



PROJECT COMPASSION

UNITE
AGAINST
POVERTY
this Lent



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Secondary
STUDENT WORKBOOK

Lent Link

Do you observe Lent regularly? Why/Why not?

What do you know about Lent?

What significance does it have for you?

Throughout Lent, we commit to strengthening our faith through the three pillars: prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Pope Francis said:

...in Lent, to act also means to pause. To pause in prayer, in order to receive the word of God, to pause like the Samaritan in the presence of a wounded brother or sister. Love of God and love of neighbour are one love... For this reason, prayer, almsgiving and fasting are not three unrelated acts, but a single movement of openness and self-emptying.

(Pope Francis's Lenten Message 2024)

During Lent, we take time to reflect and be strengthened by the Holy Spirit so that we are not indifferent to each other or global poverty. Through Project Compassion, we can stand in solidarity with our neighbours around the world. We can celebrate Caritas Australia's partnerships with other agencies around the world, which support those most vulnerable to extreme poverty and injustice. Your donations help to strengthen their lives, their families and their communities.

Over the next six weeks of Lent, through Project Compassion, we will explore stories of hope in Tanzania, Bangladesh, Fiji and Gaza. Let's focus on how we can enrich our connectedness as a global community.

Prayer

Traditionally Christians pray for themselves and others during this time of Lent. Project Compassion encourages you to pray for the people and communities you encounter through the stories about the poorest of the poor.

Fasting

Fasting is one of the most ancient practices linked to Lent. It can be an aid to prayer, as the pangs of hunger remind us of our hunger for God. Fasting can be linked to our concern for those who are forced to fast by their poverty, those who suffer from the injustices of our economic and political structures, and those who are in need for any reason. Traditionally, abstaining from meat was one way of remembering people who did not have enough to meet their daily needs. Today, some people choose other ways to 'fast' such as limiting time online, stepping away from constant entertainment, or giving up small comforts as a way to reflect and grow in compassion.

Almsgiving

Almsgiving is a sign of our care for others and an expression of our gratitude for all that God has given us. Caring for others is part of many faiths. Almsgiving by Christians is illustrated in the Bible, in Acts 4:33-37. During Project Compassion, reflect on ways you can care for others out of what you have.

How can you come together with your local community to *Unite Against Poverty* this Lent?

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.



SOLIDARITY

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



PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

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



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.



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.



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). Caritas Australia (remaining photos).

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:



 Caritas
AUSTRALIA
The Catholic agency
for international aid
and development

**PROJECT
COMPASSION**



DEEP DIVE

Click on the hot spots to learn more
about the stories and countries.

-  Sustainable Development Goals
-  Laudato Si' Goals
-  Catholic Social Teaching

**Click here to view the
Secondary Deep Dive**

Sisilia's Story

Tanzania



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

Sisilia's Story

Tanzania



[Read and Watch Sisilia's Story](#)

