyone around him. His story made me realize that caring for others, especially those with special needs, is not only about patience but also about love and understanding.

There were moments of frustration and exhaustion, but these were replaced by lessons of compassion and gratitude. Bart's simple acts—like offering a chair to me—show that kindness doesn't depend on ability but on the heart's capacity to love. His joy,

even amid pain, taught me a deeper meaning of resilience.

My brief journey with Bart left a lasting impression on my heart, a reminder that every person, regardless of their condition, carries beauty and purpose. His memory inspires me to serve with patience, to find joy in small things, and to love beyond limitations. May he now be enjoying eternal joy, peace, and life in paradise with his Creator. 

Columban lay missionary Febie Gonzales lives and works in Taiwan.



Following the Spirit

Mission Does Not Stay the Same for Long

By Fr. Albert Utzig


The Columbans started our mission in Korea in 1933 when Korea was very poor and a colony of Japan. Nine newly ordained men arrived in Shanghai, China, to begin there. On arriving, they received a telegram that they were to go to Korea and start a new mission there instead! They didn't even know where Korea was. Thus, we began our Korean mission. There were very few Catholics, priests, or churches. The Paris Foreign Missionaries were spread too thin, and Columbans came to help. The official language of the country was Japanese, with Korean only used in the homes and churches. Very bad times. In those days, we were aware of the difficulties of working under Japanese eyes, but the focus was on growing the Church. Our men went for twelve years at a time and before they came back, they had been in Japanese jails or under house arrest during World War II. Those were the

stories fresh in their minds when they did come home. I think that in those days we just saw the Church as the "Ark of Salvation" to eternal life, and that's where we focused—keeping the churches going and growing in difficult circumstances.

After the Korean war (1950-1953), which destroyed the whole country, the Columban Sisters joined the Fathers, coming to help with medical and social needs, founding hospitals and clinics and nursing schools. The Fathers all over the country, Kwangju in the south and Chunchon in the north, were also very involved in passing out corn meal and flour and powdered milk as much as baptizing "pagans." Columban Fr. P.J. McGlinchy started a large operation on the island of Cheju, bringing pigs, cattle, sheep, and horses from Ireland to share with local farmers who had nothing with which to start farming. Columban Fr. Howie Eisel, from

Minnesota, started 4H clubs. We were involved with lepers also. Our priests were pastors dealing with lots of social needs. People started flooding into the churches. So, preparing catechists to teach them took up more and more time and funds. And with the decrees of Vatican II, the need to be better at the language also became more evident.

As the 1960s became the 1970s, President Pak Chong-hee became a dictator and developed great programs to modernize the country's economy, moving millions of young people into cities to work in newly established factories while modernizing farming in the countryside. We Columbans got involved in Young Christian Workers movements, organizing with them in their struggle to be recognized as humans and not mere tools of production. Our faith took us into politics. Many of us inhaled more than a fair share of tear gas.



In the 1980s and 1990s, “Inculturation” was a major theme. After Vatican II, we were called to help bring Korean symbols and culture into the Church. Rome and Latin became less important. When Liberation Theology was evolving in Latin America, we collaborated with Korean theologians on a Minjung (suffering people’s) Theology, seeing and feeling the han or intense feeling of being wronged and oppressed, which is so important in Korean culture.


A number of us started moving into non-clerical situations of living among the people, not in a rectory, but in village farms, at the same time being aware of ecology as necessary for our own lives and the life of the world. This was long before Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’*. Columban Fr. Bob Sweeney from Buffalo moved into a small house in a rural village and worked with local farmers. I moved into a small village with a community

of three Columban Sisters and a lay missionary. There was a small chapel in the village, but the pastor in the town didn’t want me to have Mass there, so we usually went by bus with several of our neighbors to the town for Sunday Mass. We lived fairly simply, making compost from grass, weeds, pig manure, and our own manure. Our cabbages were the biggest in the village. It was a mission of “being and working with” the people as Christians. Most of our neighbors were not Christians. We wanted to be examples of international people, priests, religious, lay, men, women living in harmony with each other and with the Earth, both to our neighbors and to the local Church. We also wanted to share with them the name and teaching and work of Jesus, which gives so much meaning to us.

