Secondary

Teacher Handbook









CARITAS AUSTRALIA

PROJECT COMPASSION

Unite Against Poverty this Lent

2027

Caritas AUSTRALIA

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IMPORTANT – STUDENT WELLBEING

At Caritas Australia, we believe that all people should be treated with respect and dignity. Everyone has the right to feel safe, especially children and vulnerable adults. Please consider your audience when selecting which stories and activities to share with your class.

Our Safeguarding animation recognises that learning about challenges to the health, wellbeing and safety of others and our earth can be hard. It encourages young people to talk to their teacher or trusted adult if they're feeling worried or upset about anything they have learnt through our resources or activities. The animation also acknowledges Caritas Australia's commitment for children and vulnerable adults to feel valued and heard by encouraging them to share their great ideas with us.

Watch Caritas Australia's Safeguarding Animation

Student Workbook

The Secondary Student Workbook is a fillable PDF that students can complete independently – Download Student Workbook

There are sample pages included in this handbook for your reference.

The learning tasks follow the 'See, Judge, Act' method with links to Lent:

See: A Story (Learning Tasks) – with comprehension questions, activities and a country study

Judge: A Catholic Worldview (RE Link)

Act: Faith in Action (Lent Link) – Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving.

Resource Guide

All our resources are online! Access the films and written stories, teaching materials and our fundraising and awareness raising ideas at caritas.org.au/resources/project-compassion. Below is a list and short description of all the resources, as well as suggestions for use.

	Resource	Description/ Suggested Use
For Students	Student Workbook	A fillable PDF students can complete and submit back to their teacher. Use weekly to 'see, judge and act'. Dedicate 20–30 mins of weekly Religious Education classes. Go beyond RE and share tasks or sections of the research with teachers from other subject areas.
	Secondary Deep Dive	An interactive Thinglink image designed as a central location for students to access information about each of the stories, as well as to help them complete activities throughout the workbook.
	AD Stories	Audio described versions of each story.
For Teachers	School's Guide	A guide for the REC, APRE or Social Justice Leader. Includes tips to plan Project Compassion for the whole school.
	Teacher Handbook	Briefly explores the curriculum and learning opportunities for Project Compassion 2027. Send to subject learning area teachers. Use as PD reading if seeking to integrate global education from a Catholic perspective across curriculum areas.
Media	Weekly Films	Watch in homeroom, assembly or as stimulus for learning tasks in the classroom. There are six films: Introduction to Project Compassion 2027, Patricia's Story (Solomon Islands), Reaksmey's Story (Cambodia) and Yeshareg's Story (Ethiopia), Emergency Response Story (Venezuela), and a Thank you film.
	Photo Galleries	View photos from the field. The photos are available through the Deep Dive (interactive image) for each week. Use these photos to promote rich discussion about the 4 stories.

	Resource	Description/ Suggested Use
All Purpose	Introducing Project Compassion (PPT)	Overview of all 4 stories and the work of Caritas Australia. Share in homeroom or at assembly.
	School's Fundraising Guide	Ideas to inspire fundraising and awareness raising activities that are linked to the Project Compassion stories.
Prayer and Reflection	Ash Wednesday Liturgy	Liturgy of the Word, including distribution of the ashes.
	Prayer (PPT)	Reflection using the Project Compassion prayer and images. Use as a daily or weekly prayer for students or staff, or at an assembly.
	Weekly Reflections	Weekly reflections linking the Project Compassion stories to the Sunday Scripture readings. Use for weekly staff prayer/reflections during Lent or in RE lessons with students.
	Way of the Cross (PPT)	A reflection following the traditional Way of the Cross, to use during Holy Week. Comes with Leaders' Notes.
Telling Others	Newsletter Notices	A brief insert for your weekly school newsletter, explaining the week's Project Compassion story. Include in print/online school communications.
	Social Media Toolkit	Content and assets to share your support of Project Compassion through your social media channels.

Introduction

Welcome to Project Compassion 2027!

Caritas Australia is the international aid and development organisation of the Catholic Church in Australia and is part of one of the largest aid and development networks in the world – Caritas Internationalis – working in over 200 countries and territories.

Each year, Project Compassion runs during the six weeks of the Church season of Lent. We invite people across Australia to help us raise funds AND act in solidarity with the millions of people across the world with whom we work. We ask you to join us in building a more just and fairer world: a world in balance, at peace and free of poverty.

Project Compassion is an opportunity for students to learn about life in different countries through the personal stories of people who have participated in Caritas Australia-supported programs. The notions of our interconnectedness as one human family are embedded throughout the content and suggested learning tasks.

We understand that the curriculum leaves little room for additional content, so we endeavour to offer compelling and interactive content that can be unpacked with high impact teaching strategies, higher order thinking and collaborative learning tasks that capture your students' imagination, intellect, compassion and will to act for social justice.

We endeavour to support the integration of a Catholic worldview. Catholicism is a comprehensive way of life that should animate every aspect of how we, as Catholics, view the world.

Since the Project Compassion stories and learning tasks relate to a wide range of Curriculum Areas, Cross-Curriculum Priorities and General Capabilities, we encourage you to use them beyond the Religious Education classroom.

Resources 2027

The bulk of the learning tasks for each story are arranged in a 'See, Judge, Act' sequence.

See

Students encounter stories of participants involved in Caritas Australia supported projects through the text, films and photographs. Students witness the challenges and positive changes of people who experience extreme poverty and injustice.

Judge

The Catholic Social Teaching (CST) reflection tasks provide students with a framework to 'judge'.

Act

Students, in response to what they have learnt and in light of Catholic Social Teaching, practise planning personal and collective responses and start to see how their local action can have a global impact.

LENT LINK: PRAYER, FASTING, ALMSGIVING

This is a focused Religious Education task for each week that deepens the link between the Project Compassion stories, the Lenten traditions, themes and Scripture.

By making explicit links, students are encouraged to see how their actions to learn and support the work of the church, through Caritas Australia, are an extension of their faith.

About the Theme

The theme of Project Compassion 2027 is ***Unite Against Poverty***. It reminds us that when people work together, change is possible.

Poverty is more than not having enough money. It can mean not having the things people need to live safely and well, such as food, clean water, shelter, health care, education or opportunities.

As members of God's global family, we are called to care for one another and stand alongside people experiencing challenges. Through prayer, learning, fundraising and action, Project Compassion encourages us to recognise our shared humanity and respond with compassion and hope.

When people come together to share their skills, resources and strengths, they can help build communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. By working together, we can create a fairer and more just world and help bring about God's vision of hope, dignity and peace for all.

> *Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.*
>
> **Galatians 6:2**

Introducing the Theme to Your Class:

Unite Against Poverty

Help students understand that poverty is not just about lacking money, it can mean going without education, clean water, food, healthcare, or a safe place to live. Explain that by uniting and taking action together, we can make a real difference in the lives of people facing these challenges.

Ask students to think about:

- What does it mean to 'unite'?
- Who are we uniting with?
- What actions can we take as a class or school to show compassion and support?

Invite students to write a message of unity or hope for people experiencing poverty. These could be displayed around a large globe or map in your classroom, showing that we are part of a global community working together to create change.

You might also create a 'Wall of Unity' where students contribute drawings, poems, or pledges that reflect their commitment to ending poverty. These can become prayer or reflection points throughout Lent.

By taking these small but powerful steps, your class can be part of the movement to *Unite Against Poverty*, bringing the message of Jesus to life through action, love and hope.

Curriculum Links: Religious Education and beyond

PROJECT COMPASSION AND THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Linking the themes of Project Compassion with the curriculum is an opportunity for students to engage more deeply with justice and the work of Caritas Australia. The stories and learning tasks featured can relate broadly to the following Australian Curriculum areas.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION THEMES ACROSS AUSTRALIA

There are many Religious Education Curricula around the country, however it is not surprising that there are many common themes. We have drawn on these common themes:

- Church and community
- Prayer
- Living the mission of Jesus
- Morality and justice
- Catholic Social Teachings: Human Dignity, Preferential Option for the Poor, Solidarity, Subsidiarity and Participation, Care for our Common Home and the Common Good.

CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITIES

Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia

People of the Asia region are diverse in backgrounds, experiences, stories, religions, beliefs and perspectives. (AAK1). **Look for Reaksmey's Story (Cambodia).**

Sustainability

Sustainable futures are achieved through informed individual, community, business and political action that values local, national and global equity and fairness across generations into the future (SF1). **Look for Patricia'S Story (Solomon Islands) and Yeshareg's Story (Ethiopia).**

GENERAL CAPABILITIES KEY IDEAS

Intercultural Understanding

Intercultural understanding encourages students to reflect on their thoughts and feelings when taking on a range of perspectives. They learn to mediate perspectives to pursue inclusive and equitable outcomes.

Personal and Social Capability

Students gain an understanding of the role of advocacy in contemporary society. They learn to build their capacity to take responsibility for their social, physical and natural environments.

Ethical Understanding

In developing and acting with ethical understanding, students: understand the role that values (see Catholic Social Teaching Guide page 11), rights and responsibilities, and norms have in ethical decisions.

Curriculum Links

English

Year 7: Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring, questioning and inferring to analyse and summarise information and ideas (AC9E7LY05).

Year 8: Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring, questioning and inferring to interpret and evaluate ideas in texts (AC9E8LY05).

Year 9: Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring, questioning and inferring to compare and contrast ideas and opinions in and between texts (AC9E9LY05).

Year 10: Integrate comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring, questioning and inferring to analyse and interpret complex and abstract ideas (AC9E10LY05).

Civics and Citizenship

Year 7: Locate, select and organise information, data and ideas from different sources (AC9HC7S02).

Year 8: Locate, select and organise information, data and ideas from different sources (AC9HC8S02).

Year 9: Locate, select and compare information, data and ideas from a range of sources (AC9HC9S02).

Year 10: Locate, select and compare information, data and ideas from a range of sources (AC9HC10S02).

Geography

Year 7: The economic, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic value of water for people, including First Nations Australians (AC9HG7K03).

Identify a strategy for action in relation to environmental, economic, social or other factors, and explain potential impacts (AC9HG7S05).

Year 8: The causes and impacts of a geomorphological hazard on people, places and environments, and the effects of responses (AC9HG8K05).

Identify a strategy for action in relation to environmental, economic, social or other factors, and explain potential impacts (AC9HG8S05).

Year 9: Challenges to sustainable food production and food security in Australia and appropriate management strategies (AC9HG9K04).

Develop and evaluate strategies using environmental, economic or social criteria; recommend a strategy and explain the predicted impacts (AC9HG9S05).

Year 10: Causes and effects of a change in an identified environment at a local, national or global scale, and strategies to manage sustainability (AC9HG10K04).

Develop and evaluate strategies using environmental, economic or social criteria; recommend a strategy and explain the predicted impacts (AC9HG10S05).

Caritas Q&As

Explore the different stories, programs and issues for each of the Project Compassion stories with our Caritas Q&As.

WHAT ARE CARITAS Q&As?

During Project Compassion, Caritas Australia is offering the chance to interact online with our Programs staff.

Caritas Q&As are 30-minute sessions hosted by Caritas Australia on Zoom. The sessions are a unique opportunity for students to connect with Caritas-supported programs and to learn more about the impact of their generous donations.

Caritas Q&As are open to students in Years 4–12 and are available across all time zones.

HOW WILL IT WORK?

Caritas Q&As run across Lent during school term and will focus on a different Project Compassion story and program.

Help prepare your students for a Caritas Q&As by:

• showing them the relevant Project Compassion video

• working through our Project Compassion school resources or relevant social justice resources

• guiding them to create a question to ask Caritas staff.

HOW DO I REGISTER?

Go to the Caritas Australia website to register your class in the session that suits you.



Register your class

Caritas Q&A Timetable

All times listed below are AEDT. Please adjust for your time zone.
Note: Times are subject to change prior to Lent, depending on our program partners' availability. Maximum of 10 classes per session.

		Thursday 18 February
Patricia's Story (Solomon Islands)	**Secondary (Y7-12)**	1:00pm

		Wednesday 24 February
Reaksmey's Story (Cambodia)	**Secondary (Y7-12)**	1:00pm

		Thursday 4 March
Yeshareg's Story (Ethiopia)	**Secondary (Y7-12)**	9:15am

		Thursday 4 March
Emergency Response (Venezuela)	**Secondary (Y7-12)**	1:00pm



Register at https://www.caritas.org.au/project-compassion/caritas-q-a/

Fundraise Online

Raise funds the easy way - online!

No cash at your school? No problem!

Setting up your schools online fundraising page is simple!

Visit: projectcompassion.org.au/schools

Tips for success at your school:

• Create teams for classes or houses to add a little friendly competition!

• Share your fundraising page and QR code with your school community to spread the word!

• Access awesome tools and resources to make Project Compassion at your school the best yet!

Register your fundraiser

Note: If you placed your resource order online, you've already completed this step and set up your page. Simply go to projectcompassion.org.au to log in to your school's online dashboard!

1. HEAD TO: projectcompassion.org.au/schools

2. SEARCH for your school

3. ACTIVATE your school's profile – just create an account and follow the prompts to complete setup.

4. SELECT how your school is going to fundraise!

5. SET UP teams for each class or homeroom to spark some friendly competition!

6. SHARE your school's fundraising page or class pages with your school community. Note: parents can register their child with all online donations made contributing to your class/school total.

7. LET THE FUNDRAISING BEGIN!

Unite your whole school community and take on **The BIG Water Walk** at your school this Lent. Your school will raise funds to bring clean, safe drinking water to communities around the world!

How to host your School's BIG Water Walk:

1. Pick a date: Choose a day during Lent that works for your school.

2. Set your route: You could plan laps around your school oval, circuits through your school grounds, or even a walk to a local park!

3. Consider adding a challenge: Consider carrying water during the walk to simulate the daily journey faced by vulnerable communities.

4.Promote the Event: Share details with students, parents, and staff to build excitement and support



Download The BIG Water Walk Toolkit

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) Guide

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) principles cover all spheres of life – the economic, political, ecological, personal and spiritual. The principles are inspired by scripture and the writings of the Pope and other Catholic leaders about social issues.

Caritas Australia's work is shaped by the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching.

HUMAN DIGNITY

We believe every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and therefore has inherent dignity that should always be safeguarded.



SUBSIDIARITY AND PARTICIPATION

We believe all people have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Subsidiarity requires that decisions are made by people closest and most affected by the issues and concerns of the community.





SOLIDARITY

We believe we are part of one human family and have a responsibility to help each person achieve their full potential.



THE COMMON GOOD

We believe the good of each human person is intimately related to the good of the whole community. We are all responsible for each other.

PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

We believe in prioritising the women, men and children most vulnerable to extreme poverty and injustice.



CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

We believe that care for our common home is vital for the common good of all people. We believe a true ecological approach is a social approach. We are to be protectors of creation and of one another.



For more on Catholic Social Teaching, including classroom activities, short films and other resources, visit our CST Toolkit.

Photo credits: Caritas Jerusalem (middle left). Peter Caton/ Caritas Australia (bottom left and top right), Caritas Australia (remaining photos).

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CST Film Study Guide



Patricia's Story (Solomon Islands)



Reaksmey's Story (Cambodia)



Yeshareg's Story (Ethiopia)



Emergency Response (Venezuela)

OVERARCHING QUESTION

How are the principles of Catholic Social Teaching evident in the work of Caritas Australia?

- Human Dignity
- Preferential Option for the Poor
- Care for Our Common Home
- Solidarity
- The Common Good
- Subsidiarity and Participation

GUIDED REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- **Human Dignity** – How is the Caritas Australia supported program working to upholding the dignity of the people in the community?
- **Common Good** – How are individual and social rights and responsibilities being fulfilled? How is the program benefiting the whole community?
- **Preferential Option for the Poor** – How is Caritas Australia demonstrating their commitment to working with the most vulnerable and marginalised?
- **Solidarity** – How are the Caritas Australia supported programs an example of solidarity? How is supporting Caritas Australia one way we can act in solidarity?
- **Subsidiarity and Participation** – How are the Caritas Australia supported programs enabling people to participate in their own development and in their community? How are the participants empowered to make decisions that affect them and their community?
- **Care for Our Common Home** – How are the programs encouraging environmental sustainability and equity, and respect for the environment?

Secondary Deep Dive

The Secondary Deep Dive is an interactive image created as a central location with everything you need to complete this student workbook. This includes the stories and videos for each of the 4 stories.