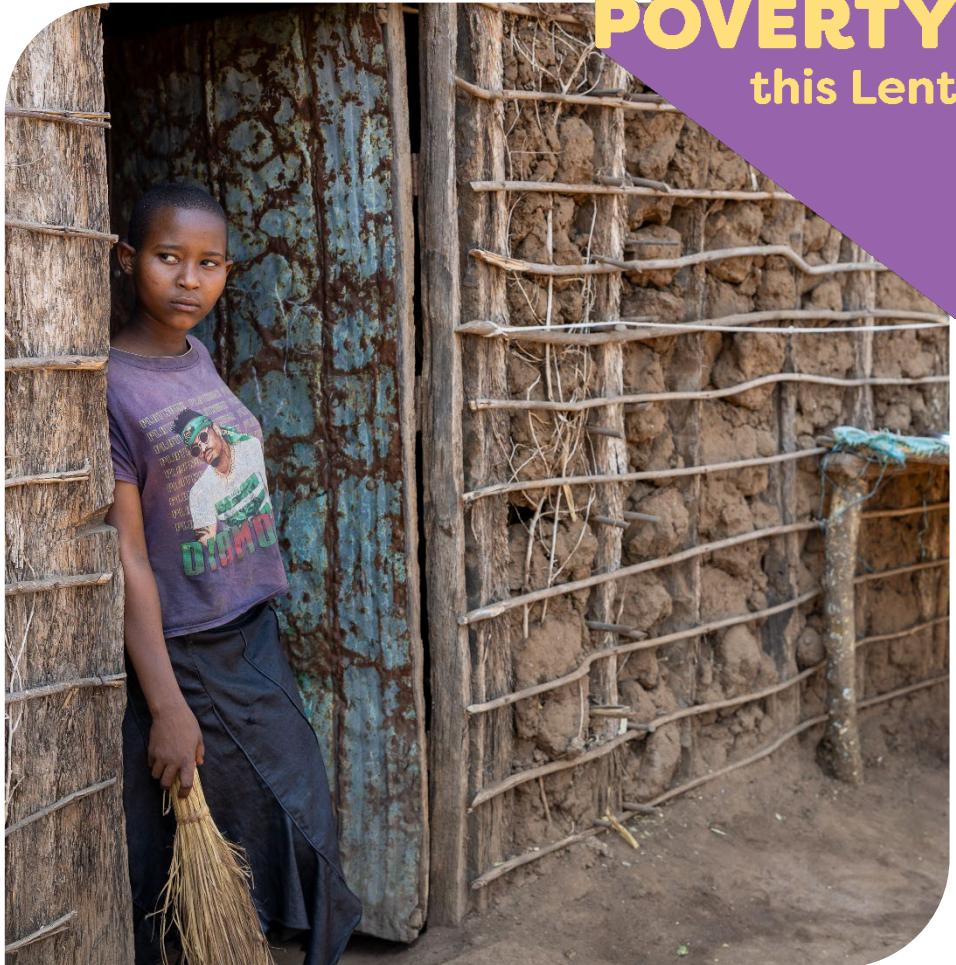
13-year-old Sisilia lives in a village in remote northern Tanzania. Life was not easy for Sisilia growing up. Her father passed away when she was one, leaving her mother to care for her and her four siblings all on her own.

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.

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Sisilia outside her family home in rural Tanzania. Photo: Caritas Australia

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.'**

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.



Sisilia's Story

Learning Tasks

Task 1 – Comprehension

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

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

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

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

Task 2 – Leadership

Leadership is when someone guides or influences others to work towards common goals. It's about inspiring, directing, and helping a group or team function well together.

How did Sisilia demonstrate leadership qualities in her community?

Think about a current need in your local, regional, national or global community and propose a possible strategy to address it.

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 does Caritas Australia demonstrate 'The Common Good' in Sisilia's story?

B. How is supporting Project Compassion an example of acting for The Common Good?

Scripture Connection - James 2:14-17

Read the Scripture passage and reflect on the following:

What does it mean to 'act on their faith'?

What's the difference between saying we care about something and actually doing something about it?

Can you think of a time when someone's actions spoke louder than their words? What impact did it have?

How could schools or communities show their values through action rather than just talking about them?

Sisilia's Story

Lent Link

FAITH IN ACTION (ACT)

PRAYER

Write a prayer inspired by Sisilia's story.

FASTING

Reflect on all the ways and times you use water throughout your day (showers, taps, cooking).

Choose one way to reduce water waste each day as an act of solidarity with people who do not have easy access to safe water.

Daily Journal or Reflection

Keep a simple journal about your experience.

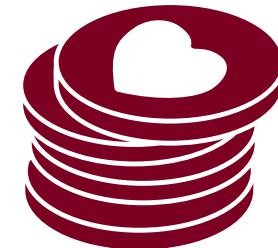
Prompt questions:

- What ways did I use water today that I usually don't think about?
- What change did I make today? Was it easy or hard to make this change?
- How did this activity help me understand what life might be like for someone without safe water?
- What did I learn about myself or my habits through this activity?

