



60
YEARS
1964-2024

ADVENT 2024



A RESOURCE FOR
SECONDARY SCHOOLS

www.caritas.org.au/advent

ABOUT

This resource invites participants to journey through the four weeks of Advent, reflecting on the Scripture readings and sharing in the stories of our sisters and brothers around the world. Each week, one of the Advent themes of hope, peace, joy and love is explored, through quotes, Scripture, reflections, possible actions and prayer.

About Caritas Australia

As the Catholic Church's international aid and development agency, Caritas Australia works hand in hand with the most marginalised and remote communities in Australia and overseas, to confront the challenges of poverty. Through locally-led programs we work with all people, with shared hope and compassion, towards a world where all can thrive and reach their full potential. Through partnerships with local organisations and Church networks, and as a member of Caritas Internationalis, one of the largest humanitarian networks in the world, we are able to reach where the need is greatest and work together for a just future.

About Advent

Advent marks the beginning of the Church's new year and is a season of waiting and preparation. In fact, the season of Advent focuses on Christ's threefold coming—past, present and future.

We await and prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas.

We hope and give thanks for Christ's presence in us and in the Word and sacraments.

We look to the future, waiting for Christ to come again.

In the coming four weeks, we prepare with mounting expectation for the coming of Christ in a spirit of waiting, conversion and hope.

Resource Structure

Each week:

- **Pause** to contemplate some words of wisdom from Pope Francis and **pray** the Advent prayer
- Light an Advent wreath **candle**
- Hear the Scripture readings (*New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition – NRSVCE*)
- Reflect on the theme, following the Cardijn See–Judge–Act–Pray rhythm:
 - **See** a Caritas story
 - **Judge** how the Advent theme is at work in this and in your own story
 - **Act** in response to all you have reflected on
 - **Pray** to gather your thoughts and intentions and commit them to God.



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.

ADVENT

INTRODUCTION

Welcome

Leader: Explain the structure for each session as outlined in the 'Introduction' (p.3). Introduce Caritas Australia as the international aid and development organisation of the Catholic Church in Australia. Explain that through sharing the stories of the people with whom Caritas Australia works, we can acknowledge that we are all part of one global family. For more information you could watch [Compassion in Action](#) (3 mins) or use our [Introduction to Caritas Australia](#) PowerPoint presentation.

What is Advent?

Leader: Introduce the season of Advent by watching this video [Advent in two minutes](#).

Advent Pause and Prayer

At the beginning of each session (before lighting the Advent wreath candle) we will read a short quote from Pope Francis and pause for a moment to focus on the weekly theme (hope, peace, joy, love). We'll close our moment of quiet contemplation by saying the Advent prayer, 'Come, Lord Jesus.'

Lighting the Advent Wreath Candles



The word 'Advent' means 'coming'. Lighting the candles on the wreath symbolises the coming of light (Jesus) into the world. The first candle (violet) represents hope, the second (violet) peace, the third (rose) joy, and the fourth (violet) love. The central white candle is lit on Christmas Day and represents Christ. This Advent, we will learn, act and pray for a more just and fair world – a world full of hope, peace, joy and love, where we realise that 'everything is connected'.

Making the Advent Wreath a daily focus

The Advent Wreath helps us focus on the coming of Christ at Christmas. And, as Pope Francis reminds us, this coming of Christ 'is the foundation of our hope.' (*Angelus* 27 November 2022).

If you don't have an Advent wreath, consider making one. (Instructions can be found at www.caritas.org.au/advent.) Everyone gathers around the wreath and someone lights the candle(s). The Leader prays the prayer for the week.



**"Your Lord is coming" ...
This is the foundation of our hope.**

Pope Francis, *Angelus* 27 November 2022



Hope

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT



“The future is not monochrome; if we are courageous, we can contemplate it in all the variety and diversity of what each individual person has to offer. How much our human family needs to learn to live together in harmony and peace, without all of us having to be the same!”

Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* n100



Pause and pray

‘Come, Lord Jesus.’

Light a candle

As we light this first candle on our Advent wreath, may we be filled with your everlasting hope. Amen.

