

PROJECT COMPASSION

FOR ALL FUTURE
GENERATIONS



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: a **PowerPoint Presentation version** and this **PDF version** that you may wish to print as a booklet, view on your device or direct individual parishioners to.

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

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

For use in Parish Groups: Choose a **Leader** to lead these parts: **The Way of the Cross – Introduction, Reflect and Respond**. Choose at least one **Reader** to read these parts for each station: **Station** and **Story**.

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

The Way of the Cross



Photo: Biru worked as a shepherd looking after other people's cattle — a challenging job, especially for someone living with a disability. He decided to join a training program supported by Caritas Australia and now runs his own bicycle repair shop outside in his home village in the state of Jharkhand, India. Photo: Sameer Bara

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.

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 didn’t 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.

Ronita's Story



Photo: Ronita writes notes in her class. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia

RONITA'S STORY

Social justice involves creating and supporting a just society where everyone has equal access to their basic human rights and to benefits and opportunities, regardless of their background or status.

*Education is a basic human right that works to raise people out of poverty, but worldwide 244 million children and youth are still out of school.**

Ronita is 22 years old. She lives in the Philippines with her husband Lean and their two children, Egzy Grey who is 3 years old and Clark who is 5 years old. Ronita's husband works seven days a week in waste disposal, from 3 am to 9 pm each day. It is exhausting work, made harder by the very hot climate. Despite this, Ronita and her husband are only able to rent a very small brick room (measuring around 10 square metres).

Ronita left school early to start her family. But without completing secondary school, it would be hard for Ronita to earn money to overcome the cycle of poverty.

Thankfully, Ronita heard about an Alternative Learning System (ALS) program run by Caritas Australia's partner in the Philippines, the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ). For over 20 years, the Faithful Companions of Jesus has supported the local community and will be serving approximately 2,000 participants over the next three years. The area FCJ works in is an urban slum, built next to a local dumpsite and on top of a fault line. Many of the houses are in poor condition and some don't have running water.

In addition to the ALS program, FCJ also runs programs to teach house renovating, food processing, basic literacy skills, urban gardening, upcycling and activities to help residents earn an income. They run a seniors group and children's sport and play groups. They also have a clinic visited weekly by a doctor and a community nurse.

When her first child was just 2 years old, Ronita enrolled in the ALS program to continue learning in a safe and flexible environment. The ALS classes allow young mothers to bring their children to class if they cannot afford childcare. This made it possible for Ronita to continue her studies, even following the arrival of her second child.

Ronita also attends a young mothers' group regularly, which is facilitated by FCJ staff member Nurse Lyn. The group provides support for each other and they have the opportunity to learn how to manage their money and how their family can stay healthy.

After completing her ALS classes, Ronita was then able to go back to secondary school where she went on to finish Grade 12 and earn her 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 mother, husband and two young children.

She said, "I am so thankful for FCJ. One day I hope I will be a school teacher. I have now graduated senior school and I am so proud of myself. I feel hopeful for the future... Now it's not impossible for me to achieve my dream... Thank you for that."

*UNESCO

Reflect

- Ronita knew that completing school was important to her future. With support, she took courage and action.
- What social or ecological justice issues are important to you?
- How can you act to make a difference?

Respond

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

May we follow the way of justice.

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

Saint Oscar Romero, 24 March 1980

STATION 2

Jesus takes up the cross



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

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

Ayoyo's Story



Photo: Ayoyo, a community leader, works at the cash distribution centre in southwestern Ethiopia. Photo: Zacharias Abubeker/Caritas Australia

AYOYO'S STORY

Many people around the world – a quarter of a billion people, in fact – now face acute hunger. Conditions in places like the Horn of Africa continue to make it hard to grow crops. Conflict and drought often force people to flee their homes and farms.*

The Caritas network has been responding to support communities, including in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Eritrea. With the generosity of Caritas Australia supporters, thousands of families can receive urgent, life-saving food, clean water and cash distribution.

Ayoyo is a widow with five children living in the Jinka region in southern Ethiopia. She is a volunteer complaints officer who was elected by her community to handle complaints. In her role, she helps community members access government services or refers them to Caritas Ethiopia for further support. Ayoyo was chosen for the role because she is a respected and trusted member of her community.