Whenever you see any of the below icons in your workbook, go to the Secondary Deep Dive and find the matching icon to access the information you need to complete the activity.

Here are some icons to keep an eye out for throughout the workbook:





Click here to view:

Secondary Deep Dive

Caritas AUSTRALIA | PROJECT COMPASSION

Patricia's Story

Solomon Islands

UNITE AGAINST POVERTY this Lent



14-year-old Patricia sitting outside her home in Malaita province, Solomon Islands. Photo: Caritas Australia

Patricia’s story

Solomon Islands

14-year-old Patricia lives in a rural village in the Malaita province of Solomon Islands with her parents, three sisters and younger brother. Like many first-born daughters, she has always helped shoulder responsibilities at home. Every day, she supports her family by collecting firewood, grating coconuts, preparing food and caring for her younger siblings.

But until recently, one chore consumed hours of her day and left her too exhausted to think about her future: collecting water.

Before a new water system was installed outside her home, Patricia and her mother had to walk long distances to collect water for their family. The journey was not easy. The nearest water source was far from home, in a dense and hilly rainforest that is home to poisonous snakes. Because families from surrounding communities relied on the same water source, there were often long queues. Some days, Patricia and her mother would spend hours walking and waiting just to fill their buckets.

The task was physically demanding. Carrying heavy buckets of water over long distances took a toll on Patricia.

On average, collecting water took around two hours every day. During the rainy season, conditions became even more difficult. Flooded rivers and muddy water sources often made access impossible, creating uncertainty and hardship for families who relied on them.

For Patricia's father, Lazarus, the daily journey brought constant worry about the safety of his children.

"As a father, I was concerned because the water source was far away and crowded," he explains. “The water source was so far away that sometimes they returned home after dark. It was not safe.”

The burden of collecting water affected many aspects of Patricia's life, including her education. After spending hours walking and carrying water, she often returned home completely exhausted.



Patricia collecting water from a water source that is located in a dense forest 1-2km from her village. Photo: Caritas Australia

"The buckets were so heavy, and the water source was so far away," Patricia remembers. "When I came home, I didn't feel like studying."

Over time, school began to feel out of reach. Patricia lost interest in attending and eventually stopped going. Like many children facing significant daily responsibilities, the demands of life at home made it difficult to focus on learning.

The journey to clean water has been a long struggle for many communities in the Malaita province in the Solomon Islands. Many areas lack proper water treatment and distribution systems, which results in unsafe drinking water. Malaita is also highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, particularly rising sea levels and extreme weather events. The island is prone to floods, droughts, and cyclones, which can damage water supply systems, contaminate freshwater sources, and disrupt rainwater collection.

According to the World Bank (2024), at least 28% of the population in the Solomon Islands, more than 1 in 4 people, do not have access to basic drinking water services, and 65% do not have access to basic sanitation services (World Bank, 2024). Only 59.9% of girls successfully complete lower secondary education (World Bank, 2023). Many communities in the Solomon Islands are forced to rely on contaminated water sources, leading to waterborne diseases like diarrhea and cholera. Limited access to safe water hampers hygiene, increasing the risk of malnutrition and child mortality.

The Common Home project, run in partnership with the Catholic Diocese of Auki, aims to improve access to water, hygiene and sanitation. The project works with communities to rehabilitate gravity-fed water systems and construct sanitation facilities. It also focuses on building pit latrines and handwash stations to improve sanitation in the community, as well as training to promote hygiene and eliminate open defecation.

Today, thanks to the new water system supported by the Common Home project, life in Patricia’s village has been transformed. A water tap now stands just metres from Patricia's family's home. Instead of walking long distances every day, Patricia can collect water quickly and safely. Her family can now access clean water whenever they need it.

For Patricia, that extra time has opened the door for her to return to school next year.

Although she admits she once felt she didn't want to go, she now looks forward to learning alongside other children. She wants to make friends, learn to read and write, and gain the education she needs to build a brighter future. When asked what she hopes to become one day, Patricia says that she wants to become a teacher, like her father.

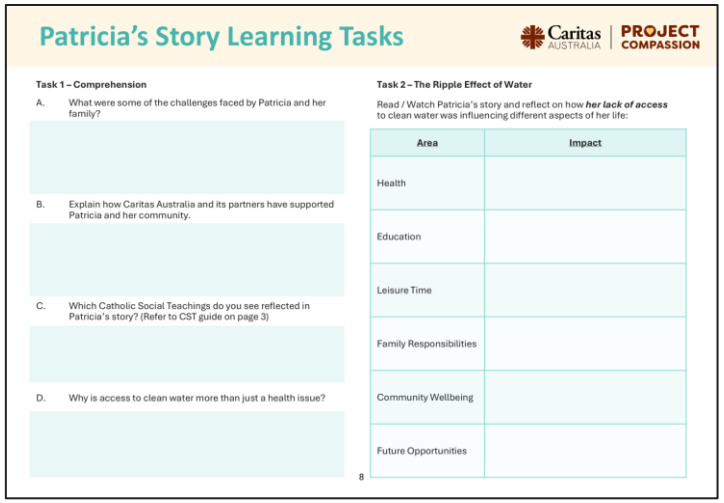






Student Workbook Sample Pages

Download **Student Workbook**



Patricia's Story Learning Tasks

Task 1 – Comprehension

A. What were some of the challenges faced by Patricia and her family?

B. Explain how Caritas Australia and its partners have supported Patricia and her community.

C. Which Catholic Social Teachings do you see reflected in Patricia's story? (Refer to CST guide on page 3)

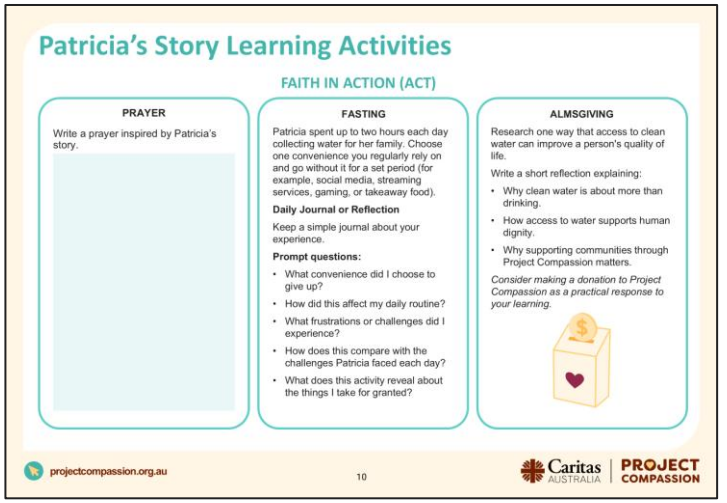
D. Why is access to clean water more than just a health issue?

Task 2 – The Ripple Effect of Water

Read / Watch Patricia's story and reflect on how ***her lack of access*** to clean water was influencing different aspects of her life:

Area	Impact
Health	
Education	
Leisure Time	
Family Responsibilities	
Community Wellbeing	
Future Opportunities	

8



Patricia's Story Learning Activities

FAITH IN ACTION (ACT)

PRAYER

Write a prayer inspired by Patricia's story.

FASTING

Patricia spent up to two hours each day collecting water for her family. Choose one convenience you regularly rely on and go without it for a set period (for example, social media, streaming services, gaming, or takeaway food).

Daily Journal or Reflection

Keep a simple journal about your experience.

Prompt questions:

- What convenience did I choose to give up?
- How did this affect my daily routine?
- What frustrations or challenges did I experience?
- How does this compare with the challenges Patricia faced each day?
- What does this activity reveal about the things I take for granted?

ALMSGIVING

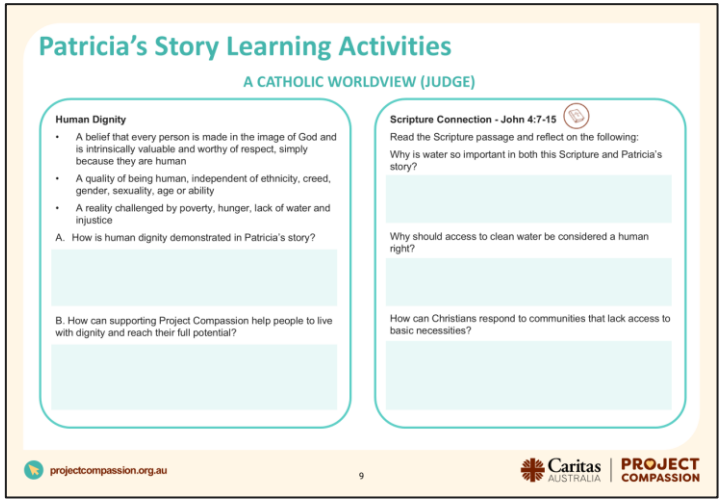
Research one way that access to clean water can improve a person's quality of life.

