

# The Way of the Cross

for Parish Groups and Personal Devotion



# How to use this resource

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

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

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

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

**For use in Parish Groups:** Choose a **Leader** to lead these parts: **Introduction**, **Reflect** and **Respond**. Choose at least one **Reader** to read these parts for each station: **Station** and **Story**. Find the script for each part in the '**Notes**' section accompanying each slide.

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

# Introduction

The Way of the Cross tells the story of Jesus of Nazareth's journey to the cross. It is a story that challenges us to think about injustice and its impacts on human dignity. Yet, even in its darkest moments, it is also a story that reminds us of compassion and the power of forgiveness and love.

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

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

# Station 1

## Jesus is condemned to death

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

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

# Laxmi's Story



Laxmi and members of the child's club beside the water taps they lobbied to have installed at their school in Nepal's Jajarkot district. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia

# Laxmi's Story

Laxmi is committed to justice and dignity too. She is 16 and lives with her mother and siblings in Nepal's Jajarkot district, one of the least developed areas in the remote Karnali province, with almost half of the population living below the poverty line. Girls and young women in remote Nepal face numerous challenges in their everyday life. Despite the economic hardship their family faced, Laxmi's parents were determined that their daughter receive an education.

Laxmi joined the child's club at her school that was run with the support of Caritas Australia's partner organisation, Caritas Nepal, through the Nepal Livelihoods and Resilience Program. These clubs support students to participate in extracurricular activities to develop their speaking, writing and leadership skills. The children also organise awareness-raising activities such as public rallies, street dramas and creating posters that highlight issues such as child rights. Since 2018, Caritas Nepal has supported more than 5,000 children through the child's clubs.

Access to clean water had long been an issue at Laxmi's school. Laxmi, who was elected chairperson of her child's club, together with other club members lobbied the school administration, the ward office and the municipality office until they eventually agreed to construct a series of water taps on the school grounds. This experience made Laxmi realise that her voice matters, and that her actions can make a difference. "Now, I know where to speak, what to speak. However big the gathering might be, I'm not afraid to speak," she said.

Laxmi has graduated from her secondary school and is now studying engineering. She continues to be involved in the child's club, serving as an advisor and mentor to the next generation of young leaders. The impact Laxmi has made will continue for generations to come.

# Reflect

- What social and ecological justice issues are important to you?
- What change would you like to see?
- How can you stand up and make a difference?

# Respond

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

**May we follow the way of justice.**

# Station 2

## Jesus takes up the cross

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

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

# Sita's Story



Sita has transformed her life by learning new skills that have helped her to overcome the challenges she faced. She is now a role model for other single women in her community. Photo: Dipendra Lamsal

# Sita's Story

Poverty, disability, discrimination, isolation, limited access to healthcare and education as well as a lack of work impact a person's capacity to live their best life. Conflict and vulnerability as a result of drought, flood, depleted soils, natural disasters and climate change also affect the daily lives of many communities around the world. Sita's story tells of how these things can combine to make life difficult.

Sita lives in Nepal. She is a mother of four children, aged from 10 to 24 years. Her youngest child goes to primary school while her eldest child studies at university. After her husband passed away, she found it difficult to support her children's education. As a widow in a patriarchal society like Nepal, she was stigmatised and discriminated against by others in her community. And, she struggled to earn enough income through her work as a labourer.

Nepal is one of the least developed countries in South Asia, with food insecurity a constant concern throughout the country. According to the World Food

Programme, there are 4.6 million food-insecure people in Nepal.\*

Despite the challenges she faced, Sita was determined to forge a brighter future for her children. She joined the Livelihoods and Resilience Program, supported by Caritas Australia and its partner, Caritas Nepal. Sita learnt farming and money skills and soon became a member of a cooperative made up of single women from the community. “The program has helped to improve my relationship with other people in the community. I feel I am being part of the community now,” Sita said.

Sita no longer needs to purchase vegetables from the market as she can rely on her own home-grown produce. Her new livestock business is thriving now too and, with a sustainable source of income, she can continue to pay for her children’s education. She has become a respected member of her community and a role model for other single women.

# Reflect

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- Is there anything weighing you down at the moment? Some burden you're carrying that might be relieved by sharing it with someone you trust?
- Do you know someone whose life feels difficult for them right now? How could you help?