Nearly all of Ayoyo's crops have been destroyed by the drought, which she said is the worst in her lifetime.

“The drought has destroyed all of our crops and left us very hungry, we have nothing to eat. Before when I had my husband, he could support me, but now as a widow I don't have any support.”

With the support of Caritas Australia and its local partners, Ayoyo and her children have what they need to get by.

*[World Food Programme](#)

Reflect

- Food security is when people have enough safe and nutritious food to live a healthy and active life.
- Why do some people in our world not have access to the food they need?
- What will you do to help?

Respond

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

May we follow the way of solidarity.

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

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* n13

STATION 3

Jesus falls for the first time



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

Jesus understands how vulnerable we can be when life becomes challenging.

Sometimes, the effects of such things as disability, poverty and geographic isolation combine and cause people to become especially vulnerable.

Emmanuel's Story



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

EMMANUEL'S STORY

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

Emmanuel is 23. He grew up in the Malaita province of the Solomon Islands, with his father, mother and two siblings. His siblings study in the city of Honiara but Emmanuel attended San Isidro Care Center – a rural training centre that caters for hearing-impaired students in the Solomon Islands.

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

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

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

Reflect

- Have you ever been surprised by another person's ability to overcome challenges? Why was it surprising?
- Around the world, many people, creatures and ecosystems face urgent challenges. How will you make a difference?

Respond

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

May we follow the way of dignity.

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

Pope Francis, *Laudato Deum* n67

STATION 4

Jesus meets his mother



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

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

A Community's Story



Members of the banana winemaking group in the Blantyre region, southern Malawi. Photo: Tim Lam/Caritas Australia

A COMMUNITY'S STORY

This story shows how members of a community worked together to discover creative ways to meet their needs and make a better future.

It has been a difficult year for vulnerable communities in Malawi, where more than 70 percent of the population live on less than US\$2.15 a day.

The destructive Cyclone Freddy in March 2023 significantly impacted communities in the southern part of the country, particularly around the Blantyre region, by destroying the crops and basic service infrastructures. A widespread cholera outbreak – the deadliest in the country's history – also led to the deaths of more than 1,700 people. During this time, the kindness of generous people like you was essential in helping provide emergency recovery and long-term support to communities in Malawi, so that families can be healthy and resilient.

Since 2016, with the support of Caritas Australia's partners Catholic Development Commission (CADECOM) in Malawi and Diocese of Mbulu Development Department (DMDD) in Tanzania, the A+ program has helped 7,397 families (33,287 people) across Malawi and 3,428 families (16,454 people) in the remote Karatu district of Tanzania.*

*[Caritas Australia](#)

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.

“God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil...”

Pope Francis, *Laudato Deum* n67

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, vulnerability or injustice.

Thu's Story



Photo: Thu joined the Empowerment of People with Disabilities program, supported by Caritas Australia. This led him to join an incense-making group and also obtain an affordable loan through the Village Savings and Loans Association in order to open his own barber shop. Phan Tan Lam/Caritas Australia

THU'S STORY

Thu and his community know just how important it is to stand shoulder to shoulder together.

Thu lives with his wife Linh, in Vietnam. Even though the war in Vietnam ended in 1975, poverty and inequality remain widespread and there are still 800,000 tonnes of unexploded land mines across the country. Thu was just 12 years old when he lost his leg stepping on an unexploded land mine. Thu now uses a prosthetic leg to walk.

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 therefore extremely difficult,” Thu said.

In addition to being the breadwinner for his family, Thu cares 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 organisation in Vietnam, the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD). The program supports people living with disabilities to establish Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) so that they can access affordable loans.

Through the VSLA, Thu was able to obtain a loan which he used to open his own barber shop. He also joined an incense-making group. With the extra income from selling incense he was able to repair his house and fix his front yard to prevent flooding during the rainy season. Thu now plans to invest in livestock, such as pigs, ducks, or chickens, so he has multiple ways to earn a living.

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

Along with your support, this program is supported by the Australian government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

Reflect

- Think of a time when someone came alongside you to show their support. How did that feel? What difference did their solidarity make?
- How could you act in solidarity with Thu and others who are experiencing some kind of challenge or need?

Respond

Jesus, you are in solidarity with all in need.

May we follow the way of solidarity.

