

“As the Father has sent me, so am I sending you” John 20:21

KAULOTU

FOR PACIFIC MISSIONARIES



Journeying out for Christ

Columban Companions in Mission - Silver Jubilee

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IN THIS ISSUE [Becoming companions in Mission P3](#) | [Peregrinari pro Christo: Journeying out for Christ P4](#) | [Christmas under the uto tree P6](#)
[Trusting in God's mercy P8](#) | [Short stories P10](#) | [CCIM Annual meetings gallery P11](#) | [The Journey P12](#)



Father McEvoy dancing with CCIM members

Editorial

John McEvoy

Congratulations to the Columban Companions in Mission (CCIM) who celebrated their Silver Jubilee. About 300 CCIM members and their families from branches around Fiji came together at Sacred Heart College in Suva on Friday 6th of July.

The CCIMs have walked and worked with us in promoting our missionary priorities and ideals during these past 25 years. They have supported our get-togethers and our celebrations. They have helped foster vocations by encouraging our students and lay missionaries. They held fundraisers to help our missionary outreach in Fiji and Tonga. They promoted and sold our calendars and other missionary materials.

Indeed, the entire Columban Family had reason to rejoice and celebrate. It was a day of immense joy with members of our Companions from across the country and some from abroad who returned to reflect, give thanks, and attend the festivities.

The late Pope St John Paul's letter "Redemptoris Missio" stated that Mission is not a peripheral task of the church but is at its very centre.

Since their humble beginning in 1994, our Companions in Mission have been encouraged to have a missionary attitude which should be the central focus for their work in Fiji and Tonga.

As lay Catholics, they not only dedicated time, energy, and fundraising efforts to assist Columban seminarians and lay missionaries, but have gone into marginalised communities to serve those who are most in need.

The first goal of the recent Archdiocesan Synod is to make the local church more missionary – this should be an easy enough call for our Companions in Mission, since they have been doing this over the past 25 years with us.

They too would rejoice with the theme of this year's Extraordinary Missionary Month in October being "Baptised and Sent"

This final edition of the Kaulotu for 2019 is dedicated to the faithful work of our Companions in Mission. Stories of their mission and work throughout Fiji, accompanying Columban priests, students and lay missionaries, crossing boundaries of religion, race, and culture, and always reaching out to be witnesses of Christ's love. Our Companions have touched many lives and contributed to Columban Mission in Fiji and Tonga.

Some of our earlier Companions have gone to their heavenly reward. We remember and give thanks for their lives and their courage to assist us with our mission during those early days. May they now reap the rewards of their labours in heaven.

On the 23rd of November, the Feast of St Columban, the Columban Region of Fiji amalgamated with Australia and New Zealand to become the Region of Oceania. With this new reality – the work and dedication of our Companions will be needed even more and we will be encouraging new members to join us and support us in this new venture.

But for now on behalf of the Columbans in Fiji I wish to say a huge word of thanks for your help, support, and the encouragement given to us by each and every member of our Companions in Mission.



Becoming companions in Mission

Frank Hoare

The Lone Ranger was a cowboy hero. As a child, I read about him in comics and saw him in films. He rode alone into a town where the bad guys were bullying the poor people. He challenged the bad guys. He shot them up and chased them out of town. Then he rode away into the setting sun.

In those days missionaries too, in our minds, were Lone Rangers working for God. They were priests or religious who chased away Satan and his followers. They led people to the true Church. But the Vatican Council taught that baptism gives all Christians a mission. All of us are called to witness to and work for the Kingdom of God. Priests and religious aren't the only active missionaries. Working as a team we can all join with our priests and religious to share our faith in Jesus Christ and to build Christian communities.

By 1994, Fathers Dan Ahern, John McEvoy and I saw Pacificans responding to the call to go abroad on mission as Columban seminarians and lay missionaries. We recognized then the need for laity in our parishes to join in mission too. So we started the Columban Companions in Mission in Tamavua Parish in 1994. Early members were Kenneth and Kitty Zinck, Rosema Dass and Elizabeth Krishna, Sisi Marama and others.