Hear Scripture

Leader: Ask the participants to sit comfortably, feet flat on the floor, hands in laps, shoulders relaxed. Explain that you (or someone in the group) will read the scripture readings and they are asked to listen closely to the words and think about what they are saying to them.

Jeremiah 33:14–16

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: “The Lord is our righteousness.”

1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

A reading from the Thessalonians

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Finally, brothers and sisters, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.



Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke:

Jesus said to his disciples: 'There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.

'Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will be sprung on you suddenly, like a trap. For it will come down on every living man on the face of the earth. Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man.'





Sakhina standing at the market in Kutupalong Refugee Camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Photo: Caritas Australia

Sakhina's story



Kutupalong Refugee Camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh is home to over one million displaced people. It has been 7 years since the Rohingya here faced mass-displacement from Myanmar. Overcrowding, limited access to clean water and sanitation, fire outbreaks, inadequate healthcare, and increasingly high crime rates have posed significant challenges to the wellbeing and safety of the Rohingya refugees living there.

Sakhina is a 55-year-old Rohingya woman, living in the camp. She lives with her 30-year-old daughter Noor who has a disability.

Widowed many years ago, Sakhina was left with the sole responsibility for her children. In 2017, she was forced to flee with them to Bangladesh. She recalls shots being fired into her home and having to escape by going under the house and crawling away.

"Too many people died in our neighbourhood. I couldn't bear it and moved away," Sakhina explained.

She hid for ten days with no food, before being able to flee to the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. When reaching the border, she and her family didn't drink water for 3 days, before being forced to drink from an unclean river to survive.

When Sakhina arrived at the camp she would worry about leaving Noor by herself, and had to help her to use the toilet so that she wouldn't fall over and injure herself.

She explained, "There was no toilet. You had to go far to find water. It became very dangerous to go to the toilet."

Sakhina and Noor now live in a small hut made of bamboo and tarpaulin in one of the districts served by Caritas Bangladesh. She attended hygiene sessions run by Caritas Bangladesh. Caritas Bangladesh also installed railings and a ramp so that Noor could access a nearby latrine outside their home.

Caritas Bangladesh, working in conjunction with partners, provide latrines, soap, hygiene training, garbage disposal, and better access to clean water for participants in the districts they serve.



Today we begin a new year in the Christian community, starting once again the cycle of celebration that sustains us in every season. We begin our preparation for the birth of Jesus and then, before long, we will enter once again into making ready to commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus at Easter. It is always a little different, depending on where we are on life's journey, but we are challenged by the same events every year and asked to grow deeper in faith.

This week, Caritas Australia shares the story of Sakhina a 55-year-old Rohingya widow living in Kutupalong Refugee Camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Her life was dramatically changed when she was forced to flee her homeland. Your work through Caritas enables her to learn and provide a safer home for her daughter, Noor who has a disability. In this way, she is actively seeking a better future for her family.

This is the theme of this week's readings. The future doesn't just fall from the sky. We have a part in building it. The readings remind us that there are many things God would like to see take place in the world and there is much that has been entrusted to us to ensure it. The prophet Jeremiah says, 'the days are coming.' They are not here yet.

Likewise, St Paul looks to our future, one in which we make 'progress' and embrace more wholeheartedly the kind of life God wants for us. The key to this is love for the whole human race. Our community has no solid boundaries. Luke's Gospel has no time for the kind of platitudes that often bring in the new year. It says that things are going to be difficult, not to mention confusing. People are going to be fearful and bewildered. Yet this is the path to liberation. God wants us to stay awake. To be fully alive. To find our strength and stand up as Sakhina does. **Hope** is an activity, not an emotion. It is a plan, not wishful thinking.



- Learn more about the Rohingya community, then share Sakhina's story with your school community.
- Sakhina and her daughter did not have easy access to clean water and sanitation. Say a prayer of thanks every time you use water in one day and seek to conserve water where you can.
- Prepare your heart for Christmas by turning off one form of social media so that you can be more present to the world around you.



God of Hope

Light in us the flame of hope, awakening the infinite possibilities you have placed before us.