“Remember, we are all but travellers here.”

Saint Mary MacKillop, 1867

STATION 6

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus



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

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

Salin's Story



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

SALIN'S STORY

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

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

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

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

With the encouragement of the teachers at her school and other villagers, Salin joined the Upholding Community Dignity Together program, supported by Caritas Australia's local partner, HURREDO. The program supports communities to create lasting change in their lives through sustainable access to food, income, WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), and disaster risk reduction training. Through the program, a 10,000 litre water distribution station was constructed in the village and Salin was elected as the chairperson of the water station committee.

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

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

Along with your generous support, this program is also supported by the Australian Government, through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

Reflect

- Access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene is a human right and one of the United Nation's Global Goals.
- How does this goal impact people's capacity to live in ways that match their human dignity?

Respond

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

May we follow the way of courage.

“Authentic faith not only gives strength to the human heart, but also transforms life...”

Pope Francis, *Laudate Deum* n61

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.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the first increase in global poverty in 25 years. In 2020, 90 million more people were living in extreme poverty, bringing the total to almost 700 million.* [*World Bank](#)

Rosalie's Story



Photo: Rosalie has become a leader in her community and here participates in a meeting with other members of the internal savings and lending group (SILC) near her home in Democratic Republic of Congo. Rosalie is now the president of this SILC, which provided her a loan to start her business. Arlette Bashizi/Caritas Australia

ROSALIE'S STORY

This story shows not only how poverty limits people's choices but how access to training and other supports can help people transform their lives and futures for the better.

Rosalie lives with her husband and seven children in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

DRC is the second largest country in Africa, and home to over 95 million people. It is a country rich in minerals, some of which are used to make mobile phones and computers. But it is also a country that has experienced and continues to face a lot of conflict and unrest.

Rosalie had a tough childhood. Her family didn't have much money to pay for food, clothing and school fees so she didn't get to go to school for long. When Rosalie was just 15 years old, she was forced to join the army. Along with other child soldiers, Rosalie worked in the army for many years, even after she was married and had children of her own. Sometimes, she had to take her children onto the battlefield with her. It was very hard.

Rosalie wanted a new life.

Leaving the army was just the beginning. Rosalie had to adjust to ordinary life and work out a way to earn a sustainable income to provide food for her children. This is a common struggle for former soldiers in the DRC. But Rosalie was determined to turn her life around and set a new path for herself and her family. With the help of Caritas Australia's local partners, she learned new business and social skills.

Rosalie also joined a Saving and Internal Lending Community group (SILC), which helped her with a loan to start her own small business, selling second-hand shoes, natural remedies and ice cream!

Through the program, she gained essential skills in generating an income while gaining a sense of belonging and community spirit. Rosalie became the SILC group's president, helping other women to save and start up their own businesses.

Rosalie now earns enough income to pay for food, clothing and school fees for her seven children. She is determined to give her children the best chance to finish school.

"I can eat, dress, maintain my health and help others. My children study and manage to eat twice a day," Rosalie says. "The program allowed me to break out of my ways of just thinking about myself and I have learnt to work hand-in-hand with other members of the community. Really, there is more joy in sharing with others."

Rosalie is a courageous leader and role model for women and others in her community. Even amidst ongoing unrest, Rosalie is working towards the common good, striving to help her family and community break the cycle of poverty and create lasting change for all future generations.

Reflect

- Reflect on the idea of the common good.
- 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.

May we follow the way of sharing.

“The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all.”

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 means to suffer with.

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

Maria's Story

Photo: Maria (centre) walks with other women from her village in Tanzania where, through the A+ program, the community was able to install a new borehole. Caritas Tanzania

MARIA'S STORY

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

Maria lives with her husband and six children in a village in northern Tanzania, in a region with long-term food and water insecurity.

Maria's family has a small farm, growing onion, maize, beans and vegetables. However, water scarcity has meant poor harvests and a low income in recent years. This has made it difficult to afford seeds and fertiliser. Maria also had to walk a four-kilometre round trip, to fetch water for the household. With little education or way of earning a sustainable income, it was a daily struggle for Maria and her husband to feed their young family.

Around 14 million people in Tanzania are living in poverty,* while 34 percent of children under five experience stunted growth.** Gender inequality also means that women do not have equal access and control of resources or involvement in community decision-making.

