



Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity

The Ladies' Ancient Order of Hibernians

By Fr. Al Utzig

This July (2026) the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians (LAOH) will hold its biennial meeting in Omaha. It could not be a more appropriate city to gather in for a couple of reasons. One is that Omaha is where the sisterhood of Irish American Catholic women was founded in 1894 as the Daughters of Erin. This took place during the National convention of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) held in Omaha Nebraska in 1894. The other reason is that our Missionary Society of St. Columban was also established in the United States in Omaha in 1920. We have had a close relationship with the LOAH since 1936.

*We are pledged to God and
Country. Our patroness is
St. Brigid.*

At the time of their founding the primary purpose of the LAOH was to protect young immigrant Irish women coming to the United States, to assist them in securing positions, and to offer support and encouragement. Over the years the organization has developed in many ways but still holds true to their motto of "Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity." The LAOH describe themselves in the following pledge. We are pledged to

God and Country. We are a Catholic Action organization whose focus is to keep before the country and the world the fact that the Irish and their descendants are foremost among the people of the world in faith, in patriotism, in a sense of justice and in the spirit of self-sacrifice in their love for true liberty and peace. Our patroness is St. Brigid.

Since their founding the LAOH has engaged in many diverse works. For instance, they were behind the erection of a monument in Washington, D.C., to honor the Sister-Nurses of the Civil War. They have engaged in many charitable works in Ireland. Contributions have been

made to the victims of earthquakes and famines throughout the world. One of their primary charities over the years has been the Missionary Society of St. Columban.

Just two years after being founded in Ireland in 1918 the missionary society of Saint Columban was established in the United States in Omaha. We received a warm reception at that time from Archbishop Hardy who welcomed us to his archdiocese. So, both the LAOH and the Missionary Society of St. Columban can claim a founding story in Omaha.

Our Columban relationship with the LAOH began in 1935 when Bishop

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Edward Galvin, the co-founder of the Missionary Society of Saint Columban, visited Chicago and met Mrs. Mary MacWhorter. She had formed a group called the Mission Helpers of Saint Columban. Many of their members were also members of the LAOH. Mrs. McWhorter, a former president of the LAOH invited Bishop Galvin to address their convention in Baltimore in 1936. Bishop Galvin talked about the difficulties encountered by his small band of missionaries in China and asked if they might help. He asked for financial support from the LAOH to "enable the work of God to be done." He suggested that each member donate a dollar a year.

The assembled delegates at the convention voted to name the Columban missionaries as their principal charity. That first year



St. Brigid was reputed to turn water into ale (16th-century fresco by Lorenzo Lotto)

they donated \$500. Since then the LAOH has been most generous in supporting Columban missionaries with donations.

On behalf of all Columban missionaries and the people Columban missionaries have served over the years we offer our thanks and prayers to the women of LAOH. We hope that you continue to prosper and serve your communities with joy and the spirit of you patroness St. Brigid. With St. Patrick and St. Colmcille, she is revered as one of the three patron saints of Ireland. There is a wonderful poem promoting good cheer attributed to St. Brigid, your patroness, that we hope characterizes your convention in Omaha this year. (Author's note: ale was a nonalcoholic beverage at that time.)

*I would like to have the men of Heaven
in my own house;
With vats of good cheer laid out for
them.*

*I would like to have the three Marys,
their fame is so great.*

*I would like people from every corner of
Heaven.*

*I would like them to be cheerful in their
drinking.*

*I would like to have Jesus sitting here
among them.*

*I would like a great lake of ale for the
King of Kings.*

*I would like to be watching Heaven's
family*

Drinking it through all eternity. CM

Columban Fr. Al Utzig is the U.S. Region Director.



Myitkyina, Myanmar

A Decades-Long Journey Bringing Help and Hope to People in a Troubled Land

By Sister Enda Im

Columban Sister Enda Im, originally from Korea, has been on mission in Myanmar for several years.