As Korean clergy increased rapidly, we Columbans moved out of parishes, some into hospital chaplaincy roles,

others as teachers even in universities, some in Justice and Peace roles, some in using art to express spirituality, some in caring for creation, some in fundraising and mission promotion.

Where there had been almost 150 western-born Columbans living in Korea in 1970, there are now twenty-one priests, nine of whom are Koreans, and three lay missionaries. In many ways, the Korean mission is similar to the American mission—emphasis on educating people that there is still a mission going on in the world, raising funds to support it, and doing the best we can within the local church.

There is always a need for foreigners with a “missionary mind” in all local churches. We enrich that vision as we ourselves are enriched by the local people. We take what we are given and follow the Holy Spirit. 

Columban Fr. Albert Utzig is the regional director for the U.S.

Martyr to a House

A Remarkable Story

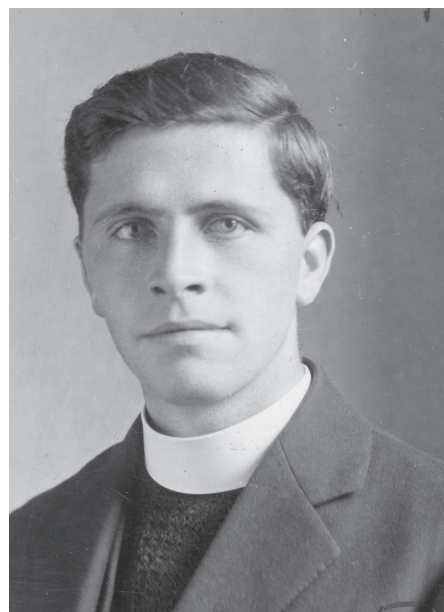
By Fr. John Boles



Panmunjeom must rank as one of the world's most bizarre tourist attractions. Every morning, convoys of brightly colored sightseeing buses wind their way up to carefully positioned lookout points. From these, visitors can feast their eyes on the gun emplacements, barbed-wire fences and minefields of perhaps the most heavily fortified border on Earth—the

Demilitarized Zone (or “DMZ”)—which divides North and South Korea.

Tourists can also see the hut where, on July 27, 1953, an armistice was signed to end the Korean War. This conflict had left some three million dead, finishing almost where it had started some three years earlier on the infamous 38th parallel. The victims included several Columbans, among



Fr. James Maginn

them one Father Jim Maginn. It is a truly remarkable story.

Fr. Jim was born in the United States but grew up in Northern Ireland. He joined the Columbans in 1929 and, in 1936, was sent to Korea, a country that had been under Japanese occupation since 1910. The timing of his appointment turned out to be unfortunate, for just five years later, on December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the U.S. at Pearl Harbor and entered the Second World War. Fr. Jim was promptly arrested as an enemy alien and spent the next four years in confinement, only regaining his freedom at the end of the war.

After recovering from this ordeal, Jim returned to his pastoral duties in Korea and in 1949, became pastor of a new parish in the coastal town of Samcheok, not far from the newly established border between North and South Korea. This frontier had been agreed upon by the victorious allies in 1945, with the government in the North being supported by Stalin and, later, Mao Zedong, and that of the South by U.S. President Truman. Once again, the timing of Fr. Jim's appointment was less than fortuitous.

Scarcely a year later, on June 25, 1950, the North Korean leader, Kim Il-

sung, launched a surprise invasion of his southern neighbor. South Korean forces were quickly overwhelmed, and soon the North Korean army was bearing down on Samcheok. Much of the local population was prepared to flee. Fr. Jim was urged to join the exodus, but he steadfastly refused, declaring it his duty to stay and accompany those of his flock who were unable to escape.

After the war was over, the parish of Samcheok commissioned an official testimony of what happened next based on eyewitness accounts. It affirms that Fr. Jim, “divided the parish money among the believers, telling them to use it when necessary. On July 1, the communist army took over Samcheok. On July 2, Fr. Jim was arrested, having celebrated Sunday Mass. The communists came unexpectedly, and he asked them to wait while he went into the church to pray in front of the altar. As the soldiers pushed him out of the church with their rifle butts, he told them,

“I’m not going to flee. If I’d wanted to flee, I would have done so before this, so take me as I am.” Saying that, he walked out of the church with dignity. He was detained at the local police station. Some hours later, John Kim Su-song, a teacher at Samcheok High School, was also arrested and detained.

