



PROJECT COMPASSION

**UNITE
AGAINST
POVERTY**
this Lent



Contents

Resources Guide	3
Project Compassion and the Year of Jubilee	4
Project Compassion Pilgrimage Experience	5
Curriculum: Religious Education and Beyond	6
Lent Links	8
Live Caritas Q&A Sessions	9
Fundraise Online and the Big Water Walk	11
Catholic Social Teaching (CST) Guide	12
CST Film Study Guide	13
Stories and Learning Tasks	
Jubilee Year – Pilgrims of Hope	15
Toefuata'iga's Story (Samoa) and Sample Journal Pages	19
Lam's Story (Vietnam) and Sample Journal Pages	23
Irene's Story (DRC) and Sample Journal Pages	27
Pray As One	31

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IMPORTANT – STUDENT WELLBEING

At Caritas Australia, we believe that all people should be treated with respect and dignity. Everyone has the right to feel safe, especially children and vulnerable adults. Please consider your audience when selecting which stories and activities to share with your class.

Our Safeguarding animation recognises that learning about challenges to the health, wellbeing and safety of others and our earth can be hard. It encourages young people to talk to their teacher or trusted adult if they're feeling worried or upset about anything they have learnt through our resources or activities. The animation also acknowledges Caritas Australia's commitment for children and vulnerable adults to feel valued and heard by encouraging them to share their great ideas with us.



[Watch Caritas Australia's Safeguarding Animation](#)

STUDENT PILGRIM JOURNAL

The [Secondary Student Pilgrim Journal](#) is a fillable PDF that students can complete independently.

There are sample pages included in this handbook for your reference.

For more information on the pilgrim experience please see page 5 of Teacher Handbook.

Resources Guide

All our resources are online! Access the films and written stories, teaching materials and our fundraising and awareness raising ideas at caritas.org.au/project-compassion. Below is a list and short description of all the resources you can download, as well as suggestions for use.

	Resource	Description/Suggested Use
For Students	Pilgrim Journal	A fillable PDF students can complete and submit back to their teacher. Use weekly to reflect on the Project Compassion stories. Dedicate 20–30 mins of weekly Religious Education classes.
	Virtual Pilgrimage	An interactive Thinglink image designed as a central location for students to access information about each of the stories, as well as to help them complete activities throughout the pilgrim journal.
	AD Stories	Audio described versions of each story.
For Teachers	School's Guide	A guide for the REC, APRE or Social Justice Leader. Includes tips to plan Project Compassion for the whole school.
	Teacher Handbook	Briefly explores the curriculum and learning opportunities for Project Compassion 2025. Send to subject learning area teachers to use with their classes.
All Purpose	Introducing Project Compassion (PPT)	Overview of all 3 stories and the work of Caritas Australia. Share in homeroom or assembly.
	Fundraising Booklet	Ideas to inspire fundraising and awareness raising activities that are linked to the Project Compassion stories.
	Big Water Walk	This schools guide with accompanying resources will assist teachers to run the Big Water Walk in solidarity with the millions of people who walk for water each day.

	Resource	Description/Suggested Use
Media	Films	Watch in homeroom, assembly or as stimulus for learning tasks in the classroom. There are four films: Introduction to Project Compassion 2025 , Toefuata'iga's Story (Samoa), Lam's Story (Vietnam) and Irene's story (DRC).
Prayer and Reflection	Ash Wednesday Liturgy	Liturgy of the Word, including distribution of the ashes.
	Prayer (PPT)	Reflection using the Project Compassion prayer and images. Use as a daily or weekly prayer for students or staff, or at an assembly.
	Weekly Reflections	Weekly reflections linking the Project Compassion stories to the Sunday Scripture readings. Use for weekly staff prayer/reflections during Lent or in RE lessons with students.
Telling Others	Way of the Cross (PPT)	A reflection following the traditional Way of the Cross, to use during Holy Week. Comes with Leaders' Notes.
	Newsletter Notices	A brief insert for your weekly school newsletter, explaining the week's Project Compassion story. Include in print/online school communications. Use on school social media and website.
	Social Media Toolkit	Content and assets to share your support of Project Compassion through your social media channels.

PROJECT COMPASSION AND THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

Let's all *Unite Against Poverty!* There is no time like 2025!

This year is an exciting time in the life of the Catholic Church. A Jubilee year only comes around once every quarter of a century, and it brings with it a special invitation for each one of us. That invitation is close to the heart of Caritas Australia's Project Compassion. The theme of Jubilee 2025 is Pilgrims of Hope. It is hope which calls us to come together and *Unite Against Poverty*.

The word 'Jubilee' comes from the Hebrew word for a ram's horn, which was blown to announce the start of a Jubilee year in the Bible. The idea of a jubilee goes right back to biblical times and is closely linked to our call to a faith that does justice. It stems from the idea of a Sabbath. Once a week, from the beginning of our relationship with God, we stopped work to rest. Every seven years, at least part of the land was allowed to rest and recover, something that modern science happens to appreciate as part of caring for Earth. During a Jubilee year, debts were cancelled, people could rest, and because crops weren't planted, even the land was able to rest. It was seen as a fresh start.

It was also a time of freedom: prisoners and slaves were freed, and land was given to those who didn't have any. It was known as the year of the Lord's favour.

In Chapter 4 of Luke's Gospel, when Jesus returns to his hometown, he announces the 'year of the Lord's favor.' This is the meaning of jubilee: 'he has sent me to bring good news to the poor and freedom for those in captivity'.

During Lent, we are called to be good news for the poor. Project Compassion is a wonderful way to do this. This year, we share 3 challenging yet inspiring stories. We meet Toefuata'iga in Samoa, Lam from rural Vietnam, and Irene from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We encourage students to discover the power of giving and the impact that their contribution, however big or small, can have in the lives of others.

