

PARISH BOOKLET 2024

**SIGN UP TO
FUNDRAISE**



INSIDE:

- **STORIES**
- **REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS**
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“Jesus keeps knocking
on our door in the faces
of our brothers and
sisters, in the faces of our
neighbours, in the faces
of those at our side.”

– Pope Francis

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FIND US ONLINE

Visit the Caritas Australia website for more information about Project Compassion, including useful resources.

**CARITAS.ORG.AU/
PROJECT-COMPASSION**



CREATE YOUR PARISH FUNDRAISING PAGE!

Want an easy way of collecting funds at your parish? Create a fundraising page and get a unique QR code to display at your parish so people can donate.

**FUNDRAISE.
PROJECTCOMPASSION.ORG.AU**



**RONITA,
PHILIPPINES**



**LEAIA,
SAMOA**



**MEMORY,
MALAWI**

GOVERNMENT NOTICE

All fundraisers, participants and volunteers agree to abide by and comply with all relevant legislation, regulations and best practice guidelines (as appropriate) in each State and/or Territory of Australia.

Individuals and other legal entities who fundraise for Caritas Australia (Fundraisers) are responsible for (but not limited to):

- Complying with relevant fundraising laws and regulations in each jurisdiction where they fundraise (and complying with the fundraising laws in every Australian State and Territory if donations are accepted on the internet).

- Ensuring that all monies raised via fundraising activities will be donated to the stated purpose of the appeal.

- Ensuring that all donations are forwarded to Caritas Australia by **31 May 2024**.

For full fundraising responsibilities, please refer to our website: caritas.org.au.



Australian Government

Cover Photo: Ronita is a mother of two children living in a slum in the Philippines. Photo by Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia

Philippines photos by Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia

Samoa photos by Laura Womersley/Caritas Australia

Malawi photos by Tim Lam/Caritas Australia

WELCOME

KIRSTY ROBERTSON CARITAS AUSTRALIA CEO

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the unwavering support that your parish showed towards Caritas Australia throughout 2023. Last year was filled with enormous challenges. We witnessed the devastating impact of the food crisis on the most vulnerable communities in Africa. We worked tirelessly with our partners in Türkiye and Syria to assist families affected by the earthquake that struck the two nations. And with your generosity, we have continued to support the work of our partners across Asia, the Pacific, Africa and here in Australia.

Though these crises are far from being solved, we begin 2024 filled with optimism and a few steps closer to realising our mission. This year is filled with promise and with opportunities for partnership and growth and I am incredibly excited to see all the wonderful ways in which we will try to make the world a better and more just place for all.

Project Compassion provides us with an opportunity to do just that. To work in partnership towards a brighter tomorrow. It acts as a timely reminder that, by putting our faith and compassion in action today, we have the power to create lasting change for generations to come.

For decades, Project Compassion has been the heart and soul of Caritas Australia and has touched the lives of so many – including my own. It brings us closer as a community, as an organisation and ultimately, as a human family. And each year, I am filled with joy when I see our community rally to help transform the lives of those we serve.

Once again, the theme for Project Compassion is *For All Future Generations*. Inspired by the Bible's story of the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-20), this theme reminds us that the good that we do today will create a lasting impact for generations to come.

Project Compassion 2024 brings you the stories of three resilient women from different corners of the

world. Though they face vastly different challenges in their day-to-day lives, they are all united by their dream of creating a better tomorrow *for all future generations*.

There is the story of Memory from Malawi, who trained to become a carpenter to support her family. She is now self-reliant and able to provide for herself and her family and she is able to work in a male-dominated industry, which is rare for women in rural villages. Her dream is to open her own carpentry workshop and provide employment to skilled carpenters in her area.

There are also the stories of Ronita, a mother of two living in a slum in the Philippines who went back to school to support her children and forge a path out of poverty. And Leaia, who through hard work and determination is building a better life for herself and her five children.

On behalf of everyone at Caritas Australia, I want to thank your parish once more. Without your ongoing support, dedication and commitment, the work we do would simply not be possible. These inspiring stories are living proof that your generosity travels far and wide, and can create better opportunities *for all future generations*.

With gratitude,



Kirsty Robertson
Chief Executive Officer
Caritas Australia



YOUR GUIDE TO PROJECT COMPASSION

HERE ARE SUGGESTIONS TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR YOUR PARISH TO LINK LENT, LITURGY AND LIFE THIS LENTEN SEASON. CHECKLISTS ARE PROVIDED TO HELP YOU PLAN AND KEEP TRACK OF YOUR ACTIVITIES.