ALMSGIVING

Calculate how much you currently spend on one 'extra' (e.g. coffee, snacks, streaming subscription). Imagine donating that to Project Compassion – who support many people like Sisilia in different ways.

Take a moment to reflect on how a small contribution from you could make a big difference for someone else.



Sisilia's Story

Country Study

Secondary Deep Dive Link

 What is the population of Tanzania? What is the population of Australia?	Tanzania: <input type="text"/> Australia: <input type="text"/>	 <u>The Laudato Si' Goals</u> 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 Tanzania and Australia. Find out the correct answer. Does this surprise you? Why/Why not?	Tanzania <input type="text"/> Australia <input type="text"/> Prediction: <input type="text"/> Prediction: <input type="text"/> Actual: <input type="text"/> Actual: <input type="text"/>	
 What percentage of the population in Tanzania use safely managed drinking water services?	<input type="text"/>	
 What percentage of the population use safely managed sanitation services?	<input type="text"/>	 <u>The Sustainable Development Goals</u> Select two SDG goals that are relevant to Sisilia's story. Explain your selection.
List 3 ways a lack of reliable access to clean water can affect poverty levels.	<input type="text"/>	

Monoranjon's Story

Bangladesh



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

Monoranjon's Story

Bangladesh



[Read and Watch Monoranjon's Story](#)

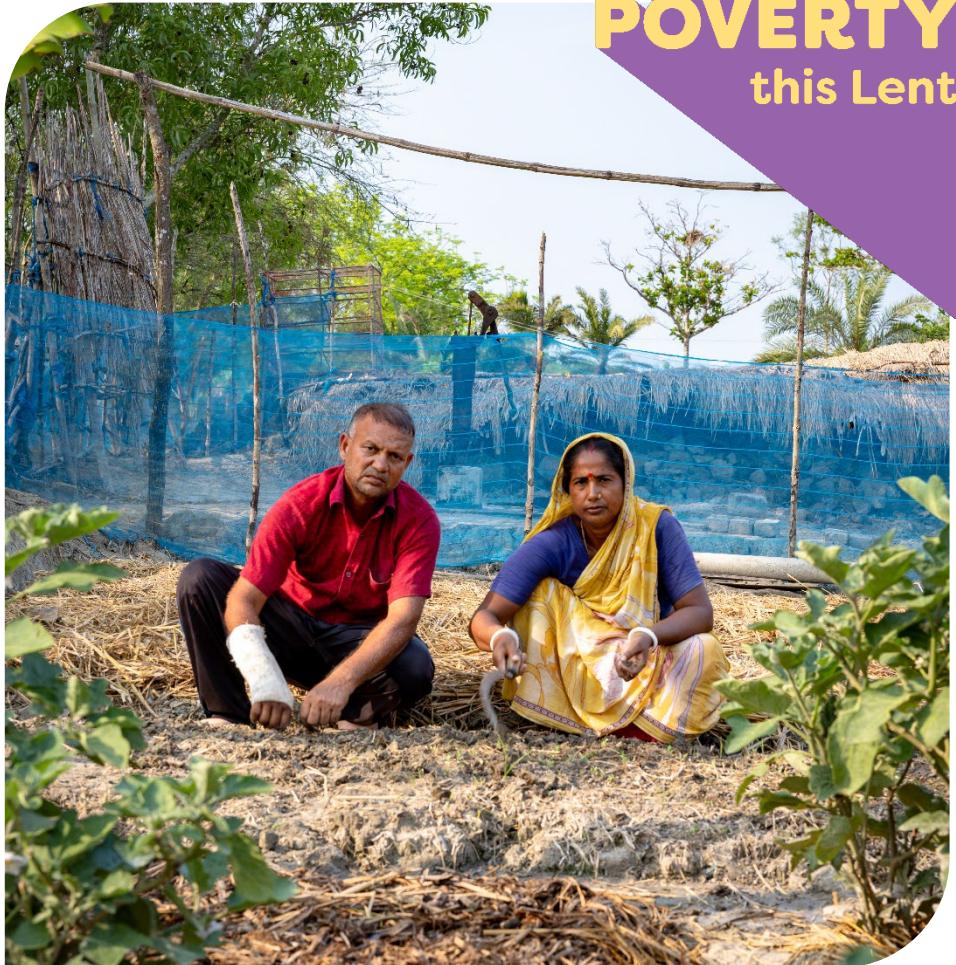
Monoranjon lived a life fraught with challenges before joining Caritas Bangladesh's Community Managed Sustainable Livelihoods and Resilience Program (CMLRP-II). As a day labourer, he struggled to make ends meet, facing the constant threats of natural disasters like cyclones, storms, and heat waves. Poverty, 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.'**