Let us come together once again in this Year of Jubilee as pilgrims of hope and *Unite Against Poverty this Lent!*

Introducing Project Compassion

Introduce Caritas Australia's Project Compassion appeal using the following resources:

- [Introduction to Caritas Australia – Secondary](#)
- [Introduction to Project Compassion PPT](#)
- [Introduction to Project Compassion – Video](#)

Project Compassion Pilgrimage Experience

This resource has been designed to lead students in a pilgrimage experience to align with the Year of Jubilee theme, *Pilgrims of Hope*. Traditionally a pilgrimage requires the person to travel to their allocated faith destination. This pilgrimage experience is different in that students will travel to Samoa, Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of the Congo without leaving the classroom.

In designing the Project Compassion Pilgrimage Experience, we have taken key pilgrim components into consideration and have designed an experience where students can *Unite Against Poverty* through Project Compassion; engaging with the Project Compassion stories, Church teachings, the *Pilgrims of Hope* theme for the Year of Jubilee and links to Lent – Fasting, Almsgiving and Prayer.

The resource has been broken into three sections:

Pre-Pilgrimage

Before students head off on their pilgrimage, they will take time to learn about the Year of Jubilee as a class. They will explore its significance for Catholics, the meaning of the theme *Pilgrims of Hope*, and begin contemplating where they see signs of hope within their own communities.

Pilgrimage

For the pilgrimage experience, students will be taken on a journey through our three Project Compassion case studies: Toefuata'iga (Samoa), Lam (Vietnam) and Irene (DRC). The first component will take them on a [virtual pilgrimage](#), where they will engage in 4 different stages for each case study. They include:



Encounter: where they engage in comprehension questions to explore the case study



Barriers: where they will explore the key issues connected to the case study (climate change, disability inclusion and poverty)



Mercy: where they will reflect upon the Church's teaching to explore the importance of displaying compassion to others

Hope: where they will reflect on the message of hope in relation to the case study and their personal learnings



For the second component they are invited to engage in Acts of Solidarity for each Project Compassion case study. This involves actively engaging in the key elements of Lent: Fasting, Almsgiving and Prayer.

Post Pilgrimage

To conclude their full pilgrimage experience, you will lead the class in the 'Pray as One' prayer experience where students are invited to reflect upon their personal pilgrimage experience.

Students are invited to record their reflections in their [Pilgrim Journal](#).

Curriculum Links: Religious Education and Beyond

Project Compassion and the Australian curriculum

Linking the themes of Project Compassion with the curriculum is an opportunity for students to engage more deeply with justice and the work of Caritas Australia. The stories and learning tasks featured can relate broadly to the following Australian Curriculum areas.

Source: [Australian Curriculum V9](#)

Religious Education

There are many Religious Education Curricula around the country, however it is not surprising that there are many common themes. We have drawn on these common themes:

- Church and community
- Prayer
- Living the mission of Jesus
- Morality and justice
- Catholic Social Teachings: Human Dignity, Preferential Option for the Poor, Solidarity, Subsidiarity and Participation, Care for our Common Home and the Common Good.

Cross-curriculum priorities

Sustainability

World views that recognise the dependence of living things on healthy ecosystems, and value diversity and social justice, are essential for achieving sustainability. Look for Toefuata'iga's Story (Samoa).

General capabilities key ideas

Intercultural Understanding

Intercultural understanding stimulates students' interest in the lives of others. It cultivates values and dispositions such as curiosity, care, empathy, reciprocity, respect and responsibility, open-mindedness and critical awareness, and supports new and positive intercultural behaviours.

Personal and Social Capability

Students gain an understanding of the role of advocacy in contemporary society and build their capacity to critique societal constructs and forms of discrimination, such as racism and sexism. In developing and acting with personal and social capability, students are encouraged to appreciate diverse perspectives, contribute to civil society and understand relationships. Look for Lam's Story (Vietnam).

Ethical Understanding

In developing and acting with ethical understanding, students examine values (see Catholic Social Teaching Guide on page 12), explore rights and responsibilities and consider other points of view.

Critical and Creative Thinking

In presenting students with subjective aspects of a problem that is sensitive to a particular context, students are creating possibilities by adapting and connection ideas to formulate responses. The questions that have been developed facilitate increasing student understanding of general ideas and concepts that enable them to inform themselves and be critical thinkers.

Curriculum Links

English

The English curriculum aims to provide students the opportunity to learn to analyse, understand, communicate and build relationships with others and the world. Students are provided the opportunity to explore ideas and perspectives about human experiences and cultural significance, interpersonal relationships and ethical and global issues within real-world setting. This enables students develop an understanding of themselves and their place in the world.

Through studying English, students will develop into confident communicators, imaginative and critical thinkers, and informed citizens who will be able to use these skills to become ethical, informed, perceptive, innovative and active members of society.

Geography

In a world of increasing global integration and international mobility, it is critical to sustainability and human wellbeing that young Australians develop a holistic understanding of the world. This requires deep knowledge and understanding of why the world is the way it is and the interconnections between people, places and environments over time.

Geography inspires curiosity and wonder about the diversity of the world's people, places and environments. Geography features a structured way of exploring, analysing and understanding the characteristics of the places that make up our world. This enables students to question why the world is the way it is and reflect on their relationships with and responsibilities for the world.

Through the study of Geography, students become informed and responsible members of their local and global communities. They learn to act ethically to sustain and improve natural and social environments and engage in the global community.

Civics and Citizenship

While the curriculum strongly focuses on the Australian context, students also reflect on Australia's position and international obligations, and the role of citizens today, both within Australia and in an interconnected world. Through the study of Civics and Citizenship, students develop inquiry skills, values and dispositions that enable them to be active and informed citizens who question, understand and contribute to the world they live in. The Civics and Citizenship curriculum aims to reinforce students' appreciation and understanding of what it means to be a citizen. It fosters responsible participation in Australia's democracy and explores ways in which students can actively shape their lives, value belonging to a diverse and dynamic society, and positively contribute locally, nationally, regionally and globally.

