PROJECT COMPASSION



Yeshareg and her family outside their home in Ethiopia. Photo: Peter Caton/Caritas Australia.

UNITE AGAINST POVERTY this Lent

Parish Booklet 2027

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Caritas AUSTRALIA

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Want to find out more about how your parish can get involved and turn compassion into action? Head to our website to access information, online resources, and more.

Scan the QR code or visit projectcompassion.org.au/parish

FIND OUT MORE

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WELCOME

from Michael McGirr



Lent comes so early this year that some of us might not feel ready. There is a positive side to this. A long-standing friend of mine lives by the saying, 'start as you mean to continue.' In other words, if you turn up on time for the first day of a new job, it's easy to continue that pattern. If a child gets away with stealing something small, they might keep going.

Lent is a fresh start. Perhaps we can make it the overture for the whole year. In any famous opera or musical, all the great themes and melodies are found in the overture. They are developed as the performance continues. This year, we are still in the middle of summer when we hear the words of Ash Wednesday: 'come back to me with all your heart.' Surely, that is an invitation we need to hear every day of the year. 'A pure heart create for me, O God, put a steadfast spirit within me.'

Where do we find God's heart? Time and again, Scripture reminds us that God's heart is close to the broken. The Psalms say that 'those whose spirit is crushed, he will save.'

Once again, Caritas Australia is delighted to contribute to our observance of Lent through Project Compassion. In a world which is torn and divided, we draw again on the words of Jesus the night before he died when he prayed 'that they all may be one.' Our invitation is to *'Unite Against Poverty.'* The money raised by Project Compassion makes a genuine and lasting difference in God's world. Last year, it enabled Caritas Australia to impact more than 3.9 million people around the world, directly helping more than 1.8 million participants in 31 countries.

Project Compassion is a two-way street. We appreciate your support. At the same time, we hope to support you on the Lenten journey with stories and resources which show the Gospel at work as we endeavour to help carry the cross in our own time and place. We know that God feeds us in the Eucharist where we celebrate the real presence of Christ. In turn, God calls us to feed and nurture others. Let our work for Project Compassion be part of our great Amen.

Michael McGirr

Mission Facilitator, Caritas Australia

PROJECT COMPASSION 2027 FEATURE STORIES

Want to hear more about these stories and how your parish is transforming lives around the world?

Scan to learn more and register

Join us for a special live Q&A with members of Caritas Australia's Programs team and learn how we work alongside communities around the world to create lasting change.



Patricia, Solomon Islands

Patricia is a 14-year-old girl living in Malaita in the Solomon Islands. Before clean water was available in her community, she spent up to two hours a day walking to collect water in a dangerous and hilly rainforest, often leaving her too tired for homework and schooling.

With the support of the Common Home project, implemented by the Catholic Diocese of Auki, water taps have been installed outside her family's house and Patricia's life has become easier. She now has more time to help her family, play with friends, and support her younger siblings.

Although her schooling has been interrupted, she plans to return and continue her education in 2027 with the hope of one day becoming a teacher, like her father.

$10 can provide a set of soaps for washing and bathing for a family of six people.

$3,000 can establish a sustainable handwashing station with multiple faucets at a school, keeping students hydrated and hygienically safe.



Reaksmey, Cambodia

Reaksmey, a 23-year-old from Kampot, Cambodia, has faced a life shaped by loss and isolation. After his mother passed away when he was just 15 days old and his father moved away to live with his new family, he was raised by his two aunts.

Being deaf, Reaksmey struggled to communicate with others and spent most of his time at home caring for livestock. He eventually dropped out of school after grade six due to discrimination from his classmates.

With support from Epic Arts, he received a bicycle and began attending the Epic Arts Centre, where he learnt sign language for the first time. Through dance and art, he found ways to express himself and connect with others. Now working at the Epic Arts Café, Reaksmey earns an income and helps contribute to his family's expenses.

$150 can support a child with a disability to attend and participate in school through inclusive learning support.

$4,500 can provide an inclusive school improvement package, including accessible Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities, ramps, learning materials, teacher mentoring and community engagement.