# Respond

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

**May we follow the way of solidarity.**

# Station 3

## Jesus falls for the first time

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

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

# Biru's Story



Biru is seen working at his bicycle repair shop outside his home. He gained support and skills needed to establish his own business through the entrepreneurship and livelihoods training program, run by Caritas Australia's partner, Caritas India. Photo: Sameer Bara

# Biru's Story

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

Biru lives in a rural village in India's east. He lost mobility in one of his legs after contracting polio as a child, which makes it difficult for him to walk. He managed to complete his education until grade six but was always dependent on his parents to get him to school because he was unable to walk so far on his own.

A member of India's Ho ethnic minority population, Biru started to work as a shepherd from a young age, looking after other people's cattle. He continued this work after he married his wife, Budhni and had four daughters, even though keeping up with the cattle was a challenge.

Over 26 million people who have a disability in India also live in poverty. A further, 69 percent of the population living with a disability reside in rural areas which makes access to support services, education and employment an even

greater challenge.\* Discrimination can further limit job opportunities and lead to social exclusion.

Although he had taught himself to repair bicycles by watching other people, Biru never dreamed of using his skills to start his own business. Then in 2016, Caritas India's staff saw Biru struggling to walk along with the cattle and invited him to join its Community Led Development and Governance (Gram Nirman) program, which is supported by Caritas Australia. The program works with tribal communities and vulnerable groups, such as people living with a disability, women and the elderly. It supports them to develop small businesses.

“I was motivated by the team, my life started changing after I entered the program,” Biru says. “I didn't know that I had the skills to manage a shop, but after receiving the support, I started with cycle repairing, then I realised I can manage other skills too, like repairing motorcycles.”

Before, Biru had felt like a burden. Now, his community has a better understanding of how people living with a disability can participate in community life and decision-making.

# Reflect

- Can you think of a time when you achieved something you didn't expect to? What or who helped you achieve it?
- Have you ever been surprised by another person's ability to overcome challenges in order to achieve something? Why was it surprising?

# Respond

Jesus, you know what it is to be vulnerable and you lift up all who are downtrodden.

**May we follow the way of dignity.**

# Station 4

## Jesus meets his mother

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

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

# Tereesa's Story



Tereesa chats with some of the founding Elders during the weekly Elders Gathering at Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation in Western Sydney. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia

# Tereesa's Story

Having a place where we feel we belong helps us heal, grow and flourish. Tereesa knows this.

Tereesa is a proud Gamilaroi woman who was born and raised on Darug Country, in Western Sydney. Tereesa's high school education was cut short when she became pregnant at 16. As a single mother, she was unable to afford rental properties for her family of four children. Her family frequently moved from one temporary accommodation to another, without a stable environment. "I was homeless. I didn't have a place to call home... my kids never had a connection to the community." Tereesa said.

Determined to create a better future for her children, Tereesa discovered the Young Mums and Bubs Group at Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation, supported by Caritas Australia. Baabayn (which means 'Ancestral Woman' in Gumbaynggirr language) was founded by five Elders and aims to support its community to heal from the past and nurture their sense of confidence and pride in the future.

“Baabayn is a place where people can come and gather. It's a belonging place. It's a place of culture, finding out about who your mobs are,” said Auntie Jenny, one of the founders of Baabayn.

With the help of Baabayn, Tereesa was able to access services such as psychological and housing support and driving lessons. Her family now have their own accommodation and a stable environment they can call home. More than that, Baabayn has helped Tereesa and her children connect with their First Nations Australian culture, history and symbols, especially through art.

“I want my children to continue learning about their culture,” Tereesa said. “I want them to have an involvement with the community. The community has your back. It's good to have that to lean on and I want my kids to realise that as well.”

# Reflect

- Think of a group or community that you are a part of. What things help you to feel like you belong?
- What could you do to more deeply connect with and support others in your group or community?

# Respond

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

**May we follow the way of love.**

# Station 5

## Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross

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

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



## Thu's Story

Thu (left) helps make incense sticks with fellow members of his Village Savings and Loans Association group near his home in Quang Tri province in Vietnam. Photo: Phan Tan Lam/Caritas Australia

# Thu's Story

Thu and his community know just how important solidarity is. In fact, their lives are fuller because of it.

Thu lives in the Quảng Trị province, located on the Northern Central Coast of Vietnam. Vietnam has made significant economic and social progress since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. However, poverty and inequality remain widespread across the country. The repercussions of land mines and chemical warfare can be seen in the large numbers of people living with a disability.

