



MISSIONARY SOCIETY
OF ST COLUMBAN

ANNUAL REPORT
2024





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Cover image: A local woman in Sicuani, Peru, with Fr Joe Ruys, an Australian diocesan priest on mission alongside Columbans

On this page: Lay missionaries, Joan Yap (front) and Sherryl Capili (left) join volunteers from Hope Workers' Centre for Migrants' Rally held in Taipei, Taiwan





OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Missionary Society of St Columban is sent by the Church to proclaim and witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ. We cross boundaries of country, language and culture, living in close relationship with the poor while fostering care for our common home the earth. We are called to:

- Establish the Church among peoples to whom the Gospel has not been preached;
- Accompany local churches as they mature until they are able to evangelize their own and other people;
- Promote dialogue between Christians and those of other religious traditions;
- Facilitate exchange between local churches, especially those from which we come and those to which we are sent;
- Foster in local churches an awareness of their missionary responsibility, particularly in the areas of justice, peace and care for creation.

We strive to build collaborative relationships with our supporters in order to nurture their faith while encouraging them to provide spiritual and financial support for our missionary endeavours.

◀ Fr Gonzalo Borquez with parishioners during a parish Mission Appeal in San Francisco, US





LETTER FROM THE SOCIETY LEADER

As the international leader of the Missionary Society of St Columban, it is my privilege to share with you, our friends and supporters, this 2024 annual report.

This report aims to provide you with snapshots of our various missionary endeavours, as well as a summary of how your generous gifts have sustained our day-to-day lives, as well as various projects and programmes, in our fifteen mission countries.

As I reviewed this report, I was struck by the commitment of my Columban colleagues not only to preaching the Gospel, but to proclaiming the Good News through various activities that respond to the needs and the hopes of the people around them. Yes, we Columban missionaries emphasize the importance of knowing people, of listening to their concerns and dreams, and of supporting them as they strive with God's guidance and grace to make each new day a little brighter than yesterday.

During this past year, Columban missionaries in many countries continued to extend hospitality and hope to vulnerable migrants. Besides this, in several places they continued to provide encouragement and education programmes to people living in difficult circumstances with limited opportunities. And during this past year, Columban missionaries have provided new homes and a fresh start to more than one-hundred-and-twenty families who were left destitute after severe floods in Pakistan.

As you review these and many other snapshots in this report, I hope that you will come to a greater realization of how Columban missionaries continue to channel your sacrifices towards people in our mission countries. On behalf of all those people who have experienced God's care and compassion because of your faithful support of Columban mission during this past year: Thank You.

May God reward your faith and generosity with an abundance of blessings.



Fr. Andrei Paz

FR ANDREI PAZ



WATCH
VIDEO



OUR MISSIONARY WAY OF LIFE

As missionary disciples of Jesus, we are called to build bridges and foster mutual understanding through encounters with people of other cultures and religious traditions, as well as to promote healing, reconciliation and peace. Moreover, our commitment to live in solidarity with people on the margins of our world, and to care for the earth, our common home, are ways in which we participate in God's mission. Our proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus leads us into a deeper awareness of God's presence and action throughout our world, which leads us into a deeper communion with the Trinity.