Yeshareg, Ethiopia

Yeshareg, a 30-year-old mother of two from south-western Ethiopia, once faced constant hunger, low income and food insecurity. Some days her family ate only one meal, and basic necessities like soap were out of reach.

Through Caritas Ethiopia's CLEAR project, Yeshareg joined a women's savings and potato-farming group, gaining skills in growing vegetables and managing income. She now harvests and sells potatoes, earns money for her children's school supplies and contributes to a community savings fund.

With additional income from raising sheep, she can provide three meals a day and build a brighter future for her family.

$25 can supply a hygiene kit for a family in Ethiopia, including water bucket, soaps, water scoop, towel, slippers and nail clippers.

$2,000 can help provide farming tools for 100 subsistence farmers in Ethiopia to prepare their agricultural land and grow food for their family.



Caritas Venezuela

Two major earthquakes struck Venezuela in June 2026, killing more than 6,000 people and leaving thousands injured. Homes, buildings and vital infrastructure were severely damaged, deepening an already existing humanitarian crisis.

Caritas Venezuela was on the ground within hours of the disaster and has since been working through dioceses and parishes to provide shelter to displaced families and distribute emergency assistance. Thousands of food and hygiene kits have been delivered to families, alongside water and medical supplies.

Around 10,000 volunteers have helped receive, sort, pack and distribute aid. With many families still in temporary accommodation, sustained support will be essential throughout the long recovery ahead.

$75 can provide an emergency food basket for a family in Venezuela, helping ensure access to nutritious meals and essential food items during recovery from the earthquake.

$6,000 can provide major repairs to four earthquake-damaged homes, helping families return to a safe and secure place to live.

YOUR PROJECT COMPASSION CHECKLIST



Archbishop O'Regan at the Project Compassion launch in the Archdiocese of Adelaide. Credit: Richard Miller.

BEFORE LENT

- ☐ **Unpack your Project Compassion resources –** make sure you've received all the printed materials that you ordered and begin sharing these with your parish community.
- ☐ **Create a Project Compassion Lenten display –** use your donation envelopes, boxes and posters to set up a display in the church foyer, providing a visible reminder of prayer, fasting and almsgiving throughout Lent.
- ☐ **Take a look at our online resources –** head to projectcompassion.org.au to take a look at our online resources, including films, weekly reflections, and more.
- ☐ **Plan your parish fundraising activities –** an online fundraising page provides a simple way for parishioners to practice almsgiving during Lent. If you haven't already, head to projectcompassion.org.au/parish to activate yours, and share the link with your parishioners to encourage them to set up their own fundraisers.
- ☐ **Enquire about a Parish Speaker –** contact your Diocesan Director to ask about having a Caritas Australia representative come to speak at Mass during Lent.

AT THE START OF PROJECT COMPASSION

The Sunday before Ash Wednesday is known as Project Compassion Sunday, a time to come together as a community to prepare for the upcoming season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, and to reflect on the actions we can take over the coming weeks to grow together in faith and compassion.

This year, Sunday 7 February is Project Compassion Sunday – here's how you can mark the day in your parish:

- ☐ **Introduce Project Compassion 2027 during Mass –** share the importance of Project Compassion and explain how it invites us to live out the Gospel through prayer, sacrifice and solidarity.
- ☐ **Distribute your donation boxes and envelopes –** offer these to parishioners after Communion, highlighting the link between saying 'Amen' to the Body of Christ and 'being' the Body of Christ in the world through acts of generosity and service.
- ☐ **Encourage weekly giving –** remind your parish community that every donation during this sacred season, no matter the size, makes a real, lasting difference – and that all donations are tax-deductible.