BEFORE PROJECT COMPASSION BEGINS

Each year, Project Compassion brings together thousands of Australians in schools, parishes and the community to stand in solidarity with the world's most vulnerable communities, to help end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity.

The theme of Project Compassion is *For All Future Generations*. It reminds us that what we do today can have an impact *for all future generations*. This message invites us to step up for those who do not have the essential resources they need for their survival, and those whose needs at this time are far beyond our own. By putting compassion into action, we can make a difference today, *for all future generations*.

We hope that the resources we provide help you bring Project Compassion to life in your parish, making it an inspiring and rewarding experience for everyone.

CHECKLIST

- MATERIALS RECEIVED?** Do you have all the materials ordered for your parish? If you have any queries, or need additional resources, please contact your Diocesan Director.
- PROJECT COMPASSION USB PASSED ON?** The USB should be handed to the relevant person in your parish (e.g. parish secretary or parish representative).
- PROJECT COMPASSION MATERIALS SHARED?** Share the films and other resources with your parish liturgy/ social justice group. These can be found on your USB or visit caritas.org.au/project-compassion

PROJECT COMPASSION BEGINS

Project Compassion Sunday is the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. Get your Project Compassion activities off to a good start by ensuring your whole parish is familiar with Project Compassion theme: *For All Future Generations*.

CHECKLIST

- DISTRIBUTE BOXES AND DONATION ENVELOPES:** If possible, offer these to parishioners individually, either as people leave the church, or after Communion, signifying the link between saying 'Amen' to the Body of Christ and 'being' the Body of Christ in the world today.
- DISPLAY POSTERS:** Hang posters prominently in your church, other Mass centres and meeting rooms.
- TALKS:** Deliver one of the Project Compassion Sunday talks provided (visit caritas.org.au/project-compassion).
- SHOW 'INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT COMPASSION' FILM:** Meet the people featured in Project Compassion this year. This film can be found on the USB or at caritas.org.au/projectcompassion

Note: The films have subtitles for parishioners with hearing impairments.

PROJECT COMPASSION DURING LENT

CHECKLIST

- BULLETIN NOTICE:** Insert the Project Compassion bulletin notice in your weekly parish bulletin (this can be found on your USB).
- USE LENT REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION:** See the weekly reflections in this booklet and on the USB.
- SHOW THE FILMS:** The short films introduce some Project Compassion program participants and share their personal success stories. A popular time is just before the beginning or end of Mass each week.
- DISTRIBUTE BOXES AND DONATION ENVELOPES:** Be sure to give donation boxes and envelopes to any parishioners who weren't at Mass on Project Compassion Sunday, and to your social justice group and other committees.
- PRINT THE PROJECT COMPASSION STORIES:** If space permits, print the Project Compassion stories in your bulletin. The stories are available in different lengths on the USB.
- CREATE YOUR PARISH FUNDRAISING PAGE:** Use fundraise.projectcompassion.org.au to sign up and register your parish Project Compassion fundraising page.
- SHARE YOUR FUNDRAISER WITH YOUR COMMUNITY AND ASK THEM TO SUPPORT YOUR EVENT:** You can use the images provided in the social media kit, or you can post links to any of the great resources you find on our website. Don't forget to use the #projectcompassion hashtag, and tag us as well!



EASTER SUNDAY

CHECKLIST

- **DISTRIBUTE EASTER ENVELOPES:** Leave the envelopes on seats, or hand them out after Mass or as people leave on Easter Sunday.
- **PRINT A BULLETIN NOTICE:** Write an invitation to visiting parishioners and those who haven't participated before to support Project Compassion. Example: *"If you didn't have a Project Compassion box/envelope during Lent, envelopes on the seats enable you to participate today. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible."*

AFTER EASTER SUNDAY

Take the time to thank all who have supported Project Compassion in your parish.

CHECKLIST

- **TURN OVER YOUR PROJECT COMPASSION POSTER:** Display the 'Thank You' poster on the back.
- **PUT A REMINDER IN THE PARISH BULLETIN:** Place a note in your April and May parish bulletins reminding people to hand in their donations.
- **PUT A THANK YOU IN THE PARISH BULLETIN:** Publish a final 'Thank You' bulletin notice announcing the total amount raised.
- **FORWARD YOUR DONATIONS:** All donations and Record of Receipts sheets must be forwarded to Caritas Australia before **31 May 2024**.