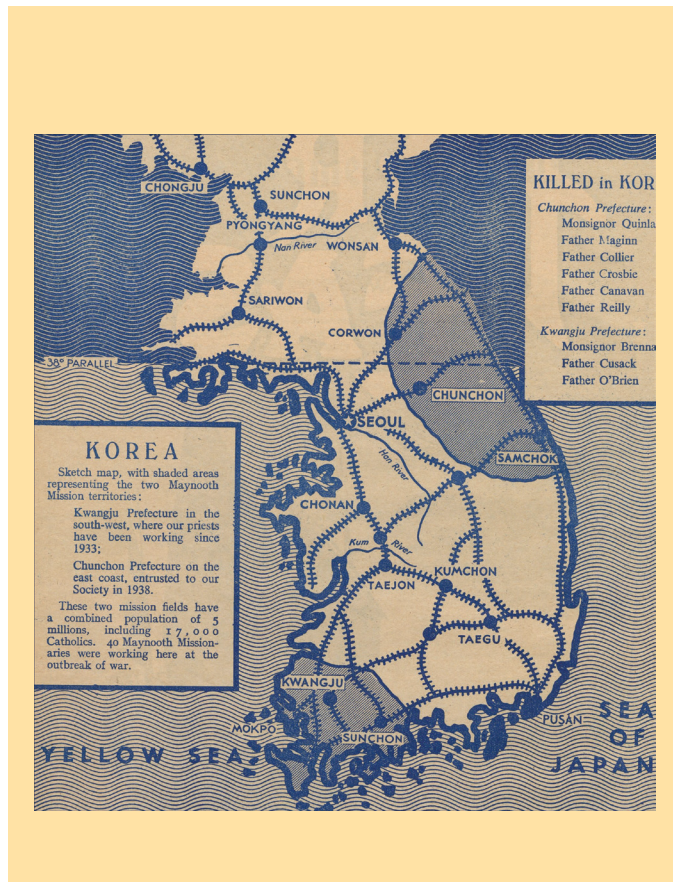
Fr. Jim and John Kim spent two nights together, often the targets of verbal and physical abuse on the part of the authorities. The remainder of the account comes from John Kim’s testimony. “On the night of July 4, Fr. Jim was taken away by the communists. Anticipating his death, he blessed John Kim, who was in the next cell, saying to him, ‘Let us meet in heaven, John; never deny the Faith’, and walked out. That night Fr. Jim was shot, martyred at the side of a little stream.” The villagers secretly marked his resting place.

By October, the tides of war had changed. Douglas MacArthur’s audacious amphibious landing at Incheon sent the North Korean army

scrambling back across the 38th parallel. Samcheok was liberated, and in October 1951, Fr. Jim’s body was exhumed and buried in a place of honour beside Chuncheon City Cathedral. However, the parishioners of Samcheok held dear the memory of their murdered parish priest and, down the years, continued to celebrate his life and sacrifice.

In March 2023, seven decades after the end of the Korean War, the parish invited Columban representatives from all over the world, led by our Superior General, Fr. Tim Mulroy, to attend one of its regular memorial services for Fr. Jim and to visit the site of his original makeshift grave. It was a moving occasion for all concerned, bringing home, once again, confirmation of how evil people can kill the body but the spirit of the martyr—be it Jesus or Fr. Jim Maginn—lives on forever. **CM**

Columban Fr. John Boles lives and works in Britain.





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Recently, a huge influx of thousands of Venezuelan immigrants have entered Chile. Columban parishes have always welcomed the immigrants and tried to provide some material help (school supplies, warm clothing, blankets, and more) for them. We hope to continue providing relief for those who come to this "land of dreams." However, we know that the most important gift we have to share with them is our faith in the Risen Lord.

A planned gift helps the Missionary Society of St. Columban continue God's mission in the poorest areas of the world. And, financially and prayerfully supporting the Missionary Society of St. Columban is an excellent way to participate in the missionary activity of the Church.