We agreed that the Companions would have two main purposes. The first would be to support our local seminarians and lay missionaries by prayer and fund-raising. The



second was to work together as missionaries in Fiji with Columbans.

I prepared leaflets explaining who could be Companions in Mission and what kind of mission work they could engage in e.g. sharing faith with non-Christians, helping poor or marginalized people, catechizing neglected Catholics, and working for understanding and respect between different religions and ethnic groups in Fiji.

I enjoyed attending the bi-annual gatherings and donations organized by the Companions in Mission. I laughed in Labasa as Lusi Lutua described in a letter from Chile how the Mapuche men, tipsy on apple cider, tried to avoid falling off their horses as they rode home. I was impressed in Votua seeing how Paulo Bale organised groups to discuss mission topics. I enjoyed giving a talk to the gathering at Corpus Christi College in Suva about the purpose and work of the Columbans in Mission.

In 2012 and 2013 I was happy to take on the role of National Director of the CCIM. My main job at that time was vocation promotion. This involved travelling to different parishes in Fiji to speak to seniors in secondary schools and to organize

Come and See days. So it wasn't difficult to fit in meetings with the CCIM members on those trips. I remember some of us visiting members in Komave, Sigatoka, Tacirua and Tamavua as well as the Columban parishes of Labasa, Ba and Raiwaqa.

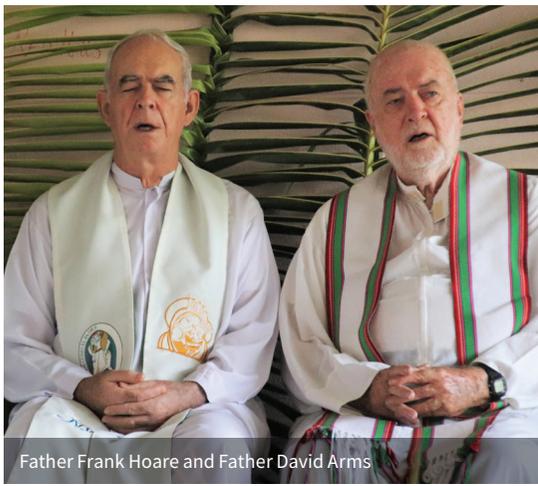
In 2013, we organized groups of Companions to go to neglected areas of the diocese. One group from Suva conducted one week of catechesis in Kadavu. A group from Labasa spent a week catechizing in villages in the Dogotuki region. A third group from Ba spent a weekend in Bemana. We promoted the Lumko method of gospel sharing in this outreach to Catholics who lived far from priests, Catholic schools and parish centres.

This year, 2019, I was very happy to participate in the Wellness Project which encouraged healthy eating and exercise as a way to lose weight. Its success was a fitting tribute to the Columban Companions in Mission on the occasion of the silver anniversary of the founding of CCIM.

Having companions in mission is a more satisfying and successful way of being missionary than operating as a lone ranger.



Columban seminarian Navitalai Paulo with Jaicinta Prakasham



Father Frank Hoare and Father David Arms



Cutting of the Anniversary cake



Paulo Bale celebrating the Silver Jubilee



Columban Fathers celebrate the Silver Jubilee Mass

Peregrinari pro Christo: Journeying out for Christ

Paulo Bale

Fiji was blessed when the Columban Fathers established the Columban Companions in Mission (CCIM) to infuse the mission spirit and spirituality to lay people in the local church, thus making it more missionary.

In a recent letter Pope Francis wrote “Every baptised man and woman is a mission. As far as God’s love is concerned, no one is useless or insignificant... each of us is a mission to the world.” The CCIMs have been an example of this mission to their local parishes and communities during the last 25 years where they accompanied the work of the Columban Fathers and functioned as a source of support to priests, seminarians, and lay missionaries.

Pioneer members such as Kenneth and his late wife Kitty Zinck, Bessie Kingdom, Rosema Das, Elizabeth Krishna and many others were instrumental in the CCIM movement during the early 1990s. When the

Lay Missionary (LM) program began later in 1994, the CCIM expanded their group to include the family and friends of LMs.