EACH WEEK DURING LENT

- ☐ **Insert our pre-written notice into your weekly parish bulletin –** keep Project Compassion in your community's hearts and minds throughout Lent.
- ☐ **Prepare your weekly parish liturgy –** use the Lenten reflections and Prayers of Intercession provided in this booklet and plan how these will fit into your Sunday Mass.
- ☐ **Continue to encourage almsgiving –** during Mass, remind parishioners that their generosity is a meaningful expression of faith in action.
- ☐ **Reflect together through your Homily –** reflect on how each week's story highlights themes like dignity, the common good and care for creation. Use the weekly reflections contained in this booklet to assist with this.
- ☐ **Play the Project Compassion films –** each week, play the short video during or after Mass to further show your parishioners how their prayers, generosity and Lenten sacrifices empower our brothers and sisters around the globe.
- ☐ **Host your Lent event –** gather your parish community for a morning tea after Mass, uniting people in faith and action.
- ☐ **Share your efforts online –** use your social media channels to celebrate your parish's participation and spread the word about how you're coming together in faith and solidarity.

AFTER EASTER

- ☐ **Bank your Project Compassion funds before 31 May 2027 –** see page 17 for more information on banking.
- ☐ **Display your 'Thank You' poster –** hang this in your church foyer to celebrate your community's generosity.
- ☐ **Thank your parish community during Mass –** acknowledge their Lenten sacrifice and generosity and play the Project Compassion Thank You video.
- ☐ **Announce your parish's total raised –** personalise our pre-written thank you bulletin notice with your parish's total to help show your parishioners the impact of their collective generosity.
- ☐ **Share your stories and photos with us –** we'd love to see pictures of your community getting involved and turning compassion into action. Use your social media channels, using #projectcompassion and tagging us @caritasaustralia, or get in touch via email.

Banking your Project Compassion funds

To help ensure that your parishioners' generous donations can be put to work as soon as possible, we encourage you to please remit your donations throughout Lent – there's no need to wait until after Easter. This also assists with smooth processing and means your parishioners can receive their tax-deductible receipts well ahead of the end of the financial year.

Take a look at page 19 for more information, or scan the QR code to download the Parish Donation Remittance Documents.

Top tip!

Consider appointing a Project Compassion champion in your parish to support you in keeping the spirit of Project Compassion alive throughout Lent. They could support with activities like organising your Lenten display, ensuring that your envelopes and boxes are laid out before Mass each week, or even coordinating your parish morning tea or fundraising event.

Contact us

Have any questions or need assistance with Project Compassion in your parish? Email projectcompassion@caritas.org.au, call us on (02) 7254 5120 or scan the QR code to find contact details for your local Diocesan Director.

PROJECT COMPASSION LENTEN PRAYER

Loving God, Father of all,

We hold in our hearts

The hurt and hungry of the world.

Many people do not have enough

food, water, healthcare, education and shelter.

The dignity you give them is not respected.

We pray this Lent,

During which we embrace prayer, fasting and almsgiving,

That the sacrifice of your Son

Will inspire us to reach out to others.

May we *Unite Against Poverty*,

Especially through Project Compassion.

We know that Jesus is the bread of life.

May we, in our turn, be bread for others.

May your Holy Spirit turn hearts of stone,

Into hearts of flesh

For the life of the world and the peace
of all creation.

Amen.





Patricia plans to return to school next year and hopes to one day become a teacher like her father. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Project Compassion Sunday

Sunday 7 February

During the past week, we celebrated a beautiful feast. On February 2 every year, we remember the occasion on which Jesus was presented as a baby in the temple. He came from a family of limited means, so the offering required was modest. A pair of birds was sufficient.

The story introduces us to the characters of Simeon and Anna, neither of them young. They have been waiting all their lives for this moment. Simeon says, 'at last my eyes have seen your salvation.'

As we prepare for the start of Lent this week, we might ask ourselves what it might mean for us to see the salvation of God, the light of revelation of which Simeon speaks.

There are some clues in this week's Scripture readings. Job reminds us that life is but a breath. In a superb image, he says, 'swifter than a weaver's shuttle, my days have passed.' St Paul says that he has made himself 'all things to all people', trying to serve others and put them ahead of himself. He says he has not chosen the work he does. God has given it to him.

Finally, Mark's Gospel presents Jesus in a very busy time: visiting the synagogue, helping Simon's mother-in-law, dealing with crowds of needy people. By the end, he needs a break to pray. Then he travels all through Galilee. The pace is frenetic.