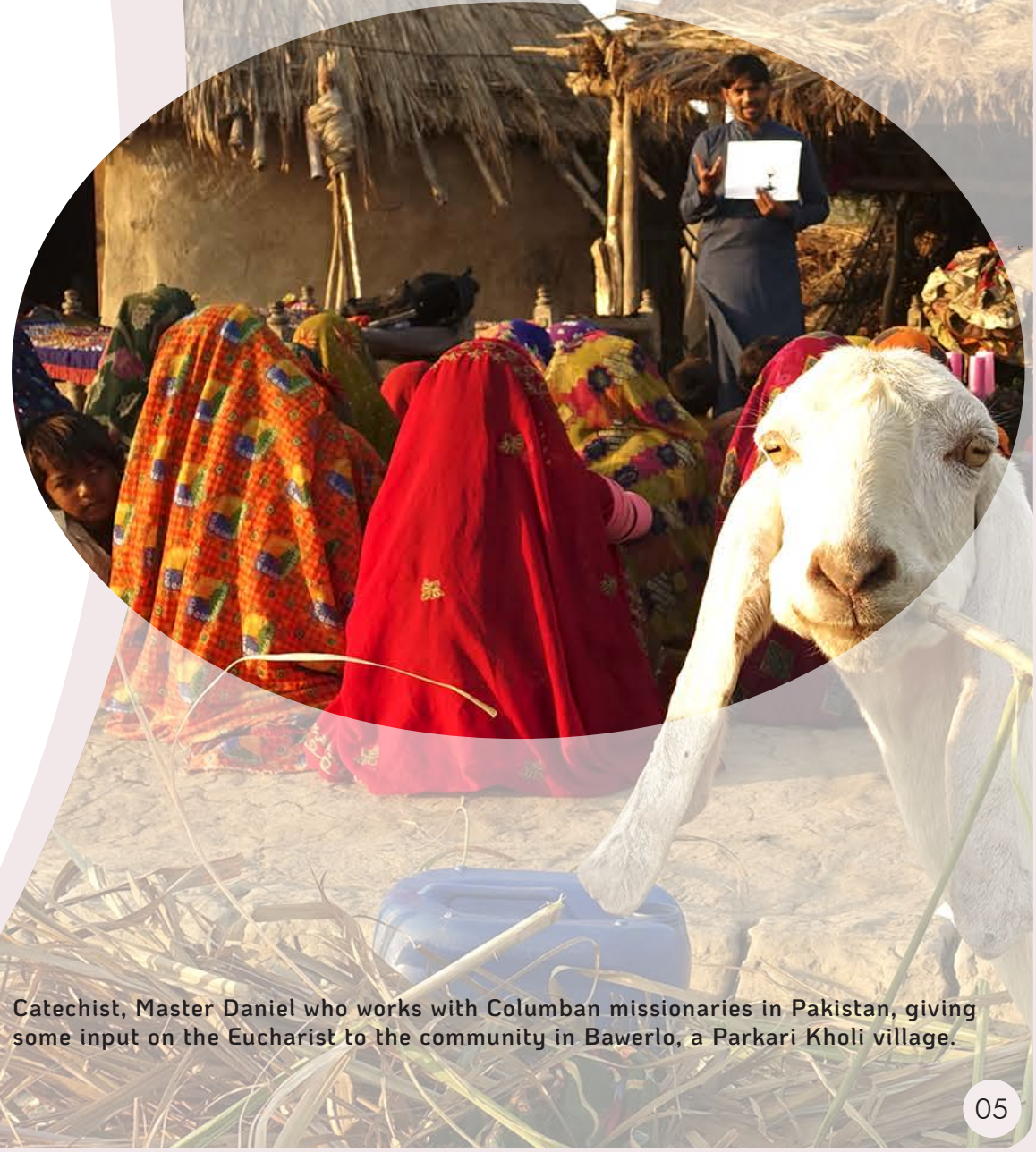
EVANGELIZATION AND EDUCATION •

SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR •

INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE •

JUSTICE AND PEACE •

CARE FOR THE EARTH •



Catechist, Master Daniel who works with Columban missionaries in Pakistan, giving some input on the Eucharist to the community in Bawerlo, a Parkari Kholi village.



WHERE WE WORK

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9



AUSTRALIA

Thanks to your generous donations, our 2023 mid-year appeal was the highest in ten years. This extraordinary response enabled us to provide additional funding for Columban projects that support the education of children, youth at risk and impoverished families in Peru, Myanmar and Pakistan.

We published a new prayer book as well as mission education resources, and initiated a weekly bible reflection, 'Trust in Him at all Times', on YouTube. We organized a Season of Creation schools' competition and developed a parish-based workshop on care for creation.

In preparation for the Synod in the Diocese of Parramatta, the Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations held three interfaith consultations, which included Hindu and Muslim guest speakers. Fr Patrick McInerney was a member of the Synod Assembly. The Synod expressed strong support for deepening interfaith relations. In whatever ways we can, we continue to commit ourselves to helping that diocese to strengthen this apostolate.

In September, we published our 100th issue of Bridges. Many subscribers provided moving testimonials to what Bridges means to them as they strive to deepen friendships between Christians and Muslims. We are very grateful for their witness and encouragement. The 100th issue of Bridges can be accessed at: <https://bit.ly/47QJLvK>.



▲ Former Society Leader, Fr Tim Mulroy (2nd row, centre) and former Lay Missionary Coordinator, Vida Hequilan (front, centre) with Columban priests and co-workers at the Columban Mission Centre in Essendon.



FACTS AND FIGURES

120 HOUSES were built in Pakistan for victims of the monsoon floods.

2,400 PEOPLE have viewed Columban Fr John Hegerty's weekly bible reflection 'Trust in Him At all Times' on YouTube.

48,000 COLUMBAN ART CALENDARS 2024 had been sold as of January 2024.



BRITAIN

The Columban Way Pilgrimage through the diocese of Plymouth took place during 'Laudato Si' Week in May. Through prayers and reflections, featuring Columban voices from China, Pakistan, South America and the Philippines, it wove together the themes of mission and ecological conversion.

Our commitment to 'the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth' has led to a five-year partnership between the Higaonon Tree Growing Project in the Philippines and 24 schools in Britain. This partnership has in turn inspired the theme of our 2024 Schools Media competition, 'Biodiversity Matters'. Responding to the conflict in Israel and Palestine, we organised and led an interfaith vigil for peace in Birmingham.

We welcomed Danny and Hannah as Faith in Action volunteers. Danny spent a year on mission alongside Columbans in Chile, which included supporting their migrant and youth ministries. On the other hand, Hannah's journey grew out of her encounter with refugee families, which led to a visit to our Hindu friends at a local Mandir.



▼ James Trewby, Columban Justice, Peace & Ecology Co-ordinator at a climate justice march which coincided with the meeting of world leaders at COP28 in December 2023.

FACTS AND FIGURES

OVER 160 PARISH CHURCHES visited in the dioceses of East Anglia, Leeds, Plymouth, Westminster and Wrexham, where Columbans shared their experience of cross-cultural mission with the local people and expressed our gratitude in person to our many loyal supporters.

Provided **3,100 NIGHTS OF ACCOMMODATION** in Fatima House, Birmingham, for ten women whose asylum application in Britain has been rejected - this gives them the support they need while awaiting the outcome of a second application.