Write a short reflection explaining:

- Why clean water is about more than drinking.
- How access to water supports human dignity.
- Why supporting communities through Project Compassion matters.

Consider making a donation to Project Compassion as a practical response to your learning.

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Patricia's Story Learning Activities

A CATHOLIC WORLDVIEW (JUDGE)

Human Dignity

- A belief that every person is made in the image of God and is intrinsically valuable and worthy of respect, simply because they are human
- A quality of being human, independent of ethnicity, creed, gender, sexuality, age or ability
- A reality challenged by poverty, hunger, lack of water and injustice

A. How is human dignity demonstrated in Patricia's story?

B. How can supporting Project Compassion help people to live with dignity and reach their full potential?

Scripture Connection - John 4:7-15

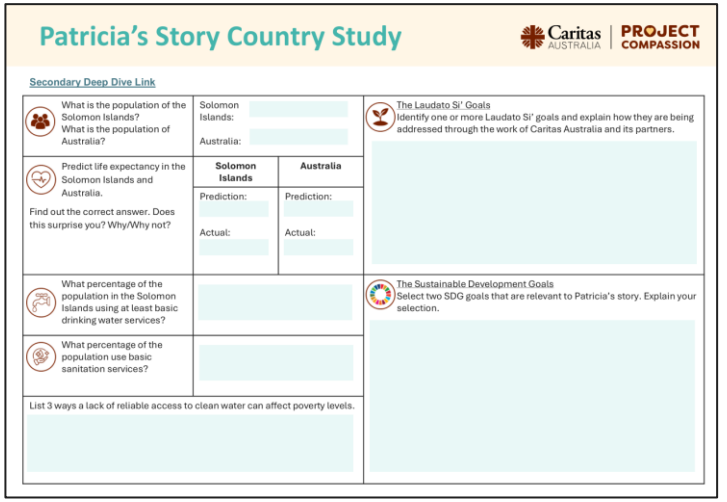
Read the Scripture passage and reflect on the following:

Why is water so important in both this Scripture and Patricia's story?

Why should access to clean water be considered a human right?

How can Christians respond to communities that lack access to basic necessities?

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Patricia's Story Country Study

Secondary Deep Dive Link

What is the population of the Solomon Islands? What is the population of Australia?

Solomon Islands:

Australia:

Predict life expectancy in the Solomon Islands and Australia.

Find out the correct answer. Does this surprise you? Why/Why not?

	Solomon Islands	Australia
Prediction:		
Actual:		

What percentage of the population in the Solomon Islands using at least basic drinking water services?

What percentage of the population use basic sanitation services?

List 3 ways a lack of reliable access to clean water can affect poverty levels.

The Laudato Si' Goals

Identify one or more Laudato Si' goals and explain how they are being addressed through the work of Caritas Australia and its partners.

The Sustainable Development Goals

Select two SDG goals that are relevant to Patricia's story. Explain your selection.

Caritas AUSTRALIA | PROJECT COMPASSION

Reaksmey's Story

Cambodia

UNITE AGAINST POVERTY this Lent



Reaksmey standing outside the kitchen in Epic Arts Café, where he now works. Photo: Caritas Australia

Reaksmey's Story

Cambodia

Reaksmey grew up in the Kampot province in southern Cambodia. He never knew his mother, who passed away from a heart attack 15 days after he was born.

When Reaksmey's dad re-married and moved out to live with his new family, Reaksmey was left to be raised by his two aunts. But despite their best efforts, communication was difficult as none of them knew any sign language.

School was a struggle for Reaksmey. Without the ability to speak or hear, he found it difficult to find acceptance with his fellow classmates who discriminated him because of his disability.

Because of the discrimination he experienced from his classmates at school, Reaksmey quit school after grade six and never went back. From there on, he mostly stayed at home and looked after the cows in his family farm.

In Cambodia, children with a disability are often severely disadvantaged when it comes to their education prospects. Sokny Onn, the CEO of Epic Arts (and a former Epic Arts student) said that longstanding community attitudes about disability in Cambodia often leads to discrimination against people with disabilities.

The Inclusive Education in Kampot project is dedicated to opening doors for children with disabilities, ensuring they can learn, grow, and thrive alongside their peers. Working with local Cambodian NGO Epic Arts, the project supports teachers and schools with the tools and learning environment they need to create truly inclusive classrooms, to ensure that children with disabilities can access education, and enjoy the same rights as every other child.

It also supports young people like Reaksmey with opportunities to help them participate more fully in society through sign language classes, vocational training and art.

When Reaksmey participated in the project, he was able to learn sign language and discover a way to communicate – for the first time in his life.

The project also helped provide Reaksmey with a bicycle so that he can travel to and from the centre.



Reaksmey baking bagels in the kitchen at Epic Arts café. Photo: Caritas Australia

At Epic Arts, Reaksmey was able to connect with and form friendships with other young people with a disability. He also participated in a range of classes including dancing, painting, handicraft, computer, coffee making and vocational training.

The dance training centre at Epic Arts has special floor mats that vibrate whenever there is music, which enables people with a hearing disability to 'feel' the music, even if they cannot hear it.

'When I dance, I can't hear the music, but I use eye contact with my team,' Reaksmey shared.

With support from his art teacher, who also has a disability, Reaksmey found a way to channel his thoughts and emotions through art.

As his confidence grew, so did his ambitions. Reaksmey took part in vocational training and became especially interested in hospitality. With encouragement from his teachers, he applied for a job at the Epic Arts Café, a social enterprise that has been providing employment to people with and without disabilities for 20 years.

After successfully passing the job interview, Reaksmey was hired as a kitchen hand. As part of his role, he prepares ingredients in the kitchen, making bread and bagels, and working alongside his colleagues, many of whom also have a hearing disability. He hopes to continue developing his skills and learn how to make coffee and smoothies.

Sokny said that Reaksmey's growth and transformation since joining the project has changed how his family sees him.

'His family always thought that Reaksmey won't be able to do anything, or learn, or find a job and earn money. To see Reaksmey learn a new skill and get at job at Epic Arts café and earn some income – that is a big impact for Reaksmey's life and for his family,' she said.

Reaksmey has a message he wants to share with people everywhere about the importance of inclusion.

'I just want to share a message to everyone to stop discriminating people with disability, like me, who have a hearing disability or those with physical disabilities,' he shared.

'Please encourage people with disabilities to have the opportunity to participate, to have the opportunity to find jobs – just like everyone else.'

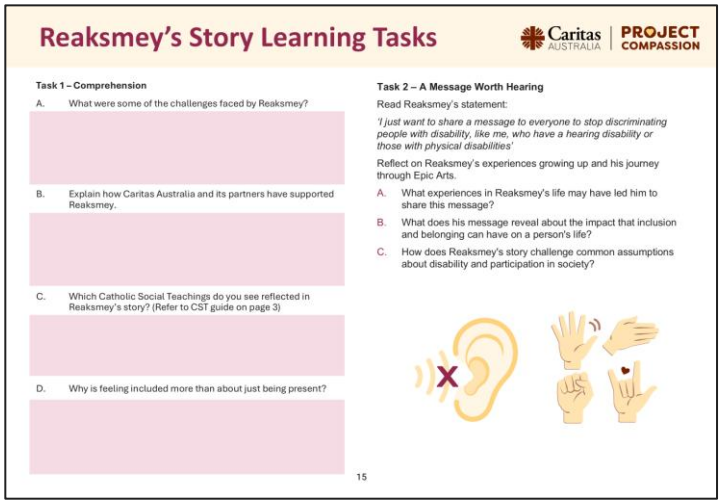






Student Workbook Sample Pages

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Reaksmey's Story Learning Tasks

