

For a Columban missionary it was never easy for him to leave the Philippines.

Fr. Michael Sinnott, 80, has decided to retire in Ireland instead of staying in the country, which was his home in the last 50 years.

“It really was a very difficult decision to make. I realized that I’m going home and not going back but I still think I made the right decision that there is really nothing more I can do here in Manila that there’s more I can do at home,” he said during a send-off party held at the Malate Church on Tuesday night.

Sinnott is leaving the country to retire in his native land this Friday.

“I will live a big part of my heart here in the Philippines and I will always remember the people that I met and helped me,” he said in an article posted on the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) news website.

His 58 years as a missionary were mostly spent in Pagadian City where he lived through poverty, armed conflicts, and the daily struggles of too little food and too little hope for the future.

Sinnott arrived in Mindanao in the early 1950s, as a young priest several years out of the seminary.

“I was delighted when I got my appointment to the Philippines and I’ve never been sorry ever since,” he said.

Sinnott was abducted by armed men on Oct. 11, 2009, at his house in Pagadian City but after a month in captivity, he was released in a coastal village in Zamboanga City on Nov. 11, 2009. He was weak as he was not able to take medications for his serious heart condition.

Since then, Sinnott was brought to their provincial headquarters in Manila and was never assigned again in Southern Philippines.

“For the long time that I’ve been here... it’s been a privileged for me to serve the people of the Philippines and I learned a lot more from them more than I gave, especially from the ordinary people for their goodness and their faith,” he said.

He also thanked the Columbans for their support. “We sometimes have an arguments but I have to say that everytime I was in trouble there were always there to help me,” the foreign missionary said.