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Monoranjon and his wife, Anita, working on their farm in southwest Bangladesh. Photo: Caritas Australia

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 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, which has elevated his standing within the community.

Monoranjon also takes part in local groups that grow mangroves and raise awareness about their role in the climate crisis. Monoranjon 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).

Monoranjon's Story

Learning Tasks

Task 1 – Comprehension

A. Why was it difficult for Monoranjon to provide for his family before joining Caritas Bangladesh's Community Managed Sustainable Livelihoods and Resilience Program?

B. How has Caritas Australia and their partners assisted Monoranjon and others in his community?

C. Why do you think it is important for Monoranjon and his community to care for their local environment through climate-resilient farming and tending to the mangroves?

D. What Catholic Teachings are reflected in Monoranjon's story?

Task 2 – Exploring Poverty

In 2022, using the upper poverty line, the per capita income of the poor was Tk. 3578.0 per month at the national level ([Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics](#)).



1. Currency Conversion

Using the Currency Converter ([Currency Converter](#)), work out how much per month Tk. 3578.0 is in Australian Dollars.

Calculate the amount per day in AUD.

Using the daily figure, write down what can be bought per day in Australia with this amount. (Use online catalogues or shopping websites).

2. Reflection

Reflect on the following questions:

- a) What challenges might people face living on this income?
- b) How does this compare to their own daily spending?
- c) What kinds of support could help reduce poverty in Bangladesh?
- d) How does Caritas Australia assist people living in Bangladesh?

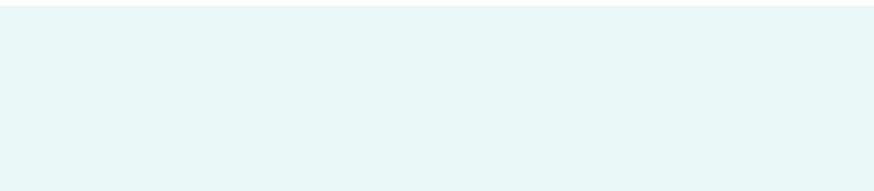
A CATHOLIC WORLDVIEW (JUDGE)

Preferential Option for the Poor

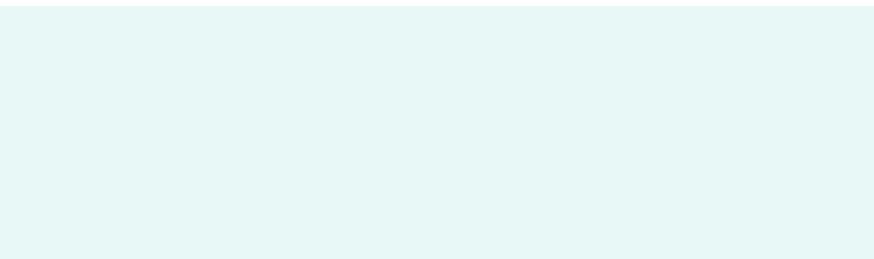
CST

- The act of prioritising the needs of the poor over the desires of the rich, the rights of workers over profits and the preservation of the environment over its exploitation
- A way of responding in love to the unjust circumstances in which millions of people live.