Economics and Business

Economics and Business develops the knowledge, understanding and skills that will equip students to shape their social and economic futures. It also aids in the development of prosperous, sustainable and equitable Australian and global economies. Through studying economics and business, students learn to make informed decisions and to appreciate the effects of these decisions on individuals, businesses, and environmental and social systems.

Thinking about and responding to contemporary economic and business issues requires an understanding of resource allocation and economic decision-making, the operation of the business environment, the ways entrepreneurs create solutions, the nature and future of work, and the factors influencing decision-making in consumer and financial contexts.

Economics and Business develops a range of skills that foster enterprising individuals who can effectively embrace change; seek innovation; work with others; show initiative, flexibility and leadership; plan, organise and manage risk; and use resources efficiently.

Lent Links

Do you observe Lent regularly? Why/Why not?

What do you know about Lent?

What significance does it have for you?

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

Pope Francis explains, “Lent is also a time of communitarian decisions, of decisions, small and large, that are countercurrent. Decisions capable of altering the daily lives of individuals and entire neighbourhoods, such as the ways we acquire goods, care for creation, and strive to include those who go unseen or are looked down upon.”

[\(Pope Francis's Lenten Message 2024\)](#)

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

Over the next six weeks of Lent, through Project Compassion, we will explore stories of hope in the Samoa, Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Let's focus on how we can enrich our connectedness as a global community.

PRAYER

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

FASTING

Fasting is one of the most ancient practices linked to Lent. It can be an aid to prayer, as the pangs of hunger remind us of our hunger for God. Fasting can be linked to our concern for those who are forced to fast by their poverty, those who suffer from the injustices of our economic and political structures, and those who are in need for any reason. Traditionally, abstaining from meat was one way of remembering people who did not have enough to meet their daily needs. Some people also choose other ways to 'fast' such as from social media.

ALMSGIVING

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

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

Live Caritas Q&As

Explore the different stories, programs and issues for each week of Project Compassion with our Caritas Q&As.

WHAT ARE CARITAS Q&As?

During Project Compassion, Caritas Australia is offering the chance to interact online with our staff and partners in Australia and overseas!

Caritas Q&As are 30-minute sessions hosted by Caritas Australia on Zoom. The sessions are a unique opportunity for students to connect with the people positively affected through Caritas-supported programs and to learn more about the impact of their generous donations.

Caritas Q&As are open to students in **Years 4–12** and are available across all time zones.

HOW WILL IT WORK?

Caritas Q&As run across Lent during school term and will focus on a different Project Compassion story and program each week.

Help prepare your students for a Caritas Q&A by:

- showing them the relevant Project Compassion video
- working through our Project Compassion school resources or relevant social justice resources
- guiding them to create a question to ask Caritas staff/partners.

HOW DO I REGISTER?

Go to <https://www.caritas.org.au/project-compassion/caritas-q-a/> to register your class in the session that suits you.



**Register your class
for Caritas Q&As**



Q&A TIMETABLE

All times listed below are AEDT. Please adjust for your time zone.

Note: Times are subject to change prior to Lent, depending on our program partners' availability.

Toefuata'iga's Story (Samoa)	Primary (Y4-6)	Wednesday 12 March	Thursday 13 March
		9:15 am 2:15 pm	10:30 am 12:15 pm
	Secondary (Y7-12)	Wednesday 12 March	Thursday 13 March
		11:00 am 1:00 pm	9:00 am 2:00 pm

Lam's Story (Vietnam)	Primary (Y4-6)	Monday 17 March	Thursday 20 March
		10:30 am 12:15 pm	9:15 am 2:15 pm
	Secondary (Y7-12)	Monday 17 March	Thursday 20 March
		9:00 am 2:00 pm	11:00 am 1:00 pm

Irene's Story (Democratic Republic of the Congo)	Primary (Y4-6)	Monday 24 March	Wednesday 26 March
		9:15 am 2:15 pm	10:30 am 12:15 pm
	Secondary (Y7-12)	Monday 24 March	Wednesday 26 March
		11:00 am 1:00 pm	9:00 am 2:00 pm

Register at <https://www.caritas.org.au/project-compassion/caritas-q-a/>

FUNDRAISE ONLINE

Raise funds the easy way - online!

No cash at your school? *No problem!*

Setting up your schools online fundraising page is simple!

Visit: www.caritas.org.au/fundraiseonline

💡 Tips for success at your school:

- Create teams for classes or houses to add a little friendly competition! 🏆
- Share your fundraising page and QR code with your school community to spread the word!
- Access awesome tools and resources to make Project Compassion at your school the best yet!

Register your fundraiser

1. VISIT: www.caritas.org.au/fundraiseonline
2. SEARCH for your school's name
3. SELECT 'ACTIVATE YOUR SCHOOL'S PROFILE - FOR TEACHERS'
4. FILL in your school details, add a profile picture (maybe your school logo) and choose your schools fundraising goal
5. CREATE teams/classes for your students to join (*only a teacher can set up teams!*)
6. SHARE your school page to encourage participation and support
7. START your school fundraising!

THE BIG WATER WALK

Unite your whole school community and take on **The BIG Water Walk** at your school this Lent. Your school will raise funds to bring *clean, safe drinking water to communities around the world!*

How to host your School's BIG Water Walk:

1. **Pick a date:** Choose a day during Lent that works for your school.
2. **Set your route:** You could plan laps around your school oval, circuits through your school grounds, or even a walk to a local park!
3. **Consider adding a challenge:** Consider carrying water during the walk to simulate the daily journey faced by vulnerable communities.
4. **Promote the Event:** Share details with students, parents, and staff to build excitement and support.

Join The Big Water Walk for schools



Step 1

Register now



Step 2

Choose your walk day and distance



Step 3

Raise funds and have fun

Download The Big Water Walk Guide



Catholic Social Teaching (CST) Guide

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) principles cover all spheres of life – the economic, political, ecological, personal and spiritual. The principles are inspired by scripture and the writings of the Pope and other Catholic leaders about social issues.

Caritas Australia's work is shaped by the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching.