Distributed **MORE THAN 2,000 COPIES** of Fr Pat Sayles' book 'Jubilee Prayers & Pictures' to mark the Golden Jubilee of his ordination and to celebrate the Year of Prayer in 2024.



CHILE

The beauty of Columban mission outside the city of Iquique in northern Chile becomes evident when one realizes that, despite the daily struggles of the large number of migrants as they strive to build a better life for themselves and their families, the church has become a place where they continue to deepen their relationship with God, with one another, and with the local community. Of course, this is a long and slow process as people from different backgrounds learn to trust one another and build a community where everyone feels welcomed and valued.

The harvest here is great but the labourers are few. However, we remain grateful for the leadership of our local bishop who continues to challenge and encourage us to develop a pastoral plan that is responsive to the needs of the people around us.

▼ Fr Martin Koroiciri and parishioners in the parish of Alto Hospicio, Chile.

FACTS AND FIGURES

OVER 100 MIGRANTS were offered short-term accommodation in the two Columban Migrant Houses in Santiago in 2023.

After **MORE THAN 60 YEARS** of ministering in the area, Columbans handed back the Parish of St Columban to the archdiocese of Santiago at the end of January 2024.

THREE SHORT TERM COLUMBAN VOLUNTEERS participated in a school holiday programme for children in the Columban parish of St Matthew in Santiago. Afterwards, they participated in a programme for indigenous people in the Andes mountains. Later, they participated in youth programmes held in the Columban-staffed Parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Alto Hospicio, which is located in the Atacama desert in northern Chile.



CHINA



During these past 20 years, Columbans have engaged in retreat work across China. We have also provided scholarships for Chinese priests and sisters to study overseas in order to receive the necessary training to lead retreats. Moreover, in 2007, we established a part-time three-year programme for priests, Sisters and lay people to train as spiritual directors.

Graduates of the programme can work as spiritual directors, give retreats and facilitate days of recollection and prayer for parish groups and others. Those who staffed the programme during its early years included Chinese priests and Sisters who had studied overseas, as well as some foreign priests, Sisters, and lay people.

However, while Columbans continue to assist in directing the programme up until today, all the programme staff are local Chinese people, some of whom are themselves graduates of the programme. The programme includes an annual intensive four-week summer session held at the National Seminary in Beijing.

◀ Fr Kevin O'Neill (right) during a visit to the Yangtze River in Wuhan with special needs friend Han Weiwei (2nd from left), accompanied by Sr Clara Zhang and Theresa Li.



FACTS AND FIGURES

In September 2023, **95 PEOPLE** applied for the spiritual-directors' training programme which commenced in June 2024. From the initial written applications, **57 persons** (41 Sisters, nine lay people and seven priests) were selected to participate in the nine-month ongoing application process, which consisted of written personal reflections and periodic meetings with a member of staff and culminated in a final application interview.

Up to **100 PEOPLE APPLY** to join the three-year training programme. However, from that large number, only **30 PARTICIPANTS** are chosen.



FIJI

The Columbans were 'farewelled' from Christ the King Parish in the city of Ba with a traditional Fijian ceremony. We give thanks for the generous support of all the parishioners during these past 70 years. Columban missionaries continue to staff parishes in Raiwaqa, Suva and Labasa.

The Columban Interreligious Dialogue Coordinator helped to establish the Suva Women's Interfaith Group. The women celebrated the Season of Creation with the theme "Sowing seeds of faith".

We worked collaboratively with Jubilee Australia to support local communities and protect fragile ecosystems from destruction because of black sand mining.

Mr Daniele Burese was elected as the new Columban Companions in Mission National President.



▼ Frs Felisiano Fatu, Vincent Ratnam, Frank Hoare, William Lee and Donal McIlraith (left to right) prepare to celebrate the Eucharist on the Feast of St Columban at the Columban Centre House in Suva in November 2023.





IRELAND



The drop in migrant numbers requesting English classes in Dublin city centre reflects the overall decrease in the number of new arrivals being accommodated there. However, there is still a large number of refugees, and we continue to offer them support and hospitality.

The importance of this was brought home to all of us by protest events in Dublin City and indeed around the country, where anti-migrant sentiment continues to be stoked by a small but sinister group. Following serious disturbances in Dublin, Columbans took part in meetings with local community workers and faith leaders to assess what happened, and to plan new ways to work with local communities in tackling myths and improving relationships.

Columbans are delighted that Fr Paul Glynn and Fr Pat Colgan are now active members of the Dublin City Inter Faith Forum (DCIF).

- ▶ Christmas celebration in Columban Centre. (From left to right) Columban missionary Sr Lucia So and a mother and daughter from Bolivia, a husband and wife from Ukraine, a student from Venezuela, two Ukrainian students, Columban missionary Sr Monica Kelly, and Columban lay missionary Angie Escarsa.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Fr Pat Colgan and Fr Paul Glynn, both of whom have recently returned to Ireland, bring their rich experience of living and working alongside people of various faith traditions in Fiji and the Philippines, respectively.

This year, the Dublin City Interfaith Forum started a new partnership with one of Ireland's largest hospitals, the Mater in Dublin, to ensure that the faith needs of both patients and staff are properly recognized and respected.