May all who have been forcibly displaced, like Sakhina and her family, find hope in you.

Make us sources of hope in our homes, in our school and in our world.

Amen.



Peace



SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT



Let us continue to pray for peace without losing heart, to knock with a humble and insistent spirit at the ever-open door of God's heart and at the doors of humankind.

Pope Francis, *International Prayer Meeting for Peace*, September 2023



Pause and pray

'Come, Lord Jesus.'

Light a candle

As we light this second candle on our Advent wreath, we pray for the many places in the world that are in special need of peace at this time. We pray that we too may be filled with your deep peace. Amen.

Hear Scripture

Leader: Ask the participants to sit comfortably, feet flat on the floor, hands in laps, shoulders relaxed. Explain that you (or someone in the group) will read the scripture readings and they are asked to listen closely to the words and think about what they are saying to them.

Baruch 5:1-9

A reading from the prophet Baruch

Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem,
and put on forever the beauty of the glory from God.
Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God;
put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting;
for God will show your splendor everywhere under heaven.
For God will give you evermore the name,
"Righteous Peace, Godly Glory."

Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height;
look toward the east,
and see your children gathered from west and east
at the word of the Holy One,
rejoicing that God has remembered them.



For they went out from you on foot,
led away by their enemies;
but God will bring them back to you,
carried in glory, as on a royal throne.

For God has ordered that every high mountain and the everlasting hills be made low
and the valleys filled up, to make level ground,
so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God.

The woods and every fragrant tree
have shaded Israel at God's command.

For God will lead Israel with joy,
in the light of his glory,
with the mercy and righteousness that come from him.

Philippians 1:3-6, 8-11

A reading from the Philippians

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Luke 3:1-6

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke:

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah:

A voice cries in the wilderness;
Prepare a way for the Lord,
make God's paths straight.
Every valley will be filled in,
every mountain and hill be laid low,
winding ways will be straightened
and rough roads made smooth.
And all mankind shall see the salvation of God.



Ukraine stories

Nina, far right, with Vera and her grandson Ruslan. Photo: Shimbator for CRS



The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has forced many families to seek refuge in neighbouring countries such as Moldova.

Lyudmila and Yuri, a retired couple from Ukraine, fled when the conflict escalated. Initially they sheltered in a refugee centre but they struggled with the noise and lack of privacy, which was particularly difficult for Yuri, who has a disability. Through Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Caritas Moldova's shelter program, Lyudmila and Yuri were provided with assistance to rent an apartment.

"Our goal is to give people that space so they can cook their own meals, have their own bathroom, and have private time with family." CRS Project Officer Irina Osoianu

Nina and her husband Adrian welcomed several Ukrainian refugees, including Vera and her grandson Ruslan, into their home, providing them with a safe space and assistance. With the help of CRS, Nina was able to make essential repairs to her house, making it a comfortable place for Vera and other refugees.

Nina's generous spirit supported Vera through a cancer diagnosis, helping her with medical appointments and treatment. The relationship between the families highlight the profound impact of community and compassion during times of crisis.

"It's really ok to open your doors to a stranger," said Adrian.

Fleeing the Russian invasion, Yana and her family arrived in Moldova. They were warmly welcomed by Vera, who opened her home to them, embodying the generous spirit seen across Moldova. Over time, Yana's family and Vera's became close, sharing daily life and holidays together. Yana's heart remains tied to Ukraine, longing for the day they can return home.

"People were incredibly generous, often hosting families for free" - Project Manager, Svetlana Cires.

The efforts of organisations like CRS and Caritas Moldova are crucial in providing not just physical shelter but also hope and a sense of normalcy to displaced families. The international community's support remains vital as these families navigate the uncertainties of their future.



Have you noticed how specific this week's readings are, especially about times and places? The prophet Baruch is clearly familiar with Jerusalem, imagining people standing on the heights and looking east. Those very heights still figure in our news, often tragically. The letter to the Philippians is addressed to a community that St Paul knows very well. He remembers them and prays for them as individuals, grateful for who they are and what they have done. This is not general advice. He asks people to love each other, something that doesn't happen in the abstract.