Thu was just 12 years old when he stepped on an unexploded land mine and lost his leg. Living with a disability in rural Vietnam presented many challenges for Thu, who worked mainly as a rice farmer. “It is hard to get a job in rural areas where people earn their living mainly from farming. However, local farming here depends on the natural weather... There is often drought in summertime and flood in rainy season. Life is thus extremely difficult,” says Thu.

In addition to being the breadwinner for his family, Thu took on the role of caring for his wife, Linh, after she suffered a stroke.

Determined to turn their lives around, Thu and Linh joined the Empowerment of People with Disabilities program, run by Caritas Australia's local partner in Vietnam, the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD). The program supports people living with disabilities to establish Village Saving and Loans Associations (VSLA) so that they can access affordable loans. Through the VSLA, Thu was able to obtain a low-interest loan, which he used to open his own barber shop. Thu also joined an incense-making group and, with the extra income, he was able to repair his house and reconstruct his front yard to prevent flooding during the rainy season. He now plans to invest in livestock, such as pigs, ducks or chickens, to further diversify his income streams.

Before he joined the program, Thu mostly stayed at home and had limited contact with other people in his neighbourhood. The VSLA provides a welcoming and inclusive space for people with a disability like Thu and Linh to socialise, learn and support each other.

# Reflect

- Think of a time when someone showed you compassion. How did that feel?
- Now, think about the people and communities you know of who are experiencing need or vulnerability. How could you turn your compassion into action?

# Respond

Jesus, you show compassion to all in need.

**May we follow the way of compassion.**

# Station 6

## Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

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

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



## Shirley's Story

Shirley trained as a Tribal Health Worker, through a program run by Caritas Australia's partner in the Philippines. By acting as an intermediary between government health services and her community, she helps ensure the Manide people have access to health care. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia

# Shirley's Story

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

Shirley is an Indigenous Manide woman living in the remote Camarines Norte province in the Philippines. She is the mother of four and the family's sole breadwinner, as her husband is sick. But Shirley was struggling to support the whole family and keep her children in school. Indigenous minorities in the Philippines face regular discrimination and disadvantage, limiting their access to education, employment and healthcare. Adding to these challenges, Shirley lives in a disaster-prone area. Around 20 typhoons lash the Philippines each year and in 2018, Tropical Cyclone Usman struck her town. Heavy rains destroyed the vegetables she had grown to eat, and she was left with almost nothing.

Shirley joined a Caritas-supported program, and that became the turning point in her life. In partnership with the Socio Pastoral Action Centre Foundation Inc. (SPACFI), this program strengthens the capacity of indigenous people to lead lives of dignity, grow in self-esteem and attain sustainable livelihoods. It also

helps them to advocate for land rights, obtain better employment and improve their access to health, education, housing and sanitation. Nearly 1200 Manide people have benefitted so far.

Shirley trained to become an Indigenous health worker and learnt to supplement her income by growing vegetables. She now lives in a government-supplied house and grows more than enough produce to feed her family. She sells the rest of her harvest for extra income.

Shirley recently took over her father's role as tribal chieftain and represents her people on the Municipal Health Board. As a leader in her community, she helps Manide people access medicines, vaccines, healthcare and nutritional advice. Not only has she improved her own life, she is leading her community to create change for future generations.

# Reflect

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- Reflect on the idea of human dignity. How is it related to freedom and justice?
- What skills or resources do you have to share that can help support people and communities impacted by poverty, oppression or other injustice?

# Respond

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

**May we follow the way of courage.**

# Station 7

## Jesus falls for a second time

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

Poverty and injustice keep people from accessing what they need to live safe and healthy lives. Global events such as war and pandemics only deepen the struggle.

Since the COVID-19 crisis began, more than 700 million people now live in extreme poverty.\*

\* [World Bank](#)

# Phany's Story



Phany works in a field near her home in Cambodia. Before joining the Caritas Australia-supported Environmental Protection and Development Organisation project, she was not able to earn enough money as a rice farmer and had to leave her family to work in the city's exploitative construction industry. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia

# Phany's Story

Phany's story illustrates not only how poverty limits people's choices but how access to training and other supports can help people, especially in rural communities, transform their lives and futures for the better.