HUMAN DIGNITY

We believe every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and therefore has inherent dignity that should always be safeguarded.



SUBSIDIARITY AND PARTICIPATION

We believe all people have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Subsidiarity requires that decisions are made by people closest and most affected by the issues and concerns of the community.



SOLIDARITY

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



THE COMMON GOOD

We believe the good of each human person is intimately related to the good of the whole community. We are all responsible for each other.



PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

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



CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

We believe that care for our common home is vital for the common good of all people. We believe a true ecological approach is a social approach. We are to be protectors of creation and of one another.



For more on Catholic Social Teaching, including classroom activities, short films and other resources, visit our [CST Toolkit](#).

Photo credits: Arlette Bashizi/Caritas Australia (Top right, bottom left, bottom right). Caritas Australia (remaining photos).

CST: Film Study Guide

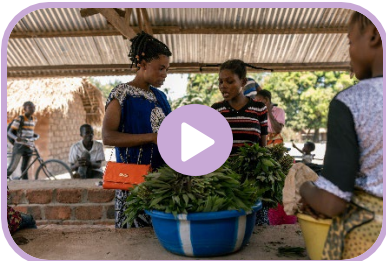
Toefuata'iga - Samoa



Lam - Vietnam



Irene - DRC



OVERARCHING QUESTION

How are the principles of Catholic Social Teaching evident in the work of Caritas Australia?

- Human Dignity
- Preferential Option for the Poor
- Care for Our Common Home
- Solidarity
- The Common Good
- Subsidiarity and Participation

GUIDED REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- **Human Dignity** – How is the Caritas Australia supported program working to upholding the dignity of the people in the community?
- **Common Good** – How are individual and social rights and responsibilities being fulfilled? How is the program benefiting the whole community?
- **Preferential Option for the Poor** – How is Caritas Australia demonstrating their commitment to working with the most vulnerable and marginalised?
- **Solidarity** – How are the Caritas Australia supported programs an example of solidarity? How is supporting Caritas Australia one way we can act in solidarity?
- **Subsidiarity and Participation** – How are the Caritas Australia supported programs enabling people to participate in their own development and in their community? How are the participants empowered to make decisions that affect them and their community?
- **Care for Our Common Home** – How are the programs encouraging environmental sustainability and equity, and respect for the environment?

Pre-Pilgrimage Experience

A decorative graphic featuring a small purple heart at the top center, a large purple heart on the right side, and a purple silhouette of two hands clasped in prayer at the bottom center with radiating lines above them.

'Being a pilgrim means setting out each day, *beginning ever anew*, rediscovering the enthusiasm and strength needed to pursue the various stages of a journey'

Pope Francis, [Message on 61st World Day of Prayer for Vocations](#)

Jubilee Year – Pilgrims of Hope

As a class watch the CAFOD [Jubilee for Schools Animation](#) video.

At the conclusion of the video, invite students to respond to the questions in their [Pilgrim Journal](#) on page 5 and 6.

Pilgrim Journal Sample

Jubilee Year

After watching the CAFOD [Jubilee for Schools Animation](#) video, answer the following questions.
What is meant by the phrase 'the year of the Lord's favour' (Luke 4:19)?

According to Luke's Gospel, when Jesus recites from the prophet Isaiah, what was Jesus's mission?

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."
Luke 4:18-19

What is the significance of celebrating a Jubilee year in today's context?

5

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Jubilee Year continued

What do you understand *pilgrim of hope* to mean?

Where do you see hope in the world today?

Pope Francis' Challenge

Pope Francis challenges us to stop and look for the good in the world everyday. It can be as simple as an act of kindness, unexpected generosity, a gesture of help, or a kind word. With time 'our hearts will light up with hope' and we will become beacons of hope for those who surround us.
[*Pope Francis, *Hope is a gift and duty for every Christian*](#)

What examples of hope have you witnessed within the last couple of days.

6

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Pope Francis Challenge

Share this information with students

Pope Francis describes a Christian pilgrimage as a journey where we set out to discover ourselves and the love of God. 'We are *pilgrims because we have been called*: called to love God and to love one another.' ([World Day of Prayer for Vocations](#), 2024). Therefore, to be *pilgrims of hope*, we are called to be courageous and work towards a world filled with justice, peace and love.

Everyday we are surrounded by pain and suffering, questioning where is the good in the world. Pope Francis challenges us to stop and look for the good in the world everyday. It can be as simple as an act of kindness, unexpected generosity, a gesture of help, or a kind word. With time 'our hearts will light up with hope' (Pope Francis, [Hope is a gift and duty for every Christian](#)) and we will become beacons of hope for those who surround us.

Invite students to record signs of hope they have witnessed within the last couple of days in their *Pilgrim Journal*. You may like to create a classroom display with the heading '*Pilgrims of hope*'.

Encourage students to take on Pope Francis's challenge, to stop and reflect daily on where they see signs of hope in their own lives, this Lent.

Individual Pilgrim Experience



‘Christian pilgrimage: we set out on a journey to discover the love of God and at the same time to discover ourselves, thanks to an interior journey nourished by our relationships with others. We are pilgrims because we have been called: called to love God and to love one another.’

Pope Francis, [Message on 61st World Day of Prayer for Vocations](#)



Toefuata'iga (Samoa)

Toefuata'iga, (Toy-foo-ah-tah-ing-ah) a 13-year-old primary school student in Samoa, faced severe challenges and disruptions to her learning due to water scarcity. After Caritas Australia's partner Caritas Samoa installed a 10,000 litre water tank at her school, Toefuata'iga and her classmates saw improved health, consistent attendance, and more opportunities to prioritise education.



Lam (Vietnam)

Lam, a young man from rural Vietnam with a passion for graphic design, faced limited career prospects due to his disability. With support from the I-SHINE program, he pursued IT training and now runs a successful freelance graphic design business.



Irene (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

Irene is a 25-year-old single mother of two boys living in the Democratic Republic of the Congo who, despite experiencing extreme poverty, has become a skilled seamstress. With her income, she can now support her children's education.