HELP WITH RECEIPTING & PARISH DONATION REMITTANCE

The USB offers you a guide to remittance procedures and contains receipt templates as well as an Excel Record of Receipts sheet.

If you are unable to use the Excel spreadsheet version on the USB, your Diocesan Director can provide remittance information and assistance. The details of your Diocesan Director can be found on the back of this booklet.



NEED SOMEONE TO HELP PROMOTE PROJECT COMPASSION?

Many parish priests find it is a great help to have a parishioner working with them as their 'Caritas Parish Representative'.

This person could create Project Compassion displays, distribute materials, organise the use of films and prayer reflections, and arrange other appropriate ways to maintain Project Compassion's meaning during Lent.

To help you find a Caritas Parish Representative, the USB offers you a bulletin notice and a parish flyer, as well as a guide for new Parish Representatives.

Your Diocesan Director is also happy to assist. You can find their contact details on the back of this booklet.



RECEIPTS

Please forward your donations to Caritas Australia before **31 May 2024** with your Record of Receipts sheet.

You can also transfer donations by electronic funds transfer. Call us on 1800 024 413 for details.

PROJECT COMPASSION PRAYER 2024



God of all hope,
we pray for our world with all its beauty and need.
We thank you for the love in our lives that is
a mirror of your unending love.

May all creation know your compassion this Lent
and may we take courage to share it, especially with
those who don't have what they need.

In our time, we hear the same words you spoke to Moses:
'I will be with you,' when you ask us to do courageous things.

Through our prayer, fasting and almsgiving,
move us to act in the company of your Spirit,
showing compassion and acting for justice
to renew the face of the Earth,
now and for all future generations.

We ask this in the name of Christ.
Amen.



IN THE NEXT SECTION OF THIS BOOKLET, YOU WILL FIND REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR EACH SUNDAY OF LENT. ALL REFLECTIONS WRITTEN BY MICHAEL MCGIRR.

REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS

**PROJECT COMPASSION SUNDAY REFLECTION
WEEKEND OF 10-11 FEBRUARY 2024**



**MEMORY,
MALAWI**

Have you ever felt a little nervous when asking for help? You might need to borrow someone's car or get them to read over a job application. Isn't it wonderful when they say 'of course I want to!' It is so much better than 'I'll see if I can fit it in' or 'I'd love to, but I can't.'

The person affected by leprosy in today's Gospel had a lonely life. The first reading from the book of Leviticus tells us how those suffering certain diseases were required to live away from the community, 'outside the camp.' There was surely a fear of contagion, but it must have been tough for the people in isolation.

Jesus stretched out his hand. He reaches into the world of the lonely. Jesus is always creating community, especially with those overlooked by others.

Lent starts this week with Ash Wednesday. As we prepare to celebrate once again the death and resurrection of Jesus at Easter, Project Compassion gives us the chance to act as Jesus did. To reach out to those in some of the most challenging situations imaginable.

Once again, the theme for Project Compassion is **For All Future Generations**.

This year, that theme is being drawn from the story of the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-20).

Moses was part of a stolen generation. He was taken from his family because Pharaoh was committing genocide against the people of Israel. One day, he was working for his father-in-law in what seems to have been a family business. His sheep wander off and suddenly Moses encounters a bush that is burning but not consumed. He is stunned. A voice tells him to remove his shoes because he is standing on 'holy ground.' The earth beneath our feet is indeed a sacred place. It is God's gift to us.

God tells Moses that he has heard the cry of his people. God responds to injustice and chooses Moses to speak to Pharaoh. Moses is scared but God promises 'I will be with you.' God will share the journey. All the time, God remains a mystery. He tells Moses 'I am who I am.' Moses wants more detail, so God simply says that this is the same

God who has been longing for justice for the whole of history:

'By this name I shall be invoked for all future generations.'

As God called Moses, so now God calls us to work 'for all future generations.'



PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

We pray for the ability to respond to the needs of the poor and marginalised. Just as Jesus said to the man who needed help, 'of course I want to,' may we in turn reach out to others from our heart, especially during Lent through our efforts for Project Compassion. Lord, hear us.

ASH WEDNESDAY REFLECTION

14 FEBRUARY 2024



It is curious that this year Ash Wednesday happens to fall on the same day as St Valentine's Day. This doesn't happen very often. St Valentine's Day is a great occasion for florists and restaurants. Some people get carried away and arrange to propose marriage in hot air balloons and beside beautiful waterfalls. This is all great fun, and it is delightful to see people dizzy with love.