Phany lives with her husband and daughter in a village in Kandieng district in Cambodia where 50 percent of the population face moderate or severe food insecurity. The region experiences recurrent drought and water shortages, making it increasingly difficult to grow enough food or earn a living. The irrigation system in Phany's village was old and inefficient and didn't provide enough water for crops.

“We weren't earning much income, our meals lacked nutrition,” Phany says. “We had no technical skills in vegetable and animal raising, I just farmed in the traditional way. We had debt with a high interest rate.”

Struggling to earn a living as a rice farmer, Phany and her husband had to leave their daughter with family in the village to take up construction work in the city.

“I missed my child, I had never separated from her before. She stayed with her grandmother who was also sick,” Phany says, crying. “I used to dream of staying at home raising chickens and growing vegetables.”

In 2016, Phany joined the Upholding Community Dignity Together program, where she learnt new farming techniques, such as a drip irrigation system which enabled her to get a better yield from her vegetable crops and to conserve water for drier periods. She also learnt how to grow vegetables and raise chickens and ducks, just like she’d dreamed. Phany’s community also took part in training in health, nutrition, hygiene and disaster preparedness, arming them with better strategies to cope with environmental changes.

Now Phany grows a wider variety of crops all year round and is more aware of market needs. The family is now able to afford a small house, they have enough food and clothes and can afford to send their daughter to school.

“I am proud that I was a farmer who had no skills and now I can earn and improve my living, share my knowledge and also improve solidarity in the family and amongst our neighbours,” Phany says.

# Reflect

- Reflect on the idea of the common good, defined in Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'* as something "belonging to all and meant for all".\*
- How could you conserve or share the resources you have, to better balance your rights with the needs of others in our global family?

# Respond

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

**May we follow the way of sharing.**

\*Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* n23

# Station 8

## Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

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

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

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

# Pronali's Story



Pronali (centre) joined a Caritas Australia-supported program to strengthen her skills in farming and health. She now works as a midwife with the community clinic in her village in northeast Bangladesh. She provides important health care to pregnant women, new mothers and their babies. Photo: Argho Sku

# Pronali's Story

Love and compassion are at the heart of Pronali's story.

Pronali lives with her husband and two children in a village in the northeast region of Bangladesh. Their community is made up of several different groups of people, including the Indigenous Garo people. Farming is the main job in the area.

According to the World Bank, while Bangladesh “has made remarkable progress in reducing poverty, supported by sustained economic growth”, there are “about 22 million people still living below the poverty line”.<sup>\*</sup> Factors such as poor infrastructure, rapid urbanisation and vulnerability to climate change are among current challenges. This is the case in Pronali's rural village where schooling, communication and health services are less developed compared to other parts of the country.

Pronali enjoys learning. After joining a local program aimed at strengthening skills in farming and health, her special interest in mother and child health care

<sup>\*</sup> World Bank <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2018/11/15/bangladesh-reducing-poverty-and-sharing-prosperity>

grew. Soon after, she was invited to attend a safe motherhood training course. “I talked to my family and husband about it,” Pronali explains. “Considering the remote area and the suffering of pregnant mothers, delivery and child care, my family and husband agreed to my proposal and encouraged me to participate.”

Supported by Caritas Australia and its local partner Caritas Bangladesh, the program enabled Pronali to discover more about her own strengths and abilities. It also taught her how to deliver basic health care and education to others in her community. Pronali now works as a midwife with the community clinic, providing important health care to pregnant women, new mothers and their babies. “Every day, pregnant women come to me for health checkup and frequently call me for home delivery,” she says.

Pronali loves her community and hopes to one day build a health care training and first aid centre in her village.

# Reflect

- Pronali saw a need in her community and responded with compassion. What needs do you see in your community or world? How could you turn your compassion to action?
- Consider hosting an event to share Pronali's story and raise awareness and funds to further support Caritas Australia's work.

# Respond

Jesus, your “love exudes compassion and dignity.”\*

**May we follow the way of love.**

# Station 9

## Jesus falls for the third time

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

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

# Halima's Story



Halima (right) participated in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) program, supported by Caritas Australia and its partner Caritas Bangladesh. She now shares her knowledge of safe hygiene practices with others in the refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Photo: Inmanuel Biswas/Caritas Bangladesh

# Halima's Story

Halima's story demonstrates how vital care and generosity towards others can be, especially when life is difficult.

After the tragic passing of her husband several years ago, Halima was left to fend for herself, caring for her young children and her widowed mother whose disability means she has difficulty walking. Then life in Myanmar became too dangerous.