A. How does Caritas Australia demonstrate the 'preferential option for the poor' in Monoranjon's story?



B. How is supporting Project Compassion an example of the Preferential Option for the Poor?

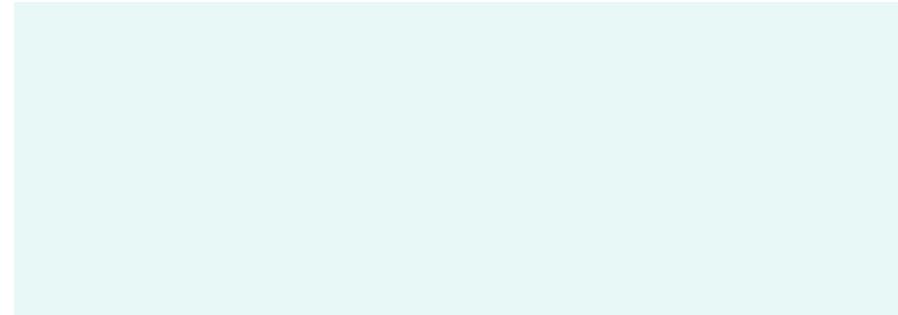


Scripture Connection – Matthew 25:31–46

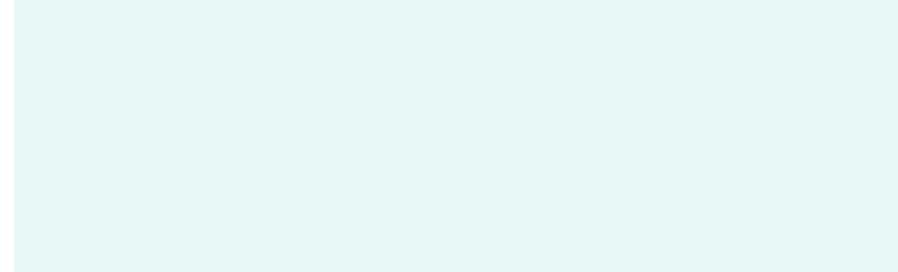


Read the Scripture passage and reflect on the following:

- How does Jesus' teaching in this passage emphasise the importance of caring for the poor and vulnerable as a measure of true discipleship?



- In what ways does this passage challenge us to live out the Preferential Option for the Poor in our everyday lives?



FAITH IN ACTION (ACT)

PRAYER

Write a prayer inspired by Monoranjon's story.

FASTING

Personal Fasting Challenge (24 hours)

Choose a fasting practice (e.g. skip one meal, give up snacks or sweets, or take a break from screens and online activities).

Offer your fast in solidarity with people who are hungry or struggling due to poverty and climate change.

Daily Journal or Reflection (during fast)

Keep a simple journal of your feelings, challenges and any insights about hunger or sacrifice.

Prompt questions:

- How did fasting affect your thoughts or emotions?
- What did you learn about those who fast because they have no choice?
- How can this experience inspire you to act for justice?

ALMSGIVING

Set Up a Fundraising Campaign (2–3 weeks)

Organise a fundraising drive during Lent (can be longer or shorter based on your timetable).

Ideas for fundraising:

- Host a Lent Event
- Run The BIG Water Walk at your school
- Casual dress days with a donation
- Bake sales or food stalls
- Recycle drive or sale of second-hand goods
- Social media awareness posts encouraging donations
- Send money to Caritas Australia to assist them in supporting people like Monoranjon.

Monoranjon's Story

Country Study

[Secondary Deep Dive Link](#)

Complete the table then answer the questions below:

	Bangladesh	Global
 Population density (per km ²)		
 GDP per capita (current US\$)		
 Literacy rate (aged 7+)		
 Employment in agriculture (% of employed)		
Which indicators show Bangladesh above or below global averages?		
How does Monoranjon's story connect to the statistics above?		
How could organisations, like Caritas Australia, help to address these issues?		



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 Monoranjon's story. Explain your selection.

Manaini's Story

Fiji



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

Fiji



[Read and Watch Manaini's Story](#)

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.