Columban missionaries continue to facilitate and provide English classes for migrants and refugees, though the number availing of this service has dropped from previous years.



JAPAN



In Japan, Christmas is often the first time that non-Christians enter a church, attracted by the decorations and Christmas music but also looking for something more. This may lead some to participate in preparation-for-baptism courses where they hear the Good News of Christ for the first time. Columban missionaries feel privileged to guide these catechumens on their faith journey.

As the number of migrants - coming in particular from other Asian countries - increases, ministry to migrants is a growing element of parish ministry. Since the Society of St Columban has an international character, we are well suited to offer support and guidance to these migrants. At the same time, we continue to encourage Japanese parish communities to overcome their polite diffidence so that they can truly welcome their Catholic sisters and brothers.

In some parishes founded by Columbans 70 years ago, the majority of those coming to church now are foreign-born.

Mission in Japan continues to evolve in response to changes in the surrounding society. However, we continue as always to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

During this past year, Columbans in Japan celebrated the 75th anniversary of our mission here.

◀ Columban missionaries and friends gathered to celebrate 75 years of mission in Japan at Katase parish.



FACTS AND FIGURES

OVER 40 NEW PARISHES were established by Columbans during the past 75 years.

OVER 180 COLUMBAN PRIESTS AND LAY MISSIONARIES have made a significant contribution to lay catechetics, ecology awareness and migrant ministry during that period.

There are now 11 Columbans ministering in Japan, most of whom are engaged in parish ministry. Parishes continue to be the location for pastoral ministry, as well as a base for missionary outreach, in this predominantly non-Christian country.



KOREA

One of the principal channels through which Columbans engage with benefactors is the traditional parish Mission Appeal. Visiting parishes, we introduce our ministries not only in Korea but also in other countries, and we appeal for support.

In various dioceses, we invite our local benefactors to a special monthly Mass; we organise annual days of recollection and prayer in various places; and in May of each year, we organise a pilgrimage to a place of historical interest to Columbans.

We also invite our benefactors to Columban celebrations e.g. the Christmas and Easter liturgies at our Seoul house, Columban ordinations, and missioning ceremonies.

Moreover, when Columban missionaries are home on vacation from overseas, or if we have a Columban from another country visiting Korea, we arrange for interviews with Catholic news outlets. When Columban leaders gathered for a meeting in Seoul in 2023, we got comprehensive media coverage.

In these various ways, we strive to keep Columban mission in the public domain.

Fr Kim Young-In promoting mission at Myeongdong Cathedral, Seoul. ▶



FACTS AND FIGURES

Approximately **14,500 COPIES OF OUR MISSION MAGAZINE** are sent out to our benefactors three times per year.

In 2023, in a new joint initiative between the Columbans in Korea and the Columbans in the U.S., Fr Gonzalo Borquez from Chile, who ministers in Korea, did parish Mission Appeals in the U.S.. Over a period of three months he visited many parishes, including Hispanic and Korean communities, to promote Columban mission.

We continue to develop our online presence – for example, Columban webpage, Facebook and Instagram – in order to share Columban mission and news with a wider audience.



MYANMAR

The Student Learning Resources Centre celebrated its first anniversary. It provides young people with skills, as well as helps them to develop into mature persons. With support from Columban Fr Kurt Pala, it is run by Catholic Student Action Myitkyina (CSAM), a movement by, for and with Catholic students in the Diocese of Myitkyina.

During this past year, the Centre facilitated the Positive Youth Development Programme (PYDP), a 9-month long course aimed at enabling young adults to be life-and-work-ready. Nine students completed the initial programme while 23 new students requested to join the second offering of the same programme. Furthermore, 50 students attended English language classes or Basic Information and Communication Technology classes.

The Centre facilitated young people in celebrating World Environment Day and World Mental Health Day. It also sent participants to the International Young Catholic Students (IYCS) - Asian Council Meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand.



◀ Fr Kurt Zion Pala (right) with Philip Naw Seng and a Chinese student at the Asian Council Meeting of the International Young Christian Student Movement in Changmai, Thailand.



FACTS AND FIGURES

The Centre facilitated two series of mental health training sessions which prepared a total of **31 YOUNG PEOPLE** to provide similar sessions for other young people. As a result **486 CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS** in total benefitted.

The Centre also provided individual counselling services to **20 CLIENTS** (80 sessions).

OVER 340 STUDENTS participated in the first Student Fellowship Camp organised by the CSAM and Myitkyina Diocese Youth Commission.



AOTEAROA-NEW ZEALAND

Several semi-retired priests in the Columban community in Lower Hutt celebrate Mass and other religious ceremonies in nearby churches. Thanks to their background and mission experiences, they also accompany and support the Maori community, the Fijian community and the Latino community. Indeed, the congregation at the daily morning Mass in the Columban chapel represents a broad mix of local and international people. Meanwhile, Fr Michael Gormly continues as chaplain to the Sisters of Mercy community in Upper Hutt.

Fr Tom Rouse is the convenor of the Poverty Committee under the Ecology, Justice and Peace (EJP) Commission of the Archdiocese of Wellington. He attends monthly zoom meetings of that Commission as well as of the Poverty Committee. He is also a member of the local NZ Talitha Kum, the Catholic anti-trafficking movement.

