

REPORT OF PRE-CHAPTER MEETING OF THE JAPAN MISSION UNIT

Tuesday Afternoon 21st November

10 members of the JMU were present. The only absentee was Frank McKay, for health reasons. Joseph Kang attended as the representative from CA.

Facilitator: Tien Nguyen

Opening prayer: Reading from St Luke's Gospel, Prayer by St Oscar Romero

Welcome to Joseph Kang

A few words from Joseph, Second councilor of the General Council.

Elected to this position even though he was not attending the chapter.

He spoke about his experience on the council, the challenges to administration during Covid, And his designated responsibilities for associate priests, inter-cultural living and invitation to mission. He also summed up his experience of visitation in Japan.

Personal Sharing by the members

At each Columban gathering, each member takes a few minutes to share about ministry, health condition and any personal issues. This is a time for openness and trust.

JPIC report from Paul McCartin

Hired a new office person to work 2 hours a day, 4 days a week.

Also may have some help from a woman who works with the CBCJ.

Concentrating most of his efforts on ecology and Laudato Si.

Plans to visit Catholic schools and parishes to raise awareness.

Selection of Delegate for the Chapter

Single name on a ballot

Paul McCartin 2

Tien Nguyen 7

Frank McKay 1

Tien was selected as the delegate to the Lima chapter 2024

Wednesday Morning 22nd November

Sharing on the 6 recommendations from IRMU Seoul

Morning Prayer

Recommendation #1. Discussion

To create a culture of accountability.

Who is this directed at? For the leadership, for the membership, for everyone?

Which policies are being disregarded?

Two examples of this were leaving the country or leaving the diocese are not being done according to policy.

Policies should be adjusted to the situation of the members.

Concern about the term 'rigorous policy procedures' which seems excessive.

How are we to be monitored?

There should be a spiritual basis for this accountability question.

What was the background to this at the IRMU?

Don't rightly remember, but there is concern about the attitude of some Columbans towards Society policies, and being responsible for each other.

Columbans are working in many different areas, need to have a sense of ownership for Columban mission, and to offer support and information to each others.

I would like to see a strong call to conversion and to new life in the Society.

Not specifically Columban or even spiritual in this recommendation

How are we not being accountable?

A problem not only for younger Columbans, but for us as well.

As an International Society there are different cultures present and different ways of doing things. Some cultures are more laidback, and adjustments need to be made for these culture differences.

There are some things that have to be agreed upon as Columbans, such as preaching the gospel to the unevangelized, JPIC priorities.

Within the Columban Society, we have created a situation where whether you do anything or not you have a guaranteed life style. Where security of income takes precedence over mission. Before things become too serious, accountability and support should be applied.

Need to invite people to commit in order to be a Columban

If we don't change structures then this is not going to work. We did that in Japan, and now people have a better sense of co-responsibility and supportive of each their. Without a change in structures then it is difficult to implement.

There is need for individual responsibility, but also need to have support from policies. How far should policies direct us?

Financial support from the Japanese Church is part of this question.

Accountability starts at the top, goes both ways. CA needs to be accountable to the membership. Financial transparency is a church priority.

Continuation of the Columbans is at question.

'Home Region' structures are costing so much, little money is leaving the country.

Too reliant on donations from ordinary people.

Get rid of large Columban houses, large Columban staffs, cut back overall.

There is accountability in the parish ministry.

During retirement how much should we rely on the Columban Society, and if we are able to how much should we contribute?

Recommendation #5

Was there a time when leadership was not burdensome?

Is there a change now?

There seems like less people you can call on and to help out.

Some people are not good at delegating and try to do everything

In earlier days leadership was seen as something big, so that gives some

Leaders are not born, but leadership develops. Not everyone can do this.

More co-responsibility, more cooperation is necessary, old forms of leadership are gone.

You need to lead a transformed life, to be a transformative leadership.
The big decisions that need to be made, have been put off.
The JMU can make a contribution through its experience of change from Region to MU.
Too much consultation? If I get an order, I follow up.
Leadership would be a lot less burdensome if all the membership take responsibility for their mission. There is conflict between recommendations 1 and 5.
Need to get rid of all the big houses, etc, would make leadership less burdensome.
How does mentoring take place in the Society?
Different interpretations were offered; fostering, enabling, sharing and teaching.
To build a culture of trust, must be based on trust.
There is a culture of trust within the Society, so where did this come from.
Communication might be the issue, with leadership feedback better.
What new structures may help in this situation.
MU style of shared accountability and shared leadership could be a way forward.
Amalgamation of Regions into bigger Regions will not make a difference.
Need to look at the survey results.
We need to look at the videos, for a transformative answer for the Society.
Not bogged down looking at problems.
Should take the preparations for the chapter seriously.

Status Report on the independent reviews described in Recommendations 2 and 3

From Joseph Kang

Need to create a strategic view of the Columban Society.
At the heart of our ministry, is our Catholic faith, and missionary commitment.
Mission priority was set by the 2018 chapter.
How to face the future.

Responses

If there is no more top-down approach, then basically it's up to each RMU to sort out their future. Japan may last 10 years and the Society 30 years.

Take responsibility for our own demise.

Do we let the lay people take over the Society?

Well first they need to take over the Church.

What about the Associate Priest program?

At present there are 2 from Australia, 5 from Korea working in South America.

Problem with visas is a major issue. Also supervision issues.

'Go and teach all nations' should be put forward clearly as the focus of our Society mission then it might help with vocations as well.

Mission priorities mention two and then 'etc.'. Preaching the Gospel and explaining that God's love is for all, should not be described as 'etc'.

Telling all the Catholics in their area are evangelizers, is part of a growing Japan wide movement.

Clericalism is also a problem in the church, Japan included.

We have different understandings of God, church, ministry, and these understandings can be expressions of our faith and are very dear to the individual.

Some young Columbans expressed a desire to spend at least 6 years in a parish, to exercise their ministry after the long years of formation.

Importance of prayer and as Pope Francis says, kneel down before the Blessed Sacrament.

Suspension of vocations for five years is not viable.

A decision will be made by the LM's about a suspension next year.

Downsizing will need to be done within the Society and then once the process has started see what can be done.

During the preparation for the Chapter, proposals will be submitted to the General Assembly.

Qualified people should be providing their expertise in their fields.

As a Society we have structures canonically defined, how can we get them changed

Only a chapter can change the constitutions.

Reviews of recent changes to structures would be useful.

Formation programs become overloaded, need not have a full formation program.

Formation programs can be downsized as well.

Recommendation #6

How can Columbans convey our passion?

There is a big challenge with new media.

One can reach a lot of people including the shut-ins.

Also a negative side with trolls etc.

Alvaro on the GC asks for more articles to communicate Columban mission.

One page articles with a personal element acceptable by the magazines.

A wide variety of topics were raised, that is difficult to summarize.

Afternoon 2:30

JMU Business

Steering Committee 3rd Member selection

Panel selected by nominations

Thomas Tehan. 7. Paul McCartin 3. Philip Bonifacio

Tom has been selected

Columban Checklist. Looking at our own future and the future of JMU

This becomes our Transition Plan of Action

Budget 2024-2025

Schedule for 2024

Gathering with St. Columban's even Mass and a fine feast.

Leo Schumacher