“In Myanmar, we have always been victims of discrimination. We had no opportunity to go to school. They started to bomb, shoot us and set fire to the houses in the village. Leaving our homeland and coming to an unknown country for us was a matter of survival. I felt devastated inside.”

During the three-day journey to Bangladesh, Halima walked across mountains and through jungles, fearful of foxes and elephants, often struggling to carry her mother – with little food to eat. Halima arrived at the world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, home to over 1.3 million people, with no way of providing

for her children with their most basic daily needs, with no way even to protect them from the scorching sun.

Caritas Australia, in solidarity with its partner organisation Caritas Bangladesh, provided Halima with a stove and gas so that she could cook for her family, and helped her to set up a makeshift shelter. As time went by, Caritas helped Halima to improve her new home, building retention walls and drains to protect it from monsoonal rains, as well as maintaining wells, toilets and waste management.

Halima also participated in a water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) program, learning safe hygiene practices, how to source clean drinking water and to keep her family clean and healthy in the densely-populated camp. She was then appointed to the role of community mobiliser, responsible for inspecting and organising the cleaning of washrooms, wells and toilets in her block and sharing her knowledge of safe practices with others in the camp – a role particularly important as the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

Halima is proud that she is able to earn a small income from her training role, while also helping to maintain the cleanliness of the camp community. Her two young children are adapting to life in the camp and have started attending school.

“My life has changed a lot after participating in the WASH program,” Halima says. “Before, my kids fell sick two or three times a month. Now I can keep my children clean, educate them and cover expenses for their needs. I can feed them balanced food and ensure our clothes are clean. I can afford a doctor and medicines for my mother.”

Over 2,300 households which includes around 10,580 people, have benefitted from the program so far. Halima aspired to ‘be more’ for her family and for her community in the camp. Taking small steps, she made a big difference to their daily lives, sowing seeds of hope for the future.

“We are very thankful to Australian people. We pray for their sound health and positivity so that they can keep stretching a helping hand as always,” says Halima. “Thank you very much Caritas Australia.”

# Reflect

- Pope Francis writes, “Dear young people, do not bury your talents, the gifts God has given you! Do not be afraid to dream of great things!”\* How did Halima use her own gifts to help others in her community?
- How could you use your talents to raise awareness about the issues raised in Halima’s story?

# Respond

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

**May we follow the way of generosity.**

\* Pope Francis, 2013

# Station 10

## Jesus is stripped of his garments

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

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

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

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

# Bute's Story



The current drought in Ethiopia is the worst Bute has ever seen in his lifetime. Caritas Australia is working with our partner Caritas Ethiopia to provide urgent food and trucking emergency water to the most drought-affected communities in the region. Photo: Zacharias Abubeker/Caritas Australia

# Bute's Story

Bute's story highlights the extreme and devastating impacts of drought, flood and other climate-related factors on daily life. It also points to just how important it is for the whole human family to respond with compassion.

Bute is a village elder living in southern Ethiopia with his wife, Burre. Bute was elected by his community members to represent their voices. They have a story to share with the rest of the world: they need urgent humanitarian aid now.

Bute and Burre have experienced many droughts, but this one is by far the worst they have seen in their lifetime. Before the current drought, the couple had 2,000 livestock in two stables, including donkeys, goats and cows. The grass was green and there was plenty of pasture for their livestock. They used to harvest sorghum and maize, with enough water from the nearby river to irrigate their crops.

“We used to have lots of milk and meat to eat, and now we have almost nothing. The life we used to live and enjoy is completely gone,” Bute said.

Bute and Burre's family used to live near Lake Turkana, which provided water for their crops. But when Lake Turkana flooded, Bute and Burre lost their house, their crops and all their possessions overnight.

“We only saved ourselves and our children. It happened very quickly,” Bute explained. “The water came in the night while we were sleeping. We didn't have time to do anything, we could only run with our children and ourselves.”

Along with many members of their community, Bute and Burre had to relocate to drier, desert land. Due to the impacts of recurrent drought and desert locust-related damage, most people living in Bute and Burre's community are heavily reliant on humanitarian aid for survival. Across eastern Africa, over 81.6 million people are facing high acute food insecurity in countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. Caritas Australia is working with our partner Caritas Ethiopia to provide urgent food and trucking emergency water to the most drought-affected communities in Ethiopia. With no sign of the drought easing, many people in Bute's community will be heavily reliant on humanitarian aid for survival in coming months.