◀ Oceania Regional Council members and Columbans during a meeting at Lower Hutt, Wellington, Aotearoa-New Zealand.



PAKISTAN

Pakistan continues to experience major challenges as the pace of increase in the price of petrol and commodities threatens the livelihood of millions of people who are already very poor. Columban Missionaries live and minister among tribal people who are bordering on destitution.

Thanks to the generous support of benefactors in other countries, during this past year Columbans were able to construct 122 houses for poor families who had lost their homes as a consequence of severe floods two years ago.

The Columban-run tuberculosis clinic welcomes TB patients as well as people with various other ailments whether they are Hindu, Muslim, or Christian. Columbans also facilitate an outreach programme, providing medical assistance and medicine to those who are sick in the wider community.



Fr Pat Visanti visiting a family in their house still under construction after the area was badly affected by terrible floods. ▼

FACTS AND FIGURES

In Badin parish, Columban-run schools cater to children from poor families in the hope of building a bright future for them. **475 CHILDREN** are enrolled in the main campus and 78 in a small facility in a remote village.

Last year, the TB Clinic in Badin Parish provided medical services to **241 TB PATIENTS AND 1,217 PERSONS WITH VARIOUS OTHER AILMENTS.**

AROUND 300 POOR FAMILIES benefit annually from education, housing, medical and other services provided by Columban missionaries



PERU



The funeral Mass for Fr Cathal Gallagher, who died suddenly, was celebrated in Lima one week after the feast of St Columban in November 2023. Bishop Neri of the Diocese of Carabayllo presided, while some family members from Ireland, several diocesan and Columban priests, as well as many local people attended it.

Fr Cathal was one of several Columban missionary priests whose mission in Peru came to a close in recent years. Like Fr Cathal, some of them have gone back to their Creator, while several more – Fr Chris Baker, Fr John Boles, Fr Kim YoungIn, Fr Ed O’Connell, Fr Bernie Lane, Fr Kevin Donagh – have moved to other parts of the Lord’s vineyard in places such as Australia, Britain and Korea.

We remain blessed, however, to have a younger, multicultural group of priests who are committed to carrying the torch forward in Peru. Some of them are Columbans, while several others are diocesan priests from Korea and Australia who have come to minister alongside Columbans for a fixed number of years in the capital city of Lima or the remote mountainous Andean region of Sicuani.

▼ Fr Iowane Gukibau (2nd from left) with Danny Sweeny (left), a Columban volunteer from Britain, helping in a community kitchen in Lima.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Last year, **MORE THAN 50 CHILDREN** came to our workshops on ‘Wholesome Vacations’ in Holy Archangels Parish. This workshop is now in its sixth year.

AROUND 200 BOYS, GIRLS AND TEENAGERS underwent preparation to receive First Communion in November 2023 in Holy Archangels Parish.

Parishioners and Columbans in Holy Archangels Parish celebrated the **32ND ANNIVERSARY** of its founding on August 21, 2023. Later this year, it will be handed over to the local diocese so that Columbans can focus their efforts on the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in a newly emerging and poor area on the outskirts of Lima.



PHILIPPINES

Columban Missionaries in the Philippines continue to spread God's message of hope through pastoral ministry in parishes as well as through the promotion of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. We are also committed to the education of young men and women for missions in the Philippines and overseas.

We strive to give help and hope to people who are suffering or marginalized from society – those who are deaf and mute, those who are hungry, and indigenous people living in remote areas.

We also educate church leaders about environmental and ecological concerns that impact their communities, and we encourage them to network with organizations that strive to protect and nurture our Common Home.

We continue to invite people to share in God's mission through prayer, faith formation programmes, lay mission, the sponsorship of seminarians, and seminary programmes.

The deaf-mute community with Fr Jovito Dales and lay missionary, Lanieta Tamatawale (3rd row, far right) after celebrating Mass at Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish, Barra, Opol. ▼



FACTS AND FIGURES

Columbans in the Philippines include **20 PRIESTS, FOUR LAY MISSIONARIES AND 13 SEMINARIANS**, representing eight nationalities.

We celebrated **TWO DIACONATE ORDINATIONS** on 9 September 2023: Iowane Naio (Fiji) and Nbwí La Aung (Myanmar). **SIX STUDENTS** are preparing for their first overseas mission assignment.

From 29 January to 9 February 2024, Columbans in the Philippines hosted the Columban Lay Missionaries International Meeting for **30 PARTICIPANTS**.



TAIWAN

During this past year, the Migrants and Immigrants Chaplain Office of Hsinchu Diocese and the Vietnamese Migrant Workers and Immigrants Office (VMWIO) have achieved significant milestones in advancing pastoral directives, safeguarding religious freedom, and seeking justice for environmental victims.

The formulation of diocesan pastoral directives represented a crucial initial step in providing comprehensive support to the Catholic Migrant Communities. These guidelines aim to address the diverse pastoral needs of migrant workers and other immigrants, emphasizing compassion and assistance in times of hardship.

It is evident that the Columbans' commitment to justice, compassion, and advocacy has made a tangible impact on the lives of many. Looking ahead, the Hsinchu Diocese remains dedicated to upholding these values and seeking God's guidance in the ongoing pursuit of justice, equity, and the well-being of all.