Maria heard about the A+ program which is supported by Caritas Australia's local partner, Diocese of Mbulu Development Development Department (DMDD). She saw it as her chance to achieve what she had always wanted.

Maria took part enthusiastically in all the program's activities which included training in sustainable farming techniques, entrepreneurship, literacy and numeracy, gender awareness, environmental protection, hygiene and sanitation.

Maria's community was able to install a new borehole closer to the village so they no need to walk long distances to access safe, clean water.

Improved irrigation also boosted food production. Now Maria and her husband are able to produce enough food for their family to eat three meals per day, throughout the entire year, using a variety of nutritious foods. They also produce enough to sell which has increased their income. Improved hygiene and sanitation has also reduced the risk of the spread of waterborne diseases and COVID-19.

"We have increased happiness in our family as we are able to fulfil basic needs. In future, I would like have a dairy cow, to build a good house and I want my children to do well in school so they can get good jobs and have a good future," Maria said.

Maria's confidence grew and she was inspired to run as a local councillor to help her community.

Along with your generous support, this program is supported by the Australian Government, through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

* World Bank

** World Food Program

Reflect

- Access to safe, clean water along with new knowledge and skills enabled Maria to make way for a good future for herself, her family and community.
- What resources do you have access to? How are these shaping your future and that of those around you?

Respond

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

May we follow the way of generosity.

“Aspire not to have more, but to be more.”

Saint Oscar Romero

STATION 9

Jesus falls for the third time



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

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

Sita's Story



Photo: Sita grows and harvests food plants on her small farm where she also now runs a livestock business that generates a enough sustainable income to enable her to support her children's education. Dipendra Lamsal/Caritas Australia

SITA'S STORY

Sita's story shows what a difference it makes when we lift each other up.

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, she was left out and disrespected by others in her community. And, she struggled to earn enough income through her work as a labourer.

But Sita was determined to forge a brighter future for her children.

Sita joined the Nepal Livelihoods and Resilience Program, supported by Caritas Australia and our partner, Caritas Nepal. She learnt farming and money skills and soon became a member of a cooperative made up of single women from the community. The group helped her borrow money to purchase cows and start her own business.

Sita's livestock business is now thriving 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

- Experiences of exclusion can limit people's capacity to meet their daily needs and create sustainable, happy futures.
- How could you and/or your community deepen existing connections and better welcome others?

Respond

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

May we follow the way of generosity.

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

*Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* n62

STATION 10

Jesus is stripped of his garments



The soldiers strip Jesus of his clothes. They mock him, 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. 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.

With the support of generous Australians, Caritas Australia and its partners work to end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity.

Sibomana's Story



Photo: Sibomana and his family in an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
Bitita Dany/Caritas Goma

SIBOMANA'S STORY

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

Sibomana is 34 years old and a married father of six children. War forced his family to flee their home in August 2022. Since then, they have been living in a camp for Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs), in the province of North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

‘Sibo’, as his relatives call him, was chosen as a hygiene promoter because of his knowledge and leadership skills. Hygiene promoters organise community awareness sessions and clean public toilets and homes to stop the spread of diseases, including cholera. As a member of the Hygiene Committee, Sibomana has received equipment and the support he needs to do his job and improve the health and safety of the camp community. Caritas Goma has helped improve hygiene and sanitation measures in various IDP camps too. As part of this work, Sibomana earns a bonus at the end of each week, which allows him to support the needs of his family.

Through the generosity of people like you, Caritas and Sibomana are working together to make a big difference in the daily lives of hundreds of families.

Reflect

- In his letter *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis says, “Solidarity finds concrete expression in service...”*
- What action will you take to express solidarity with Sibomana and his family and community?

Respond

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

May we follow the way of life.

“Solidarity finds concrete expression in service.”

*Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* n115

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. 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.”

Laxmi's Story



Photo: Laxmi (centre) leading a rally with child's club members, calling for child rights, such as access to education and stopping child marriage and child labour. Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia



Caritas
AUSTRALIA

LAXMI'S STORY

Laxmi's story is about bearing witness to needs around us and taking action that helps end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity.

Laxmi lives with her mother and siblings in Jajarkot, a remote district in Nepal where almost half of the population live below the poverty line. Her family's house is situated next to a giant suspension bridge – the second biggest in Nepal – which stretches over the mighty Bheri River.

