



**PROJECT
COMPASSION**

**UNITE
AGAINST
POVERTY**
this Lent



 projectcompassion.org.au

THE WAY OF THE CROSS
FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

How to use this resource

This resource offers brief reflections on the 14 stations of the Traditional Way of the Cross. It also shares stories from Caritas Australia's work to end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity for the sake of the world's most vulnerable people and communities.

Two versions of the resource are available: a **PowerPoint Presentation version** and this **PDF version** that you may wish to print as a booklet or direct individual parishioners to view on their own devices.

Given the number of stations and related reflections and stories, you may wish to focus on a few stations at a time, 'walking' the Way of the Cross over a number of days or weeks leading up to Holy Week.

To aid group discussion, personal reflection and prayer, each **Station** and **Story** in this resource is accompanied by prompts to **Reflect** and **Respond**.

For use in Parish Groups:

Choose a **Leader** to lead these parts: **The Way of the Cross – Introduction, Reflect and Respond**.

Choose at least one **Reader** to read these parts for each station: **Station** and **Story**. Find the script for each part in the '**Notes**' section accompanying each slide.

For use in Personal Devotion: Consider using all parts of the resource as you engage with the Traditional Stations of the Cross in your church or local area.

Introduction

The Way of the Cross tells the story of Jesus of Nazareth's journey to the cross.

It is a story that challenges us to think about injustice and its impacts on human life and dignity, the health of the planet and the future flourishing of creation as a whole. Yet, even in its darkest moments, it is also a story that reminds us of compassion, the power of love and the persistent possibility that the world can change for the better.

The story of Jesus's death is a sad story but, we know, it is not the end of the story. As the Christian scriptures say, three days after Jesus died, he rose again! And life began anew, for him, for us and all of creation.

As you follow the Way of the Cross, may you encounter solidarity, compassion and, above all, hope.

The Way of the Cross



Sisilia watering her school garden. Photo: Caritas Australia

STATION 1

Jesus is condemned to death

Pilate, the Roman governor of the day, can find no reason to charge Jesus, but the chief priests, elders and others cry, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate can see that a riot is going to break out if he doesn’t give the crowd what it wants so he hands Jesus over to the people to be put to death, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. It is your concern.”

Matthew 27:1–2, 11–26, Mark 15:1–15,
Luke 23:1–25, John 19:1–16

Standing in front of the angry crowd, Pilate literally washed his hands of responsibility for Jesus’s fate. He took the easy way out of the situation and lacked the courage to stand up for Jesus and do what was right. Pilate’s choice is in total contrast to Jesus’s deep commitment to justice and dignity for all.

Irene's Story



Irene teaches other women how to sew after participating in the Caritas-supported youth empowerment program in Kongolo, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Photo: Arlette Bashizi/Caritas Australia

Irene's Story

Irene's determination to build a better life for her family shows how dignity is upheld when people have the chance to use their talents.

Irene is a young single mother living in Kongolo, a rural area in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). She takes care of her two children, aged 3 and 7, while also supporting her mother and extended family. Her life has been full of challenges, especially since she became a mother at a young age.

The DRC is one of the poorest countries in the world, with millions of people affected by conflict and political instability. About 70% of the population live in poverty, on less than \$3.30 AUD* a day, making it incredibly hard for families to make ends meet.

Irene's childhood was marked by hardships – after her father died in a war, Irene along with her mother and siblings were displaced. Her mother worked very hard to provide for her family.

“We lived a very difficult life. Every morning, [my mother] would go to the fields to grow yams. That's all we ate, and sometimes she worked for others in exchange for cassava, which she used to make fufu with sambouza, sometimes without oil, and borrowed salt from neighbours. That's how we got by.”

Irene's life took another difficult turn, when as a teenager, she became pregnant for the first time. Her husband fled soon after she had her first child. Overwhelmed by trying to support herself and child with limited education and therefore job opportunities, Irene returned to her mother's household.

A while later, her husband returned, and she began living with him briefly before he later fled again after learning she was pregnant a second time.

Despite these challenges, Irene's life improved when she joined the Youth Capacity Strengthening Program (YCSP), run by Caritas Australia's partner, Caritas Kongolo. This program aims to empower young individuals,

* <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2023-24reporten.pdf>

Irene's Story

especially young mothers, to become self-sufficient and contribute to their communities.

Irene took a sewing class through the program, where she learnt how to make clothes to sell. She also participated in agricultural training and received emotional support to help her heal from her past trauma.

After completing the six-month sewing course, Irene was given a sewing machine to continue her work. With her newfound skills, she was able to start earning money to provide for her family, including sending her son, nieces and nephews to school. Irene proudly said, "I make sure to provide for all their needs. There are 15 of us at home, and I take care of everyone."

On top of this, Irene's new farming skills has helped her grow food for her family to eat. She explains, "Before, I didn't know how to farm, but with this training, I learnt. We grew peanuts and corn and harvested them. After the harvest, they gave us chickens to start poultry farming, then returned with more work tools. We have a group field, but I also have my own field that produces the food we eat today at home."

The YCSP has made a huge difference in Irene's life and Irene is generously sharing her new skills with others. She loves teaching other women how to sew. "Our lives are so different now. Before, women depended on men's income, but now, with our sewing skills, we can take care of ourselves... When I teach others to sew, I feel comfortable and useful to my community," Irene shared.

Life has been tough for Irene, but she worked hard, learnt new skills, and became really good at sewing. Irene has been able to break out of a cycle of poverty. She can now send her son to school and support her extended family too.

"I want to say a big thank you to Caritas Australia and Caritas Kongolo. Thank you so much for uplifting me. I never thought I, Irene, could become someone. I never knew this life was possible," Irene said.

Reflect

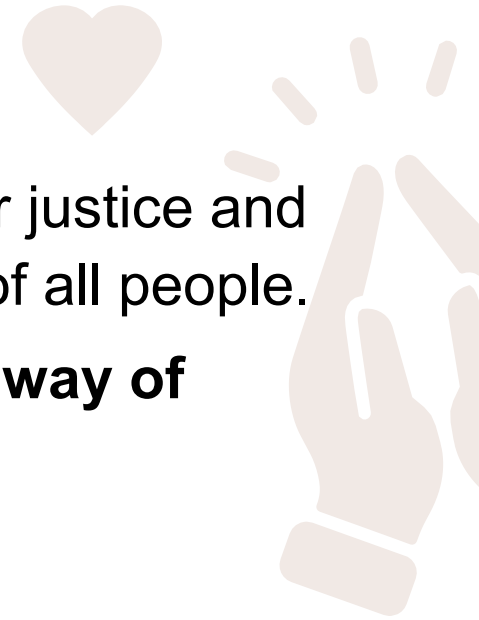
Irene used her talents to build a stronger future for her family.

- What gifts or abilities could you use to support justice for others?
- Where do you see dignity being denied in our world and how might you respond?