Their vision was to “witness their faith in the Risen Christ to those who were in need of that witness,” but as lay people sent out, the sharing of the Good News and of God’s love was practiced through acts of charity and generosity to their neighbours in need. The CCIMs shared St Columban’s motto, *–Peregrinari pro Christo–* they journeyed out for Christ; helping not only the Columbans but Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Some examples of this were when the CCIMs assisted a family in Yaudigi rebuild their home, toilet, and bathroom. In Dogoru village near Labasa, CCIM members organised joint services with Catholics, Methodists, and Indo-Fijian friends from nearby settlements, encouraging unity and harmony between different peoples. They raised funds and paid school lunches for struggling families in Lautoka, coordinated clean-ups and awareness campaigns in Votua, and most recently organised the Wellness Programme which promoted healthy living and raised over \$15,000 for local Columban seminarians.



Anniversary cake



Joe Qalo and Sylvester Lingam



Mr Kenneth Zinck flanked by Atefina Lee (left) and Vitalina Vukinagauna (right)



Naomi Naiubi and Lillian Bing



Sisilia Marama and Father Carlo Jung



Vilikesa Lakobo and Sainiana Matairatu

The work of the CCIM has indeed reached far and wide in Fiji. Columban companions seek the mystery of God in the mystery of people different to themselves, practicing St Columban's motto of, "A life unlike your own can be your teacher."

A story tells of a Fijian lady living in Sigatoka who was a Columban companion. Every now and then some Hindu ladies would arrive at her church and light candles to pray. She would sit behind these women and silently accompany them in their prayers. Afterwards, the lady would tell the women that she was also praying for them. This act of companionship made the women feel comfortable enough to share their burdens and lighten their load.

Another time some CCIM members in the western part of Viti Levu heard of a neglected group of

Catholics in an isolated part of the parish. Companions began to visit the community and learned that their catechist had passed away and so the people rarely attended Mass or received communion. The CCIM organised Sunday afternoon prayers for the community and requested local catechists to take turns bringing the liturgy of the Word and Communion to the group.

The Columban Companions in Mission were established in Columban and non-Columban parishes and communities. They operated in Raiwaqa, Tamavua, Nadera, Naililili, Korolevu, Sigatoka, Lautoka, Ba Town, Navala, Varadoli, Votua, Nawaqarua, Sasa, Natunuku, Toge, Labasa, Yaudigi, Koromakawa, Naleba, Dogoru, and Sigatoka.

Every year members gathered to encourage one another, reflect on their life and work as local missionaries, and discuss plans on how best to assist the Columban Fathers. There were many challenges of course, but that is to be expected of all mission and faith

journeys; "God gives us what we can bear, and no more..." (St Catherine of Siena).

On July 6th, the CCIM celebrated their 25-year anniversary of mission work from 1994 to 2019. Members gathered to reminisce about the last quarter of a century's mission, as well as to look towards the next 25 years of CCIM work. It was a day of lively celebration, dancing, and singing. The Columban Fathers celebrated Mass on the day and many CCIM pioneer and current members attended with their families and communities. Columban Companions in Mission, through their work, have crossed boundaries and infused the spirit of mission into congregations. By doing so they have put their witness of Christ to action throughout the years. We acknowledge and thank the support of the Columban Fathers, without whom we would be unable to fulfil our mission to the people of Fiji.



The character of Juan Diego with the special t-shirt



Children of Vabea and Nasalia village



Re-enactment of Our Lady of Guadalupe



Telling of the Nativity story



CCIM members with Vabea parishioners

Christmas under the uto tree

Visenia Navelinikoro

Far from the Christmas trees, lights, and decorations of Suva I sat with the children beneath an uto tree (breadfruit) in Kadavu. Ears listened intently, eyes widened, and the children visualised the Nativity as I retold that famous birth in Bethlehem.

It was Advent season and the Columban Companions in Mission (CCIM) were accompanied by Father Donal McIlraith to the village of Vabea for a mission outreach and workshop. We ate with the people, laughed with them, and accompanied their spiritual journey.