- ▶ Migrants Chaplain and VMWIO Director, Fr Peter Hung Van Nguyen (left) with lay volunteers of the migrant community in Annunciation Church Parish in Hsinchu during his pastoral visit.

FACTS AND FIGURES

The VMWIO is actively engaged in a legal battle concerning environmental pollution in Vietnam, which is caused by the Formosa Ha Tinh Steel company, a subsidiary of the Taiwan-based Formosa Plastics Group. Almost **8,000 PLAINTIFFS, VICTIMS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS** were given support when lodging their legal case in Taiwan.

A pivotal moment unfolded when VMWIO, in collaboration with the office of a Taiwan legislator, Wu Yu Qing, organized a press conference at the Taiwan Legislative Office. The conference exposed the intrusion of police into places of worship, illustrating a violation of religious freedom. This bold action garnered widespread public attention, prompting a re-evaluation of law enforcement practices and a renewed commitment to protecting religious spaces.



UNITED STATES

Columban missionaries continue to provide pastoral care to more than 5,000 families in St Mary's parish in Fontana, California. The vast majority of the parishioners are migrants from various countries around the world.

Since the two Columban priests - Fr Al Utzig and Fr Arturo Aguilar - who minister in St Mary's parish have many years of experience as missionaries in other countries, we understand the hopes and fears, the struggles and rewards of being a migrant. Therefore, we strive to create a welcoming and hospitable church community that assists people in coming closer to God and one another.

After more than a decade of planning and preparation, we began construction of a new church building towards the end of last year. Despite various challenges, we are hoping to complete it before Easter of next year.

While we are looking forward with great anticipation to that accomplishment, we are also preparing plans for the renovation of the existing church building so that it can be used for catechetical activities and a venue for various meetings a few years from now.



▼ "Danza Azteca" group celebrating a Marian feast in St Mary's Church.

FACTS AND FIGURES

MORE THAN 5,000 FAMILIES with backgrounds in Colombia and Cuba, Nicaragua and Nigeria, the Philippines and Peru make the Parish of St Mary's their spiritual home.

Last year, the parish's annual Thanksgiving Walk-A-Thon of seven miles raised about **\$6,000** to help those who experience food shortages.

Twice a month, around 40 parish volunteers distribute food packages to approximately **70 NEEDY FAMILIES.**



IN GRATITUDE

“EVERYTHING IS RELATED, AND WE HUMAN BEINGS ARE UNITED AS BROTHERS AND SISTERS ON A WONDERFUL PILGRIMAGE, WOVEN TOGETHER BY THE LOVE GOD HAS FOR EACH OF HIS CREATURES...” (LAUDATO SI’ #92).

Whenever Columban Missionaries visit a diocese in England and Wales to do a mission appeal, we look for ways to give a little back to parishes as an expression of our gratitude for the hospitality and generosity we receive.

Last year, during our visit to Plymouth diocese, we were inspired by St Columban to organise a pilgrimage. According to tradition, St Columban and his 12 companions travelled through Cornwall, the most westerly part of that diocese, on their missionary journey from Ireland to mainland Europe.

Our pilgrimage took place during ‘Laudato Si’ Week in May 2023. We wove together the themes of mission and ecological conversion in our prayers and reflections which featured the voices of Columbans in China, Pakistan, South America, the Philippines, and Britain. We worked closely with diocesan agencies, the local parish and the primary school, to plan a pilgrimage for the local Church community and for anyone who wished to join us in person or in spirit and prayer.

Along with people from the parish, we were joined on the pilgrimage by more than 50 others who signed up as ‘virtual’ pilgrims and followed our progress, prayers and reflections via email.

What began as a once-off pilgrimage has become a template for others to organise their own ‘pilgrimage’. The Columban Way Pilgrimage booklet is our gift to the Diocese of Plymouth, to our supporters, and to all who wish to deepen their commitment to care for God’s beautiful creation.

◀ Pilgrims on the Columban Way Pilgrimage during Laudato Si’ Week in May 2023, leaving St Mary’s Catholic Primary School in Bodmin, Cornwall.



Pakistan Housing Project:
The Columban Mission in Australia has made commendable efforts to provide housing for Pakistani families, building 120 houses in a year.

Columban Fr Liam O'Callaghan (right) visits one of the finished houses.



GIVING BACK TO OUR BENEFACTORS



It's truly touching to hear about acts of generosity amidst the devastation caused by natural disasters. The resilience and compassion shown by individuals, even in their own times of hardship, exemplify the best of humanity. For instance, a Columban supporter from Lismore, Australia, who, despite losing everything, still chose to donate \$250 to support those in need elsewhere, is incredibly moving.

In times of crisis, such acts of kindness and solidarity remind us of the importance of coming together as a global community to support one another. It's heartwarming to know that even in the face of adversity, there are individuals who selflessly prioritize helping others.

These gestures not only provide immediate relief to those affected by disasters but also serve as a source of hope and inspiration for rebuilding and recovery. They highlight the power of empathy and remind us of the resilience of the human spirit.

Our heartfelt gratitude to Columban supporters for your generosity and compassion. Your support truly makes a difference and helps us to bring hope and relief to those who need it most.