Task 1 – Comprehension

A. What were some of the challenges faced by Reaksmey?

B. Explain how Caritas Australia and its partners have supported Reaksmey.

C. Which Catholic Social Teachings do you see reflected in Reaksmey's story? (Refer to CST guide on page 3)

D. Why is feeling included more than about just being present?

Task 2 – A Message Worth Hearing

Read Reaksmey's statement:

'I just want to share a message to everyone to stop discriminating people with disability, like me, who have a hearing disability or those with physical disabilities'

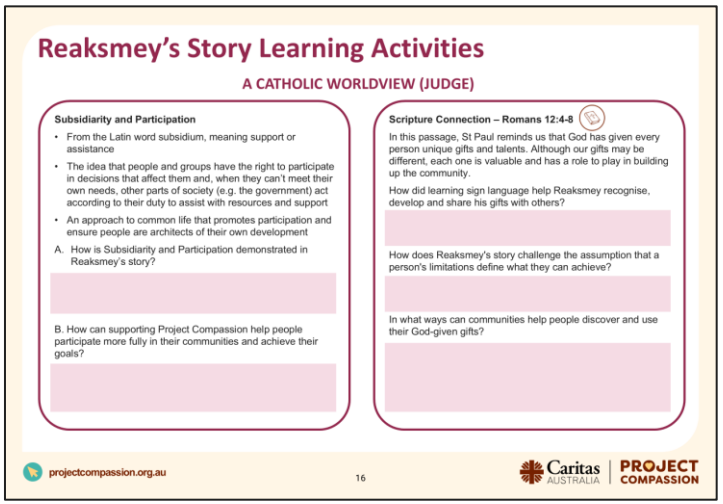
Reflect on Reaksmey's experiences growing up and his journey through Epic Arts.

A. What experiences in Reaksmey's life may have led him to share this message?

B. What does his message reveal about the impact that inclusion and belonging can have on a person's life?

C. How does Reaksmey's story challenge common assumptions about disability and participation in society?

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Reaksmey's Story Learning Activities

A CATHOLIC WORLDVIEW (JUDGE)

Subsidiarity and Participation

- From the Latin word subsidium, meaning support or assistance
- The idea that people and groups have the right to participate in decisions that affect them and, when they can't meet their own needs, other parts of society (e.g. the government) act according to their duty to assist with resources and support
- An approach to common life that promotes participation and ensure people are architects of their own development

A. How is Subsidiarity and Participation demonstrated in Reaksmey's story?

B. How can supporting Project Compassion help people participate more fully in their communities and achieve their goals?

Scripture Connection – Romans 12:4-8

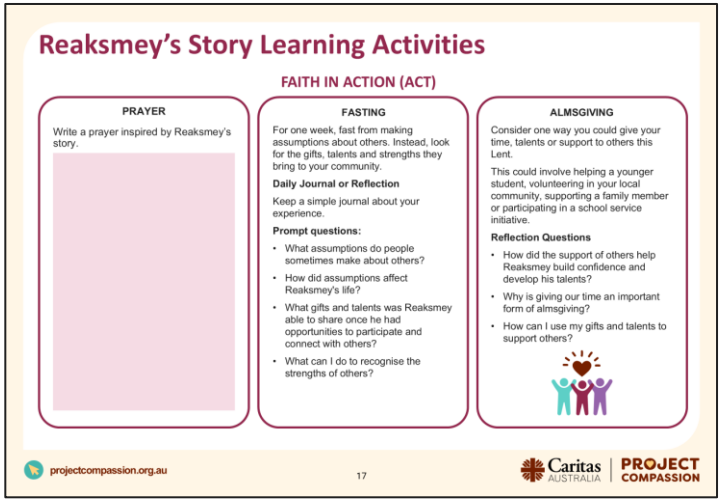
In this passage, St Paul reminds us that God has given every person unique gifts and talents. Although our gifts may be different, each one is valuable and has a role to play in building up the community.

How did learning sign language help Reaksmey recognise, develop and share his gifts with others?

How does Reaksmey's story challenge the assumption that a person's limitations define what they can achieve?

In what ways can communities help people discover and use their God-given gifts?

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Reaksmey's Story Learning Activities

FAITH IN ACTION (ACT)

PRAYER

Write a prayer inspired by Reaksmey's story.

FASTING

For one week, fast from making assumptions about others. Instead, look for the gifts, talents and strengths they bring to your community.

Daily Journal or Reflection

Keep a simple journal about your experience.

Prompt questions:

- What assumptions do people sometimes make about others?
- How did assumptions affect Reaksmey's life?
- What gifts and talents was Reaksmey able to share once he had opportunities to participate and connect with others?
- What can I do to recognise the strengths of others?

ALMSGIVING

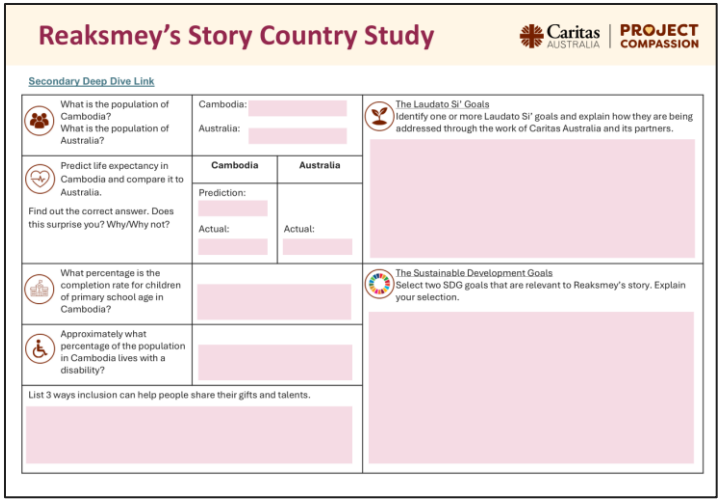
Consider one way you could give your time, talents or support to others this Lent.

This could involve helping a younger student, volunteering in your local community, supporting a family member or participating in a school service initiative.

Reflection Questions

- How did the support of others help Reaksmey build confidence and develop his talents?
- Why is giving our time an important form of almsgiving?
- How can I use my gifts and talents to support others?

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Reaksmey's Story Country Study

Secondary Deep Dive Link

What is the population of Cambodia? What is the population of Australia?	Cambodia: Australia:	The Laudato Si' Goals Identify one or more Laudato Si' goals and explain how they are being addressed through the work of Caritas Australia and its partners.
Predict life expectancy in Cambodia and compare it to Australia. Find out the correct answer. Does this surprise you? Why/Why not?	Cambodia Prediction: Actual:	Australia Actual:
What percentage is the completion rate for children of primary school age in Cambodia?		The Sustainable Development Goals Select two SDG goals that are relevant to Reaksmey's story. Explain your selection.
Approximately what percentage of the population in Cambodia lives with a disability?		
List 3 ways inclusion can help people share their gifts and talents.		

Caritas AUSTRALIA | PROJECT COMPASSION

Yeshareg's Story

Ethiopia

UNITE AGAINST POVERTY this Lent



Yeshareg at home with her harvested potatoes. Photo: Peter Caton/Caritas Australia

Yeshareg's Story

Ethiopia

30-year-old Yeshareg lives in Kaffa Zone in south-western Ethiopia with her husband, Tamiru, and her 9-year-old son Henok and 4-year-old daughter Mintamir. In the area where she lives, food insecurity and extreme weather are a common occurrence. Droughts make it hard to grow crops, while during the wet season floods cut off access to roads and destroy farms.

Life has not been easy for Yeshareg and her family. Her family's days were often defined by scarcity. Food was never certain. Meals came twice a day at best, sometimes less. Even soap and basic sanitary items were precious.

'Back then, hunger was a constant struggle. Life was very difficult. On good days, we ate only twice. Other days, we had just one meal,' Yeshareg shared.

In Ethiopia, more than 10 million people face hunger and malnutrition and 55% of children under five are suffering from malnutrition (World Food Programme 2025). Fuel shortages linked to the war in the Middle East have also sharply increased fuel prices countrywide, with the cost of staple food prices rising sharply.

The CLEAR (Innovative Climate-Smart Livelihood Enhancement for Resilience Building Project) project aims to support communities in Ethiopia who experience persistent drought, climate shocks, water scarcity, and limited livelihood opportunities.