Our pastoral role as CCIMs was to do an outreach and support their formation work in Vabea. We also listened to the people's experiences, shared in their spirituality, and assisted Fr. Donal in the daily Eucharistic celebrations.

Due to my years of work as a lay missionary in Chile (South America), I asked to work with the 30 or so

children from the villages of Vabea and Nasalia. CCIM member Barbara King and two youths helped me with an Advent program that would revisit the Nativity story. There were no special Christmas lights or decorations under that uto tree but the children sat in awe of the story – attesting to Gospel truth, that the kingdom of God truly belongs to such as these.

The children and I veered away from the commercialized Santa Claus, Christmas Trees, and colourfully wrapped gifts. I had to reach their young minds and hearts somehow, capture their imagination, and return to that most Holy of nights.

In the dark sky there was one kalokalo (star) that was shinier and bigger than any other, it brought wise men from faraway, they came with gifts of koula (gold), na drega me vakamai (frankincense), kei na mura (myrrh). There were also some shepherds in a field nearby and they were visited by an angel and a chorus of heavenly beings who sang, "Glory



Visenia and children underneath the uto tree



CCIM members journeyed by fibre boats to Vabea Village



Father Donal, CCIM members, and parishioners in front of St Theresa church in Vabea



to God in the highest
and on earth peace to
those he favours.”

We imagined baby Jesus sleeping
in a manger and how there was a
lamp lighting the stable where farm
animals were also resting that night.

“Now children, what does the lamp
represent?”

Light!

“So the light represents Jesus. Now,
why was Mary there?”

Because Mary is Jesus’ mother!

“And children, who after Mary and
Joseph got to see baby Jesus first?”

The animals!

“Yes, that’s why we shouldn’t
smack or hurt animals. The animals
represented God’s creation and they
were watching. So the next time
you want to smack a chicken the
chicken will say, “Hey! Don’t smack
me, I saw Jesus before you!”

The children burst into laughter.

What better way to connect
them to the birth of Christ than
through joy and a sense of awe?
Under the uto tree that day
the ensuing consumerist spirit
which overshadows modern day
Christmas celebrations was held at
bay as the children deepened their
understanding of the Nativity and
their relationship with Christ.

Later in the week, by instruction
of Father Donal, the children
performed a play on Our Lady
of Guadalupe and the visions of
St Juan Diego who converted to
Christianity in 1531. The bishop in
Mexico at the time demanded a
sign from St Juan, and in a meeting
Juan opened his coat and dozens
of roses fell to the floor before an
image of Mary appeared on the side
of his coat.

The children were excited to act
out the story but there were two
things missing – the roses and an
image of Mother Mary. Then lo and

behold, one of the CCIM members
named Lanieta Tamatawale gave
us a t-shirt that had an image of Our
Lady of Guadalupe surrounded by
roses! Everyone was shocked at the
end of the performance when the
character of Juan Diego dropped
his coat and the Lady and roses
were revealed.

The Columban Companions in
Mission have impacted and helped
many communities throughout
Fiji and this has included the next
generation of young Catholics.

Our pastoral mission to Vabea was
memorable because it gave me the
opportunity to transmit the story of
Jesus’ birth to the little ones. It was
a life giving and affirming experience
as it focused my mind as well as the
children’s firmly onto Jesus. Christ
is indeed the reason for this festive
season – Merry Christmas!



CCIM members journeying with Father Willy to Veidrala village



Trusting in God's mercy

Vitalina Vukinagauna

The Columban Companions in Mission (CCIM) have a saying, “In this journey we acknowledge our gift, trusting in God’s mercy.” Such words have strengthened us in our work throughout the last 25 years, particularly when dealing with disastrous events.

TC Winston hit Fiji in February 2016. As a category 5 storm, it was the strongest tropical cyclone to make landfall in the southern hemisphere. Over 540,000 Fijians were affected with homes, schools, and public infrastructure bearing the brunt of the destructive storm. International governments and aid agencies generously assisted Fiji’s recovery efforts but even in December of that same year, many villages were still struggling to piece their livelihoods back together.

