

Hit - 3 - Home - Run Priest

By Father Chris Carey
In this island off the southern coast of Japan, I'm known as the "Hit-Three-Home-Run Priest."

It all began when the captain of the village baseball team decided I was the man he needed to fill out his team for the coming island baseball series.

Poor me—the son of a small town in Ireland where a baseball bat was as foreign as a boomerang!

Practice was a disaster

The first night's training was a disaster. I couldn't get my glove on, and at bat I hit a lot of air, that's all. Balls I threw to first base usually ended up at third and several zoomed into neighboring paddy fields. My smiling companions assured me that I was simply out of practice and things would come back to normal in no time. I feared they were right!

No major leaguer

The series was held in nearby Takahama. My attempts to back out of the clean-up spot were regarded by the coach as modest.



COLUMBAN SISTERS — Telling among the poorest of the poor in Hong Kong, Korea, Peru and the Philippines, Columban Sisters nourish, heal, comfort and guide. They preach Christianity by love and example.

ty, a quality much admired by the Japanese. Stuck again!

Then, in the finals, a team from Shinoda was trouncing us 9-2 when the miracles started. There was one man on base as I faced the pitcher. His second ball looked good, so I swung and prayed. "Homaar!" the crowd roared. Slightly dazed, I trotted around the bases and was greeted by jubilant teammates. Then disaster struck.

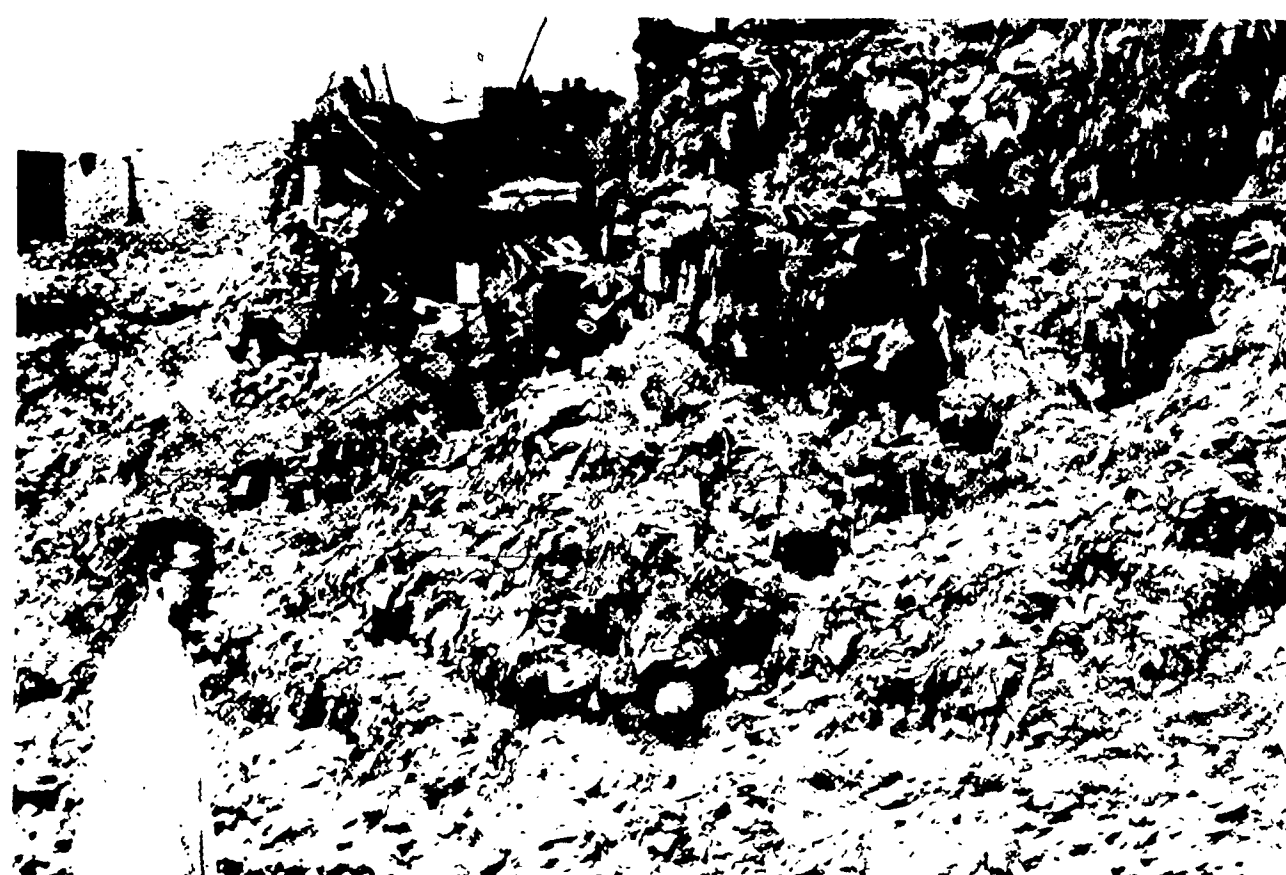
The umpire apologetically told us that honorable Father had failed to touch second base, so the run didn't count!