Run by our partner Caritas Ethiopia, the project helps improve the livelihood of women, men and youth through better agricultural practices, income diversification, and improvement in basic services such as drinking water supply and household sanitation so that community members have increased food security and increased income.

The project aims to support 14,000 people in Ethiopia over five years, and so far, has supported 8,864 people since the project's inception.

Through the CLEAR project, Yeshareg was able to join a women's savings and potato-farming group. For the first time, Yeshareg began to cultivate vegetables like potatoes that could both feed her family and be sold in the market.



Yeshareg cultivating sweet potatoes in her garden in her village.
Photo: Peter Caton/Caritas Australia

Last year, Yeshareg harvested 400 kilograms of crops – selling 300kg and keeping 100kg for her family. Through the sales of the potatoes, she was able to earn enough money to pay for her children's school uniforms and materials. She can also prepare nutritious meals for her daughter, making sure she started each day nourished.

The project didn't stop at farming. Yeshareg and other women in her community formed a savings group, contributing regularly and supporting one another. Over time, they built up significant savings, something that would have once felt impossible.

'We've learned to save money. We save money every week. Together, we've saved 50,000 Birr. It has been a great help. It has inspired us… I've set aside money for [my children's] schooling,' she said.

As part of the project, Yeshareg was given a sheep which gave birth to offsprings. She was then able to sell the lamb and use the additional income from her sales to pay for her children's education expenses.

In the future, Yeshareg would like to see improved medical facilities in her community, as well as access to clean, drinking water.

From eating sometimes just one meal a day to regularly eating three meals a day, Yeshareg has come a long way thanks to the support of the CLEAR project. For her, the future looks brighter than before and she is determined to continue working hard to ensure her children can grow up healthy and happy.

The CLEAR project is also supported by the Australian government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).



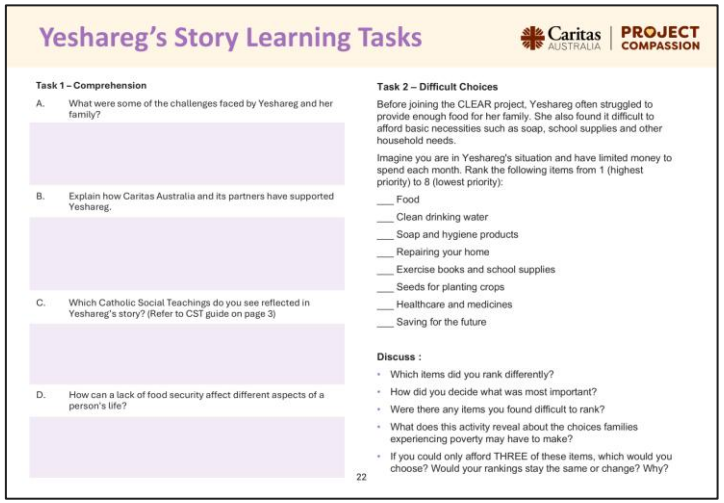






Student Workbook Sample Pages

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Yeshareg's Story Learning Tasks

Task 1 – Comprehension

A. What were some of the challenges faced by Yeshareg and her family?

B. Explain how Caritas Australia and its partners have supported Yeshareg.

C. Which Catholic Social Teachings do you see reflected in Yeshareg's story? (Refer to CST guide on page 3)

D. How can a lack of food security affect different aspects of a person's life?

Task 2 – Difficult Choices

Before joining the CLEAR project, Yeshareg often struggled to provide enough food for her family. She also found it difficult to afford basic necessities such as soap, school supplies and other household needs.

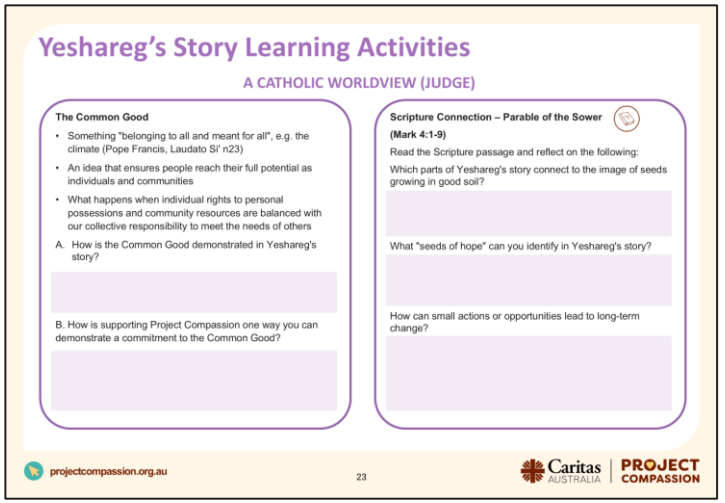
Imagine you are in Yeshareg's situation and have limited money to spend each month. Rank the following items from 1 (highest priority) to 8 (lowest priority):

___ Food
___ Clean drinking water
___ Soap and hygiene products
___ Repairing your home
___ Exercise books and school supplies
___ Seeds for planting crops
___ Healthcare and medicines
___ Saving for the future

Discuss :

- Which items did you rank differently?
- How did you decide what was most important?
- Were there any items you found difficult to rank?
- What does this activity reveal about the choices families experiencing poverty may have to make?
- If you could only afford THREE of these items, which would you choose? Would your rankings stay the same or change? Why?

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Yeshareg's Story Learning Activities

A CATHOLIC WORLDVIEW (JUDGE)

The Common Good

- Something "belonging to all and meant for all", e.g. the climate (Pope Francis, Laudato Si' n23)
- An idea that ensures people reach their full potential as individuals and communities
- What happens when individual rights to personal possessions and community resources are balanced with our collective responsibility to meet the needs of others

A. How is the Common Good demonstrated in Yeshareg's story?

B. How is supporting Project Compassion one way you can demonstrate a commitment to the Common Good?

Scripture Connection – Parable of the Sower

(Mark 4:1-9)

Read the Scripture passage and reflect on the following:

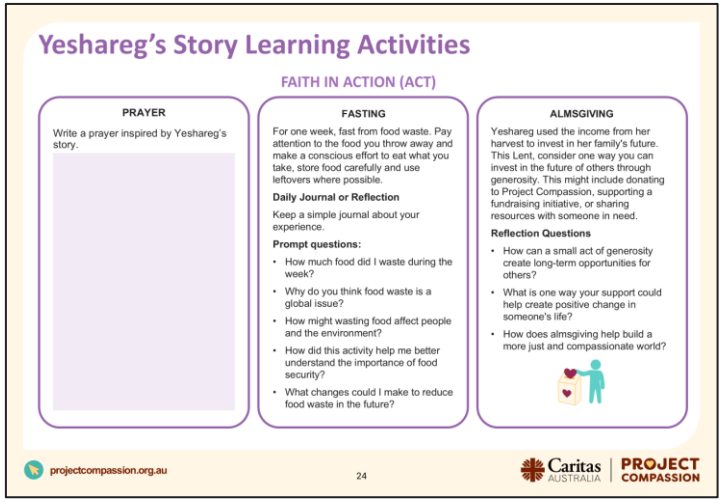
Which parts of Yeshareg's story connect to the image of seeds growing in good soil?

What "seeds of hope" can you identify in Yeshareg's story?

How can small actions or opportunities lead to long-term change?

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Yeshareg's Story Learning Activities

FAITH IN ACTION (ACT)

PRAYER

Write a prayer inspired by Yeshareg's story.

FASTING

For one week, fast from food waste. Pay attention to the food you throw away and make a conscious effort to eat what you take, store food carefully and use leftovers where possible.

Daily Journal or Reflection

Keep a simple journal about your experience.

Prompt questions:

- How much food did I waste during the week?
- Why do you think food waste is a global issue?
- How might wasting food affect people and the environment?
- How did this activity help me better understand the importance of food security?
- What changes could I make to reduce food waste in the future?