One such place was a rural village named Veidrala on the coastal outlook of Ra Province. On an initial visit, CCIM members and Lay Missionaries from Suva, Ba, and Labasa accompanied Father Willy Lee and Father Iowane Gukibau

to what could only be described as “ground zero.” All except three houses had been destroyed and nine months later many residents were still living in tents. Father Frank Hoare did a follow up visit with CCIM member Sisi Marama to deliver a chainsaw and on returning presented a video clip showing CCIM members and LMs the dire situation in Veidrala.

That December the Columban Companions formed a joint program with former Lay Missionaries (LM) and facilitated a workshop that supported the people of Veidrala. CCIM members Vosita Lenisaurua and Paulo Bale focused on the trauma and healing aspect of the aftermath while Father Willy and Father Iowane

took care of the spiritual needs of the people. The rest of the LMs and CCIM members visited families still living in tents, they also cleaned the seawall, and accompanied the people who after nine months were still mourning the traumatic experience. CCIMs visited people, regardless of their denomination or religion. Many cried while sharing their experiences, some said they thought it was judgement day as they watched house after house go down – two lives were lost in Veidrala.

Columban friends and supporters donated generously and enabled the combined CCIM/LM group to provide



Trauma counselling workshop for the victims of TC Winston



Veidrala in ruins – Sourced image



Sisilia Marama stands at the old chapel in Namuriwai

food, boxes of honey bees, clothes, cooking utensils, farming tools, fishing nets, and other desperately needed equipment.

The Ministry for Agriculture was consulted and brought seedlings for a second workshop in what remained of the village. Due to the remoteness of Veidrala, the Ministry were surprised that the Columbans were out there assisting the people.

This mission outreach showed the agency that the Church has to contribute in times of natural disasters and turmoil. As a Columban group the CCIMs not only provided practical provision, but due to the various skill sets of their members and the ordained ministry of Columban missionary priests, they were able to help with the spiritual and psychological needs of the people.

This showed the vital role we as the Church play after such grief-stricken

experiences where people suffer tremendous loss. It is the presence of our ministry and mission that helps those affected remember that God is still present, even after their world seemingly falls apart. The church must stand ready and prepared to journey with people as they search for meaning and survival after devastating events such as TC Winston.

During Holy Week the following year, the CCIMs visited Veidrala once more to join their Easter celebrations as well as to deliver donations from Columban friends in Melbourne and Sydney. They donated clothes, food, chocolates and Easter eggs for the children.

The CCIMs also missioned to Nakoroboya where the people cried with happiness upon their arrival. One woman said to Father Donal, “Oh you are our saviour!” But Father responded, “No, there’s only one saviour and that is Jesus.” Like Veidrala, the village had been destroyed and the local school flattened. Upon hearing

about Nakoroboya, an anonymous donor from Raiwaqa Parish bought multiple sacks of rice, sugar, and flour to be donated for the people. These types of generous acts from fellow Catholics as well as the support of the Columban Fathers has helped the CCIMs over the years and we are grateful for their support of our mission work.

The CCIM outreach to Veidrala and Nakoroboya villages were unforgettable because of the impact they had not only on the people but on our members too. We witnessed how God’s mercy prevails in the face of such adversity, pain, and loss. TC Winston’s powerful winds destroyed many things on the 20th of February 2016, but it failed to destroy the spirit of the people. Our outreach and the generosity of donors from abroad and locally showed that when we journey together and trust in God’s mercy, our Catholic mission becomes life giving for those in need of God’s provision, healing, and restoration.

Signs of the times on Koro Island

NAME: Maria Nariva, Namosi Village

WORK HISTORY: Former Columban Lay Missionary – Philippines & CCIM member

MISSION LOCATION: Nacamaki Village and Nabuna Village – Koro Island

We are Companions in that we carry the charism of the Columbans with us:

- Work with the poor • Develop faith communities in the local Diocese • Interfaith relations with people of other denominations and religions
- Seek justice and peace for exploited people • Care for the earth.

Before Climate Change became a priority in Fiji the Columbans were already doing the work and creating awareness. Prophetic you might say? I agree, the Columban Fathers have learned to read the signs of the times and move accordingly to help those most vulnerable to the affects.