# Reflect

- In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis writes, “Solidarity finds concrete expression in service... And service in great part means caring for vulnerability, for the vulnerable members of our families, our society, our people.”\*
- What action will you take to express solidarity with Bute and his family and community?

# Respond

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

**May we follow the way of life.**

# Station 11

## Jesus is nailed to the cross

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

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

“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” One of the criminals crucified alongside Jesus sees his innocence and something of the divine possibility he embodied. In that moment of connection, Jesus replied with words of forgiveness and welcome: “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

# Margret's Story



Margret teaches at San Isidro Care Centre, a live-in vocational school for deaf students in the Solomon Islands. Students learn sign language as well as life skills like cooking and nutrition. Here, she uses one of the water tanks that Caritas Australia supported the school to install. Photo: Neil Nuia/Caritas Australia

# Margret's Story

Margret's story is about connection. It's also about bearing witness to environmental change and taking action that helps end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity.

Margret says her early childhood, being deaf, was difficult, until she learnt sign language when she was seven years old. "Before, I faced discrimination, my needs felt neglected and I felt excluded from the community. Then I could communicate with my other deaf friends, it reduced my frustrations and made me feel more confident and happy." As Margret grew older, she was keen to share her knowledge with others.

Margret teaches at the San Isidro Care Centre, a live-in vocational school for deaf students in the Solomon Islands. She teaches sign language and life skills, like sewing, cooking, nutrition and hygiene to teen and adult students, some who have never been to school before. However sourcing water at the school was an ongoing challenge. The school's four small tanks always ran out of water quickly or remained empty during the dry season.

Staff and students would have to walk for up to half an hour to collect the water they needed for drinking, cooking, washing and growing vegetables for their meals.

Although the Solomon Islands is a nation surrounded by water, it still experiences drought and water shortages. Around 40% of people in rural areas do not have access to basic drinking water\*, which can lead to the spread of communicable diseases like cholera and typhoid.

In 2019, Caritas Australia supported the school by installing 8 water tanks and a rainwater harvesting system which allowed a year-long supply of drinking water. Students also gained carpentry, building and plumbing skills by helping to install the water tanks, tank stands and guttering.

“Water is always available now for drinking, washing, bathing, gardening,” Margret says. “Unlike before, when we had to go 25 minutes away to collect water during the dry season. Water is so important for our life, also part of our music and culture.”

\* World Bank <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.H2O.BASW.RU.ZS?locations=SBA>

When Tropical Cyclone Harold struck in April 2020, it destroyed the roof of a staff living quarters and damaging the school's vegetable garden, leading to food shortages, amidst the threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Caritas supported the school by providing cyclone-proof materials for repairs and helped the school to raise awareness about COVID-19 prevention measures, including how to install makeshift 'tippy taps' outside so students could wash their hands. Caritas also provided fabric for students to make face masks to protect themselves and others.

Water is now available at the San Isidro Care Centre all year round which has improved sanitation and food security and allowed the school to enrol more students. With Caritas Australia's support, the school hopes to upscale poultry production, add livestock and diversify its vegetable garden using drought-resilient seedlings. This will improve the nutrition of staff and students, as well as boosting the school's income.

"I am proud that our school community works together with Caritas Australia as our partner in ensuring that we live in a healthier environment," Margret says.

# Reflect

- What situations of poverty, inequality, environmental crisis or other injustice are we witness to today?
- What actions will you take to bear witness to and be an ally or advocate for people and communities experiencing injustice?

# Respond

Jesus, in that dark hour, the witness of others led to connection and truth.

**May we follow the way of truth.**

# Station 12

## Jesus dies on the cross

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

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

Injustice can impact the earth and its people for generations.

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

# Aloma's Story



Aloma tends to a plant in the mangrove nursery she and her community built after they participated in the Caritas Australia-supported coastal management training. They have planted more than 50,000 mangrove trees, which help protect the area from storm surges and coastal erosion. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia

# Aloma's Story

Women like Aloma in the Philippines are leading the way in helping their communities work together to care for the environment and overcome the challenges of recurring natural disasters and poverty in the process.

In the coastal areas of the Philippines, extreme weather events have caused extraordinary levels of devastation, threatening the safety and food security of many families. The country is struck by over 20 typhoons every year – with infrastructure in some remote areas taking years to re-build.