On May 13, 1947, four Missionary Sisters of St. Columban left Ireland for our first mission in Burma, later known as Myanmar. The Sisters arrived in Rangoon after a three-week journey on a troop ship amid austere circumstances due to post-war conditions. They then flew by army plane to Myitkyina in the north country where the Columban Fathers had a mission. Here they took charge of the school started by the Fathers. No school had operated during the war years, so the opening of the Sisters' school was an exciting event. The roll call numbered 125 students including Burmans, Shans, Karens and Kachins. A few years later, a boarding school was opened for Kachin youth who the missionaries believed were the hope for the Church's future in Burma.

At the same time, the political situation



(L) Sister M. Ita O'Mahoney on the Irrawaddy River; (R) Sister Maureen Griffin with Kachin weavers. Photos are from the late 1940s when the Columban Sisters established their first mission in Burma/Myanmar.

in the country was becoming very precarious. As the British were handing over the government of Burma to the Burmese people, General Aung San and his government were assassinated by a rival group. It was also becoming difficult to secure visas for new Sisters coming to the mission resulting in long delays before they arrived. However, this did not deter the Sisters from expanding their service and developing strong bonds of love and friendship

with the people. This resulted in some local women becoming attracted to the Columban Sisters way of life. Given the political unrest, plans to build a novitiate had to be suspended. The growing need for medical services and the arrival of two Sisters who were nurses led to establishing a clinic in the Kachin Independent Army's (KIA) territory. Tragically, due to the fighting between the KIA and the Burmese army, the clinic and convent had to be closed.

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A Departure and a Return

Over the next few years, the situation continued to deteriorate and soon, as foreigners, they were not allowed to administer the school. Undaunted, they then spent their time traveling by bicycle to visit families and grew even closer to the people. Soon, the situation became so unstable that in 1966 the Sisters made a quiet departure after 19 years of serving the people and the land they had come to love.



Sister Enda Im and co-worker support a special needs child.

But it was with great joy that in 2003 five Columban Sisters returned to the land now known as Myanmar. They were received by the people of Myitkyina with much happiness after their long separation. As the Sisters settled into life once again, they engaged in various areas of ministry including a language



Sister Theresa Kim encourages a young boy with special needs.

school, caring for HIV patients, community health in rural areas, religious/priestly formation, drug rehabilitation, and youth and biblical ministry. The Sisters also have reached out to the Mandalay diocese and now engage in inter-faith dialogue in every level of life in the Mandalay community.

Meeting the Challenges of Our Faith Journey

Sadly, the people of Myanmar have found themselves once again struggling against politically motivated violence and civil unrest since another military coup in 2021. Cities, villages and rural areas have been exposed to armed conflict and there has been much destruction. Many people have had to leave their homes and hide in the jungle or find

shelter in refugee camps. In the midst of this ongoing uncertainty, the Columban Sisters continue to live and work among the people in various areas of need. We collaborate in psychotherapy programs for those with psychological or physical difficulties, for women who experience domestic violence, and in trauma healing processes that support children and young people in refugee camps. Just like our early Sisters, we believe that empowering the next generation is the way to build up the country for a better future. We are most grateful to all the friends and benefactors of the Columban Sisters who join us in prayer and support as we continue our faith journey.



Columban Sisters Theresa Kim (second from left) Kathleen Geaney (center) and Cris de Leon (far right) with the Mandalay Interfaith group.

All photos courtesy of Far East Magazine/Ireland

**Thank you for
Supporting the
Columban Sisters**

The Missionary Sisters of St. Columban is a religious congregation of sisters dedicated to lives of prayer and service. We work among the poor, the sick and the elderly in our missions in China, England, Ireland, Korea, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines and the United States and are deeply grateful to all who support our missionary work.

For more information about our mission projects, visit ColumbanSisters.org; email us at SisterCorona@StColumbansHome.org or call 716-934-4515. Contributions can be made by using the enclosed envelope or by contacting the Mission Office.