In 2010 Visenia Navelinikoro and I were accompanied by Father Iowane Gukibau to Koro Island for a three-day workshop that focused on climate change, rising sea levels, waste management, and beach clean-ups. The people were so happy! They had been witnessing the changing climate and effects it had on

their environment but thought it was just something that was happening to them in particular. Our CCIM outreach included the Methodists and their Talatala, school students, teachers, and villagers.

We were shown where the high tides used to come up to but these tides now reached their kitchen doors and they were not sure why? We explained in our workshops that climate change and rising sea levels were going to become more common not only in Fiji but around the world. Basing our teachings on the creation story in Genesis, we promoted care for the environment and wise stewardship of natural resources.

Afterwards, the people shared they had taken things for granted by cutting trees and being careless with their waste management. The elders were filled with regret and shared their hope that the next generation would do things differently and take better care of their beautiful island.

As a former lay missionary I am proud to be a Columban Companion because it gave me the opportunity to serve and mission to my own people here in Fiji.

A life unlike your own

NAME: Sisi Marama, Veidrala Village

WORK HISTORY: Columban Companions in Mission

MISSION LOCATION: Tamavua, Suva

St Columban has a saying, “A life unlike your own can be your teacher.” In my work as a CCIM, this has been true. I never thought I could be someone who evangelised or missioned out to others, especially to the Indo-Fijian community because they spoke a different language and had a culture different to mine.

But this changed when I had to go and visit some of the poorer families in the Tamavua Mandali group. It was so challenging because only some could speak English and I did not speak or understand Hindi. In the beginning they did not really trust me and would close their doors when they saw me walking. I learned the importance of not forcing myself into the community but patiently waiting and trying on a daily or weekly basis. I believe the Holy Spirit led me to the Mandali group so bridges could be built between their community and ours.

Working with the Indo-Fijian community has been the highlight of my CCIM work and I feel like I am a part of them and their families. The younger women now call me ‘Mum’ or ‘Aunty Sisi’ and I am inspired by their experiences of faith, family, and friendship. Sometimes they ask, “Aunty Sisi, why do you choose to come visit us?” And I tell them, this is my work as a Columban Companion; to visit you, share the joys of the Gospel, and accompany and encourage you in your faith. They would smile and say, “Oh thank you Aunty, very few people think of us or visit.”

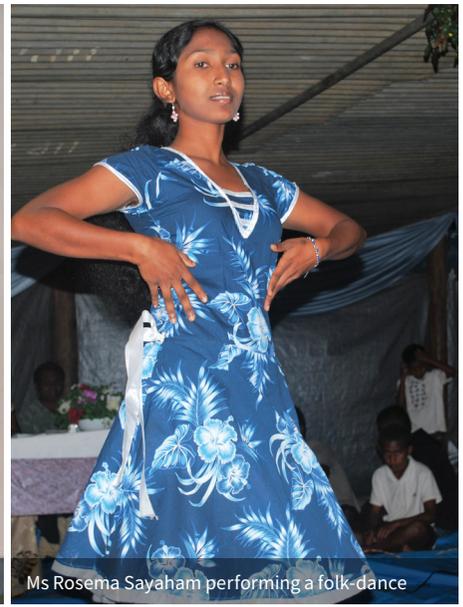
A life unlike my own has taught me that God’s love transcends cultural and language barriers. I have become a better Catholic by stepping out in faith and embracing those who were different to me. Another famous saying states, “You cannot understand someone until you’ve walked a mile in their shoes.” But I only had to look around in my own backyard and see that there were people waiting to be understood and treated with love, care, and respect.