When Typhoon Santi occurred, Aloma's village in the Philippines was a scene of devastation – high winds and high seas battered the barren stretch of sand. Aloma lost her home but she was determined to rebuild her life and after participating in the Integrated Community Development Program, supported by Caritas Australia.

Aloma learnt bookkeeping and ecological conservations skills, and along with others in the community, undertook training in disaster risk reduction (DRR). She

learnt how to manage the logistics of disaster response, and together with her husband took part in first-aid training.

Aloma is now a member of Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council. She communicates with the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction Office to receive updates on typhoons, sends warnings and updates to the community via group chats and prepares the evacuation centres by checking the supplies of medicine, food and water. She also leads the community to trim trees to prevent accidents during a typhoon.

“My knowledge, skill and trainings in terms of DRR I may able to apply during the typhoon. I can say that I can lead other people, to guide them what to do first and what to prepare during natural disaster because I am part of Barangay Disaster Reduction. I am also responsible for keeping everyone safe,” Aloma says. “In times of calamities, I join the logistic and relief committee and I take charge of purchasing and securing supplies like stockpiling of food and medicines before and after the typhoon.”

With Aloma's training, her confidence grew, and so did her awareness of the role she could play in caring for the land.

“The greatest change in my life was to realise that the environment is very important,” Aloma explains. “We grew up cutting down all the trees around us, including the mangroves... and using [them] for firewood. Now, instead, we are planting the mangroves for our own protection. It is important to protect the environment. We are in a coastal area, and mangroves will protect us from a tsunami or flooding.”

Aloma and her community have built a mangrove nursery. These mangroves provide a good breeding ground for fish, which has become a major source of income for the different families in her village. It does not only benefit Aloma's village, but the neighbouring villages as well. 50,000 mangrove trees have been planted which helps to protect the area from storm surges and coastal erosion. The mangroves also help to protect and regenerate local wildlife.

“As the others [in my community] say, ‘Alone, one can do little, but together, we can do much better,’” says Aloma.

# Reflect

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- Reflect on the ways in which caring for our common home helps the world's most vulnerable communities.
- What changes at personal/local/regional/global levels will make way for justice and flourishing?

# Respond

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

**May we follow the way of care.**

# Station 13

## Jesus is taken down from the cross

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

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

# Arsad's Story



Arsad with his wife Kasniti, outside their home in Pandeglang District, Indonesia. With Caritas Australia's support, Arsad and his community improved hygiene, sanitation and funded their own toilets. Photo: Laz Harfa

# Arsad's Story

Human dignity and its connection to health and wellbeing are central themes in Arsad's story.

Arsad lives in the Pandeglang region of Indonesia's western most Banten province. Three families live in his household including his parents, his wife Kasniti, his three children, aged 4, 17 and his 20-year-old daughter, her husband and their four-month-old son.

The Pandeglang region has very few employment opportunities, poor roads and infrastructure. Arsad is a rice farmer who also grows vegetables to feed and support his family. Arsad did not have a toilet in his house and his family had to walk a long distance into the forest to the district's open defecation area. It was worse at night with the danger of snakes.

"We thought it was normal, even though we have to face our fear every time," says Kasniti, Arsad's wife. "When it was raining or we were sick, it became very troublesome."

Around 45 million people in Indonesia practice open defecation – going to the toilet outdoors in fields, forests, and other open spaces\*, with many unaware that it contributes to significant health problems. Open defecation spreads bacterial diseases, and causes diarrhea, which increases the risk of malnutrition for children.\*\* Arsad’s family was often sick, and open defecation in the community caused many neighbourhood disputes.

When he heard about hygiene and sanitation training run by Caritas Australia, through local partner, Laz Harfa, he was keen to get involved. The Economic and Community-based Health Development Project encourages community members to save to build their own toilets and to work together to create “open defecation-free” villages. It also aims to boost incomes through sustainable agriculture and other livelihood activities. Through the training, Arsad gained the confidence to raise awareness about the issue, and was keen to find solutions. He decided to fund and install a toilet and piped water system in his home himself. He learnt financial management skills and became the leader of his local Arisan Jamban group where members save money together to build toilets in their homes.

\* World Bank <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.ODFC.RU.ZS?locations=ID>

\*\* World Bank <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/open-defecation-nearly-halved-2000-still-practiced-670-million>

The Caritas-supported project has resulted in the installation of around 280 toilets in the community.