Individual Pilgrim Experience

Note: At the beginning of the pilgrim experience, create an Act in Solidarity prayer wall within the classroom or school. Invite students to display the prayers they have written as part of the Act in Solidarity part of pilgrimage.

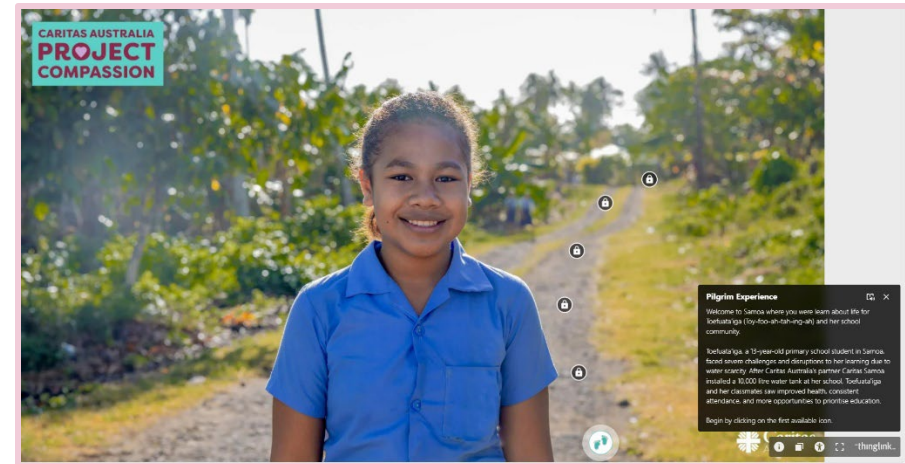
Follow these steps to continue the pilgrim experience:

- Invite students to open the [Virtual Pilgrimage](#) via page 3 of the [Pilgrim Journal](#)
- Direct students to the case study you are looking at for this lesson: Toefuata'iga (Samoa), Lam (Vietnam) or Irene (DRC).
- Students participate in the virtual pilgrimage for the allocated case study and record reflections in their Pilgrim Journal.
- Students continue to the Act in Solidarity component in their journal, once they have completed the virtual pilgrimage. Repeat the above steps until all 3 case studies have been completed.
- Continue to the 'Pray as One' prayer experience to conclude the pilgrimage experience.

Virtual Pilgrimage Homepage



Virtual Pilgrimage Sample Page



Toefuata'iga's story

Samoa



Toefuata'iga (13) a Samoan primary school student, smiles at the camera on a road outside her school. Photo: Caritas Australia.



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Toefuata'iga's Story

Samoa

Toefuata'iga (Toy-foo-ah-tah-ing-ah) is 13 years old and attends a school in the Upolu region of Samoa that didn't have a reliable source of clean water. Despite being surrounded by water, many Samoans struggle with consistent access to clean drinking water, often relying on rainwater or neighbours with a piped water connection.

Climate change exacerbates this issue, leading to longer, drier periods and frequent shutdowns of the Samoan Water Authority pipeline due to natural disasters and maintenance. The pipeline's unpredictability and potential contamination after heavy rains further complicates access to safe water.

"The climate is changing dramatically in Samoa. When it rains, it goes nonstop, like four days, five days of rain heavily, and then it stops. Then, there is no rain for nearly three, going up to four weeks," explained Principal Ada. These extreme weather patterns lead to water shortages.

The students' education was frequently interrupted by school closures, especially during the dry months of Term 3 and Term 4. Principal Ada explained that the school closed about five to six times per term due to water shortages. This situation also led to health issues among students. Without clean water, many students suffered from dehydration or became unwell with waterborne diseases like typhoid.

Principal Ada (right) and a group of students including Toefuata'iga (centre), smile to camera in a Samoan primary school class. Photo: Caritas Australia.

“Parents would have to ring us up to tell us that their kids are sick or send letters excusing them for not being at school. It was normally things like headaches caused by heat or dehydration, or stomach aches... Like if it’s typhoid or whatever, disease that’s caused from lack of water,” said Ada. The high absence rate slowed down the curriculum, with teachers needing to revisit missed lessons, especially for students who were absent for extended periods.

At times, when the school ran out of clean water teachers had to fetch water themselves in buckets from neighbouring homes with access to piped water. This took time away from teaching and planning lessons.

With little or no water, students were sent home early, missing out on learning and playing with friends. “School would finish early because when there wasn’t any water, we wouldn’t have classes,” Toefuata’iga shared. “I felt sad when there was no school. There’s not enough time to read a book or play games with my friends.”

Access to clean drinking water is a problem for many children around the world. 288 million children attend schools with no drinking water at all. In Oceania, nearly half of all schools don’t have access to basic drinking water services.¹

Principal Ada recognised the urgent need for a water tank to provide safe drinking water, given the unreliability of the piped water network. With support from Caritas Australia’s local partner, Caritas Samoa, a 10,000 L water tank was installed at Toefuata’iga’s school as part of a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) initiative to Strengthen Education and Health (WISEH) program. The tank fills up on water via a pipeline, at times when access to clean water is possible via the Samoan Water Authority. This resources the school with days of water supply for the school community.

“Since we’ve had the water tank, there’s been a big help for us because when our taps aren’t working, there’s a water tank we can use for the whole day,” Toefuata’iga shared.

The water tank provides a reliable water supply, allowing students to stay in school all day, continue their lessons, and play with friends. Attendance rates have increased, and enrolment is steadily growing.

Access to clean water has a ripple effect, enabling children to access their right to education and break the cycle of poverty. Caritas Australia and Caritas Samoa continue to support vulnerable communities through programs like WISEH, ensuring access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene. Together we can *Unite Against Poverty* and help students like Toefuata’iga pursue their education and build a brighter future.