Despite her family not having very much money, Laxmi's parents were determined that their daughter receive an education.

Laxmi loved going to school. She joined a child's club at her school that was run with the support of Caritas Australia's partner, Caritas Nepal. Since 2018, Caritas Nepal has supported more than 5,000 children through the child's clubs. Child's club supports students to participate in extracurricular activities to develop their speaking, writing and leadership skills through activities such as debating competitions and essay writings. The children also organise awareness-raising activities such as public rallies, street dramas and putting up posters to highlight different issues such as child rights.

Through involvement in her child's club, Laxmi developed greater confidence. Keen to take on a leadership role, Laxmi was elected as the chairperson of her club! Her grades also excelled – she was the top of her class in many subjects and received a number of prizes in recognition of her academic achievements. But her proudest achievement was something that will have a lasting impact for future generations: water taps.

Clean water has long been an issue at Laxmi's school. Laxmi and her child's club members discussed the need to build multiple water taps at the school so all students would have access clean drinking water. They 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, that her actions can make a difference.

Laxmi has graduated from high school and is now studying a Diploma in Civil Engineering at a technical school. Her dream is to work as an engineer and create a better life for her mother who is working from dawn to dusk every day to support her children. Laxmi continues to be involved in the child's club, serving as an advisor and mentor to the next generation of young leaders at her old school.

Caritas Australia and its partners continue to come alongside communities, including Laxmi's, as they face ongoing and new challenges. Sadly, in late 2023, Laxmi's village was impacted by an earthquake. Some members of their community lost their lives; many people and homes were impacted. While Laxmi and her family were able to escape safely, their home was destroyed. Your generous support enables basic needs to be met so that Laxmi and others experiencing such vulnerability can rebuild their homes and futures.

Along with your support, this program is supported by the Australian government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

Reflect

- What situations of poverty, inequality, environmental crisis or other injustice do you see?
- What actions will you take to bear witness to and be an ally or advocate for communities facing injustice?

Respond

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

May we follow the way of truth.

“There can be no true peace and no true love that is based on injustice...”

Saint Oscar Romero, 14 March 1977

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 restore justice help all of creation to thrive.

Pauline's Story

Photo: Pauline's community in Tonga was impacted by a tsunami in 2022. Pauline now works with Caritas Tonga to offer psychosocial support for people recovering and readying themselves to respond to future disasters.
Caritas Australia

PAULINE'S STORY

Women like Pauline in Tonga are leading the way in helping their communities work together to care for each other in the midst of environmental change.

When the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano in Tonga erupted on 15 January 2022, many people fled, some seeking refuge in a chapel on the top of a hill.

Pauline was there. She and her family heard a loud booming sound coming from the sea. They ran from their home to the water's edge where they noticed changes in the rhythm of the waves. As they began to realise it was a tsunami, they turned and fled to the chapel.

The chapel was on top of the only real hill on the island. Pauline, her husband and their six children stayed there for one week, taking shelter alongside many others from the community. There, they slept on chapel pews and received the support of Caritas, who provided food, water and blankets.

Pauline now works for Caritas Tonga as a Field Officer, supporting members of her community as they recover and get ready for future disasters.

"It has been more than a year since the volcanic eruption but I think people are still affected by the destructive tsunami," she said. "With ongoing psychosocial support, we've been working together... I've seen a lot of people... They're happy they've changed their mindset for the next disaster that would be heading our way."

Reflect

- *Integral ecology* is the idea that everything is connected. We are one part of the whole of creation.
- How does caring for our common home help the world's most vulnerable communities?

Respond

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

May we follow the way of care.

“Hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”

*Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* n49

STATION 13

Jesus is taken down from the cross



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

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

A Shared Story



www.indigenousvoice.church

A SHARED STORY

This is a story about care, dignity and solidarity.

In 2023, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) and Caritas Australia worked together ahead of the 2023 Voice to Parliament Referendum to launch the *One Journey, Together.* website www.indigenousvoice.church

Grounded in Catholic Social Teaching, it gathers statements and resources to foster understanding and discernment. It invites the Catholic community to take up its responsibility to listen to the voices of First Australians and work towards a more just and equitable society.