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For more information, please contact us at donorrelations@columban.org, call us toll-free at (877) 299-1920, or visit www.columban.org. The Missionary Society of St. Columban treasures your support and is committed to the stewardship of your gifts.

People on the Move

A Path of Hope and Healing

By Fr. Alvaro Martinez



Today, we give thanks to God as we take an important step in our pastoral and humanitarian mission by starting the Mental Health Program. This initiative comes from our deep commitment to the dignity, life, and hope of migrants. In a world shaped by forced displacement, inequality, and vulnerability, this program is a real sign of care, support, and love for others.

The city of Juárez, Mexico, has welcomed thousands of migrants searching for a safe place to rebuild their lives. At the Columbano Ministry of the Border, we support them by meeting basic and spiritual needs. Through our work, we have seen that mental health is essential for people of

all ages to join a new community and look to the future with hope.

We are very grateful for our year-long partnership with the Humanitarian Health Initiative for the Border (ISHF). This group of health professionals, guided by compassion and a commitment to social justice and human rights, has helped us support migrants' physical and mental health.

Migrants bring with them stories shaped by pain, loss, uprooting, uncertainty, and often violence from their home countries or during their journey. These experiences leave unseen marks that affect their emotions, self-worth, and hopes for the future. As a faith community, we know that healing

the heart and mind is just as important as caring for the body. Jesus showed compassion to those who suffered, looked at them with kindness, listened without judging, and gave them back their dignity and hope.

We are happy to welcome the professionals joining our Columbano team. Each brings valuable experience from different organizations and a caring, professional approach to working with people on the move. They will focus on group support, as well as educational and community activities that build relationships, improve daily life, and encourage resilience, mutual help, and a sense of belonging.

We have also set up a clear plan for individual psychological care. Each professional can work with up to five people in ongoing therapy sessions, usually lasting eight to twelve sessions, with the option to extend if needed. This support aims to provide emotional help, tools to handle trauma, and a path toward healing.

This program is a seed of hope planted in a time of pain and uncertainty. We believe that with professional help, solidarity, and our faith, we can support deep healing and change. We always remember that every migrant is sacred, carries God's image, and deserves to live with dignity, peace, and hope at every step of their journey. **EM**



The Border team

Columban Fr. Alvaro Martinez lives and works in El Paso, Texas.

Helping the Displaced

Columban Missionaries Lend a Hand

By Fr. Kurt Zion Pala

In Myanmar, formerly Burma, the Columban Mission Office team leads the Myanmar Mission Unit in facilitating activities and programs that respond to the Columban mission priorities on biodiversity conservation and accompany refugees.

Besides the celebration of the *Laudato Si* week, the Columban missionaries also visited internally displaced peoples' (IDP) camps now increasing and growing in number.

The ongoing conflict has displaced more and more people from areas previously left untouched by the war. "Entire villages have been burned one house after another," one displaced mother shared. She added that many of them have been moving from one camp to another. Another young mother shared that there is no chance to return to their villages or their farms because of the presence of Burmese soldiers.

I tagged along with Fr. La Lung, the Diocesan Youth Director and also a member of the Diocesan Emergency Response Team (DERT), as he visited Namti and Mogaung. We first arrived at Namti Parish, which hosts families displaced from Lawa and its nearby villages. Since March 2025, they had left their villages and moved to Namti town, where the parish temporarily sheltered them. In June, the township allowed the displaced families to rent government land where they are now building a more "permanent" shelter from bamboo and tarpaulin sheets. When the wind blows, and it rains, it can be cold and wet.

Fr. La Lung asked the camp head to share what their urgent needs were. The camp head mentioned that a total of 400 families are expected to stay in



the camp. There are currently about 300 already settled, and 100 more are still coming. But they only have eleven toilet facilities, and the water supply is not enough. They fear that an outbreak of sanitation-related diseases will happen.

We slept overnight at Namti Parish, hosted by Fr. Tu Hkawng, the local parish priest. The next day, we visited St. Peter's Parish in Mogaung, which hosted more displaced families from Kamaing and other nearby villages. One catechist mentioned that their food supplies are depleting. And there are more families trapped in the forests, afraid to leave and be displaced from one place to another.