Respond

Jesus, you stand for justice and respect the dignity of all people.

May we follow the way of justice.



‘Let us all do what we can. We can all do something, at least have a sense of understanding’

Saint Oscar Romero, 24 March 1980

STATION 2

Jesus takes up the cross

Jesus is made to carry his own cross all the way out of the city to a place called Golgotha or 'the place of the skull'.

Jesus carried the weight of that heavy burden and understood the path ahead would be a difficult one. While he was in the garden, just before his arrest, he had even prayed that God would keep him from it: "*Abba*, Father, for you all things are possible. Take this cup from me. Yet not my will but yours be done."

John 19:17, Mark 14:36

Worknesh's Story



Worknesh, a mother and member of Degebon Women's saving group is seen drying coffee beans at her house in Decha District, South West Region in Ethiopia. Photo: Maheder Tadese/Caritas Australia

Worknesh's Story

Worknesh's strength in adapting to climate challenges reflects the resilience of families who face hardship with courage.

Worknesh is a mother and coffee and vegetable farmer who lives in southern Ethiopia. The area she lives in is prone to natural disasters, including droughts and landslides.

During lean seasons, families like Worknesh's are often at risk of hunger. The income from the coffee beans that Worknesh grows only lasts three months. During other times of the year, she grows staple food like millet and vegetables, but it is often a struggle to have enough food to feed her family.

"We were suffering during the lean season and it destroys the yield," Worknesh said. "We suffer when there is not enough food for our family. Since there is no option, our family tries to sustain and pass the time with root crops."

Malnutrition, particularly among children, remains a pressing issue in Ethiopia. High rates of stunting and wasting reflect underlying problems in food security and nutrition in the country, especially in rural areas.

Worknesh fears for her children's health, as poor nutrition takes a toll on their growth and education. To make matters worse, her family is often forced to drink contaminated water from a spring, leading to frequent illness from waterborne diseases. The long trek - nearly 90 minutes - to collect clean water adds yet another burden to her already overwhelming responsibilities.

Malaria is another persistent risk and the lack of health centres in her village means there is little support or treatment for malaria, waterborne diseases or other health risks that are present in her community.

Although Ethiopia has made progress in reducing poverty, it remains widespread. The unpredictable nature of rainfall and crop yields means that the family's food security is never guaranteed, and the situation is worsened by

Worknesh's Story

a series of droughts in the region. The 2022-2023 drought, one of the most severe in recent history, significantly impacted crop yields and water availability.

Despite these ongoing challenges, Worknesh's life has begun to change for the better, thanks to the support of a program that has helped her improve her family's food security and economic stability.

With the support of Caritas Ethiopia, Worknesh was able to join a program which aims to support communities who experience repeated drought and conflict driven crisis in the southern part of the country. The project aims to support communities by improving agricultural productivity, helping families diversify their income sources through on-farm and off-farm activities, promoting drinking water and irrigation technologies and improving sustainable water utilisation and land and forest conservation practices.

With the training and vegetable seeds provided by the program, Worknesh has been able to grow a variety of crops, ensuring a more reliable and nutritious food source for her family.

"After engaging in the project I am able to produce vegetable to secure my family food security problem and to increase my family income with the surplus product," Worknesh said.

Through the program, Worknesh also gained valuable business management skills and joined a women's savings group, allowing her to access new income streams and further strengthen her family's food security.

While the road ahead is still challenging and climate change continues to pose a threat to food security in Ethiopia, Worknesh's journey is a testament to the power of hope and resilience in the face of adversity. Thanks to the program, she now has the knowledge, resources, and confidence to forge a future for her children that is free from hunger.

This project is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

Reflect

Worknesh showed strength while navigating uncertainty.

- Who do you know who carries heavy burdens and how could you walk with them?
- How can you show solidarity with people facing climate-related hardship?

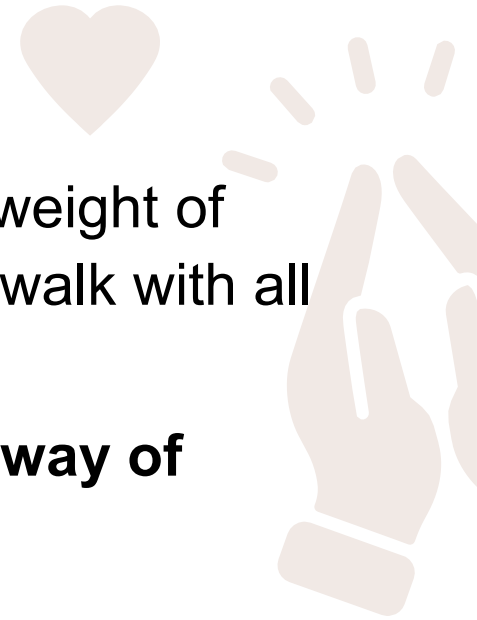
‘The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together... for we know that things can change.’

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* n13

Respond

Jesus, you feel the weight of heavy burdens and walk with all who suffer.

May we follow the way of solidarity.



STATION 3

Jesus falls for the first time

Under the weight of a heavy cross, Jesus stumbles and falls.

Jesus understands how vulnerable we can be when life becomes challenging. Sometimes, the effects of such things as disability, poverty and geographic isolation combine and cause people to become especially vulnerable.

Salin's Story

Salin is a school principal in rural Cambodia. She joined the Upholding Community Dignity Together program, supported by Caritas Australia and is helping her community access clean water. Photo: Caritas Australia

Salin's Story

Care and human dignity are at the heart of Salin's story.

Salin lives in rural Cambodia with her husband and six-year-old daughter. She works as a school principal in a remote village in the Siem Reap province. Many teachers in Cambodia earn a low wage, so Salin also has to work as a farmer to earn additional income to support her family.

"My life is like the people in my village. I work as a school principal, earning only one salary, and doing a little farming so we can eat," Salin said.

Cambodia is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, particularly droughts and floods. With less predictable rainfall and the nearest water well over 1.5 kilometres away, Salin's household faced constant water shortages. The lack of clean water, handwashing and toilet facilities in the village had a significant impact on children at Salin's school too.

With the encouragement of the teachers at her school and other villagers, Salin joined a program that supports communities to create lasting change in their lives through sustainable access to food, income, WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), and disaster risk reduction training. Through the program, a 10,000 litre water distribution station was constructed in the village and Salin was elected as the chairperson of the water station committee.

"I am proud that I can help the community have access to water," Salin said.

Although Salin leads a busy life as a school principal, she remains committed to devoting her time and skills to helping others and making sure her village has what it needs so that everyone can thrive. Her dream is for all children in her village to be healthy and to attend school regularly.