What do these readings have in common? They all show people learning how to put their self-interest to one side as they embrace the reality God has chosen for them.

It is no coincidence that Lent is the time in which we *Unite Against Poverty* by supporting Project Compassion, organised by Caritas Australia. Project Compassion helps us to see the reality of the whole world to which God calls us to respond as well as we can. St Paul says, 'for the weak I made myself weak.' We too are asked to walk in partnership with people around the world who are vulnerable. It may be that we choose to make Lenten sacrifices in order to share their world.

Today's Psalm says, 'the Lord heals the broken hearted.' May we be part of healing a broken world.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

We pray for the ability to respond to the needs of the poor and marginalised. Just as Jesus responded to others, may we in turn reach out to others from our heart, as we *Unite Against Poverty* through Project Compassion this Lent.

Lord, hear us.



Reaksmey with his niece inside their home in Cambodia. Photo: Caritas Australia.



Yeshareg and her friends at Degebone women's group prepare the land for potatoes. Photo: Peter Caton/Caritas Australia.

Ash Wednesday

Wednesday 10 February

There is an Anglican priest who works near the Caritas office in Melbourne. On Ash Wednesday every year, he and some parishioners stand at the entrance of Parliament Station, where thousands of people arrive for work. They offer to put ashes on the foreheads of the commuters. They have a small brochure to explain the symbolism of what they are doing.

It is beautiful to watch this taking place. I have never noticed anyone refuse the offer, even if they are a bit bemused. Mostly they smile. Some people are clearly reminded of something from the distant past. Perhaps they received ashes when they were at school and have drifted away from religion. Others have no clue what is going on but are open to something a bit out of the ordinary.

It is good to hear that we will return to dust. Especially when the thing at the front of our mind is returning to the office, or the car or the shops. Ash Wednesday puts us in touch with the bigger picture. This is a great way to start our Lenten journey towards Easter.

It does this by drawing us inwards. Each year, the Gospel reminds us of the private places we meet God or, we should say, God waits for us. 'Go to your private room and, when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place.' The word 'secret' occurs six times in a short passage. It lets us know that God is great at hide and seek. He always finds us.

At the same time, Ash Wednesday draws us outwards. St Paul reminds us that 'we are ambassadors for Christ.' We are God's 'fellow workers.' In other words, now is the time to reach out to others.

The First Reading and the Psalm both speak of God's compassion. God 'is all tenderness and compassion'. We are called to reflect that compassion to others, especially those most in need, however far away they may seem to be. That is why every Lent we listen to stories from Caritas Australia and support Project Compassion to the best of our ability. We answer the summons to be God's compassion in the world as we *Unite Against Poverty*. We can pray the words of the Psalm, 'with a spirit of fervour sustain me.'

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

We pray for all who are trying to rise from the ashes in their lives. May our support for Project Compassion remind us that now is the time to turn to the Lord with all our hearts as we *Unite Against Poverty*.

Lord, hear us.

First Sunday of Lent

Sunday 14 February

There used to be a show on TV called Great Temptation. Contestants would answer questions and each correct answer earned money. They then had the choice of cashing in for a prize or holding out in the hope of something better, maybe even a car. It was a form of gambling, I suppose, although it was all fairly innocuous.

Often people think of temptation as a form of gambling. You might be tempted to sleep in, gambling that your boss might not notice you arriving later for work. You might be tempted to eat a second piece of chocolate cake with cream, gambling that you won't feel sick later. You might be tempted to keep a special purchase secret from your husband or wife, gambling they won't look at the credit card statement.

For Christians, temptation means something else.

Every year, the Sunday after Ash Wednesday, the First Sunday of Lent, presents us with one of the stories of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. This year, it comes from Mark's Gospel. Mark's storytelling tends to cut to the raw essentials.

The combination of temptation and the wilderness is significant. The wilderness is traditionally a place without the regular comforts of life. Those who venture there do so without the usual things that indicate our social identity such as family, possessions or position. It is a place that is full of emptiness, as it were, which asks us two basic questions. Who do you think you are? Who does God call you to be?