We all know that real love is about more than the good times. It is a commitment to grow together and encounter each other more and more deeply, even when the going is tough. There are legends about St Valentine but it's not clear who he may have been. The chances are, however, that he was a martyr in the early period of the Christian story. He knew that love meant sacrifice. Love lays down its own life to give life to others.

Ash Wednesday is the perfect day to think about love. We don't see flowers in church today and we are asked to eat modestly. Today, we begin our journey towards our observance and celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus at Easter. The cross of Jesus is the ultimate symbol of how profoundly God loves the world.

Lent is a time when we are also asked to consider how authentically we make God's love visible to others. The reading today from St Paul reminds us that 'we are ambassadors for Christ.' This means taking risks and reaching beyond our comfort zones to share a message with

a world that is often indifferent and doesn't want to hear it.

Each year, through Project Compassion, Caritas Australia offers us a significant opportunity to become ambassadors for Christ. The prophet Joel says, 'Why should it be said among nations, "where is their God?"' In other words, we must try to live the message of Jesus, which is one of justice, compassion, inclusion and extravagant love.

Today's Psalm is a reminder that God speaks through us:
Give me again the joy of your help,
With a spirit of fervour sustain me,
O Lord, open my lips,
And my mouth shall declare your praise.



**"GOD'S LOVE CALLS
US TO MOVE BEYOND
FEAR. WE ASK GOD FOR THE
COURAGE TO PUT ON FAITH,
HOPE AND LOVE AS WE GO
OUT INTO THE WORLD AND
BECOME THE WORD IN BODY
AS WELL AS SPIRIT."**

POPE FRANCIS



PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

We pray for all who are trying to rise from the ashes in their lives. May our support for Project Compassion remind us that now is the time to turn to the Lord with all our hearts and embrace the needs of God's whole family. Lord, hear us.

1ST SUNDAY OF LENT

WEEKEND OF 17-18 FEBRUARY 2024



"I am determined to finish my senior high school so I can provide a better future for my children."

Ronita, Philippines



"We are very thankful and grateful for the water tank. It has helped us so much and made our daily life easier."

Leaia, Samoa



"In my community, most people think that only men can be carpenters, so I want to prove to my community that women can do it as well."

Memory, Malawi

REFLECTION

Mark's Gospel is bold and challenging. It doesn't beat around the bush. Throughout this year, there will be many Sundays when we really need to tune in because Mark's Gospel doesn't wait for the reader to be ready. It is right in your face, to use a modern expression. Sometimes Mark reminds us of the wise old person who doesn't use many words, but every one of those words counts. There can't be many books of so few pages that have had such a mighty impact on the world.

Today, a few lines tell us that Jesus went into the desert for 40 days and 'was tempted by Satan.' He was 'with the wild beasts', meaning he was vulnerable as he was immersed in the natural world. This was surely an experience of struggle and growth. Then suddenly Jesus discovers that John the Baptist has been arrested. In a few lines, Mark creates the impression of a challenging time.

How did Jesus respond? He seems to have been enlivened, to have decided to create change. He is full of energy and purpose. 'The time has come,' he says. In his vulnerability, he has discovered that 'the kingdom of God is close at hand.'

This year, through Project Compassion, Caritas Australia will

ask us to consider several stories of vulnerability and hope in action. Over the coming weeks, we will meet a number of extraordinary women: Leaia from Samoa, Ronita from the Philippines and Memory from Malawi. They remind us that in many situations around the world, women are the heart of the community and the drivers of change. In each case, a partnership involving Caritas Australia and local agencies has led to new opportunities not just for an individual but for families and communities. The kingdom of God is, indeed, closer than we think. Our decisions help to bring it to reality around the globe.

Perhaps we might spend time with the words of today's Psalm: 'God guides me in the right path; God teaches the Lord's way to the poor.'



DON'T FORGET
TO CREATE YOUR PARISH
FUNDRAISING PAGE AT:
**CARITAS.ORG.AU/
PROJECT-COMPASSION**

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION



We pray for all those around the world who are vulnerable to the impact of poverty, violence, and climate change. May our generosity towards Project Compassion be a measure of our commitment to global change. Lord, hear us.

FUNDRAISING IDEA

Ask your Youth Group to organise a fundraising activity outside of the parish. Resources can be found at fundraise.projectcompassion.org.au

BULLETIN NOTICE

You can help better the lives of people in some of the most vulnerable communities on earth by making a donation through Project Compassion boxes and envelopes, visiting caritas.org.au/project-compassion or phoning 1800 024 413.