CCIM Annual meetings gallery



CCIM ladies of Christ the King Parish in Ba



Ms Rosema Sayaham performing a folk-dance



Mr Joseph Lee (right) with a friend in Labasa



Former lay missionaries with Father JJ at the AGM in Labasa



Raiwaqa CCIMs in Labasa



Father Donal with members of the CCIM and Catholic Women's League in Kadavu



Akanisa, Selina, and Sila from Dogoru village perform a Fijian meke

The Journey

A Poem written by Vaulina L. Sakulu



*We thank God for celebrating 25 years of the Columban Companions in Mission.
We have been to the periphery of society. Examined the prejudices that are there.
Supported the vocation so far. There is more to come my friends for the next 25 years.*

*Priests, sisters, seminarians, lay missionaries. Let's give them a hand in whatever we can.
A word of encouragement, of gratitude for what they do. A little prayer on the lips will not go amiss.*

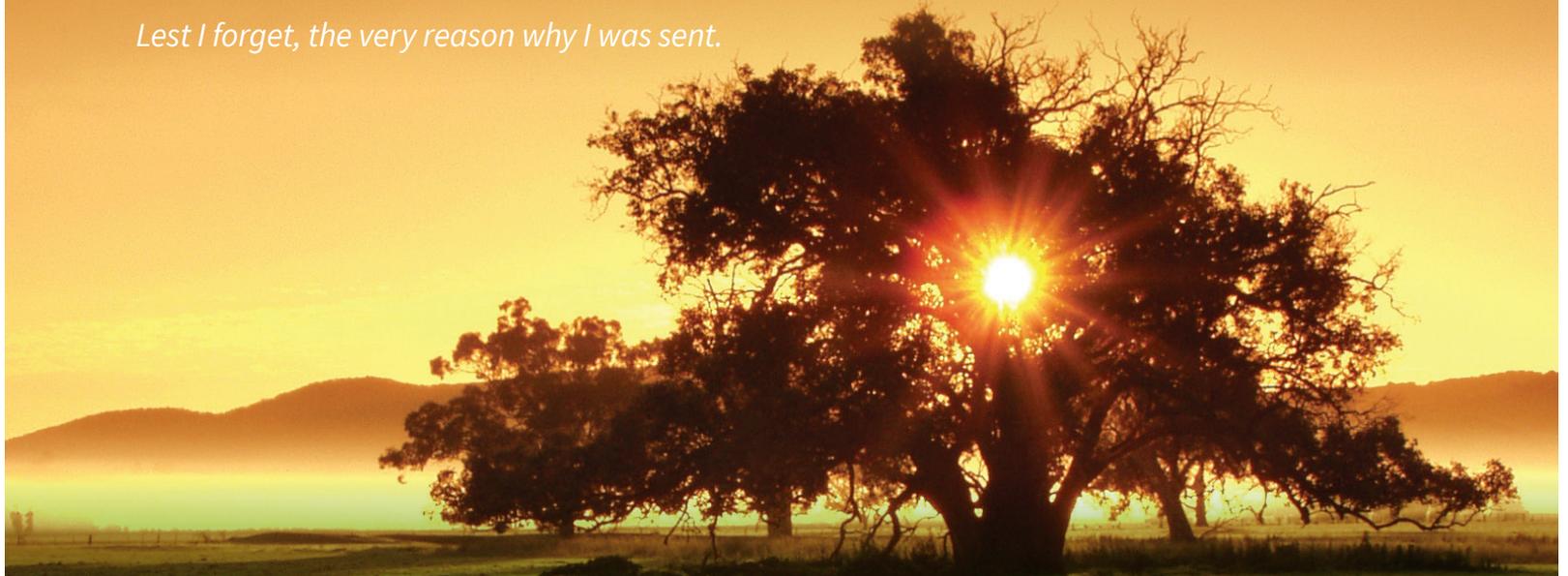
*Mother Earth is calling for us to care. Justice for the poor is a must, if peace is to endure.
Dialoguing with other religions is the way forward. To harmonious living in our society.*

*Collecting money is a real battle. Take the extra mile please everyone.
To give that much needed fund. It will go towards the works of the society.
It's the name we bear, so they need our financial care.*

*Let's visit the old members and welcome the new. Open all boundaries for them to feel free.
We need all peoples in this labor. It is a labour of love.*

*I'm happy in this journey I'm taking. With the Columban Companions in Mission.
I've been overseas to spread the Good News. Now it's my turn to do the same here.*

Lest I forget, the very reason why I was sent.



For further information



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HELP US REDUCE WASTE



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