Last month, Michael, Cata and I also visited Nawnng Chin Parish and spoke with the parish leaders. The parish was only created last year, but now it is hosting ten camps spread all over its area. When the conflict escalated in a nearby parish, families moved to Nawnng Chin Parish. The most recent survey listed 1,707 individuals spread over ten camps.

Five camps are close to the church compound, while another five more camps are spread over the parish. New shelters are being built in two camps, but the other camps also need repair of their shelters. Most camps face difficulties in responding to basic needs like food, shelter, water and electric power supply.

The number of families and individuals displaced by the ongoing conflict continues to increase. But the reduction in international humanitarian assistance to displaced peoples in Myanmar has greatly affected the response to their growing needs. We continue to pray but also seek resources to help respond to their urgent needs. We thank you for continuing to support our efforts to respond to the needs of the families and individuals here in Myanmar, particularly the urgent needs of the internally displaced families and individuals. **EM**

Columban Fr. Kurt Zion Pala lives and works in Myanmar (formerly Burma).

Living with Less in God's Kingdom

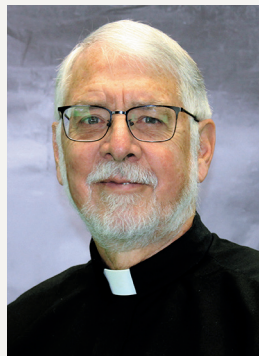
"It ain't like it used to be." How often have we heard that one? And it's usually true. I joined the Columbans in 1976, wanting to go overseas to some poorer country and try to make a difference. Then I found myself in Korea at a time when it was rapidly expanding its economy. It was impossible to turn around and not see some new high-rise apartment buildings, additions to the subway system, road expansion, etc. When I was in Wonju in 1979 as a seminarian, the church was so cold in January that the water the priest used to wash his fingers at Mass had ice on it. The church was heated with two stoves burning sawdust from a local mill. Something to write home about! But now "it sure ain't like it used to be."

We often equate missionaries and poverty. There are still millions and millions of poor people living in the world, that's for sure. And our missionaries still serve them. But the world is changing. Many needs are changing, too. All countries have their poor people, even the U.S. But poverty is seen in different ways in different places. And there are the "poor" and the "poor-in-spirit." Not all poor are poor in spirit, and not all poor-in-spirit are poor. But there is a connection.

I want to be poor-in-spirit, so the Kingdom of God will be mine as Jesus promises. This kind of poverty is a simplicity, a humility, a willingness to recognize that I have enough and don't really need or want any more. When we lived in our mud house in Korea, one of the last remaining in that village, we thought we were living simply.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

By Fr. Al Utzig



But neighbors who made their living from their tiny farms often told us that we weren't really poor because we could always get money from the Columbans if we needed something. They were right. There has to be some challenge and some hardship and uncertainty to be poor-in-spirit.

In El Paso, Texas, we have a Mission Center where people have been invited to come and spend time experiencing the border between Mexico and the U.S. as it actually is. Mostly young people use it. These days,



because of the extremely tight controls over the flow of people coming in, there are not many immigrants around needing help on this side. We also have a parish and a whole system set up in Juarez, Mexico, to work with people who have come north hoping for entry into the U.S. but are piling up on that side of the fence. It is busy, difficult work. Uncomfortable. They are poor. Our house in El Paso is an old house, very chilly in winter and hot in summer. It is unpleasant to live there for a lot of the year. So, the question comes to us, "How comfortable should we make it?" Is it better for the young people who come for an experience of the border to experience some physical discomfort? Maybe catch a cold in winter, or have a hard time sleeping in summer, or not getting a shower every day? The thousands hoping to come across the border have almost nothing and are very uncomfortable. Should our discomfort just be an occasional nod to being "in solidarity" with them? Or should it be ongoing poverty of spirit?

This kind of thing seems very mundane, but it is a real challenge for you and for us as missionaries, too, if you are trying to follow Jesus sincerely. We Americans are good at challenges to go higher, faster, get richer, more educated, etc. But we are a little weak at going slower, lower, with less money, more simply. Which challenge will we focus on? God bless us all.

Fr. Al

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*"I once heard the voice of the Lord
saying, "Whom shall I send and
who will go for us?" Then I said,
"Here I am, send me!"*

– ISAIAH 6:8

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