As the peak body representing First Nations Catholics, NATSICC is committed to healing and reconciliation, especially after the Referendum. On 26 January 2024, NATSICC invited all Australians to “a moment of reflection and unity”:

“In this moment of shared history and experience, lies a powerful opportunity. An opportunity to not only heal from the Voice debate, but embrace the bigger picture – one where every Australian steps into the shoes of another and sees through their eyes. It is a call to journey together towards a future that honours and includes the rich tapestry of cultures, histories, and stories that make up Australia, and each will, and should, celebrate in their own way.”
(NATSICC, 26 January 2024)

Caritas Australia supports programs in Australia that are designed and led by First Australians. With your support, we continue to walk alongside NATSICC and other First Australian communities as they strengthen their cultural identity, support intergenerational healing and keep culture alive for future generations.

Reflect

- 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.

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

*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.

Leaia's Story



Caritas
SAMOA



Leaia stands in front of the rainwater tank that has now been installed at her home with the support of Caritas Australia and their partner Caritas Samoa. Laura Womersley/Caritas Australia

LEAIA'S STORY

This story shows how small actions inspired by love and courage can make a big difference to the daily lives of families and individuals.

Samoa is a beautiful country surrounded by water, but there is not enough clean drinking water in some areas, with many families facing extreme hardship as a result.

Leaia is a mother of five children aged 8 to 13: Sepoima, Pati, Lisiti, Eseta and Olevia. During the week, Leaia completes daily tasks with her sister Ene, while their husbands work on a cattle farm on the other side of the island. Their husbands come home each weekend to spend time with the family.

In an incredible act of resourcefulness, Leaia's family built their home entirely out of recycled scraps collected from a nearby recycling plant! They did this to avoid wasting precious household income.

Leaia grows fruit and vegetables in her home garden to feed her family. The income from her husband's work is only enough to cover the extra things their children need. The family relies on solar power for lighting and a gas and wood burner for cooking. Their home is not connected to a piped water system so they rely on rainwater collected in old fridges.

As a result of climate change, they have faced longer dry seasons and briefer rainy seasons in recent years. This has left Leaia's family without enough clean water at times.

Leaia said, "It makes me feel worried for my family and I, especially my kids, because of the lack of water supply we have access to. We really need the water all the time... It seems like the days are hotter and the weather has become drier than in previous years."

When their water ran out, Leaia had to walk with her young children to collect water in buckets and containers from a neighbour down the street. Before being able to rely on her neighbour, she would walk a 40-minute round trip each day with her young children to fetch water in hot, humid conditions. The children would have to take several breaks, as the buckets were very heavy for them to lift.

Leaia explained, “When it was very hot, there was not much water. It became difficult for me to collect, and this would mean we had very little water, plus it was far... Without water, we can’t do any of our daily activities, we rely heavily on water to live.”

Leaia’s children would also miss school sometimes from lack of water.

“If there isn’t enough water, the kids can’t go to school because the water supply at school isn’t clean,” Leaia said.

With the support of Caritas Australia’s local partner Caritas Samoa, a 3,000 litre water tank was installed at Leaia’s home to harvest rainwater. This means that her family can now have reliable access to clean water to drink and bathe in. The time that was previously used to collect drinking water can now be used for other essential tasks and, most importantly, her children don’t have to miss out on school.

In rural areas of Samoa, poverty rates are strongly linked to lower levels of education. Caritas Samoa is installing water tanks in crucial areas of communities, such as schools and family homes, to prevent children from missing out on their right to an education.

During the next phase of the program, Caritas Samoa will work to provide homes like Leaia’s with hygienic toilets connected to septic tanks, which will improve the health of rural communities. This will only be possible with the generosity of Australians supporting Caritas Australia’s partnership with Caritas Samoa.

Leaia remarked, “I hope this program helps other families in need, like mine. Thank you, Caritas, for the water tank and the opportunity. Caritas Samoa has helped us so much. We are very thankful and grateful for the water tank. It has helped us and made our daily life easier.”

Reflect

- In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis quotes the *Earth Charter* to pose a “courageous challenge”: to foster “a new reverence for life”.
- What small daily actions will you take to show reverence for life?

Respond

Jesus, you inspire us to be courageous.

May we follow the way of courage.