Temptation refers to a lure to become someone other than your true self. Jesus had to sort things out. So do we.

During Lent, we prepare to celebrate Easter by returning to the very essence of who we are and who God is in our life. One great way to do this is by tuning in to the stories that Project Compassion, organised by Caritas Australia, offers us during this season. This year, those stories will touch upon water shortage, disability, food scarcity and emergency relief in four separate countries. There is no doubt that millions of people desperately need the help we provide through Project Compassion. We can also send a message to ourselves that we care for God's family around the world. Helping others is a good way to find peace with oneself and a closer connection with God.

Let us all *Unite Against Poverty* this Lent.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

We pray for all those around the world who are vulnerable to the impact of poverty, violence, and climate change. May our generosity towards Project Compassion be a measure of our commitment to global change as we *Unite Against Poverty*.

Lord, hear us.



Patricia used to walk through a dense forest every day to collect water to bring home to her family. Photo: Caritas Australia.



Reaksmey now works at Epic Arts Café. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Second Sunday of Lent

Sunday 21 February

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

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

Throughout Lent, we are called to support Project Compassion, an initiative of Caritas Australia. Project Compassion gives thanks for more than 60 years of partnership with some of the most marginalised communities in the world. With your help, we have walked alongside literally millions of people in dozens of countries. Caritas Australia believes that the world can be transfigured to become more like the Kingdom of God of which Jesus spoke. We can encounter people whom others choose to ignore. When we do so, we discover that here, too, are children of God. We are asked to listen to them.

This week, Project Compassion presents the story of Patricia, a 14-year-old girl living in Malaita in the Solomon Islands. Lack of access to water is a common issue across the Solomon Islands with more than 1 in 4 people without access to basic drinking water. Before clean water was available in her community, Patricia spent up to two hours a day walking to collect water in a dangerous and hilly rainforest, often leaving her too tired for homework and schooling.

Thanks to your support of Project Compassion, the Common Home Project, implemented by the Catholic Diocese of Auki, has installed water taps outside her family's house. Patricia's life has become easier and her well-being improved. She now has more time to help her family, play with friends, and support her younger siblings. Although her schooling has been interrupted, she plans to return and continue her education in 2027 with the hope of one day becoming a teacher, like her father.

Jesus' friends felt overwhelmed, but he showed them a way forward. We can also feel that the needs of the world are enormous, but if we *Unite Against Poverty*, we can make a huge impact.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

We pray in Lent for the work of Project Compassion. May we *Unite Against Poverty* to ensure more people have clean water. May the world be transfigured by our faith and love.

Lord hear us.

Third Sunday of Lent

Sunday 28 February

Listening and respect go hand in hand. One of the most important ways we uphold the dignity of others is by helping them to find their voice. Those who listen carefully to others are often the ones best able to listen to God.

Today's readings ask us to listen in deep ways. In the first reading, God sets some clear expectations for our behaviour. They are all based around respect, both for the Lord and for each other. Respect needs boundaries and the Ten Commandments mirror that belief. At the same time, God reminds us 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the house of slavery.' In other words, these are not random rules. They are designed to protect our freedom. Disregarding them sends us back into captivity.

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

This week, Project Compassion, organised by Caritas Australia, presents the challenge of listening to people who have difficulty hearing.

Reaksmey, a 23-year-old from Kampot, Cambodia, has faced a life shaped by loss and isolation. After his mother passed away when he was just 15 days old and his father moved away to live with his new family, he was raised by his two aunts. Being deaf, Reaksmey struggled to communicate with others and spent most of his time at home caring for livestock. He eventually dropped out of school after grade six due to discrimination from his classmates. With support from Epic Arts, he received a bicycle and began attending the Epic Arts Centre, where he learnt sign language for the first time. Through dance and art, he found ways to express himself and connect with others. Now working at the Epic Arts Café, Reaksmey earns an income and helps contribute to his family's expenses.