¹ [World Health Organisation, State of the World’s Drinking Water, 2022](#)



Top – Bottom: Students stand with water buckets in front of a water tank at a Samoan primary school; A Samoan primary school teacher loads large buckets of water filled from a neighbouring property into a car to take back to school, so students and teachers have water to drink and wash their hands; Samoan primary school students dance during their lunch break. The grass underneath them has died as a result of prolonged weeks of drought. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Toefuata'iga (SAMOA)

Pilgrim Journal – Sample Pages


ENCOUNTER
Toefuata'iga (SAMOA)

Comprehension Questions
Identify the challenges Toefuata'iga and her school community experience.

How has the support of Caritas Australia, and their partner Caritas Samoa changed the lives of Toefuata'iga and her school community?

Comprehension Questions continued
How is Toefuata'iga and her community uniting against poverty?

Encounter Reflection
What emotion(s) did you experience as you read about the effects climate change is having on Toefuata'iga and her school community? Why were you feeling like this?

11  **PROJECT COMPASSION**


BARRIER
Toefuata'iga (SAMOA)

One of the Greatest Injustices
What are the difficulties people living in Samoa are experiencing now? How do you feel about this?

Living in the Pacific
Imagine you were living in the Pacific region and had to leave your home because of climate change. What are the emotional challenges you are likely to experience?

How does the message in this video challenge you?

How would you work through these challenges?


12  **PROJECT COMPASSION**

MERCY
Toefuata'iga (SAMOA)

Pope Francis Quote
Identify the key terms and/or phrases that stand out to you from Pope Francis's quote.

CST: Care for our Common Home
How can our actions towards caring for our common home here in Australia impact communities like those in the Upolu region of Samoa where Toefuata'iga is from?

Reflect on the significance of these terms/phrases based upon your learnings. Record these reflections here.

13  **PROJECT COMPASSION**


HOPE
Toefuata'iga (SAMOA)

'We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision... This will indeed be the case if we are capable of recovering a sense of universal fraternity and refuse to turn a blind eye to the tragedy of rampant poverty that prevents millions of men, women, young people and children from living in a manner worthy of our human dignity.'

Letter from Pope Francis

How can uniting as one bring hope to Pacific communities?

Where have you witnessed signs of hope in the last 24 hours?


14  **PROJECT COMPASSION**

ACT IN SOLIDARITY
Toefuata'iga (SAMOA)

FASTING
There were times when Toefuata'iga and her school community did not have access to clean and safe water while attending school. Commit to conserving water as a form of fasting. (For example: take shorter showers, turn off taps when cleaning your teeth) Complete this sentence
I commit to ...

ALMSGIVING
Let us commit ourselves to remedying the remote causes of injustice, setting unjust and unpayable debts, and feeding the hungry'. (Pope Francis, Jubilee Bull, n16)
38% of the Samoan population do not have access to safe and clean drinking water.
Source: [United Nations UN Water](#)
Participate in the Big Water Walk and encourage family and friends to donate to your fundraising page. Use our [Student Ocean Prayer](#) to organise a fundraising event. Don't forget to set a fundraising target!
\$250 can provide a handwashing sink to a household in Samoa so that cleanliness and hygiene is accessible to a family.

PRAYER
Pray for those who continue to fall ill and miss out on receiving an education because they do not have access to safe and clean water. Include a message of hope in your prayer. Record these prayers and display on your Act in Solidarity prayer wall. Draft your prayer here.

15  **PROJECT COMPASSION**

Lam's story

Vietnam

Lam visiting Da Nang city where he studied an IT technician training course as part of the I-SHINE program.
Photo: Caritas Australia.



**PROJECT
COMPASSION**



Lam's Story

Vietnam

Lam was born and raised in rural Vietnam with his farming parents and three siblings. As a 27-year-old man of short stature, he experienced significant physical and social barriers due to his disability. Many aspects of his wellbeing became impacted due to his mobility issues, and he became increasingly isolated from society.

After finishing high school, he saw his classmates go off to university to pursue careers as doctors, teachers, and other professions. However, Lam didn't have the same opportunities because of his disability. With no job prospects, he stayed at home helping his parents with household chores like cooking, harvesting vegetables and feeding chickens. Even though he loved his family, Lam felt more and more disconnected from his friends and from society. His dream of becoming a graphic designer seemed impossible.

"I'm really self-conscious about my height. It feels like getting around and doing a lot of basic tasks are a major undertaking for me," Lam said.

Lam's life began to change when he found out about the I-SHINE program run by Caritas Australia's local partner, Catholic Relief Services (CRS). The program helps young people with disabilities in Vietnam access education and training to improve their lives. Through the program, Lam was given the chance to study IT in a six-month training course in Da Nang, a city about 50 km away from his hometown.

Prior to support from the I-SHINE program, Lam felt increasingly isolated. Here, Lam reflects in his family home in Quang Nam, Vietnam. Photo: Caritas Australia.

At first, the idea of leaving his village and travelling to a big city felt scary to Lam, especially with his mobility challenges. But despite his fears, he was determined to pursue his dream. “When I got the chance to be part of this program, I was over the moon,” Lam said. “Ever since I was a little kid, I’ve loved drawing and had this intense passion for computers...I always dreamed of becoming a digital artist.”

During the six months of training, Lam worked hard and made new friends who shared similar experiences. For the first time in years, he felt connected to others again. He also joined a local disability club, where he shared his story and bonded with people facing similar challenges.

With the skills he learned, Lam was able to start his own freelance graphic design business from home. Today, he is a successful graphic designer, working with clients both in Vietnam and overseas. He earns a steady income and no longer depends on his parents as much. “Right now, I’m most proud of being less dependent on my parents. They can finally relax knowing I’ve found a fulfilling career that I’m truly passionate about,” Lam said.

Lam’s story is an inspiration to other young people with disabilities in Vietnam. There are around 6 million people¹ living with disabilities in the country, many of whom, like Lam, live in rural areas with limited access to education and job opportunities. Lam hopes that more programs like I-SHINE will continue to grow and help others achieve their dreams.