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

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

Close

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

Photo: Memory, cooking breakfast in her home in Malawi. Photo: Tim Lam/Caritas Australia

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

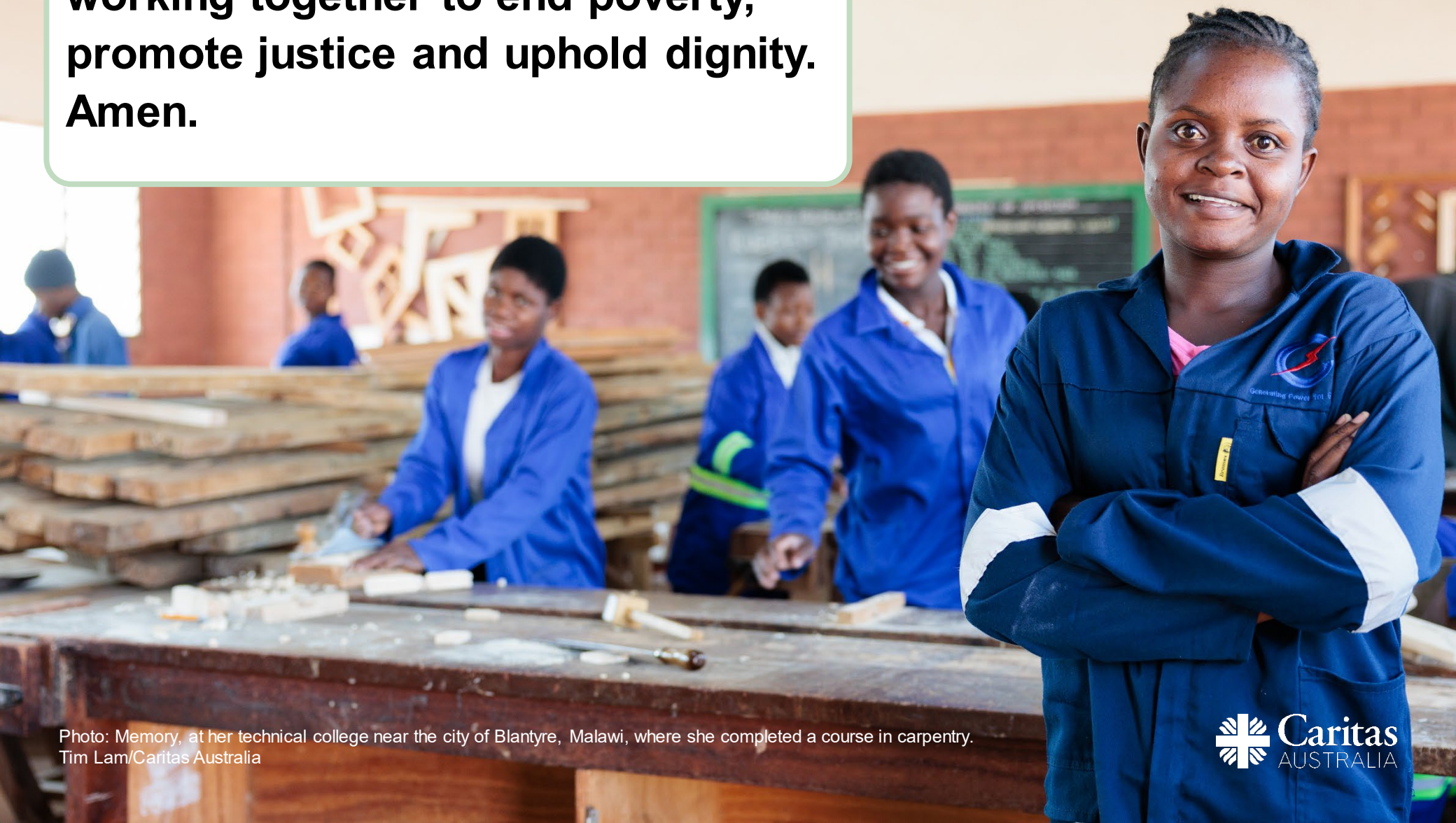


Photo: Memory, at her technical college near the city of Blantyre, Malawi, where she completed a course in carpentry.
Tim Lam/Caritas Australia

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End poverty
Promote justice
Uphold dignity