This project is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

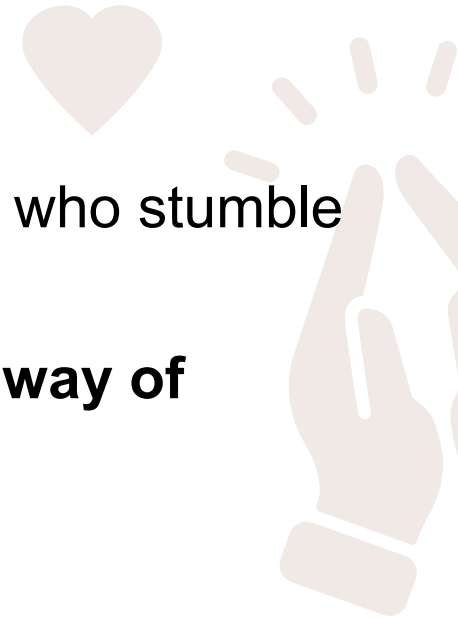
Reflect

- Who has lifted you up when life was difficult?
- How can you respect the dignity of others in your community?

Respond

Jesus, you lift up all who stumble or feel left out.

May we follow the way of dignity.



‘All of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family...’

Pope Francis, *Laudato Deum* n67

STATION 4

Jesus meets his mother

On the way, Jesus meets his mother. Out of depths of love and utter sadness at watching her son suffer, Mary comforts him.

Jesus knew the relief that love brings in times of suffering or struggle. Mary knew it too. Even while Jesus was on the cross, he continued to show love for his mother by connecting her with his dear friend John, who made a place for her in his home.

Luke 23:27–31, John 19:25–27

A Community's Story



Sign at entrance of the Lemakot Health Centre. Photo: Caritas Australia

A Community's Story

This story shows us how important it is to act with compassion when we see others in our human family facing challenges.

The Lemakot Health Center in rural Papua New Guinea was first established in 1912 with the last major maintenance work in 1987. Last year funding from Caritas Australia and Catholic Church Health Services helped replace the facility's roof.

Rural health centres, like the one in Lemakot face enormous challenges in addressing work of this magnitude. The cost of supplies in Papua New Guinea is high, with record inflation reducing purchasing power for everybody, especially for those on low incomes in rural areas.

"Papua New Guinea has a very high mortality rate because of the many challenges that affect the healthcare services in a health centre like Lemakot. We would like to provide quality and very safe delivery or childbirth for our people," said Dr Kari from Catholic Church Health Services.

"Women deliver in very challenging circumstances, even though they are in a health centre. Old and malfunctioning equipment can affect the way we deliver our health services. These can improve through the support of donor partners and through the support of the Government and the Church to be able to deliver quality and efficient care to our people," he added.

The work done to the Lemakot Health Centre was incredibly overdue. The rusty roof was full of holes, rain leaked into treatment rooms, there was no running water or electricity. This created serious impediments to the delivery of adequate healthcare to patients.

A Community's Story

“We are happy to say that through the work of Caritas Australia and the funding that has come through, and the support of the Catholic Health Services and the Kavieng Diocese, we have been able to fix the roofs of the health centre,” said Dr Kari.

Thanks to your support and the work of our partners, the new roof has been firmly installed, sealing the building – which has also been newly repainted. Several water tanks are now in operation and there are no electrical hazards.

This project is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

Reflect

This story shows the power of compassion in action.

- When has someone shown you love without condition or limits?
- How can you offer loving support to those facing hardship?

Respond

Jesus, you show love without limits and make a place of belonging for all.

May we follow the way of love.

‘This is the peace of the Risen Christ, a disarming and humble and preserving peace. It comes from God. God, who loves all of us, without any limits or conditions.’

Pope Leo XIV, 2025

STATION 5

Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross

On their way out to Golgotha, the soldiers come across Simon, a man who had travelled from a place called Cyrene. They make him help Jesus carry the cross.

As in Jesus's own story, when we travel life's difficult roads, the help of others can make all the difference. Sometimes, we depend on the support of friends, family or others in our community. Other times, we are the ones to stand in solidarity with people experiencing need or vulnerability.

Mark 15:21, Luke 23:26

Sisilia's Story



Sisilia in a classroom in her school in rural Tanzania. Photo: Caritas Australia

Sisilia's Story

Sisilia's courage in pursuing education, safety and knowledge shows how young people can lead change.

13-year-old Sisilia lives in a village in remote northern Tanzania. Life was not easy for Sisilia growing up. Her father passed away when she was one, leaving her mother to care for her and her four siblings all on her own.

Sisilia currently lives in a small, overcrowded house with only one bed, poor ventilation and no toilet. One of the main challenges she faces is access to clean and safe water. Every day, Sisilia fetches water three times, including before and after school. Prior to the installation of a water distribution point in her village, Sisilia had to walk nearly 30 mins each round trip to collect water from a dirty canal. The water was unsafe, causing frequent illness, and the long walks left Sisilia exhausted, fearful of wild animals and struggling to focus on her studies.

Lack of clean water is a major issue in Tanzania, where nearly 40% of people don't have access to basic drinking water services and 75% don't have access to basic sanitation services. (World Bank 2022).

With the support of our partner in Tanzania, the Diocese of Mbulu Development Department (DMDD), Sisilia and her school joined the A+ Successor Project.

The project has helped improve access to clean water at Sisilia's school by installing clean water taps at the school, a gamechanger for the school community. Children can wash their hands, drink clean water and water the school garden to grow food that they can eat for lunch. It's also easier for the schools to retain talented teachers as they know they have access to clean water on campus.

Sisilia said: 'It has helped us keep our classrooms, surrounds and toilets clean... I can also wash my hands after using the toilet or before eating, and this helps prevent sickness.'

Sisilia's Story

Through the project, Sisilia participated in a SWASH (School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) Club where she learnt about the importance of handwashing at critical times, boiling unclean water before drinking and keeping the toilets clean.

Sisilia is one of 30 students selected to join her school's SWASH Club, which uses a child-to-child approach to empower students to become advocates for change. Sisilia's active involvement has turned her into a confident leader in her community, using her knowledge to promote hygiene, sanitation and rights awareness in her community. As part of the club, children take part in public demonstrations where they teach their parents and other adults how to maintain good hygiene through the use of songs, dance, games and interactive handwashing demonstrations.

She explained: 'I now talk to parents in my neighbourhood about the importance of sending their children to school, regardless of their financial situation. I explain that education is a basic human right.'

In addition to providing water sources at her school, the A+ Successor project has helped establish a domestic water point in Sisilia's village. Sisilia now needs to only walk two minutes to collect water, which has drastically cut down time needed on water collection.

Sisilia's story demonstrates how lack of clean water, long walking distances and poor living conditions directly affect children's ability to focus on education. Addressing these needs can lead to improved attendance, performance and aspirations – and young leaders like Sisilia are the catalyst for that change.

With greater access to clean water at school and at home, Sisilia is determined to continue pursuing her education. Her favourite subjects are Science, English and Maths. Sisilia's dream is to one day become a pilot and she hopes the time she saves collecting water can be used to focus on her studies. She also hopes to one day build a sturdy and comfortable house for her mum and siblings to live in together.