ALMSGIVING

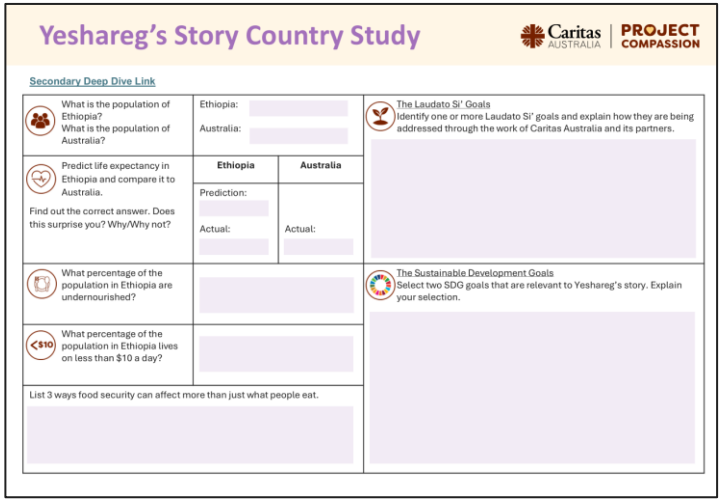
Yeshareg used the income from her harvest to invest in her family's future. This Lent, consider one way you can invest in the future of others through generosity. This might include donating to Project Compassion, supporting a fundraising initiative, or sharing resources with someone in need.

Reflection Questions

- How can a small act of generosity create long-term opportunities for others?
- What is one way your support could help create positive change in someone's life?
- How does almsgiving help build a more just and compassionate world?

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Yeshareg's Story Country Study

Secondary Deep Dive Link

What is the population of Ethiopia?
What is the population of Australia?

Ethiopia:

Australia:

Predict life expectancy in Ethiopia and compare it to Australia.

Find out the correct answer. Does this surprise you? Why/Why not?

Ethiopia	Australia
Prediction:	
Actual:	Actual:

What percentage of the population in Ethiopia are undernourished?

What percentage of the population in Ethiopia lives on less than $10 a day?

List 3 ways food security can affect more than just what people eat.

The Laudato Si' Goals
Identify one or more Laudato Si' goals and explain how they are being addressed through the work of Caritas Australia and its partners.

The Sustainable Development Goals
Select two SDG goals that are relevant to Yeshareg's story. Explain your selection.

Content Warning

The following story includes real images and information from communities affected by the earthquakes in Venezuela, which some readers may find distressing.

Teachers may wish to consider the needs and experiences of students when using this resource.

Caritas AUSTRALIA | PROJECT COMPASSION

Emergency Response

Venezuela

UNITE AGAINST POVERTY this Lent



Buildings destroyed by the Venezuela earthquake. Photo: Caritas Venezuela

Emergency Response

Venezuela

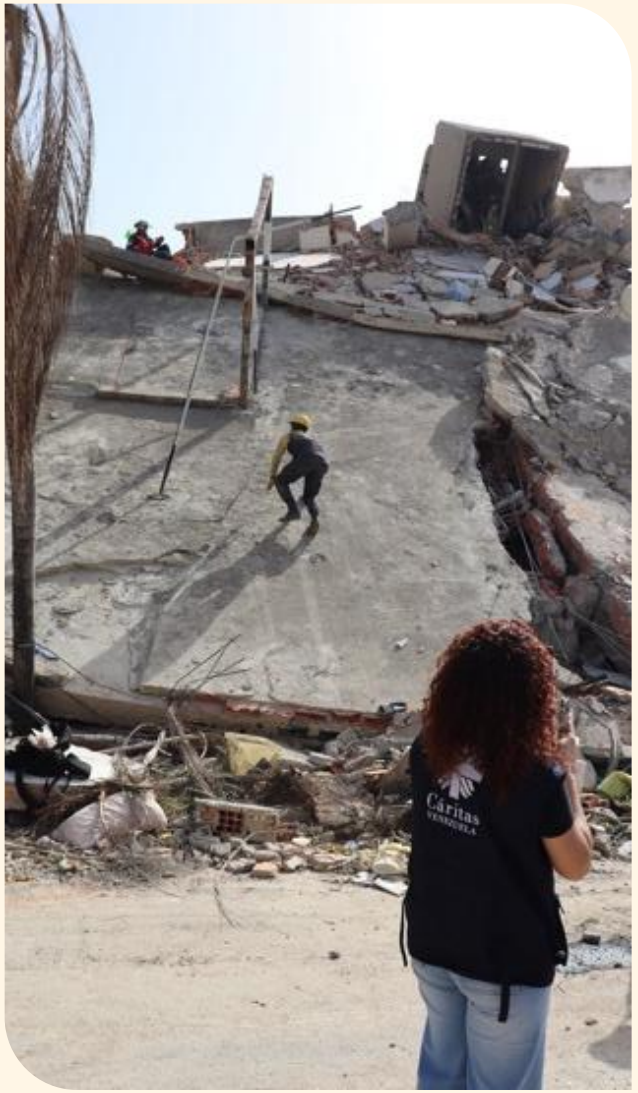
On 24 June 2026, two major earthquakes struck Venezuela within minutes of each other, devastating communities across Caracas and the country's central and coastal regions. More than 6,000 people were confirmed dead, while thousands more were injured or missing. Buildings and homes collapsed or became unsafe, vital infrastructure was severely damaged, and essential services were widely disrupted.

The disaster struck a country already facing immense humanitarian need. Before the earthquakes, around 7.9 million people in Venezuela required humanitarian assistance. Many families were already living with food shortages, limited access to healthcare and unreliable basic services. The earthquakes have placed people who were already vulnerable, including children, older people, pregnant women and people with chronic illnesses, at even greater risk.

In affected communities, local Church parishes were among the first places people turned to for help. Parishes opened their doors to shelter displaced families and distributed emergency supplies wherever they could. This immediate, community-led action created a foundation for a broader response coordinated through Caritas Venezuela.

Caritas Venezuela has long had a presence in communities across the country, including remote and hard-to-reach areas. It has been working in the country since 1963 and is present in all states across the country through its Diocesan network. Prior to the earthquake, the organisation was supporting over 60,000 vulnerable households amid an economic crisis that saw 7.9 million people already requiring humanitarian assistance before the earthquakes struck.

Three weeks into the response, Caritas Venezuela received more than 19,000 tonnes of humanitarian aid, with 84 per cent already distributed to families affected by the disaster. The response delivered 17,808 full emergency assistance kits for families, 10,820 food kits and 6,988 hygiene kits. More than 6.8 million litres of water were also distributed, together with 96,000 units of medicines and medical supplies for hospitals and healthcare facilities.



Rescue teams searching for survivors of the earthquake.
Photo: Caritas Venezuela

Caritas Venezuela reported that aid was being distributed faster than new supplies were arriving. This reflected the reach of the relief effort, while also underscoring the continuing need for support as communities began moving from immediate emergency assistance towards recovery.

Volunteers have been central to the response. Around 10,000 people joined Caritas teams through local parishes and dioceses, helping to receive, sort, pack and distribute aid. Their work has enabled emergency assistance to reach thousands of families through a network rooted in local communities.

Janeth Márquez, Executive Director of Cáritas Venezuela, described the urgency of the first phase of the response:

'Our first priority is to save lives and search for the injured. Very soon we will need to provide supplies, water, food and hygiene items for those in disaster relief centres or on the streets.' she said.

The response is focused on several connected priorities. In the immediate phase, teams are supporting efforts to save lives and search for injured people. They are also preparing to provide water, food, hygiene items and other supplies to people staying in relief centres or living on the streets because their homes are uninhabitable. As the response develops, Caritas Venezuela plans to assess people's situations more fully so assistance can address their needs holistically.

Monsignor José Luis Azuaje Ayala, President of Caritas Venezuela, spoke of the scale of the disaster and the hope found in solidarity: *'We are visiting the affected areas, as you can see, the scale of which has truly shaken us, sharing the suffering of the people and above all looking forward to the solidarity of the Venezuelan people is what fills us with hope at all times.'*

Despite significant progress, thousands of families remain in temporary accommodation, and many may be unable to return to their homes. Continued support will be essential as recovery efforts expand, helping communities address immediate needs while beginning the longer task of rebuilding lives, homes and essential services.

The response demonstrates the strength of local networks in a disaster. Through parishes, dioceses, volunteers and partners, Caritas Venezuela is standing alongside people facing grief, displacement and uncertainty. As emergency relief continues and recovery begins, solidarity will remain vital for families whose needs will extend far beyond the first weeks of the crisis.

