

Dear Educators

Thank you for your support of St Columbans Mission Society. St Columbans Mission Society invites Primary and Secondary school students in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and Fiji to participate in our 2024 Season of Creation school competition focusing on the theme, ***'To hope and act with Creation.'***

The ecumenical Season of Creation is increasingly becoming a well-established and recognized time in the Church's liturgical year. It is a special time during which Christians reflect on their relationships between God, people and all creation and come together for prayer and action to demonstrate their love and commitment. The Season of Creation begins on the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation (September 1st) and concludes on the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi (October 4th).

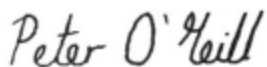
This year the Season of Creation theme, *'To hope and act with Creation'* draws on the biblical image of the Earth as a mother, from whom new life comes (Romans 8:19-25.) Hope along with other virtues and feelings are present in the waiting for new life, as an expectant mother tells. During the Season of Creation, we are invited to consider how hope doesn't mean passively waiting or standing still, but rather being actively engaged. The Season of Creation inspires communities to reflect on how working together with creation can bring forth new life in many different ways.

Catholic communities draw inspiration from Pope Francis' 2015 Encyclical letter, *Laudato Si': On care for our common home*, addressed to every person on the planet. *Laudato Si'* builds on the church's teaching to show that appreciating and caring for all God's creation is central to Christian life. Pope Francis invites the gifts and talents of everyone in a movement of cooperation.

Columban missionaries live in solidarity with people in poverty and walk beside them in their faith journeys and their struggles for dignity in many areas of life. Seeing how everything is connected, Columban missionaries consider acting for ecological integrity and justice to be an important area of mission. Based on experience, Columban missionaries see too, harms to Earth's ecology are felt most severely by the world's poorest peoples.

We look forward to hearing from you.

With every blessing,



Fr Peter O'Neill

Regional Director of Oceania