Reflect

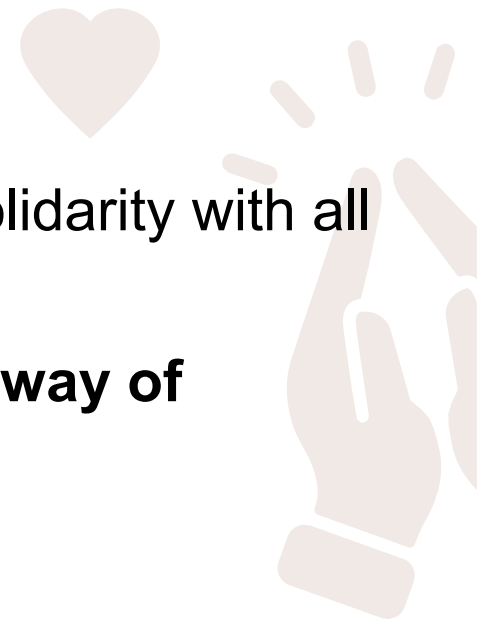
Sisilia's courage shows how young people can lead change.

- How can you stand in solidarity with young people whose rights are at risk?
- What issue would you like to speak up about?

Respond

Jesus, you are in solidarity with all in need.

May we follow the way of solidarity.



'Remember, we are all but travellers here.'

Saint Mary MacKillop, 1867

STATION 6

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

As Jesus walks along the road, slowed and sweating under the weight of the heavy cross, he is met by a woman named Veronica. Seeing his suffering and with her heart full of compassion, Veronica holds out her cloth and uses it to wipe his face.

Veronica was moved to compassion and used what she had to help Jesus. Her gesture was a sign of care and human dignity.

Ukraine



Ukraine

This story shows the courage and dignity people hold onto even in the midst of conflict and uncertainty.

The war in Ukraine has displaced millions of people, leaving families facing loss, upheaval and an uncertain future. The conflict, the largest in Europe since World War II, has created a humanitarian need affecting nearly a third of the country's population. Throughout this time, Caritas Ukraine and Caritas-Spes Ukraine have remained alongside affected communities, providing shelter, food, water and medical care, while also supporting people as they rebuild their lives and work towards self-sufficiency.

Since the full-scale invasion began, Caritas has reached more than four million people with vital support. Their work includes not only emergency relief but also long-term recovery, helping people secure housing, find employment and access education and healthcare. "Our goal is to help war-affected people emerge from crisis and become independent from humanitarian aid as much as possible," explains Tetiana Stawnychy, President of Caritas Ukraine. At the same time, she reminds us that recovery cannot happen without adequate support for local efforts.

As the conflict continues, humanitarian needs are increasing even as funding declines. This makes life especially difficult for vulnerable groups such as older people, low-income families and individuals with disabilities.

"Ukrainians are determined to rebuild, heal and thrive," says Father Vyacheslav Grynevych, Executive Director of Caritas-Spes Ukraine. "But it is difficult for us to face this alone. We fear being left in the shadow of war."

Caritas continues to call for sustained and flexible support so that local humanitarian organisations can lead the recovery work they are best placed to deliver. Over the years of this devastating conflict, Caritas has built the expertise and capacity needed to help families rebuild and communities recover. With continued international support, people in Ukraine can move toward a future where safety, stability and peace are restored.

Reflect

- How can we offer hope to those living through war or displacement?
- What helps you stay courageous during uncertain times?

Respond

Jesus, Veronica's courageous act met your need and upheld human dignity.

May we follow the way of courage.

'Without fear, united, hand in hand with God and among ourselves, we will go forward. We are disciples of Christ, Christ goes before us, and the world needs His light.'

Pope Leo XIV, 2025

STATION 7

Jesus falls for a second time

Worn out from his slow and terrible journey to Golgotha, Jesus stumbles and falls again.

Poverty and injustice keep people from accessing what they need to live safe and healthy lives. Global events such as war and natural disasters deepen these struggles, especially for the most vulnerable.

An estimated 831 million people live in extreme poverty.*

*[World Bank](#)



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Manaini's Story



Manaini sells fresh fruits and vegetables that she and her community have grown and packaged on their farms, by the roadside in a small village in Fiji. Photo: Caritas Australia

Manaini's Story

Manaini's is finding new ways to use what she has wisely, showing how shared resources can support a healthier future.

Manaini lives in a small village in northern Fiji. Life was always a struggle. Almost one quarter of Fiji's people live in poverty, and in rural areas the rate is even higher. Jobs are scarce, and most families survive on what they grow.

Meals in Manaini's home were simple and not always healthy. Sometimes it was just cassava or sweet potato with tea. If she could not afford something, her family went without and the family often lacked variety in their diet. Leftover crops were wasted when fed to pigs and chickens.

Manaini's greatest fear was for her children's future. With tears in her eyes, she said, "The things I worry about the most is my kids' education. The requirements that need to be met are hard for me to try to achieve to suit their needs and wants in their education with my daily income."

Compounding this, communities across Fiji are facing a health crisis. Many families like Manaini's have to resort to buying high calorie food for survival, at the cost of their long-term health. This shift away from traditional diets, once rich in fresh fish, root vegetables, and fruit, has contributed to a drastic rise in preventable health issues, particularly among low-income communities.

Diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer, and heart disease are now common. Four out of five deaths in Fiji are caused by these life-threatening diseases.

Viloki, who works with Caritas Australia's partner, FRIEND (Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development), explained, "Fiji has one of the highest rates in the Pacific in terms of non-communicable diseases.

Manaini's Story

That's like 80% of the people here have one or the other form of non-communicable diseases, including diabetes, high blood pressure, heart related diseases, and these are mostly attributed to the lifestyle they have, the eating habits they have. Every eight hours, there are three amputations.”

With the help of local partner, FRIEND, Manaini joined training in food processing. She learnt how to use leftovers from crops like cassava, taro and breadfruit to make flour. She now makes roti and pancakes at home instead of buying expensive flour from the supermarket. This means healthier meals and big savings.

She explained, “After the food processing training, we learnt how to make use of the food that was available. We learnt a new skill which allows us to make use of the food.”

Manaini received seeds from the project, enabling her to grow a greater variety of food in her garden. She also learnt to make organic fertiliser and pesticides from plants. With the women's group she bakes cakes and pies from root crop flour to sell at a roadside stall.

Her daughter joined financial literacy training and shared the lessons at home. The family now manages their income more wisely and no longer wastes what they earn.

The project also brought solar lights to the village. Before, nights were dark and unsafe. Families used kerosene lamps if they could afford the fuel. Now, Manaini's children can play safely, and elderly people can walk safely at night.

Manaini is proud of her progress and still dreams of more. She hopes to expand the women's business and one day bring solar power to the village. She said, “The project as a whole has a lot of value in my life as it totally changed the life of my family and even the community.”