Manaini stands in front of her home with her husband (centre), daughter (left), granddaughter (left) and grandson (centre) in a small village in Fiji. Photo: Caritas Australia



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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. 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. They have already earned \$200.

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.'**

Finally, she shared her gratitude. **'I'd like to thank those financially supporting this training which has helped us women and our community in general.'**



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

Manaini's Story

Learning Tasks

Task 1 – Comprehension

A. What were some of the challenges faced by Manaini and her community?

B. Why might poverty lead to health problems like diabetes and heart disease?

C. Explain how Caritas Australia and its partners have supported Manaini and her community.

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

Task 2 – \$10 a day challenge

Manaini and her community were struggling to have enough money to feed themselves and their families, so their meals often lacked nutrition. Many people throughout the world also face similar challenges.

What might it be like for you to have to live off only a small amount per day for food?

Your task is to create a meal plan (*next page*) for yourself for 1 week using only \$10 a day for food. At the end, reflect on what was the hardest part and what you noticed about privilege and access.

Key discussion points:

- Does everyone have the same access to food (e.g. supermarkets, fresh produce, online ordering)
- Can you make it a healthy and balanced meal plan?
- What are the key considerations?
- Are there ways you could reduce costs? How?

Manaini's Story

Learning Tasks

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Breakfast							
Cost							
Lunch							
Cost							
Dinner							
Cost							
Total Cost							

A CATHOLIC WORLDVIEW (JUDGE)

Human Dignity

CST

- 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 does Caritas Australia demonstrate 'human dignity' in Manaini's story?

B. How is supporting Project Compassion an example of Human Dignity in action?

Scripture Connection - John 6:1-14



In this Gospel story, Jesus multiplies a small amount of food to feed a large crowd.

Manaini learned to use food that was going to waste to create flour.

What do these stories teach us about valuing what we already have and seeing possibility where others might see limits or waste?

When have you seen something small or simple make a big difference?

How could you use your own talents and skills to help others?

FAITH IN ACTION (ACT)

PRAYER

Write a prayer inspired by Manaini's story.

FASTING

Many people in countries around the world face hunger due to poverty and can only afford very simple meals of rice or grains.

This Lent, challenge yourself to have one simple meal each week in place of a more elaborate one, as a way to stand in solidarity with them and reflect on the gift of food in your own life.

Daily Journal or Reflection

After eating your simple meal, write a short reflection. You could include:

Prompt questions:

- How did eating simply make you feel?
- What did you notice about the difference between this and your usual meals?
- What does this experience teach you about gratitude for the food you have?

ALMSGIVING

Manaini is putting her newly learned skills to good use by growing produce and baking goods to sell.

How can you put your time, talents or treasure towards helping others this Lent?

Manaini's Story

Country Study

Secondary Deep Dive Link

 What is the population of Fiji? What is the population of Australia?	Fiji: <input type="text"/> Australia: <input type="text"/>	 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 Fiji and Australia. Find out the correct answer. Does this surprise you? Why/Why not?	Fiji <input type="text"/> Prediction: <input type="text"/> Actual: <input type="text"/>	Australia <input type="text"/> Prediction: <input type="text"/> Actual: <input type="text"/>
 What percentage of the population in Fiji live on less than \$10 per day?	 The Sustainable Development Goals Select two SDG goals that are relevant to Manaini's story. Explain your selection.	
List 3 ways that high poverty levels can result in poor health outcomes.		

Ahmad's Story

Gaza



Camp for displaced people in Gaza. Photo: Caritas Jerusalem.

Disclaimer

This story was prepared in September 2025. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza continues to evolve daily and circumstances on the ground may have changed since the resource's production.

Content Warning

The following story includes real images and information from Gaza, which some readers may find distressing.

Ahmad's Story

Gaza



Read and Watch Ahmad's Story

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.

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

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 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 stated: '**I hope this ordeal ends so we can go back to rebuild Gaza, our children's future, our country, and our organisation.**'

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.