2ND SUNDAY OF LENT

WEEKEND OF 24-25 FEBRUARY 2024

RONITA'S STORY, PHILIPPINES

REFLECTION

When Jesus took his closest friends to the top of a high mountain, they experienced something quite extraordinary. The transfiguration gave them a glimpse of what it meant for Jesus to be the son of God. It is hardly surprising that Peter said, 'it is wonderful for us to be here.' The Gospel also tells us that Jesus' friends were frightened, and this is also easy to understand. They were overwhelmed. Nevertheless, it's not long before Jesus reminds them that he is destined to die. His friends must come down from the mountain and walk with Jesus through all the ordinary days and weeks that lie ahead.

We can all say 'it is wonderful for us to be here' no matter where that happens to be. Life is full of wonder. That doesn't mean it is always easy. We live in the arms of a very deep mystery. God's love enfolds us.

Throughout Lent, we are called to support Project Compassion, an initiative of Caritas Australia. This year, Project Compassion celebrates 60 years of partnership with some of the most marginal communities in the world. With your help, we have walked alongside literally millions of people in dozens of countries.

This week we encounter the story of Ronita who lives in Quezon City, part of metro Manila in the Philippines. Becoming a mother at a young age meant that her schooling was cut short. Her husband, Lean, leaves for work at 3am and returns at 9pm, earning less than \$US10 per day in a demanding job in waste disposal. On such a small income, Ronita and Lean, along with two young children, are able to rent a room of about 10 square metres.

Thanks to your support of Project Compassion, Ronita's life can be transfigured. She has been able to continue her education through the Alternative Learning System (ALS), run by Caritas Australia's partner, the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ). The FCJ sisters provide a safe space for young people such as Ronita to finish school and find better jobs.

Caritas Australia believes that the world can be transfigured to become more like the kingdom of God of which Jesus spoke. We can encounter people whom others choose to ignore. When we do so, we discover that here, too, are children of God. We are asked to listen to them.



22-year-old Ronita lives with her husband and two children in a barangay (local district) in Quezon City, which is situated in Metro Manila in the Philippines.

Ronita left school when she became pregnant as a teenager. This could have had a life-long impact on her ability to find work and provide for her family.

Thankfully, Ronita was given a second chance at completing her studies when she heard about the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ), Caritas Australia's local partners in the Philippines. Through the FCJ's Alternative Learning System (ALS) program, Ronita was able to re-enrol in her studies, and continue learning in a safe and flexible environment – even with the arrival of her second child, Egzy Grey.

After completing her ALS classes, Ronita went on to earn her Grade 12 Senior High School Diploma. With her new diploma, Ronita has now secured a job at a call centre which she hopes will allow her to support her family while she continues her studies.

With the support of the FCJ, Ronita has overcome tremendous obstacles to enjoy better employment prospects and a brighter future for her whole family.

"I have now graduated senior school and I am so proud of myself," she said, "I feel hopeful for the future ... Now it's not impossible for me to achieve my dream... Thank you."



PRAYER OF INTERCESSION



We pray for gratitude for the wonder of faith in God and the beauty of life. May our vision be broad and deep as we embrace people in great need through our support of Project Compassion, organised by Caritas Australia. Lord, hear us.

FUNDRAISING IDEA

Each Sunday, play a short film (found on the USB) to highlight the positive impact your community is making. Integrate weekly stories, reflections and prayers into Mass (found in this booklet and on the USB) to further emphasise how your community's donations are transforming the lives of vulnerable people around the world.

BULLETIN NOTICE

You can help people like Ronita to find work and create a better future for herself and her loved ones by making a donation through Project Compassion boxes and envelopes, visiting caritas.org.au/project-compassion or phoning 1800 024 413.

3RD SUNDAY OF LENT WEEKEND OF 2-3 MARCH 2024

**LEAIA'S STORY,
SAMOA**



Samoa may be a country surrounded by water, but access to clean drinking water is scarce in some areas, with many families facing extreme hardship as a result.

Leaia lives with her five children, husband, brother, and sister-in-law on the island of Upolu in Samoa. Not having access to clean water for their daily lives has caused Leaia a lot of worry.

Their home is not connected to a piped water system, so they used to rely solely on rainwater collected in old fridges. When their water ran out, she had to walk with her young children to collect water in buckets and containers from a neighbour down the street.