This project is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

Reflect

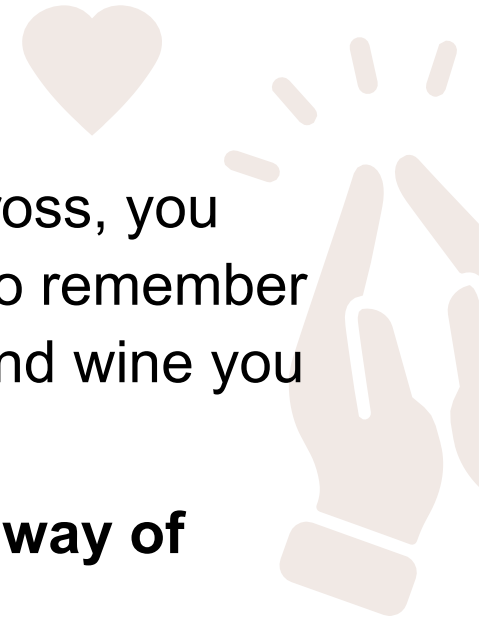
Manaini's story shows how caring for shared resources helps communities thrive.

- How do your actions affect the shared world around you?
- What is one thing you could use more wisely for the good of others?

Respond

Jesus, before the cross, you urged your friends to remember the meal of bread and wine you shared.

May we follow the way of sharing.



'We cannot hope for a better world, a bright and peaceful future, if we are not willing to share what we ourselves have received.'

Pope Leo XIV, FAO World Food Day Address (2025)

STATION 8

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

The women in the crowd following Jesus weep and mourn for him. Jesus sees their grief and understands what it means for them and the whole of the human family.

The word 'compassion' comes from a Latin word *compati*, which literally means to suffer with.

Compassion is motivated by love and moves us to act in solidarity and care for others.

Luke 23:27–31

Gaza



Ahmad sits in the rubble of a destroyed building. Photo: Caritas Jerusalem

Gaza

The situation in Gaza reveals the strength and courage people show as they face unimaginable hardship.

When war broke out in Gaza in October 2023, Caritas Jerusalem staff member Ahmad found his life and work transformed overnight. Residents living in the northern Gaza Strip – like Ahmad and his family – were ordered to evacuate.

He recalls, “We felt like this was unlike any other previous wars...we experienced what it was like to leave our homes, our neighbourhoods, our streets, our friends, our family, and the place where we were born and lived our whole lives. We did not want to leave, but the bombing was so cruel that we had to abandon our house in Gaza and head south.”

Forced to evacuate under heavy bombardment, Ahmad and his family sought shelter in the city of Khan Younis. Carrying almost nothing – no food, mattresses, or blankets –they sought refuge with friends’ relatives. At first, the area was quieter, and they hoped the fighting would soon end. But weeks stretched into months, food prices soared and access to essentials grew scarce.

Their ordeal worsened on December 12, 2023, when the house they were staying in was bombed at 4:00 am. Ahmad was buried under rubble, his eardrum ruptured by the blast. Emerging in darkness and chaos, he discovered that his brother had survived with devastating injuries, losing one leg and suffering severe damage to the other.

Ahmad said, “From that moment on, the war changed for me, and my family and I became a significant part of this profound suffering.”

At the hospital, Ahmad stayed by his brother’s side for two months as he underwent daily surgeries. Conditions were dire: too few doctors, limited equipment, and operations that took longer than three hours would often be

Gaza

postponed or cancelled entirely. Meanwhile, Ahmad's parents, displaced again from Khan Younis, rented a single-room shelter in Rafah, only for that, too, to be bombed, injuring his uncle and aunt. With no safe options, his family eventually joined Ahmad at the hospital, living in a tent for months.

Even the hospital, once a place of refuge, became unsafe when fighting reached Rafah. The family was displaced again, moving between a camp in Khan Younis, an empty home in Hamad City, and finally Deir al-Balah. At each stage, they lost everything they had managed to gather.

Through these repeated displacements, Ahmad found strength and solace in his work as part of Caritas Jerusalem's Media and Communications team.

He explains, "Thank God we work at Caritas, allowing us to serve people in the most challenging conditions despite the lack of medicine, How beautiful it is to see a mother or child come to you for help and to be able to provide them with support in the most difficult circumstances. This organisation helps us make our voices heard, which has brightened our days."

Families in Gaza are enduring catastrophic conditions as hostilities escalate and basic necessities for survival vanish. Deaths from starvation and severe malnutrition are rising daily. Amid relentless violence, people are grappling with death, injury, forced displacement and deep psychological trauma. There is no safe place left in Gaza.

Yet amid devastation, Ahmad's determination to serve his community endures. His faith and his work with Caritas have given him purpose. Even in the face of personal injury, repeated displacement, and loss, he continues to stand with his community, walking side by side with those who suffer, with hope for a better future.

Ahmad's story is a reminder that Caritas' mission of accompaniment is lived not only through its programs, but through the courage and resilience of its frontline staff.

Reflect

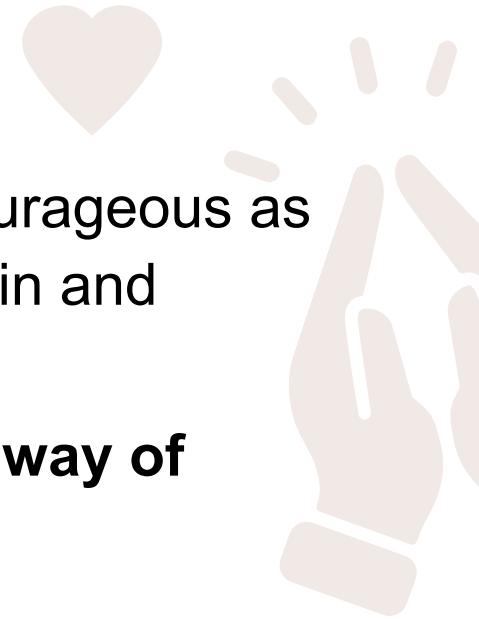
Everyone deserves to live in peace and without fear.

- When have you needed courage to face something painful or overwhelming?
- How can you show compassion to people living through crisis?

Respond

Jesus, you were courageous as you experienced pain and suffering.

May we follow the way of courage.



‘Social love is a force capable of inspiring new ways of approaching the problems of today’s world.’

Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* n183

STATION 9

Jesus falls for the third time

Exhausted and feeling the limits of his human body, Jesus falls again.

At times when we feel exhausted or downtrodden, we can rely on trusted others to help lift us up.

Pronali's Story



Pronali performing a checkup on a community member. Photo: Sumon Corraya/Caritas Bangladesh

Pronali's Story

This story shows how one person's generosity and support can strengthen an entire community.