At bat again in the seventh, I was in a frightening position: Two outs and bases loaded. Swish! I hit the pitcher's first throw with a strength born of desperation. Over the fence it went. The crowd chanted "Homa! Homa! Homa Runu!" Bases were touched carefully, everybody was happy—and fate was saved.

In the ninth I again found myself at the plate with the bases loaded. We were still losing 11-7. To my complete amazement, I did it again! We added three more runs and eked out a 14-13 victory.

The villagers back home were ecstatic. Later, during the victory banquet, everybody insisted on telling his version of how the big American (all foreigners are Americans to the Japanese) saved the day. And the more I insisted my effort was a fluke, the less they believed me.

Most of these men were not Christians. But their honorable teammate, the "Hit-Three-Home-Run-Priest," is working on them.



A Columban Father makes his parish rounds at El Monton, a city of the poor built atop garbage dump outside Lima, Peru. About 20,000 people live in crude shanties here.

Faith at the garbage dump

Columbans bring help, hope to Lima

By Father Louis Dineen

Cardinal Landazuri's car plowed through the filth on the left bank of the bone-dry River Rimac, skirted a pool of slime and lured downriver. Behind it the limousine, carrying the mayor of Lima made the same arc around the cesspool and bumped on over the hardpan.

The third car carried Peru's first lady, and through the windows she saw raised thresholds dripping slop and children chasing through the slush with packs of many dogs.

The Cardinal was coming to bless St. Andrew's church and parish clinic, both built on 22 feet of rotting garbage in Lima's notorious El Monton district. The first lady and mayor had graciously agreed to be sponsors.

The cars swung left off the shelving river bank, clambering up a crooked street festooned with red-and-white Peruvian flags. Father Dermot Carthy and I waited in a plaza jammed with 4,000 jostling people.

For our parishioners this was the greatest day, one they had fought disease, destitution and death itself to see. So that you may understand this tragic saga, let me take you back 10 years.

Flood from the hills

They came down from the Andes, driven from their mountain homes by poverty that robbed them of their dignity and their bread. They were beckoned to the coast by the hope of work in Lima, but unemployment—and a housing shortage—awaited them.

In 1955, 8,000 desperate people closed their eyes and noses to the horrors of the Mon-

ton. Lima's garbage dump, and squatted on the smoking refuse and cinders.

Their children died at the rate of four a day; they themselves wandered around in the ashes "drunk from the stench," as one survivor told me. They searched the city for the meanest jobs, fought off the police who tried to dislodge them. And they fought among themselves.

Those who survived saw improvements come, though slowly. Gradually they straightened their streets and some built houses with mud or brick walls.

Then in October 1962, 6,000 more squatters settled on the perimeter of the parish in conditions that are still among the world's worst. They jammed in wherever they could find a few vacant yards of rubble, scrapping for the most desirable places atop the putrid mounds.

Church on a sponge

The Columban Fathers came to the Monton in March 1962. Two years later Father Carthy began to rebuild a shanty church, but discovered that nothing permanent could be attempted on the spongy site.

When the Cardinal arrived he found a bamboo-thatched adobe building which will seat 300 (when we get benches). Faces crinkled with hardship glowed with pride at what they had lived to witness.

The Cardinal first blessed the parish clinic, a three-room annex financed by the British Women's Association and run for the parish by a group of dedicated women who are mostly Anglicans. Doctors come four afternoons a week and a nurse is on duty every day. The clinic tells the people of El Monton in language they can understand that they are no longer abandoned.

Crowds jam doorways

Most of the crowd could not get into the church for the blessing. They jammed around the doors, straining to see the Cardinal bless their church.

There were speeches afterwards: From the mayor, local politicians who urged further improvements, a member of the parish who thanked the Cardinal in lilting verse for his visit.

As the crowd melted away, the long black cars roared back to the city. Father Carthy snipped the severed ends of ribbon from the doors which had been ceremonially opened, and I shooed away a great mongrel dog that had sniffed his way in to find out what caused all the excitement.

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Movie mogul was a Columban!

China pioneer shoots first look at mission life

Next time you hear Bing Crosby's recording of "Silent Night" you can give a mental tip of the hat to the Columbans' movie mogul, Father Richard Ranaghan, for making it happen.

The little Irishman was one of the original Columban Fathers—joining when the group was formed in 1917—and one of its greatest promoters via a then-new medium, the moving picture.

Father Ranaghan was among Father Galvin's pioneer band of 17 missionaries who landed in China in 1920.

Using an old hand-crank camera, he shot his way across China. His movies were so impressive—and the needs of the missions so desperate—that Father Ranaghan was asked to return to the United States to raise funds.