Like so many of the people encountered by Caritas, Reaksmey has experienced a lot of disrespect, including exclusion. As we *Unite Against Poverty* this Lent, may our respect for God's way flow into our respect for all people.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

For people who suffer exclusion due to disability. May we support the work of Caritas Australia and Project Compassion as we *Unite Against Poverty this Lent*.

Lord, hear us.



Yeshareg and fellow members at the Degebone women's group. Their potato yields have been a great success and Yeshareg uses profits from the potatoes to send her children to school. Photo: Peter Caton/Caritas Australia.

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Sunday 7 March

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

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

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

Every Lent, through Project Compassion, Caritas Australia asks us to help bring light into the world and to make positive change.

This week, we can think about Yeshareg, a 30-year-old mother of two from south-western Ethiopia. She once faced constant hunger, low income and food insecurity. Some days her family ate only one meal, and basic necessities like soap were out of reach. Through Caritas Ethiopia's CLEAR project, Yeshareg joined a women's savings and potato-farming group, gaining skills in growing vegetables and managing income. She now harvests and sells potatoes, earns money for her children's school supplies and contributes to a community savings fund. With additional income from raising sheep, she can provide three meals a day and build a brighter future for her family.

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

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

We pray for all people who lack the necessities of a dignified life. May our support of Project Compassion help to bring light into the world.

Lord, hear us.



The Caritas team surveying the damage done by the earthquake. Photo: Caritas Venezuela.

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Sunday 14 March

Today's Gospel shows Jesus in deep anguish. These words come just before the moment in John's Gospel when he gathers with his friends and washes the feet of those closest to him.

There was a lot on his mind and in his heart. He is almost debating with his Father. He wonders if he should ask 'Father, save me from this hour?' Immediately, he answers himself, 'But it was for this very reason that I have come to this hour.'

We are so used to seeing people in anguish in the news that perhaps we can become blasé. No sooner has one tragedy moved out of the headlines than another replaces it.

Last year, there was a terrible earthquake in Venezuela, a country which had enough to contend with already. Caritas Australia knows well that an event may be in the news for a few days. It takes years for a community to recover and rebuild. Project Compassion enables us to support those afflicted by disasters over the long haul. Our partners operate from values of fidelity.

On March 8 last year, a Maronite priest working with Caritas in southern Lebanon was killed in the service of his community. Fr Pierre Rahi had been warned that the tanks which had come over the border, and which had already injured members of his community, were still in the area. He insisted on going to their aid at the risk of his own life. He joined a long list of Caritas workers who have given their lives for the work of the Gospel. Love can be dangerous.

Fr Pierre said: 'We are forced to stay despite the danger. When we defend our land, we do so peacefully. None of us carry weapons. All of us carry peace and goodness and love.'

His witness inspires us all. Today our reading from the prophet Jeremiah recalls that the Lord says, 'deep within our hearts I will implant my law.' Even if the surface of our lives is preoccupied with many things, we know deep down that we are called to fidelity to those most in need. The Gospel says, 'unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a single grain.'

This year as we *Unite Against Poverty* for Project Compassion, let us try to be faithful to God's call, even when it is challenging.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray for humanitarian workers around the world. May their vision and courage find support in our commitment to Project Compassion as we *Unite Against Poverty*.

Lord hear us.



Reaksmey with his two aunts who raised him after his mother passed away. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Palm Sunday

Sunday 21 March

This year, we will hear the Passion narrative from the Gospel of St Mark. It is a most extraordinary account: brutal, frank and unsparing. Mark recounts an horrific series of events with unblinking faith. The Gospel does not need to sugarcoat the story nor gloss over the sad failure of Jesus' friends.

Every Lent, Project Compassion, organised by Caritas Australia, asks us to look at the world with our eyes wide open. It is not easy to do this as sometimes it is easier to look away, especially when the world seems broken and divided. We are called to see the world through God's eyes, which are full of tenderness and compassion. We too are asked to be rich in mercy and *Unite Against Poverty*.

