

## #The Missionary Sisters of St. Columban

### #OUR FOUNDING HISTORY



It was because two people shared a vision and answered a similar call that the Missionary Sisters of St. Columban came to be.

In December 1917 Fr John Blowick, co-founder of the Columban Fathers (originally called the Maynooth Mission to China) spoke of the urgent need for women collaborators in the new missionary venture in China. This appeal found a ready response in the hearts of many women, one of whom was Lady Frances Moloney who later became Mother Mary Patrick.

Dialogue during the years 1917-1920 brought clarity as to the nature of the new missionary group and in December 1920 permission was granted to found a Missionary Religious Congregation of Sisters who would engage in any apostolate that would further the preaching of the Gospel in China.

February 1922 saw the first group of postulants gathered in Cahiracon. Co Clare, and with the First Profession on September 29, 1924, the young community was officially incorporated in the Church as a public Missionary Religious Congregation. The Congregation became one of pontifical right with the approval of the Constitutions by the Holy See in 1947.

### #Logo

### #Charism

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and in response to his grace and love, the Congregation was founded to participate in the Church's missionary task of proclaiming the Gospel to the nations. It is a religious Congregation of pontifical right existing in the Church to be sent, in her name, to spread the Good News of the Kingdom of God, especially among those who have not yet received it.

As members of the Congregation we pledge ourselves to follow Christ in the spirit and practice of the evangelical counsels and in apostolic service. We strive to develop a spirit of prayer, self-sacrifice, detachment and obedience, and above all,

to excel in mutual charity, for charity is the sign by which we are to be recognized as true disciples of him who said, “By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jn 13:35)

Urged on by the Spirit, we joyfully respond to Christ’s call to leave all things and commit ourselves to bring the Father’s saving love to those to whom we are sent, so that all may be one to the glory of the Trinity.

### **#Vision**

As missionary religious women, we commit ourselves to be witnesses of God’s love and compassion at every stage of our lives wherever we are. We commit ourselves to be contemplative and prophetic in all we are and in all we do.

We accept that this will often entail a journey through the darkness of letting go and taking risks, so that we may promote life and together work for the transformation of our world.

### **#Columban Mission Spirituality**

Touched and set on fire by God’s love which is the source of our charism, we are called and sent in a spirit of compassion and solidarity to our fast-changing world where we see:

- the collapsing of structures at all level, e.g. family life, church, state, economy, ecology
- devastating poverty and hunger
- inter- religious conflicts and lack of religious freedom
- an ever-increasing movement of peoples including refugees, women and children who are trafficked
- wholesale exploitation of natural resources for the benefit of the very few at the expense of the many

And yet, side by side with these realities, we also see :

- a global consciousness of searching/ reaching for the Divine
- an increased awareness of the uniqueness, diversity, connectedness of all life

We are sustained and nourished by a spirituality which springs from contemplation and moves us to prophetic action and dialogue.

### **#Focus on Mission**

#### **#Ways of being in mission**

The life of missionary service calls for *availability* and *adaptability* in relation to the direction of mission and our response to it. Over the years since our foundation, we Columban Sisters have been called first to establish and/or run institutions serving Educational and Medical needs. Then in the late 70's to move towards less structured ministries meeting a wide variety of other needs. And so, in our everyday lives, we give expression to our commitment through a variety of ministries and services.

#### **Empowering People through Communicating Gospel Values**

The communication of Gospel values is the basis of all our missionary service. But direct instruction is done through Bible study programs within the building of Basic Christian Communities. It also includes directing programs preparing people for the sacraments. Often the latter is initiated by people who want to know more about the Christian faith out of the witness of values such as inclusiveness, respect, compassion and self-sacrifice communicated by the Sisters and co-workers. In short, through the communication of God's love for each person.

### **#Where we serve**

The growth of the young community has moved on through the opening up of missions as follows:

Ireland(1922), China(1926) with the first foundation in Hanyang, USA(1930), Philippines(1939), Burma(1947), Hong Kong(1949), Korea(1945), Pere(1962), Chile(1974), China reopens(1986), Pakistan(1990), Myanmar(Burma) reopens 2003, Mexican border(2019), Bangor(2020)

The vision deepens; the call continues.....

### **#Mission in Myanmar**

June 6, 1947 until June 1966 ...and then re-entry Myanmar in 2003

After an absence of almost 40 years, there is once again a limited Columban Sisters' presence in Myanmar. In 1966, the Sisters who had been working there for over 20 years were asked by the Government to leave the country. The Columban Sisters are again involved in various services to the people of Myanmar.

An initial program of Basic Bible Seminars was initiated in the local parish communities and for priests and religious; added to that, the teaching of English to those are interested in studying English. The Sisters are now fully inserted in life in the cities of Myitkynia and Mandalay.

Columban Sisters in Myitkyina:

- In their Education Center provide a safe and supportive environment for young women of 18 years and over to pursue further education and training (St. Columban's Education Program)

- At their youth center at CLAY(Center for Learning Alternatives for Youth): facilitate pastoral programs for youth

- Shin Tan Chin Myo Se (growing seed) special education program offers Special Needs Education Program for disabled children:

- Women Empowerment Base (WEB): facilitates a women's empowerment program-towards New Life for Women in Urban Myitkyina.

- As a staff member at Myanmar Institute of Formation for Formators, which conducts Formation and Spiritual Direction Courses for priests, sisters and laity. These in turn form an extension of this same work back in their parishes and religious houses.

- Empowering women and children in IDPs camps through visitation and teaching music.

In the city of Mandalay, the focus is on:

Inter-Faith Dialogue sharing in contemplative practice/meditation with Buddhist friends – a bridge and meeting point. For both Buddhists and Christians, a new consciousness is being born with a greater appreciation of the Mystery from which

all faiths flow; also a greater desire to work together for social transformation. This ministry is further developed through leading seminars on the importance of Inter-Faith Dialogue. The Sisters share meditation practice with Buddhists, Hindus and Christians. They are part of the Christian Meditation Movement and share with other Catholics in mediation practice and meditation retreats. They are also available for spiritual direction and retreats.

Educational Programs for Youth – e.g. Teaching of English/ Ecology- awareness, training & meditation/ To support education for Young Children whose parents are AIDS sufferers/ Special Needs Children's program

Therapy center – To help people those who are in difficulty with emotions or psychologically through Play therapy, Sand play therapy and Figure therapy/ To have seminar or workshop in order to share therapy methods and skills

Through such ministries comes the awareness that a great difference can be made in the lives of many.

#### **#Vocation Invitation**

#### **We invite you to participate in the life and mission of the Columban Sisters**

The missionary Sisters of St. Columban, more popularly known as the Columban Sisters, are a small, international group of women who have dedicated their lives to God by religious vows. As an expression of this commitment, we make ourselves available to be sent on mission beyond the boundaries of language, cultures and belief.

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