Ahmad's Story

Learning Tasks

Task 1 – Comprehension

A. What were some of the challenges Ahmad faced?

B. What are some of the basic needs that families in Gaza, like Ahmad's, struggle to access?

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

D. What does Ahmad's example teach us about the power of working together in times of difficulty?

Task 2 – How can I help?

Often when a crisis happens in the world, it's easy to feel like there's nothing we can do. But even small acts can make a big difference. Jesus reminds us that we are all brothers and sisters, and we need to continue to care for each other.

1. List 3 ways people in Australia can help those affected by war or crises overseas.

2. Choose one way and create a poster, short video, digital message or speech encouraging others to take action.

Discussion Points:

- a) Why is it important to care about people we don't know?
- b) What stops people from helping, and how can we change that?
- c) Why do some people choose to help while others don't?
- d) How does the media affect how much we care about a crisis?
- e) How can we make sure we are helping in a respectful and meaningful way?

A CATHOLIC WORLDVIEW (JUDGE)

Solidarity

cst

- 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 does Caritas Australia demonstrate 'solidarity' in Ahmad's story?

B. How is supporting Project Compassion an example of Solidarity?

Scripture Connection – Micah 6:8



What does it mean to 'act justly' when we see suffering or injustice in the world?

In what ways does Ahmad demonstrate mercy or compassion toward others in his community?

What does 'walking humbly' mean to you and how might it shape the way you respond to people in need?

Ahmad's Story

Lent Link

FAITH IN ACTION (ACT)

PRAYER

Write a prayer inspired by Ahmad's story.

FASTING

People in Gaza often face power cuts and live with limited access to electricity.

This week, try going without lights, TV, or other powered devices for one evening.

Spend that time reflecting, praying, or talking with others about how you can stand in solidarity with those who live without these basic comforts.

Daily Journal or Reflection

At the end of the week, jot down your thoughts or feelings.

Prompt questions:

- *What was it like to go without electricity?*
- *What did I notice or appreciate more?*
- *How did this help me understand a little more what life is like for people in Gaza?*

ALMSGIVING

In Gaza, families face daily struggles because of conflict and displacement. Yet even in these difficult times, people like Ahmad keep helping others through small but powerful acts of compassion.

During Lent, we can stand with people like Ahmad by turning our own acts of kindness into signs of hope.

Brainstorm small acts of kindness you could do each day or each week during Lent and make a commitment to put these ideas into action.

Some ideas might include:

- Donate to Project Compassion.
- Sit with someone who is alone at lunch.
- Write a thank you note to a teacher, staff member or parent.

You might like to record your acts of kindness in a journal to reflect back on.

Ahmad's Story

Reflection



Read the article from Caritas Australia about the emergency in Gaza then reflect on the following:

What does the statement 'as long as there is a limb and the ability to walk, a person can do anything' reveal about the emotional and psychological impact of receiving a prosthetic limb?

Where do you see signs of hope in this story?

How does the work of Caritas Australia and their partner in Gaza reflect Catholic Social Teachings such as human dignity and solidarity?

Think of a time when you, or someone you know, faced a difficult challenge. What gave you strength or support?

Thank You

Photo Credits

Sisilia's Story (Tanzania) – Caritas Australia

Monoranjon's Story (Bangladesh) – Caritas Australia

Manaini's Story (Fiji) – Caritas Australia

Ahmad's Story (Gaza) – Caritas Jerusalem

Students

Learning about challenges to the health, wellbeing and safety of others and our earth can be hard. If you are feeling worried or upset about anything you have learnt about through this resource, make sure you talk to your teacher or trusted adult. They can share your concerns via our website.

Do you have an idea for how Caritas Australia can improve our school resources? We would love to hear it!

Please email education@caritas.org.au



We are a valued partner of the Australian Government, receiving flexible funding under the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) each year to implement development and poverty alleviation programs overseas.

CARITAS AUSTRALIA PROJECT COMPASSION

Unite Against Poverty this Lent



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