With the support of Caritas Australia's local partner, Caritas Samoa, a water tank was installed at their home. She and her family now have a steady supply of clean drinking water at home. Next year, they will also have a toilet built, with the support of Caritas Samoa, which will further improve their health and living conditions.

"We are very thankful and grateful for the water tank. It has helped us so much and made our daily life easier," Leaia said.



REFLECTION

If the world is one great classroom, then God is a fantastic teacher. We have all had experience of this: the firm and gentle way that God opens our minds and helps us to understand.

Today's readings show three different ways that God tries to get through to us. In the first reading, God sets some clear expectations for behaviour. They are all based around respect, both for the teacher and for those with whom we share the class! At the same time, God reminds us 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the house of slavery.' In other words, these are not random rules. They are designed to protect our deepest freedom. Disregarding them sends us back into captivity.

In the Gospel, Jesus is annoyed by people who think they know everything but who have not properly understood the basic lesson about justice and reverence. 'Stop turning my father's house into a market.' Finally, St Paul speaks about wisdom. 'God's weakness is human strength.' This is another style again: inviting us into a mystery, almost using riddles to get us to think outside the box.

It is no surprise that the Catholic community has always valued education and done a great deal to

make it accessible for people around the world. Just as God teaches us, so too do we try to share the wonderful gift of learning with others.

This week, Project Compassion brings us the story of Leaia, who lives in Samoa. With the support of Caritas Australia's local partner Caritas Samoa, a water tank was installed in Leaia's home to harvest rainwater. This means that her family can now have access to clean water to drink and bathe. The time that was previously spent walking to collect water in buckets from a neighbour down the street can now be used for other essential tasks and, most importantly, her children don't have to miss out on school. School is a doorway that opens onto a better world.

The Gospel today says that Jesus knew what a person had in them. We should try to be the same: to see the potential, not just the surface.



DON'T FORGET

**TO CREATE YOUR
PARISH FUNDRAISING
PAGE AT: FUNDRAISE.
PROJECTCOMPASSION.
ORG.AU**

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION



We pray that we will deepen our faith over the whole of our lives. May we be open to the many lessons God wants to teach us. Through Project Compassion, may we support the journey of all to fullness of life. Lord, hear us.

FUNDRAISING IDEA

Spread the word of Project Compassion and ask parishoners to take part in a fundraising event like Caritas Ks. Resources can be found at fundraise.projectcompassion.org.au

BULLETIN NOTICE

You can help women like Leaia access clean water and look forward to a brighter future for her family by making a generous donation through Project Compassion boxes and envelopes, visiting caritas.org.au/project-compassion or phoning 1800 024 413.

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT

WEEKEND OF 9-10 MARCH 2024

MEMORY'S STORY, MALAWI

REFLECTION

We have all lived through a great deal of change. Even young people have seen plenty. ChatGPT is a recent development and so are electric cars. Older people can remember having a phone plugged into a socket that you couldn't carry around with you. Sometimes we have discussions about the good old days. They are often tinged with nostalgia for things we miss and gratitude for improvements. We no longer need to buy film for our cameras or change typewriter ribbons. Climate change is deeply troubling. Many medical improvements are inspiring.

Change can certainly be frightening. It can also be an occasion of great hope. Jesus seems to have understood this. Nicodemus comes across as a character who is looking for change in his life, but he is nervous about it, so he comes to see Jesus under cover of darkness. Earlier in the chapter, Jesus uses the image of being born again. Of starting all over again. It is a dramatic description of change.

Jesus says that the light has come into the world and that people prefer the same old darkness. They are set in their ways.

Every Lent, through Project Compassion, Caritas Australia asks us to help bring light into the world and to make positive change. An example is presented to us this week in the story of Memory, a young

woman from rural Malawi, the eldest child in a family living at the level of subsistence farming.

Listen to some of Memory's words: 'Growing up in the village was not easy. My parents don't have a job, so they depend on farming. When the season goes wrong, we suffer a lot and become food insecure. Sometimes we need to bathe without soap. Sometimes we need to walk without shoes.'

With the support of Caritas Australia and its partner the Catholic Development Commission in Malawi (CADECOM), Memory was able to enrol at a technical college where she learnt practical skills in carpentry. A new life became possible. She was able to offer more to her family and her community.

Today, the letter to the Ephesians reminds us that every person is 'God's work of art.' God is the artist who never signs off on a painting but is always trying to make it better. Perhaps we can see the world in the same way.