We thank those supporters who left a gift in their will to support people with various needs in the 15 countries where the Columban missionaries serve. It is a truly impactful way to ensure that our mission continues to make a difference for future generations. Whether providing access to education, healthcare, disaster relief, or other forms of assistance, those gifts help create a brighter future for countless individuals and families.

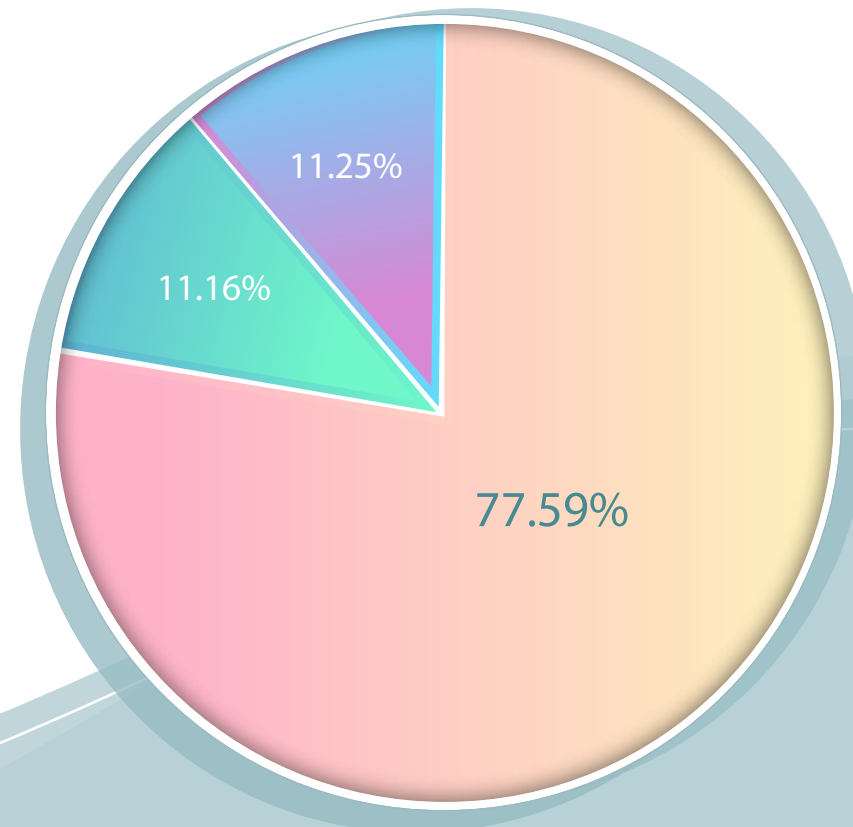
Columban missionaries are deeply grateful to all those who continue to support our mission. Your prayers, sacrifices and generosity ensure that we can continue our mission of providing assistance and hope to neglected communities around the world.



2023 - 2024 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

APPLICATION OF FUNDS RECEIVED IN THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The Society received U.S.\$22.80M in revenue. Total funds received were used in the following manner.