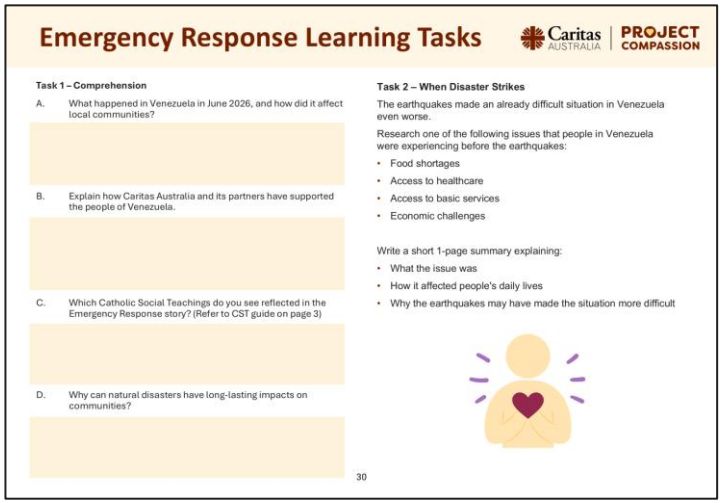






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Emergency Response Learning Tasks

Task 1 – Comprehension

A. What happened in Venezuela in June 2026, and how did it affect local communities?

B. Explain how Caritas Australia and its partners have supported the people of Venezuela.

C. Which Catholic Social Teachings do you see reflected in the Emergency Response story? (Refer to CST guide on page 3)

D. Why can natural disasters have long-lasting impacts on communities?

Task 2 – When Disaster Strikes

The earthquakes made an already difficult situation in Venezuela even worse.

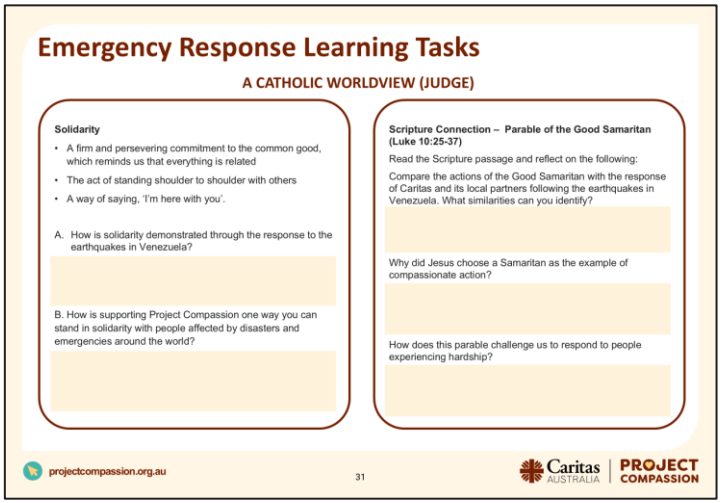
Research one of the following issues that people in Venezuela were experiencing before the earthquakes:

- Food shortages
- Access to healthcare
- Access to basic services
- Economic challenges

Write a short 1-page summary explaining:

- What the issue was
- How it affected people's daily lives
- Why the earthquakes may have made the situation more difficult

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Emergency Response Learning Tasks

A CATHOLIC WORLDVIEW (JUDGE)

Solidarity

- A firm and persevering commitment to the common good, which reminds us that everything is related
- The act of standing shoulder to shoulder with others
- A way of saying, 'I'm here with you'.

A. How is solidarity demonstrated through the response to the earthquakes in Venezuela?

B. How is supporting Project Compassion one way you can stand in solidarity with people affected by disasters and emergencies around the world?

Scripture Connection – Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

Read the Scripture passage and reflect on the following:

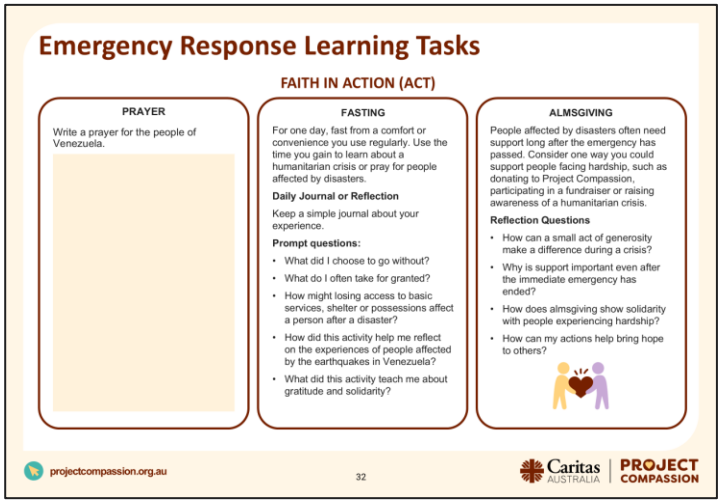
Compare the actions of the Good Samaritan with the response of Caritas and its local partners following the earthquakes in Venezuela. What similarities can you identify?

Why did Jesus choose a Samaritan as the example of compassionate action?

How does this parable challenge us to respond to people experiencing hardship?

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Emergency Response Learning Tasks

FAITH IN ACTION (ACT)

PRAYER

Write a prayer for the people of Venezuela.

FASTING

For one day, fast from a comfort or convenience you use regularly. Use the time you gain to learn about a humanitarian crisis or pray for people affected by disasters.

Daily Journal or Reflection

Keep a simple journal about your experience.

Prompt questions:

- What did I choose to go without?
- What do I often take for granted?
- How might losing access to basic services, shelter or possessions affect a person after a disaster?
- How did this activity help me reflect on the experiences of people affected by the earthquakes in Venezuela?
- What did this activity teach me about gratitude and solidarity?

ALMSGIVING

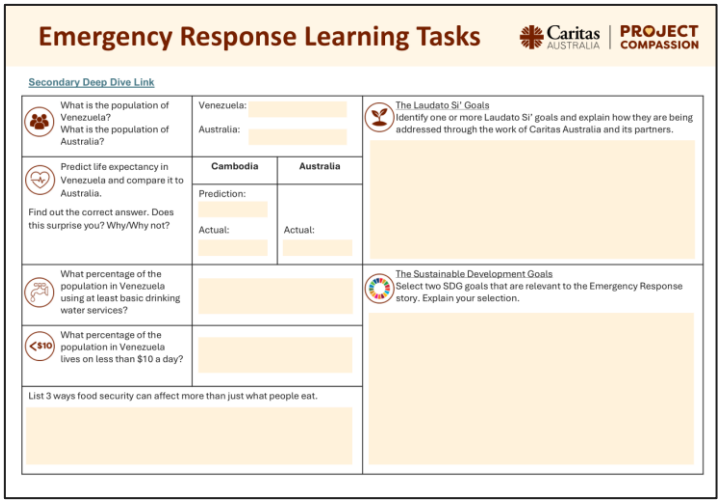
People affected by disasters often need support long after the emergency has passed. Consider one way you could support people facing hardship, such as donating to Project Compassion, participating in a fundraiser or raising awareness of a humanitarian crisis.

Reflection Questions

- How can a small act of generosity make a difference during a crisis?
- Why is support important even after the immediate emergency has ended?
- How does almsgiving show solidarity with people experiencing hardship?
- How can my actions help bring hope to others?

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Emergency Response Learning Tasks

Secondary Deep Dive Link

What is the population of Venezuela? What is the population of Australia?

Venezuela:

Australia:

Predict life expectancy in Venezuela and compare it to Australia.

Find out the correct answer. Does this surprise you? Why/Why not?

	Cambodia	Australia
Prediction:		
Actual:		Actual:

What percentage of the population in Venezuela using at least basic drinking water services?

What percentage of the population in Venezuela lives on less than $10 a day?

List 3 ways food security can affect more than just what people eat.

The Laudato Si' Goals

Identify one or more Laudato Si' goals and explain how they are being addressed through the work of Caritas Australia and its partners.

The Sustainable Development Goals

Select two SDG goals that are relevant to the Emergency Response story. Explain your selection.

Thank You

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- Patricia's Story (Solomon Islands) – Caritas Australia
- Reaksmey's Story (Cambodia) – Caritas Australia
- Yeshareg's Story (Ethiopia) – Peter Caton/Caritas Australia
- Emergency Response Story (Venezuela) – Caritas Venezuela

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- For more school resources, please visit: caritas.org.au/resources/school-resources/
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Australian Aid

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