DON'T FORGET
TO CREATE YOUR
PARISH FUNDRAISING
PAGE AT: **FUNDRAISE.
PROJECTCOMPASSION.
ORG.AU**



Growing up in the Mwanza district in southern Malawi, 26-year-old Memory was born to a low-income family who relies on subsistence farming for survival.

Memory's parents struggled to pay for her school fees and supplies, and she often had to walk to school barefoot. As the eldest of five children, Memory also faced the challenge of balancing her education with domestic chores, such as farming, cooking, cleaning, and carrying water.

Despite the challenges she faced, Memory understood that education was her best chance of breaking the cycle of poverty, "I told myself I can't stop going to school because this is the only way I can get a better life."

With the support of Caritas Australia and the Catholic Development Commission in Malawi (CADECOM) – Caritas Australia's local partner in Malawi – Memory enrolled in a technical college where she undertook a three-year carpentry course. Her tuition and boarding fees were partially funded by CADECOM through funds provided by Caritas Australia.

Memory now stands proudly as the first female carpenter from her village, working at one of Malawi's largest hydroelectric power stations. With the income from her job, she can now support her family while inspiring other young women in her community to finish their education and seize opportunities within male-dominated industries.

"Being a female carpenter sets an example to others in my community," she said. "They see a woman can do what a man can do."

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

We pray for all people who make things. We thank God for their skill. May our support of Project Compassion help people around the world find the opportunity to use their talents to support their families and communities. Lord, hear us.



FUNDRAISING IDEA

Ask your parishioners to bring in a meal or light refreshments to share after Mass. Discuss what impact basic schooling has on the most vulnerable people around the world. Ask the question, "where would you be now if you didn't receive schooling?" Collect donations through your fundraising page or donations boxes.

BULLETIN NOTICE

You can help women like Memory seize better job opportunities and thrive in their community. Please make a generous donation through Project Compassion boxes and envelopes, visit caritas.org.au/project-compassion or phone 1800 024 413.

5TH SUNDAY OF LENT WEEKEND OF 16-17 MARCH 2024

PROJECT COMPASSION'S IMPACT



FOR ALL FUTURE GENERATIONS

As Holy Week approaches we hope you and your parishioners are feeling inspired and supported to raise money for Caritas Australia, the aid agency of the Australian Catholic Church working to eradicate poverty and injustice.



REFLECTION

The word 'heart' occurs almost a thousand times in the Bible, more than three times as often as the word 'soul.' Perhaps this is just another item of trivia but surely it gives us a clue about Christianity. It is a religion of the heart. It gets our blood pumping.

As we approach the climax of our Lenten journey, this week's readings ask questions about our hearts. The psalm begs 'a pure heart create for me, O God.' Those words invite the Lord to come right inside us, into the very core of our being. The prophet Jeremiah quotes the Lord as saying, 'deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it on their hearts.' In other words, we won't find God's most intimate whisperings to us just in books or lectures. We will find it when we are genuinely in touch with our core, our most intimate space. God's love is inscribed on our hearts.

In his letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis speaks against 'a culture of walls.' He asks us to treasure the hope found in every heart:

Hope 'speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, independently of our circumstances and historical conditioning. Hope speaks to us of a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for a life of fulfillment, a desire to achieve great things, things that fill our heart and lift our spirit

to lofty realities like truth, goodness and beauty, justice and love... Hope is bold.'

The word 'caritas' means love. The work of Caritas Australia is a heartfelt response to the needs of the world, one that gives expression to our shared hope. Caritas always works in partnership with others. During Lent, as we have listened to the experience of people we have helped through our support of Project Compassion, we will have noticed that life-giving partnerships with groups on the ground in many countries make this possible.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks of the grain of wheat that must die to create a rich harvest. Of course, he is referring to his own passion. But there is a message here for us all. 'Anyone who loves their life will lose it.' We are called to wear our hearts on our sleeves. To reach beyond the safe and familiar.



DON'T FORGET

TO CREATE YOUR
PARISH FUNDRAISING
PAGE AT: [FUNDRAISE.
PROJECTCOMPASSION.
ORG.AU](https://fundraise.projectcompassion.org.au)

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION



We pray for all who go out of their way to bring God's love to others, especially to those most in need. We pray in gratitude for the many partners of Caritas Australia who ensure our contributions to Project Compassion reach the places they are needed. Lord, hear us.

FUNDRAISING IDEA

Host an information night to raise awareness of vulnerable women around the world. Did you know:

- 388 million women are living in extreme poverty?
- 60% of working people living in poverty are women?