In remote villages of Bangladesh, where more than half the population lives below the poverty line and indigenous communities often lack access to education and healthcare, maternal health remains a critical concern. Women here are over 40 times more likely to die during childbirth compared to Australia, and for many, giving birth without trained support is an everyday reality – one that puts both mother and child at risk.

Pronali, an indigenous woman from a small village in Bangladesh, knows this struggle firsthand. Since joining the Community Managed Sustainable Livelihoods and Resilience Program in July 2021, she has become not only an essential member of her community but also a role model for expectant mothers. As a mother of two herself, she now provides antenatal check-ups, safe deliveries, and health education – saving lives and shaping a healthier future.

Like many women in her village, Pronali's early life was marked by poverty. After completing secondary school, financial hardship forced her to abandon further studies, and she married young. For years, she was a full-time housewife, caring for her husband and children, with little community involvement.

“During delivery I had a lot of complications,” Pronali recalls. “I thought if I can help others in my own way, so that no one else has to suffer, it would be a blessing.”

Thanks to your generosity and support, and the work of our partners Caritas Bangladesh, Pronali completed an intensive three-week training on safe motherhood practices. She learned to recognise early warning signs, perform basic health checks such as blood pressure and weight monitoring, and refer high-risk cases to government clinics.

Pronali's Story

Before her training, there wasn't a single qualified midwife in her village. That is why her impact has been so significant. In her first three months, she successfully delivered six healthy babies – and since the program began, not a single maternal death has been reported under her care.

“Now every day pregnant women come to me for check-ups and call me for home deliveries,” Pronali says. “The villagers and family members honour me as an important person – their family health provider.”

Thanks to your generosity, and Pronali's undying dedication, she is proving that when women are empowered, entire communities thrive.

This project is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

Reflect

Pronali's generosity helps create safer and healthier futures for her community.

- Who has shown you generosity and how did it impact you?
- What is one generous action you can take this week?

Respond

Jesus, you gave all that you had out of love and generosity of spirit.

May we follow the way of generosity.

'Love enables us to create one great family, where all of us can feel at home.'

Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* n62

STATION 10

Jesus is stripped of his garments

The soldiers strip Jesus of his clothes. They mock him by saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They make him wear a crown of thorns and a scarlet robe.

They dress Jesus in his own clothes only to strip him of them again and crucify him. And then they divide his garments among themselves.

Matthew 27:27–37, Mark 15:16–24,
John 19:23–25

When all that a person needs to live a safe and healthy life is taken away, their human rights are denied and they are unable to live a life worthy of their dignity.

Caritas Australia works alongside some of the world’s most vulnerable people. Informed by principles of Catholic Social Teaching, it works to end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity.

Emmanuel's Story



Emmanuel tending chickens at the San Isidro Care Center in the Solomon Islands. Photo: Caritas Australia Solomon Islands

Emmanuel's Story

Emmanuel's story illustrates how, with the support of others, including organisations like Caritas Australia and its partners, people living with a disability can fully participate in and contribute to community life.

Emmanuel grew up in the Malaita province of the Solomon Islands, with his father, mother and two siblings. His siblings study in the city of Honiara but Emmanuel attended San Isidro Care Center – a rural training centre that caters for hearing-impaired students in the Solomon Islands.

With your generous support and the help of Caritas Australia's partner San Isidro Care Center, Emmanuel has been able to overcome the barriers of living with a hearing impairment and has learned the necessary skills, including sign language, to gain greater employment opportunities.

As the head boy of the centre, Emmanuel was selected by his classmates to attend World Youth Day (WYD) 2023 in Lisbon, Portugal, along with three other San Isidro students. (WYD is a worldwide encounter with the Pope, celebrated every three years. It is a great opportunity for young people to celebrate their faith and personally experience the universality of the Catholic Church.)

Emmanuel has now finished his four-year course at the rural training centre and is looking forward to pursuing construction-related work using the skills he has learnt.

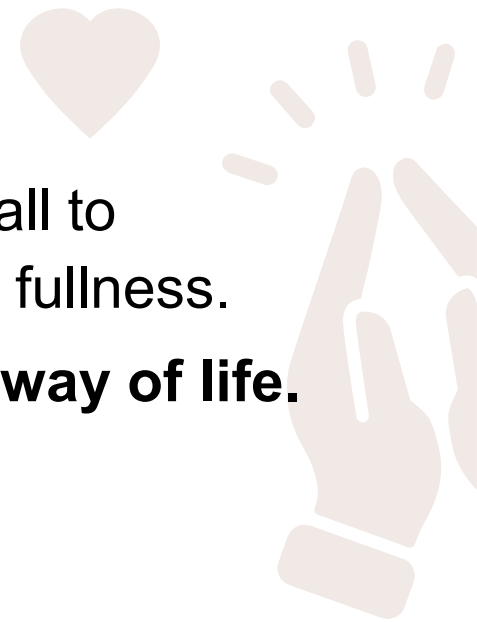
Reflect

- What helps you remember that your value is not based on what you have?
- How can you help create spaces where everyone can participate and belong?

Respond

Jesus, you long for all to experience life in its fullness.

May we follow the way of life.



‘Aspire not to have more, but to be more.’

Saint Oscar Romero

STATION 11

Jesus is nailed to the cross

Jesus is crucified between two criminals. It is a dark scene.

Nevertheless, Jesus's love and compassion for humanity is so deep that even while he is being crucified, he prays for God to forgive those who mock and hurt him.

Matthew 27:35, Mark 15:24, Luke 23:32-42, John 19:18

“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

One of the criminals crucified alongside Jesus sees his innocence and something of the divine possibility he embodied.

In that moment of connection, Jesus replied with words of forgiveness and welcome: “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation

Sheridan painting at the Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation headquarters. Photo: Caritas Australia

Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation

This community shows how connection to culture, Country and each other strengthens identity and brings healing.

Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation in Western Sydney is a space where culture, connection and support intertwine.

Founded by five Aboriginal Elders, Baabayn offers a place of cultural resilience and healing grounded in identity. It is a place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to strengthen or rekindle their ties to culture, Country and each other.

Baabayn shows how healing happens through relationships and culture, whether through sharing stories between visitors and Elders, chatting over a cuppa, children learning in the homework club or Elders offering guidance.

Baabayn also connects people with government services, other centres, and education providers like TAFE, offering culturally appropriate support in navigating these systems. It fills a crucial gap in connecting with services that often have not been designed with needs and perspectives of First Nations peoples at their centre.

The Mums and Bubs group at Baabayn created *Why Our Children Are Proud to be Aboriginal*, a book illustrated by young mothers from the group that celebrates cultural pride and strengthens identity for future generations.

“Through artistic expression, I’m able to own my culture and honour my grandparents... Coming to Baabayn lets me speak with Elders, share experiences, and grow my sense of self,” said Sheridan, one of the participants.