“It’s a struggle to feel like we fit into society, and our limited mobility makes it hard to access jobs or education... that’s why we desperately need the help of these amazing charitable organisations,” Lam said. “I’m really hoping this initiative keeps growing and spreading its impact, uplifting even more people in similar situations, both here at home and around the globe.”

When we *Unite Against Poverty this Lent*, we can help people living with a disability access opportunities to shine.

¹ [General Statistics Office in Vietnam.](#)

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

Top – Bottom: Lam harvests vegetables, a household responsibility he managed before receiving support from the I-SHINE program and starting his career as a successful graphic designer; Lam visits the training centre in Da Nang city, where, with support from the I-SHINE program and CRS team, he completed a six-month IT technician course that helped launch his career as a freelance graphic designer; Lam and other I-SHINE program youth with a disability, supported by Catholic Relief Services staff, create and sell handmade flowers in Vietnam. Photo: Caritas Australia.



Lam (VIETNAM)

Pilgrim Journal – Sample Pages

ENCOUNTER
Lam (VIETNAM)

Comprehension Questions
Describe the challenges Lam was experiencing before attending I-SHINE.

How has I-SHINE been able to provide support to Lam? How did this support change his outlook on life?

Comprehension Questions continued
How are people uniting against poverty in Lam's story?

Encounter Reflection
What emotion(s) did you experience as you learnt about the challenges people like Lam are experiencing in Vietnam? Why were you feeling like this?

19

BARRIER
Lam (VIETNAM)

WHO: Disability Inclusion
What surprised you from this video? Why?

What emotions were you experiencing while watching this video? Why?

Inclusion Beyond the Health Sector
Reflect on how you can be more inclusive of people living with a disability within your own community.

Passions and Dreams
Lam was able to achieve what he considered to be an impossible dream. "I've loved drawing and had this intense passion for computers...I always dreamed of becoming a digital artist."
What are you passionate about?
What is a dream you have?

20

MERCY
Lam (VIETNAM)

Scripture Connection
What message is Jesus trying to teach us?
How does this Scripture reading and/or message connect with Lam's story?
Where do we see hope in this story? How can we display a similar message of hope in today's society?

Pope Francis' Quote
How does I-SHINE enable people living with a disability to 'take an active part' in the community?
What is Pope Francis's hope for the future?
How can this message extend to those who live in poverty and/or experience marginalisation?
What can we do to bring this message of hope to everyone?

22

HOPE
Lam (VIETNAM)

'We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision... This will indeed be the case if we are capable of recovering a sense of universal fraternity and refuse to turn a blind eye to the tragedy of rampant poverty that prevents millions of men, women, young people and children from living in a manner worthy of our human dignity.'
Letter from Pope Francis.

How can uniting together to create an inclusive world be a source of hope to those living with a disability?

Where have you witnessed signs of hope in the last 24 hours?

23

ACT IN SOLIDARITY
Lam (VIETNAM)

FASTING	ALMSGIVING	PRAYER
<p>By achieving his dream, Lam was able to learn new skills and become independent. Commit to fasting from social media time to learn a new skill. What new skill would you like to learn? What actions do you need to take to learn this new skill?</p>	<p>Let us commit ourselves to remedying the remote causes of injustice, settling unjust and unpayable debts, and feeding the hungry'. (Pope Francis, Jubilee Bull, n16) Consider making products using your newfound skill to sell as a fundraiser for Project Compassion. S25 can provide disability screenings and early intervention advice and procedures to 5 children</p>	<p>Pray for a world where all people are included and given an opportunity to thrive. Include a message of hope in your prayer. Record these prayers and display on your Act in Solidarity prayer wall. Draft your prayer here.</p>

24



Irene's story

**Democratic Republic
of the Congo**

Irene poses for a photograph at her home in Kongolo, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Irene is a single mother, who participated in sewing training as part of a Caritas-supported youth empowerment program. Photo: Arlette Bashizi/Caritas Australia.



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Irene's Story

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Irene is a young single mother living in Kongolo, a rural area in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). She takes care of her two children, aged 3 and 7, while also supporting her mother and extended family. Her life has been full of challenges, especially since she became a mother at a young age.

The DRC is one of the poorest countries in the world, with millions of people affected by conflict and political instability. About 70% of the population live in poverty, on less than \$3.30 AUD¹ a day, making it incredibly hard for families to make ends meet.

Irene's childhood was marked by hardships – after her father died in a war, Irene along with her mother and siblings were displaced. Her mother worked very hard to provide for her family.

"We lived a very difficult life. Every morning, [my mother] would go to the fields to grow yams. That's all we ate, and sometimes she worked for others in exchange for cassava, which she used to make fufu with *sombé*, sometimes without oil, and borrowed salt from neighbours. That's how we got by."

Irene's life took another difficult turn, when as a teenager, she became pregnant for the first time. Her husband fled soon after she had her first child. Overwhelmed by trying to support herself and child with limited education and therefore job opportunities, Irene returned to her mother's household.

¹[UNDP](#)

A while later, her husband returned, and she began living with him briefly before he later fled again after learning she was pregnant a second time.

Despite these challenges, Irene's life improved when she joined the Youth Capacity Strengthening Program (YCSP), run by Caritas Australia's partner, Caritas Kongolo. This program aims to empower young individuals, especially young mothers, to become self-sufficient and contribute to their communities.

Irene took a sewing class through the program, where she learnt how to make clothes to sell. She also participated in agricultural training and received emotional support to help her heal from her past trauma.

After completing the six-month sewing course, Irene was given a sewing machine to continue her work. With her newfound skills, she was able to start earning money to provide for her family, including sending her son, nieces and nephews to school. Irene proudly said, "I make sure to provide for all their needs. There are 15 of us at home, and I take care of everyone."

On top of this, Irene's new farming skills has helped her grow food for her family to eat. She explains, "Before, I didn't know how to farm, but with this training, I learnt. We grew peanuts and corn and harvested them. After the harvest, they gave us chickens to start poultry farming, then returned with more work tools. We have a group field, but I also have my own field that produces the food we eat today at home."