MISSION EXPENSES



MISSION APOSTOLATES



ADMINISTRATION

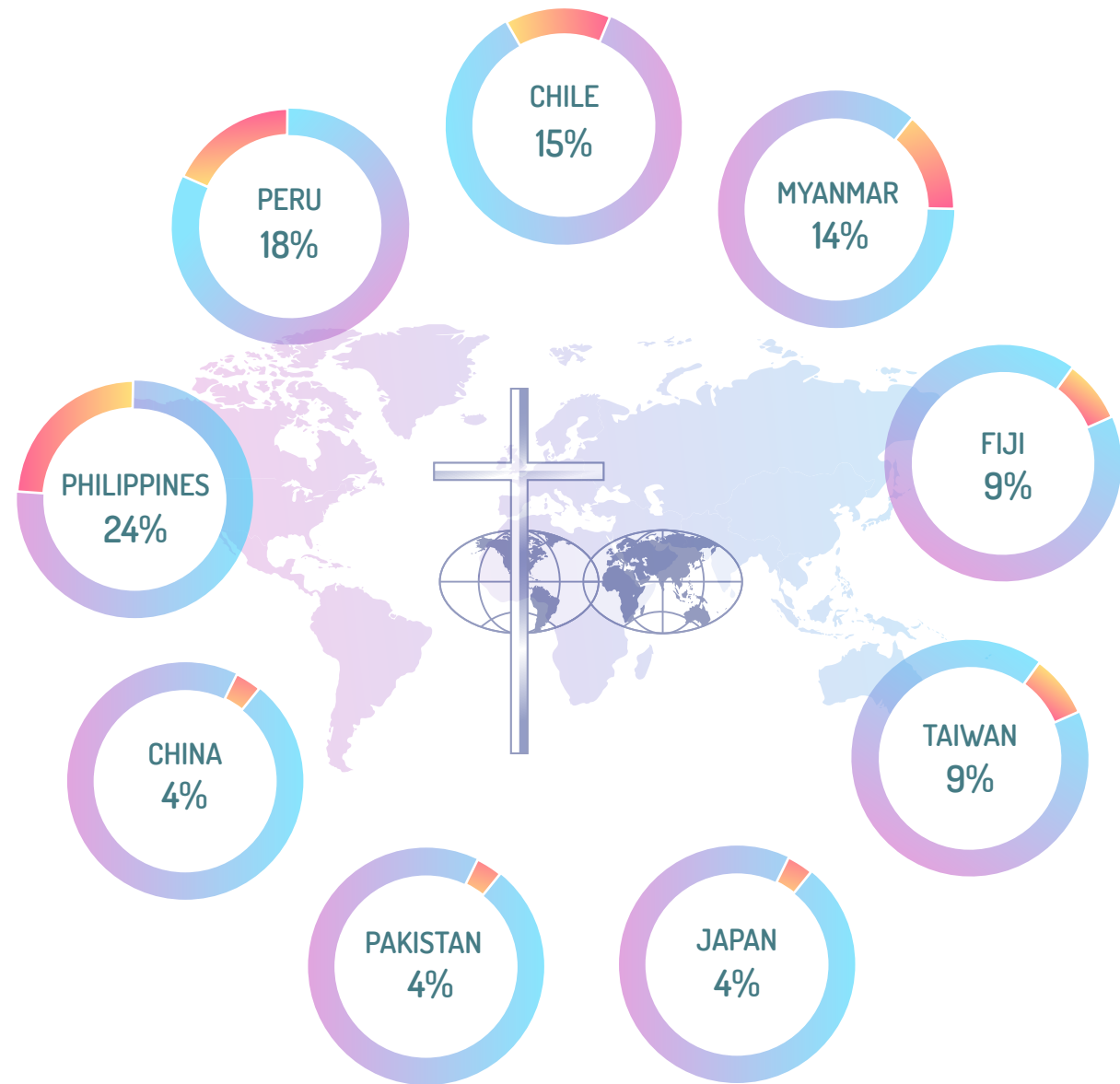


FUNDRAISING AND DONOR-DEVELOPMENT

FUNDING OF VARIOUS MISSIONS

Our missionary endeavours in Australia, Britain, Ireland, New Zealand, South Korea, and the U.S./Mexico are self-funded.

The expense associated with each mission country reflects the number of Columban Missionaries ministering there, the cost of living, and the level of support the local Church can provide.



SOCIETY INVITATION TO MISSION

- The Society Invitation to Mission (SIM) programme has made significant progress during this past year with Columbans in five countries facilitating overseas mission exposure opportunities for young adults.
- Columbans in Chile hosted Danny Sweeney, a volunteer from Britain, who actively engaged in migrant ministry alongside Columbans in Santiago for a year.
- After completing a three-month mission exposure programme in Chile, Columbans in Ireland facilitated Josh Egan in making presentations about his experience in churches and schools.



▼ Korean participants visiting a candle-making project in Manila, which was initiated by a Columban lay missionary but is now managed by a group of young mothers.

- Young adults in Korea responded enthusiastically to a Columban invitation to join mission exposure programmes in Taiwan and the Philippines.
- Building bridges of understanding and friendship among younger generations across national boundaries remains an important dimension of Columban mission.

▼ As part of a mission exposure trip, participants engage in a hands-on candle-making experience in Manila.





VOCATIONS AND SEMINARY LIFE

The purpose of the First Missionary Assignment (FMA) is to provide seminarians with a two-year opportunity to participate in Columban mission in another country. The following are accounts of the experiences of two students who spent these past two years in South America.



I am a Filipino Columban seminarian. When I first learned about my assignment to South America for two years, I felt excited but also anxious. I spent the initial four months studying Spanish in a language school in Bolivia. Then, I moved to Peru where I spent the remaining twenty months living and ministering alongside experienced Columban missionaries, many of whom had first arrived in Peru before I was born, and a few had been on mission there before my parents were born!

In the Columban parish in Lima, I became acquainted with the parishioners and various parish activities. I joined a prayer group, visited the sick, and shared short reflections in Spanish on the Sunday readings. Through numerous daily encounters with the parishioners, I became more confident in my use of Spanish and came to a deeper understanding of Peruvian culture.

Before going to Peru, I thought that my goal as a missionary was to tell people about God, Jesus and the Christian way of life. However, through my recent mission experience, I came to the realization that while I can help to nurture the faith of the Peruvian people, they also can nurture my faith. Moreover, I am coming to understand that God is to be found in people's everyday lives, their daily joys and sorrows, struggles and dreams.

LARRY DUERME

Filipino Seminarian in Peru





VOCATIONS AND SEMINARY LIFE

My name is Jeongrak Lee. I have been living in Peru since August 2022 on my first mission assignment. For me, FMA is a time to experience living in a foreign country away from home as a missionary and to see if I can live independently in various aspects of prayer, pastoral activities, and personal maintenance.

It is also a time to discover what pastoral activities I am more interested in and what I am good at as a missionary. Therefore, while living in Lima, I have been thinking and reflecting what God wants me to do and live as a missionary. I realised that the church has the power to take the lead in coordinating this help because, unlike the government, the church has more access to people's lives.

These experiences reminded me of the words of a senior priest who told me before I came to Peru, "Missionary life can be busy or leisurely, depending on how you live it." It made me realize that there are so many things I can do, depending on how I live my mission.

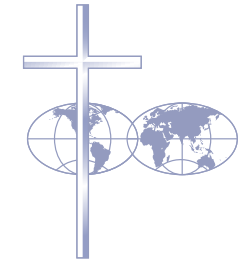
JEONGRAK LEE VERANO

Korean Seminarian in Peru



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