“Most people at first did not understand about health. Now, they’re willing to listen and they have an easy way to build toilets,”Arsad says. “We help each other, the ‘togetherness’ is growing. Our solidarity had increased.”

Imam Hidayat, Laz Harfa’s Program Manager explains “Arsad was the initiator, the first one to change his way of thinking. He set a good example and then slowly encouraged his neighbours to change for the better.”

Nearly 12,000 people have benefitted from the program so far. Improved hygiene and sanitation practices also helped Arsad’s community during the COVID-19 pandemic, which closed local markets and further reduced the family’s income. Caritas Australia, with Laz Harfa, shared lifesaving messages on preventing the spread of coronavirus and distributed soap, masks and hygiene kits. They also set up a public rice barn where people could donate rice to share with other community members.

# Reflect

- What kind of challenges have Arsad and his community had to overcome together?
- In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis writes, “Social love is a force capable of inspiring new ways of approaching the problems of today’s world.”\* How might this idea of love help with a problem you see or face today?

# Respond

Jesus, your love beyond measure inspires love in return.

**May we follow the way of love.**

\* Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* n183

# Station 14

## Jesus is laid in the tomb

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

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

# Rosalie's Story



Rosalie picks up her youngest daughter from school near her home in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.  
Photo: Arlette Bashizi

# Rosalie's Story

As Rosalie's story illustrates, actions inspired by love and courage can transform the lives of individuals and their communities for generations.

Rosalie had a tough childhood. Her father passed away when she was just two-years-old and her mother struggled to look after the family on her own.

Then, when she was just 15 years old, Rosalie was forced to join the army. In recent decades, the DRC has experienced ongoing political instability, violence and conflict, and the recruitment of child soldiers is all too common.

Rosalie suddenly found herself forced to transport munitions to soldiers on the battlefield while facing the constant threat of violence inside the military camp. She had to continue to work as a soldier, even after she married and had children because she had no other option – and it was the only life she knew. “I was in the battlefield with my baby on my back,” Rosalie recalls. “I walked with a child in my left hand, a box of ammunition on my head and another child on my back.”

When Rosalie was finally demobilised from the army after six years, she was eager to start a new life, free from violence. But like many ex-combatants, Rosalie found the challenge to adjust to civilian life overwhelming. With her childhood and education cut short by the war, she had missed out on developing skills that would help her to find secure employment. She struggled to earn a sustainable income and to provide food for her children. There was also prejudice towards ex-combatants in the community.

Rosalie was determined to turn her life around for herself and her family. She joined the Protection and Re-Integration of Ex-Combatants program, supported by Caritas Australia, and its local partners, CAFOD and Caritas Bukavu. She participated in training in accounting, conflict management, gender awareness and human rights and developed a plan for her own small business.

Rosalie also joined a Savings and Internal Lending Community group, which helped her with a loan to start her own small business, selling second-hand shoes and natural remedies. She learnt savings and group management skills and became the group's president. Rosalie has gained essential skills in generating an income while gaining a sense of belonging and community spirit.

“I can eat, dress, maintain my health and help others. My children study and manage to eat twice a day,” Rosalie says. “I have learnt to work hand-in-hand with other members of the community. Really, there is more joy in sharing with others.”

From her life as a child soldier, Rosalie has become an entrepreneur and a respected community leader. She is helping other women to save and to start up their own businesses. Her husband also has a better understanding of gender equality and is giving her more support in caring for their seven children – four girls and three boys – who are all healthy and doing well at school.

So far, 2500 people have benefitted from this program, and 48 savings and loans groups and five peace committees have been established. The program is set to expand in future, to help young people and other vulnerable community members, in addition to ex-combatants.

Rosalie is inspiring women and other members of her community to overcome the violence of the past, to work towards a more peaceful and harmonious world for all future generations.

# Reflect

- Contemplate the “courageous challenge” Pope Francis poses in *Laudato Si'*: “Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.”\*

# Respond

Jesus, you inspire us take up the courageous challenge towards sustainability, justice and peace for all of creation.

**May we follow the way of courage.**

# Close

We have walked the way of the cross. Continue in the way of hope, trusting in the renewal and possibility that comes with Christ's resurrection.

**May we follow the way of hope: for a changed world where all work together to end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity. Amen.**

+ Thank You ✠



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