Finally, Luke's Gospel tells us that John the Baptist rose to prominence in the specific time of Tiberius, Pontius Pilate, Herod, Annas and Caiaphas, all of whom will play a role in the story that follows. Luke pins down the very moment when the world begins to change.

Similarly, we have all heard about the horrors in Ukraine. It is different to read the experiences Caritas Australia brings to our attention this week. These are the stories of Lyudmila, Yuri, Vera, Ruslan, Nina, Adrian and Yana. They could be our neighbours. For Christians, they are our neighbours. **Peace** starts from knowing what it is like to live in someone else's shoes.

There is a message here as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus once again. God is alive and active in the nitty gritty of our lives, not in some vague and imprecise way. We are called to be attentive to all the small gestures of love God makes to us, day by day. Above all, where are the voices crying in our wilderness like John the Baptist? Perhaps they are the most poor and vulnerable. **Peace** grows from the soil of reality.



- Is there something that keeps you from feeling at peace in your relationships with family or friends? It might be time to ask for forgiveness.
- Pray for peace, asking how you can be an instrument of God's peace. Use St Francis of Assisi's prayer as a place to start.
- Be an agent of peace and help others in your school or local community enjoy the spirit of Christmas this year. For example, invite someone you wouldn't normally spend time with to morning tea, lunch or another Christmas event.



Peaceful God,

Show us your peace in the quiet, often unseen moments of our days; a gentle breeze, the morning sunrise and the calmness of a stranger.

May all in our human family who live with unrest, especially those in Ukraine and Russia feel your hand of peace.

Make us instruments of peace in our homes, in our school and in our world.

Amen



Joy



THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT



Do not be afraid to share with others the hope and joy of the risen Christ! Nurture the spark that has been kindled in you, but at the same time share it. You will come to realize that it grows by being given away!

Pope Francis, *XXXVIII World Youth Day* 26 November 2023



Pause and pray

'Come, Lord Jesus.'

Light a candle

As we light this third candle on our Advent wreath, may we be filled with your overflowing joy. Amen.

Hear Scripture

Leader: Ask the participants to sit comfortably, feet flat on the floor, hands in laps, shoulders relaxed. Explain that you (or someone in the group) will read the scripture readings and they are asked to listen closely to the words and think about what they are saying to them.

Zephaniah 3:14-18

A reading from the prophet Zephaniah:

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!

The Lord has taken away the judgments against you,
he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.

On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

Do not fear, O Zion;

do not let your hands grow weak.



The Lord, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing
as on a day of festival.
I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it.

Philippians 4:4-7

A reading from the Philippians:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Luke 3:10-18

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke:

When all the people asked John, 'What must we do?' he answered, 'If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same.' There were tax collectors too who came for baptism, and these said to him, 'Master, what must we do?' He said to them, 'Exact no more than your rate.' Some soldiers asked him in their turn, 'What about us? What must we do?' He said to them, 'No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!'

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.' As well as this, there were many other things he said to exhort the people and to announce the Good News to them.



Roland's story

Roland, a father of four, participated in the Youth Capacity Strengthening Program, enabling him to develop a stable income to support his family. Photo: Arlette Bashizi/Caritas Australia



A 26-year-old 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.



This week's readings come together in surprising ways. The first two are bursting with happiness. The prophet Zephaniah says the Lord is in our midst and 'he will dance with shouts of joy for you' as much as he will 'renew you by his love.' St Paul's letter to the Philippians says repeatedly that he wants the community to be happy and not to worry too much. We must be tolerant. We must be open to the peace of God 'which surpasses all understanding'.

How can we put all this exuberance alongside the figure of John the Baptist who is central in today's Gospel? He seems austere, telling people to give away their extra clothes. He says that Jesus is coming to burn the chaff 'in a fire that will never go out.' He is a real firebrand!

The answer is that John is speaking to people who have lost the ability to be truly happy. We also come across people like this, people for whom the things that preoccupy them fill up their entire field of vision. They can't see beyond the demands of the here and now. John calls people to downsize their egos and to keep their ambitions within reason. No more bullying or power games. We are called to live justly. This means seeing the whole picture. True happiness is never blind or blinkered.