The YCSP has made a huge difference in Irene's life and Irene is generously sharing her new skills with others. She loves teaching other women how to sew. "Our lives are so different now. Before, women depended on men's income, but now, with our sewing skills, we can take care of ourselves... When I teach others to sew, I feel comfortable and useful to my community," Irene shared.

Life has been tough for Irene, but she worked hard, learnt new skills, and became really good at sewing. Irene has been able to break out of a cycle of poverty. She can now send her son to school and support her extended family too.

Together, we can *Unite Against Poverty this Lent* by donating to Project Compassion, offering pathways out of poverty for people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and beyond.

"I want to say a big thank you to Caritas Australia and Caritas Kongolo. Thank you so much for uplifting me. I never thought I, Irene, could become someone. I never knew this life was possible," Irene said.



Top – Bottom: Irene teaches other women how to sew after participating in the Caritas-supported youth empowerment program in Kongolo, Democratic Republic of the Congo; Irene harvests vegetables in her field in Kongolo, Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition to training in sewing, Irene has also benefited from Caritas-supported training in agriculture, enabling her to improve the quality and quantity of her harvests; Irene accompanies her eldest son, niece and nephew to school. Photo: Arlette Bashizi/Caritas Australia.

IRENE (DRC)

Pilgrim Journal – Sample Pages

ENCOUNTER Irene (DRC)

Comprehension Questions

Explore the challenges Irene has experienced in her life.

By teaming up with Youth Capacity Strengthening Program (YCSP), how has Irene and her family's life changed?

Comprehension Questions continued

How is Irene and her community uniting against poverty?

Comprehension Questions continued

What emotion(s) did you experience as you learnt about the challenges of poverty in DRC? Why were you feeling like this?

BARRIER Irene (DRC)

Human Development Index

What are your thoughts and emotional response to reading these statistics? Why?

Dependence to Interdependence

Reflect on how you would feel moving from dependence to interdependence. Record your reflections here.

Role Model

Who is someone you consider to be a positive role model in your life? Why?

What characteristics does this person have that makes them a good role model?

MERCY Irene (DRC)

Scripture Connection

What message is Jesus trying to teach us?

How does this Scripture reading and/or message connect with Irene's story?

Where do we see hope in this story? How can we display a similar message of hope in today's society?

CST: Human Dignity

How is supporting people like Irene demonstrating a respect for Human Dignity?

HOPE Irene (DRC)

'We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision... This will indeed be the case if we are capable of recovering a sense of universal fraternity and refuse to turn a blind eye to the tragedy of rampant poverty that prevents millions of men, women, young people and children from living in a manner worthy of our human dignity.'

[Letter from Pope Francis.](#)

How can coming together to support women living in poverty fan the flame of hope?

Where have you witnessed signs of hope in the last 24 hours?

ACT IN SOLIDARITY Irene (DRC)

FASTING

Irene was committed to breaking the cycle of poverty for her children, her mother, and her orphaned nephews and niece.

Encourage your family to fast from take-away meals and commit to donating this money to Project Compassion.

Estimate how much money your family would spend in take-away meals a week. Calculate the total for Lent (6 weeks).

Review the [Your Donation Counts poster](#). How could your family's donation impact someone else's life?

ALMSGIVING

Let us commit ourselves to remedying the remote causes of injustice, settling unjust and unpayable debts, and feeding the hungry.' (Pope Francis, Jubilee Bull, n16)

73.5% of the DRC population live on less than \$2.15 a day in 2024.

Source: [World Bank Group](#)

Encourage your family to fast from take-away meals. Donate the money normally spent to Project Compassion.

\$76 can provide a family with the resources they need to start their own chicken farming business to start a small poultry operation.

PRAYER

Pray that people living below the poverty line will be able to break the cycle of poverty. Include a message of hope in your prayer.

Record these prayers and display on your Act in Solidarity prayer wall.

Draft your prayer here.

Post Pilgrim Experience

'Let us travel as pilgrims of hope towards the Holy Year, for by discovering our own vocation and its place amid the different gifts bestowed by the Spirit, we can become for our world messengers and witnesses of Jesus' dream of a single human family, united in God's love and in the bond of charity, cooperation and fraternity.'

Pope Francis, [Message on 61st World Day of Prayer for Vocations](#)

Pray As One

The Pray as One prayer experience has been designed to provide students an opportunity to reflect over their pilgrimage experience.

As a class either visit the school chapel or set-up a prayer space within the classroom. A prayer space can include:

- Candle
- Cross/Crucifix
- Bible
- Images of the case studies
- Faith image or icon

Below are instructions to lead the prayer experience.

1. Invite students into the prayer by beginning with the sign of the cross.
2. Explain to students that we are now concluding our pilgrimage experience. Through this time, they have united against poverty; engaging with the Project Compassion stories, Church teachings, the *Pilgrims of Hope* theme for the Year of Jubilee and acted in solidarity.
3. Silent Reflection Time: Invite students to take a moment to reflect over their pilgrimage experience. Students are welcome to journal in their Pilgrim Journal or sit quietly. Play some quiet reflective music for about 5min. Time may vary depending on class dynamic.
4. Towards the end of their silent reflection time, invite students to write a prayer that reflects the key message they have taken away from the experience. Have these added to your Act in Solidarity prayer wall.
5. Recite the [Project Compassion Prayer](#) as a class.
6. Conclude with the sign of the cross.

Pilgrim Journal Sample

Pray As One

Silent Reflection Time
During this time, reflect over your full pilgrimage experience. Here are some questions to guide your reflection time:

- What information did you find challenging/inspiring?
- What does *Unite Against Poverty* mean to you?
- How can you *Unite Against Poverty*?
- What do you understand about 'Pilgrims of Hope'?
- How can you be a 'pilgrim of hope' this year and into the future?
- Imagine a world where everyone came together to end poverty. How would the world look?

Write a prayer that reflects the key message you have taken away from the experience

33

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