Columban Sisters Worldwide Mission News

China • England • Ireland • Korea • Myanmar • Pakistan • Philippines • United States

► Special Issue 2022

Commemorative Edition

Columban Sisters Celebrate 100 Years of Dedicated Service In Worldwide Ministries

On February 1, 2022 the Missionary Sisters of St. Columban participated in an unprecedented event.

Members of our congregation from around the globe gathered in special Zoom meetings for a program of celebration, remembrance and thanksgiving. The virtual gathering, made possible by today's digital technology, marked the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Columban Sisters who serve the poor, the sick and the elderly in our worldwide ministries. It was a gathering of the kind that would have been unimaginable to our congregation's founders a century ago. But it was one that was filled with the same founding spirit, energy and dedication that our Sisters have carried forward to the present day, embracing the motto of our patron, St. Columban, "Let us be Christ's and not our own".

A Shared Vision

The Columban Sisters were founded in Ireland in 1922 through the shared vision of Father John Blowick and Lady Frances Moloney. Father Blowick was a missionary priest who co-founded the Maynooth Mission in China, later called the Missionary Society of St. Columban, named for an Irish monk who was a missionary in Europe in the sixth century.

Because of the cultural attitudes



Father John Blowick

in China at the time, Father Blowick realized the need to include women religious in the new mission venture. In 1917, Frances Moloney, a young widow committed to the service



Lady Frances Moloney



Some of the first novices of the Missionary Sisters of St. Columban in 1922. Today the Columban Sisters motherhouse remains in Ireland in Magheraore, Wicklow.



Candidates for the newly formed Columban Sisters pose with members of the Columban Fathers.

of the poor in the city of Dublin, attended a talk given by Father Blowick about the need for women to serve with the Columban Fathers in their mission in China. Her deepest wish was to become a missionary, and after several years of careful planning and preparation, she and Father Blowick turned their shared vision into reality and co-founded the Missionary Sisters of St. Columban.

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A Remarkable Journey Begins

In February 1922, twelve young ladies joined Frances Moloney in the newly formed Columban Sisters. Frances Moloney took the religious name of Sister Mary Patrick and later became Superior General of the congregation. Years of training and preparation for China followed and in the autumn 1926, a group of Sisters accompanied by Columban Fathers sailed 13,000 miles to Shanghai and on to the mission in Hanyang, China. There they began their first ministry tending to the health, education and social needs of the impoverished people in the area.

In the coming years the Sisters continued their journey, establishing missions in many other parts of the world including the USA (1930), the Philippines (1939), Burma, now Myanmar (1947), Hong Kong (1949), Korea (1955), Peru (1962), Chile (1974) and Pakistan (1990). These pioneering women served as teachers, nurses and social workers in lands far from home among people of different cultures and beliefs, bringing hope and comfort to all in need.

With Your Support, Our Journey Continues

Much has changed in the world since we began our mission journey 100 years ago. But as the Columban Sisters look back on a century of



Columban Sisters visit a rural Chinese parish in the 1930s.

service, we also look forward to continuing our journey in today's challenging world of great change and transition. We have recommitted ourselves to our ministries for marginalized people in our current worldwide missions in China, England, Ireland, Korea, Myanmar, Pakistan and the Philippines, as well as to our 52-year ministry of care for the elderly at St. Columban's on the Lake Retirement Home in Silver Creek, NY USA.

Throughout our history, the Columban Sisters have depended upon the generosity of our many friends and benefactors who never fail to respond to the needs of our ministries near and far. We send our prayers and blessings to all who have accompanied us through the years, and it is with grateful hearts that we ask for your ongoing support as we continue our journey.



Currently the Columban Sisters continue to welcome new members to our congregation including postulants (l to r) Ja Brim and Sut Nan Bok in Myanmar, Annalynn in the Philippines and Marianna in Korea.

Thank you for Supporting the Columban Sisters

With gratitude & blessings,

Sister Corona Colleary
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