Think about Roland whose story we can encounter thanks to Caritas Australia. He lives in one of the most dangerous and violent countries, Democratic Republic of the Congo. He says that the work you are supporting makes him happy. His **joy** is deep, not passing. That is because he is learning skills to improve the wellbeing of his whole family and to dream of a sustainable future.



- By learning and mentoring others, Roland has given joy to his family and community. Share his joy-filled story with your family as you share a meal.
- Think of ways you could share joy with your community. For example, join a group that sings Christmas carols, spend some time with a family member you don't often see, visit a nursing home or make some Christmas cards for your parish community.
- Consider sharing the joy of Caritas Australia's work through a [Global Gift](#).



Joyful God,

**Breathe in us your joy. Open our eyes to wonder, our ears
to laughter and our hearts to love.**

**May those who lovingly mentor others, like Roland, feel
the joy of your gaze.**

**Make us joyful witnesses in our homes, in our school and
in our world.**

Amen.



Love



FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT



Love makes us better, it makes us richer and it makes us wiser, at any age

Pope Francis, *The Caress and the Smile*, April 2024



Pause and pray

'Come, Lord Jesus.'

Light a candle

As we light this fourth candle on our Advent wreath, may we be filled with your restoring love. Amen.

Hear Scripture

Leader: Ask the participants to sit comfortably, feet flat on the floor, hands in laps, shoulders relaxed. Explain that you (or someone in the group) will read the scripture readings and they are asked to listen closely to the words and think about what they are saying to them.

Micah 5:1-4

A reading from the prophet Micah:

Now you are walled around with a wall;
siege is laid against us;
with a rod they strike the ruler of Israel
upon the cheek.

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;



Hebrews 10:5-10

A reading from Hebrews:

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body you have prepared for me;
in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, ‘See, God, I have come to do your will, O God’
(in the scroll of the book it is written of me).”

When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then he added, “See, I have come to do your will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Luke 1:39-45

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke:

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, ‘Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.’



Lemakot Health Centre

Dr Kari and Matron Florence in the maternity ward. Photo: Caritas Australia.



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

Rural health centres, like the one is 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.

"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.



There is a line at the end of today's reading from the prophet Micah. 'And they shall live secure.' Those words remind me of an old woman I knew who had a very challenging life. Yet whenever she was around, she made everyone feel calm, welcomed and secure. She was the very peace that we needed, especially when others were on edge. The prophet says that God is like that.

This fits beautifully with the second reading and the Gospel, both of which suggest that peace and **love** don't just come to us. We have to leave our comfort zone to find them. During Advent, we celebrate the way that God has come not just into our world but right into our lives. Yet the writer of the Hebrews reminds us to pray: 'here I am Lord, I come to do your will.' God comes to us as we are trying to come to God. Our reaching out to the poor and marginal helps to make God's love more apparent in the world. Our work for justice helps to clear the fog that shrouds the world so that we can experience the meaning of love.

A perfect example is the story we read about this week concerning the work of Caritas Australia in the New Ireland area of Papua New Guinea. Restoring a roof has so many ramifications for health, wellbeing, community and water supply.

An even better example is Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth. Both women have had the surprise of their lives, and both are now expecting children they never anticipated. Yet their love for God and each other is palpable. We don't know what the next year will ask of us. But we do know we can meet its challenges in hope and **love**.



- Let a family member or friend know you love them by preparing a meal for them or helping them with another household job.
- Choose to spend a little less on gifts this season and donate the money you saved to [Caritas Australia's Christmas Appeal](#).
- Love extends to our common home, the world around us. Organise a school or local clean-up session, where the love of creation is celebrated.



God of Love,

Gather us in your loving arms. Hold us when we are hurting and broken, loved and cherished.

May those who help bring new life into the world, especially the staff of the Lemakot Health Care Centre, feel your loving embrace.

Make us loving advocates in our homes, in our school and in our world.

Amen



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The Catholic Agency for International Aid and Development

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