The Fences and Walls project allows Elders and women to plant native seeds, symbols of healing and growth, which the next generation will nurture as they carry forward Elders’ stories and strength. This integral project reflects ongoing healing, truth-telling and the challenge of systemic barriers faced by First Nations peoples.

Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation

The work of Baabayn provides vital lessons for all Australians alike, such as the value of slowing down, listening deeply, respecting lived experience and nurturing connection to Country. Baabayn is a great example of First Nations-led grassroots programs building resilience locally and in a way that simply wouldn't exist otherwise.

Caritas Australia is proud to continue to support and amplify the voice of Baabayn.

Reflect

Baabayn teaches the importance of connection to culture, Country and community.

- Who helps you feel connected and grounded?
- How might you strengthen your connection to people and planet?

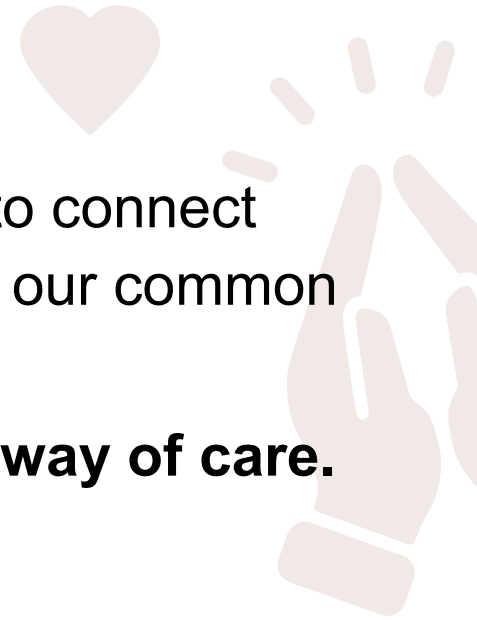
‘There can be no true peace and no true love that is based on injustice...’

Saint Oscar Romero, 14 March 1977

Respond

Jesus, you lead us to connect with each other and our common home.

May we follow the way of care.



STATION 12

Jesus dies on the cross

The sky is dark and, from the cross, Jesus cries out in despair: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Soon after, he dies.

At that moment, not only does the curtain of the temple tear in two, from top to bottom, but the whole earth shakes.

Matthew 27:45–51, Mark 15:33–39,
Luke 23:44–49, John 19:30

Injustice can impact Earth and its people for generations.

But actions that help restore social and ecological justice reverberate to disrupt that pattern so that all may flourish. Such approaches to justice hear “both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor,” as Pope Francis says in his letter, *Laudato Si’*.*

*Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’* n 49

Monoranjon's Story



Monoranjon lives in a region in southwest Bangladesh that is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Photo: Caritas Australia

Monoranjon's Story

Monoranjon's work in climate-resilient farming shows how caring for people and caring for our common home go hand in hand.

Monoranjon lived a life fraught with challenges before joining Caritas Bangladesh's Community Managed Sustainable Livelihoods and Resilience Program (CMLRP-II). As a day labourer, he struggled to make ends meet, facing the constant threats of natural disasters like cyclones, storms, and heat waves. Poverty, food insecurity, and the threat posed by forest animals compounded his difficulties. With limited education and the responsibility of caring for his family, Monoranjon's life was a constant battle to make basic ends meet.

Without enough income from his crops and fishing, Monoranjon was at risk of being unable to afford school fees and supplies for his children. Without completing school, his children face a high risk of remaining in the cycle of poverty.

Facing severe issues with salinity and sea level rise, it is crucial that more people receive support in the area. Bangladesh's most impoverished populations are disproportionately affected by and vulnerable to the current and predicted effects of climate change.

Monoranjon explained, "In this dry season no seedlings come out from seeds. Due to heat of the sun and lack of water, plants are dying."

In the next decade, 17% of Bangladesh will need to relocate as a result of climate change ([UN, 2021](#)). According to the World Risk Index, Bangladesh is ranked ninth in the world of countries most at risk of being affected by disasters ([World Risk Report, 2024](#)). Home to the world's eighth highest population, this could trigger a crisis of significant magnitude. There is a strong chance that much of the region Monoranjon lives in will be under water within the next thirty years.

Monoranjon's Story

Monoranjon also explained, “Disasters come at any time the area gets flooded. Storms devastate us. Our houses are destroyed... Suddenly tide comes from the sea and the area could be flooded, completely – I mean homes. Fish farms are all washed away, with millions of takas lost.”

Areas neighbouring to the south have already flooded, and with nowhere to go, Caritas Bangladesh reported families living in flooded homes, on makeshift beds tied to their ceilings to stay dry. In the southwest coastal region alone, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, World Food Programme, and the World Bank have counted almost 10 million people facing poverty, and of those, almost 6 million cannot meet their daily minimum nutrition Needs (World Bank Group, 2020).

Joining the livelihoods program brought hope back into Monoranjon's life. Through peer learning sessions, he gained invaluable knowledge and skills in climate-resilient farming techniques.

With the support of Caritas Bangladesh, Monoranjon also received co-investment assistance and learned about vaccination techniques, significantly reducing the mortality rate among his livestock. He has been able to share this knowledge with his family, neighbours and local community.

Monoranjon also works with his community to plant mangrove seedlings on the mudflat coastlines across the delta they live on, to prevent further erosion, flooding and sea level rise of their lands.

Without support, the most vulnerable populations will not only be displaced and landless, but with land loss and reduced livelihoods, at great risk of exploitation. The future doesn't look bright for many who live in the southern region of Bangladesh, but the support of Caritas Australia's donors and others provide a hope that more people will be able to survive this impending emergency.

This project is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

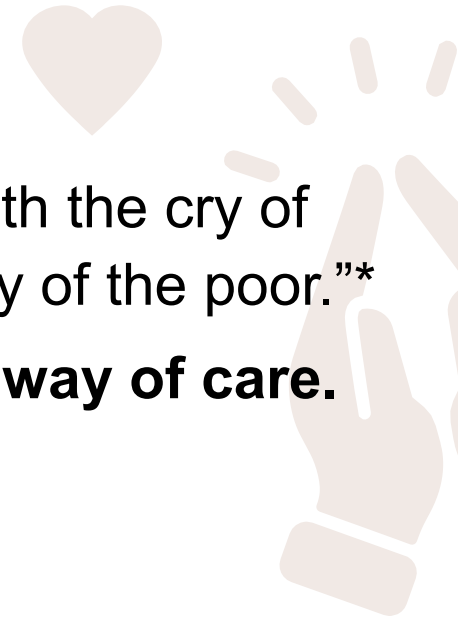
Reflect

- How does caring for our common home help protect the most vulnerable?
- What is one thing you can do to care for our common home?

Respond

Jesus, you hear “both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”*

May we follow the way of care.



‘Hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.’

Pope Francis, **Laudato Si’ n49*

STATION 13

Jesus is taken down from the cross

A secret follower of Jesus named Joseph of Arimathaea asks Pilate if he can remove the body of Jesus from the cross. Pilate allows it, so Joseph and another follower named Nicodemus take it away and prepare it for burial.