He soon became a familiar

figure in rectories and parishes from coast to coast. He was always popping up in some unexpected place—and seemed, with every tick of the clock, to pop with a new idea for raising money and men for the missions!

Idea man in action

For example, he wanted to make professional movies about the China missions. "Not just travelogues," he insisted, "but stories with a plot." Money, however, was such a pressing problem during the depression that the idea was shelved. It wasn't forgotten, though, at least not by Father Ranaghan.

A few years later he was raising funds in Los Angeles, the movie capital. Some of his priest friends mentioned a Catholic layman who might be willing to help. The man's name was Bing Crosby.

Next morning, Bing and his brother Larry were surprised by the priest who bounded into their office and said he had a film to show them.

Both men, deeply interested

in Catholic mission work, were impressed. Father Dick said he needed a new print. He got it—complete with commentary and musical background supplied by the Crosbys! As a special favor, Bing sang "Silent Night," even though he believed sacred songs were "a little out of my line."

The following spring Father

Dick heard from Bing Crosby again.

"Tell you what, Father," the singer said. "We're going to make some records of the sound track so you'll have something to sell when you pass the hat."

He recorded Silent Night, Adeste Fideles, Stabat Mater and The Columban Hymn.

Drive to disaster

One rainy October night in 1937, Father Dick had shown his film in a small Iowa town and was headed toward Omaha. He never made it. A skid... a crash... and Christ's energetic wanderer was dead. But his legacy—on film and in the hearts of those who knew him—will never die.

At the Korean DMZ

Red tape blocks blow

Father Kevin Connors, a 14-year veteran of the Columban

Missions in Korea, carries the Gospel to within a mile of the infamous Demilitarized Zone separating North and South Korea. His road was blocked once recently—and he was glad later that it was!

Father Connors is stationed at Kan Seng, on the north-

eastern coast in South Korea.

He maintains six outstations, including a mission at the northernmost village of Tejin, where he was headed that fateful morning.

"You must have a pass to get that close to the DMZ," he explained. "Usually it's no problem for a priest to get through,

but this particular morning I got unexplainably bogged down in red tape at the check-point.

"While I was haggling to get to my mission, an Army truck behind me pulled around, was passed through and started up the road—and was blown to bits by a mine North Korean infiltrators had planted the night before!"



Father Leo Baker takes a turn at bat at Kumamoto, Japan, boys

Town, founded by Columban Father George Bellas. Over 100 or-

phaned and abandoned youngsters are growing up here.

Missionary press in Burma keeps Christians in touch

Father Pat Madden runs printing plant in Burmese hills

A sign over the door reads "Jingpaw Kasa Press." As you mount the steps to the veranda you can hear the clatter of a printing press, a sound strangely out of place in the jungle. Inside the little wooden building, three young native men busy themselves around old and much-modified printing shop machinery. Within a screened-off cubbyhole in back, an intent Columban missionary-editor pounds away on a portable typewriter.

This small establishment produces one of the most effective pieces of Catholic journalism. It is called the *Jingpaw Kasa*—the Kachin Messenger—bringing Christ's news to the Kachin people of northern Burma.

The Catholics, catechumens and future converts are hard to get at in the hill country. Many villages are so inaccessible that a priest can get to them only once or twice a year.

So, to meet the needs of these brothers of Christ, Father Patrick Madden started the *Jingpaw Kasa*. It is a modest publication of 24 pages, about the size of the *Reader's Digest*. But it's crammed with material that has been adapted to the needs of the readers. *Kasa* carries local news such as accounts of religious feasts and names of converts.

Going my way?

The little publication is delivered throughout the hills by hand. The Kachins love to travel and, invariably, somebody is going where the priest wants to send the *Kasa*.

When it arrives, the villagers gather around those who can read and hang on every word, from cover to cover.

Father Madden is his own editorial staff. He writes and proofreads nearly all the articles. After that his three young printers take over. He hired two of them because they were crippled and unable to get any other work. They have become the best printers in the jungle, assures Father Madden.

The Columban Fathers gratefully acknowledge the assistance of The Mutual Protective Insurance Company, Omaha, Nebraska, whose financial help made the production of this Special Golden Jubilee Edition possible.

WANT ADS

Thousands of poor people are treated each year in our clinics. In many cases \$2 worth of medicine can transform a sick person into a healthy worker. Will you help bring health to one... or two?

Several small villages in the Philippines would welcome a simple chapel. Through strict economy and local help, pastors can build chapels for only \$500. Would you like to donate a chapel in memory of a loved one?

Jeeps play a big part in any missionary's work, but the roads are rugged and repairs are frequent. It costs about \$110 a year to keep a jeep in safe condition. Tires, which wear out quickly, cost \$30 each.

Mass wine is expensive in mission lands. Last year the Mass wine bill for Columban missions was over \$15,000. You can lessen this heavy burden by donating a year's supply of mass wine to one mission parish for \$25.

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