

CLM IRELAND

If CLM in your RMU is a body of water, what would it be like?

If Columban Lay Mission Ireland is a body of water, it would be a lake. A lake may not be as robust and as powerful as the ocean or a river. But history tells us that it was along the lake that Jesus encountered his first apostles. It was in Lake Tiberias that He walked and showed his disciples that even a mighty storm would listen to him.

CLM Ireland could be described as a lake that seems small and quiet. But just like lake Tiberias, it has a deep and strong history of ministry and mission. Columban Lay Mission in Ireland has contributed to the very life of the church and needless to say, the work of the Columbans in empowering the laity has been a living witness.

The history of CLM Ireland could be traced back to 1993 and 1994 with the sending and receiving programs consecutively. Through the years CLM has been embedded in the pastoral life of the church in the region.

- **Parish ministry:** Sacramental preparations, home visitation, Celebration of Sacraments, Parish Mission
- **School ministry:** Catechesis, Visitation, Inter-cultural festival,
- **Hospital ministry:** Communion Service, Visitation, Liturgy,
- **Fundraising:** Mission Appeal, Parish visitation, Meet and Greet,
- **Migrants and Refugees:** Visitation, Gatherings, Celebration of Cultures.

Water never stops flowing. How is CLM working well in your RMU? Why is it working well?

CLM has been part of the life of the region and it is rightly so because Ireland, as the mother home of the Society of St. Columban, is also a locus for mission therefore the impact of CLM presence has been highly recognized and acknowledged.

The support of the ordained Columbans to the lay missionaries in the region has been the stronghold that sustains the CLM.

The partnership among the ordained, lay missionaries, sisters and co-workers is paramount and has been an anchor to the life of CLM. This is evident in the way we work in collaboration with the people in the parish, with Mission Promotion Team, and the Columban Centre Team.

Policy Handbook and Guidelines for Partnerships are two important references that guide any discussion and decision making, thus help CLM to stay on track.

The commitment of lay missionaries is a pivotal part of the missionary work of the Columbans in Ireland. We trust in the quality not the quantity, the experience not the number that propel the Columban Lay Mission in Ireland.

The structure of support is a strong point in the region. Many returned ordained Columbans have made themselves available to take on the role of personal and spiritual companions of lay missionaries which are essential elements in ensuring the wellbeing of the person.

Just as water erodes even the strongest of rocks, persistence and hard work can overcome any obstacle. What areas of CLM in your RMU need attention and why? What are you doing to address those areas for your RMU?

Just as a lake can be silent and calm, it can also experience turmoil. Peter has realized his own limitation and vulnerability thus recognizing his need of Jesus's assurance of taking courage when he was losing faith sinking in the lake. This is true too in our life as lay missionaries in Ireland where we experience difficulties and trials. Indeed, we recognise that it is in those situations that we hear Jesus' words echoing; "Do not fear. I am with you, always."

All lakes need fresh water to be supplied to them to be able to give life to others.

The number of lay missionaries worldwide being down to 25 is a reality that creates a ripple effect not just to CLM Ireland but to all mission unit. Not having new candidates for the last five years or more is one factor that affect the receiving program in CLM Ireland. Hence it is something we have no control of. Perhaps inviting new candidates could help.

The new regulation implemented by the Irish government regarding the length of time to stay in Ireland has imposed some difficulty on inviting lay missionaries to the region. With three years as the maximum length of stay and one or two years of renewal has impacted the decision of a lay missionary to discontinue working in Ireland.

There is also a lesser Columban ministry in a parish level after Ballymun parish was handed back to the Diocese of Dublin. This made the ministry lesser than previous years.

Water from the rain falling on the lake is not enough; it needs rivers, streams flowing into it and if these fail the lake eventually dries up and disappears.

There is the much-reduced number of Columbans, as well as the general community of faith, to give the necessary love and support which the lay missionaries need.

These are the challenges we need to face. It may be that together, collectively, we can address these concerns and find a way forward. Our courageous conversation circles are essential.

The depth of water holds infinite possibilities. What new possibilities within CLM are emerging in your RMU?

It was in the shore of Lake Tiberias the disciples experience the risen Christ. It is important to remind ourselves of our calling where we truly encounter the risen Christ who gives hope. With that hope we remain faithful in sharing the mission to all and are open to new possibilities:

- Continuation of the work in partnership with the ordained, sisters, co-workers, and former lay missionaries and with the people in the community.
- Commitment in doing fundraising through mission appeal and collaboration with other missionary groups.
- Strengthening Society Invitation to Mission in the Region. With Josh Egan as an example of a well organized and fruitful 10 weeks in Chile, we are hopeful to have more young people like him to come forward to join SIM.
- Revival of the Mission Outreach team; With the presence of returned ordained Columbans in the region, there will be opportunities in reviving the group who can then create platform for different ministries.
- Extension of the Columban Centre in Dalgan with the ministry of hospitality, listening, bereavement, grief, well-being, reconciliation, spiritual renewal as the core objective. And this is open to the locals, migrants, refugees and all who seek a place for refuge and spiritual enrichment.

Do you have any other comments?

CLM Ireland is committed to share the giftedness of the laity in the church. With the Synodality as the way forward for the Church, CLM shows example of lay empowerment crossing boundaries of race, culture, traditions, language, gender, age, and faith.