Joseph of Arimathaea kept his care for Jesus secret because he was afraid of what might happen if it became public. But his fear did not keep him from acting with care and human dignity.

Matthew 27:57–58, Mark 15:42–45,
Luke 23:50–52, John 19:38

Roland's Story



Roland learnt carpentry skills through the Youth Strengthening Capacity program in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He is now a mentor to other community members enabling them to be self-reliant. Photo: Arlette Bashizi/Caritas Australia

Roland's Story

Roland's determination to rebuild his life and support others shows how love can inspire hope and opportunity.

A father of four, Roland and his family were forced to flee their hometown in the Democratic Republic of Congo due to violent ethnic conflict. When his family arrived in their new village, they had nothing. Struggling to provide a single meal for his family each day, Roland had to take on menial tasks like digging latrines to survive.

Roland was selected to participate in the Youth Capacity Strengthening program, funded by Caritas Australia in partnership with Caritas Développement Kongolo. Roland chose carpentry as his trade, which empowered him to develop a stable income so he could support his family and build self-reliance.

Before joining the program, Roland's family lived in extreme poverty. He had no steady income or secure access to land. However, the vocational training he received in carpentry transformed his situation dramatically.

"This training is crucial for us because it reduces unemployment, helps us escape poverty, and gives us freedom," Roland explained.

Within months, Roland mastered carpentry, which allowed him to earn a stable income by making and selling furniture such as chairs and school benches. This income enabled him to provide for his family's basic needs, including food, healthcare, and education for his children. His wife also began selling produce at the local market, adding to the household income.

"Since I started working after my training with Caritas, my life has changed. At home, we live in peace; we have enough food when we need it; my children go to school," Roland explained.

Beyond this, Roland has become a role model in his community. He mentors 15 young people in carpentry, helping them acquire skills that can keep them out of dangerous work in the local mining sector. While mentoring other community members, he is working to expand his workshop, increase his land for farming, and purchase extra equipment.

Reflect

- Who inspired you to act with love?
- How can you let love guide the way you encourage someone in your life?

Respond

Jesus, your love beyond measure inspires love in return.

May we follow the way of love.

‘No sign of affection [love], even the smallest, will ever be forgotten, especially if it is shown to those who are suffering, lonely or in need.’

Pope Leo XIV, *Dilexi Te n4*

STATION 14

Jesus is laid in the tomb

Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus wrap Jesus's body in linen cloths, with myrrh and aloes, then they lay it in a new tomb in the garden, near to where Jesus was crucified.

Having endured a terrible loss, Jesus's friends were afraid and hid themselves away. But soon, compelled by love and courage, Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter and John, would return to the tomb, only to find it empty.

Matthew 27:59–61, Mark 15:46–47,
Luke 23:53–56, John 19:39–42

Fir Kumari's Story



Fir Kumari sews using her new electric sewing machine. Photo: Caritas Nepal

Fir Kumari's Story

By working with courage and determination, Fir Kumari is creating new opportunities in her own life and for those around her.

Fir Kumari (42), lives with her family, which includes her husband, daughter, and mother-in-law. Her mother-in-law manages the household chores, while her husband works in farming and her daughter is studying at boarding school. Fir Kumari was born with a physical impairment affecting only her left elbow. She has a yellow disability card, indicating a medium level of disability without an allowance. She finished her class 10. "I did not feel like studying further," expresses Fir Kumari.

She got married at the age of 20 and soon gave birth to her daughter. Due to her disability, farming work was challenging for her. However, rather than sitting idle, she learned to sew by observing a neighbour's tailor shop. "I took classes from her for one and half years," Fir Kumari says. In 2022, she purchased a sewing machine and began making clothes herself.

"When I took the initiative, I felt scared about people's opinions on what a person with a physical disability could accomplish and who would trust me with their garments," says Fir Kumari.

Gradually, as she gained experience, people began to seek her sewing services. This motivated her to pursue sewing as a small business. However, her physical condition and basic sewing machine still made the work challenging.

In 2024, she joined a Caritas Nepal program. "I attended a Person with Disabilities (PWD) network meeting organized by Caritas Nepal in coordination with the Devchuli Municipality. During the second meeting, I was elected as the vice-chairperson of the network. I discovered that people with disabilities can work just like anyone else and earn a living. This realisation made me even prouder of my efforts," says Fir Kumari.

Fir Kumari's Story

In March 2025, she received a grant to purchase an electric sewing machine.

"I feel at ease while I work," Fir Kumari said with a smile. "It took me about 2.5 to 3 hours to sew one set of cord-set, but now I complete in 1.5 hours. Operating this machine requires much less physical effort since it's electric, saving me 50% of the time compared to before and increasing my efficiency," added Fir Kumari.

This support has helped increase her income as well. "My income has more than doubled, and I have started saving monthly in a cooperative and women's group. The income is used not only for household expenses but also to invest in my daughter's education," says Fir Kumari. She now stitches school uniforms, and the demand is high.

She plans to expand her tailoring business by hiring more people and adding another machine. She also wants to train other women to become financially strong. "I hope that this program continues, and if people like me, who have disabilities and want to do something, could also be supported like I have been, it would be wonderful."

This project is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

Reflect

Fir Kumari's determination has opened new possibilities for her and others.

- What small acts of courage can you take in your daily life?
- How can you support someone as they take a courageous first step?

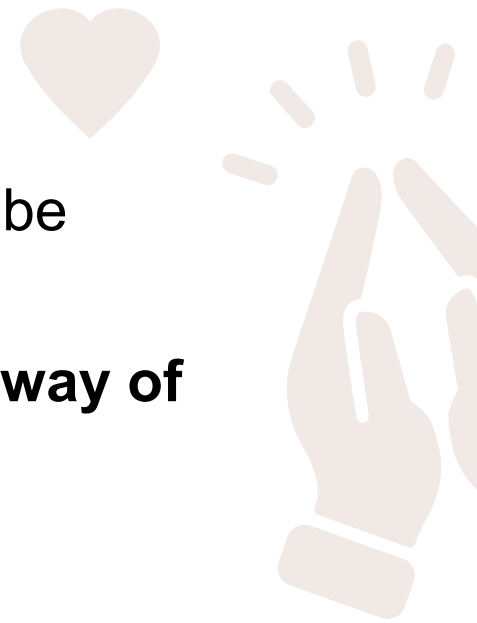
'Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life...'

**Earth Charter (2000) in Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* n207*

Respond

Jesus, inspire us to be courageous.

May we follow the way of courage.



CLOSE

We have walked the way of the cross. Now we
continue in the way of hope, remembering that
Christ is risen!

May we follow the way of hope, working together
to end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity.

Amen

CARITAS AUSTRALIA
PROJECT
COMPASSION

Unite Against Poverty this Lent