- 90% of countries have at least one law that discriminates against women?

Invite parishioners to bring a donation for a night of 'food for thought'.

Source: United Nations

6TH SUNDAY OF LENT - HOLY WEEK

WEEKEND OF 23-24 MARCH 2024

REFLECTION

We see images of the cross everywhere from school uniforms to hospital buildings. Perhaps it is so commonplace that it doesn't stop us in our tracks the way it should. The cross of Jesus is the best key we have for understanding the mystery of God's love. God's compassion for the human family took Jesus to a lonely and brutal execution. Jesus was the victim of appalling injustice and degradation. His experience asks us to try to make the world more just and to revere the dignity of every person. 'Whatsoever you do to the least of my sisters and brothers, you do to me.' This is part of the reason why Project Compassion has, for 60 years, been part of our Lenten observance.

This year, Holy Week begins with the reading of the passion story from Mark's Gospel. Even in busy lives, we should try to set time aside to spend with this extraordinary story, not to rush it. Gently take a little at a time and ask for the grace to be close to Jesus. In the Spiritual Exercises, St Ignatius asks us 'to consider how the divinity hides itself.' In other words, this is humanity stripped bare.

One way to spend time with the passion story is to take a different character each week and quietly ponder what it looked like to them and what they may have felt. Here is a suggestion:

Sunday Judas Iscariot
Monday Simon Peter
Tuesday The high priest
Wednesday Pontius Pilate
Thursday Simon of Cyrene
Friday The centurion
Saturday Mary of Magdala

Let us remember a beautiful prayer of just seven words that was taught to Pope Francis by his grandmother: Jesus, make my heart more like yours.



DON'T FORGET

**TO CREATE YOUR
PARISH FUNDRAISING
PAGE AT: FUNDRAISE.
PROJECTCOMPASSION.
ORG.AU**

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION



We pray that the mystery of the death of Jesus will deepen within our hearts. May we be ready to take up the cross in our time, especially as we support those who experience injustice throughout the world. Lord, hear us.

FUNDRAISING IDEA

Encourage each parishioner to donate on Easter Sunday using the Project Compassion Easter Envelope distributed by a volunteer at the door as parishioners enter or leave Mass (contact your Diocesan Director for envelopes if these have not been provided). Remember to turn over your Project Compassion poster after Easter to show the Project Compassion Thank You poster, acknowledging the generosity of parishioners this year.

BULLETIN NOTICE

You can help end poverty, promote justice, and uphold the dignity of all people by making a donation through Project Compassion boxes and envelopes, visiting caritas.org.au/project-compassion or phoning 1800 024 413.

WAY OF THE CROSS BY POPE FRANCIS

Lord Jesus, help us to see in your Cross all the crosses of the world:

the cross of people hungry for bread and for love;

the cross of people alone and abandoned even by their children and kin;

the cross of people thirsty for justice and for peace;

the cross of people who lack the comfort of faith;

the cross of the elderly who struggle under the weight of years and of loneliness;

the cross of migrants who find doors closed in fear and hearts armoured by political calculations;

the cross of little ones, wounded in their innocence and their purity;

the cross of humanity that wanders in the darkness of uncertainty and in the obscurity of temporary culture;

the cross of families split by betrayal, by the seductions of the evil one or by homicidal levity and selfishness;

the cross of consecrated people who tirelessly seek to bring your light into the world and feel rejected, derided and humiliated;

the cross of consecrated people who, along the way, have forgotten their first love;

the cross of your children who, while believing in you and seeking to live according to your word, find themselves marginalised and rejected even by their families and their peers;

the cross of our weaknesses, of our hypocrisy, of our betrayals, of our sins and of our many broken promises;

the cross of your Church that, faithful to your Gospel, struggles to spread your love even among the baptized themselves;

the cross of the Church, your Bride, that feels constantly assailed from within and without;

the cross of our common home that is gravely withering before our selfish eyes, blinded by greed and by power.

Lord Jesus, revive in us the hope of resurrection and of your definitive victory over all evil and all death.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



YOUR CONTACT FOR PROJECT COMPASSION

Through your generosity during Project Compassion this year, you are assisting some of the world's most vulnerable people build better futures for themselves, their families and their communities, now and **for all future generations**. Thank you so much for being part of Project Compassion 2024!

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caritas.org.au/project-compassion



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End poverty
Promote justice
Uphold dignity

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