Today we begin the journey of Holy Week. In this day and age, it takes a special commitment to make time to be present to Jesus in his suffering and death. The world doesn't pause as perhaps once it did. Like Simon of Cyrene, we are called to help carry the cross in our own time and place.

One way to experience this week is to take a single phrase for each day. Perhaps we could write them down and look at them at different moments of the day: cleaning our teeth, having our coffee, walking the dog. The words of Scripture do need time to sink their roots into our being. Choose your own phrases but remember, a few words may be better than too many:

Sunday: I tell you solemnly, one of you is about to betray me, one of you eating with me.

Monday: Take and eat

Tuesday: I tell you solemnly, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice you will have disowned me three times.

Wednesday: My soul is sorrowful to the point of death. Wait here and keep awake.

Thursday: But he was silent and made no answer at all.

Friday: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me.

Saturday: In truth this man was a son of God.

Thank you for journeying with Project Compassion this Lent. May we all gather to celebrate the life of the risen Lord at Easter when we pray:

May the light of Christ,

Rising in glory,

Dispel the darkness of our minds and hearts.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

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

Lord, hear us.

PROJECT COMPASSION FAQS

Q1 How do I book a Caritas Australia speaker to visit my parish during Project Compassion?

To enquire about booking a speaker from Caritas Australia to come to your parish during Lent, please get in touch with your Diocesan Director – you can find their contact details on the back page of this booklet.

The Caritas Australia representative will speak at Mass about the inspiring Project Compassion stories and the incredible impact of your community's faith and generosity.

**Please note that while we will make every effort to accommodate all requests for parish speakers, we unfortunately cannot guarantee availability for every parish.*

Q2 How do I use the Project Compassion donation envelopes at my parish?

For 2027, we have once again consolidated the six weekly Project Compassion envelopes into one single envelope, in line with our Laudato Si' commitment. We still encourage parishioners to give weekly if they prefer by taking multiple envelopes from the church. If you run out of envelopes, please let us know and we'll do our best to send you more stock.

Q3 What online resources are available for me to access?

In addition to your printed resources, we have plenty of online resources available to help you further bring the message and meaning of Project Compassion to life. These include our Project Compassion films, weekly bulletin inserts for you to add into your parish newsletter, and pre-written parish talks which you can use to engage and inspire your community. Head to caritas.org.au/project-compassion to access these.

Q4 How do I bank the funds my parish has raised for Project Compassion?

You can bank your parish contributions via:

- **Direct Deposit/Electronic Funds Transfer:** Deposit any cash and cheques into Caritas Australia's bank account using your deposit book and Supporter ID. Please confirm you are using the correct Commonwealth Bank account details and then send through your remittance to help@caritas.org.au
- **Cheques:** All cheques should be deposited into the Caritas Australia bank account as early as possible. Cheques must be made payable to 'Caritas Australia' and should be receipted by the parish.
- **Credit Card:** Please mail all credit card donation forms directly to Caritas Australia, GPO Box 9830, Sydney, NSW 2001 for processing. For security reasons, please do not email any credit card donations. Credit card donations cannot be receipted by the parish.

To allow donations to be processed in a timely manner, we ask you to please remit donations regularly throughout Lent (there's no need to wait until after Easter) and to submit by 31 May 2027 at the latest.

Q5 How do I receipt parishioners who require a tax receipt?

You can issue receipts for cash donations using our tax receipt template. All receipts must be signed and validated with your parish stamp. Once receipts have been issued, we ask that you record these on the Record of Receipts sheet and send this through to help@caritas.org.au

Parishioners who support Project Compassion using a credit card will have their tax receipt automatically sent to them directly from Caritas Australia once their donation has been processed.

For more information on remittance and receipting procedures and to access our receipt templates and Record of Receipt Sheet, please scan the QR code.

Q6 I have another question or would like additional help, who can I reach out to?

If you have any questions or need support, please reach out to the Project Compassion team on (02) 7254 5120 or at projectcompassion@caritas.org.au.

Alternatively, to contact your Diocesan Director, please see the back page of this booklet for details on how to get in touch.

SPOTLIGHT ON PROJECT COMPASSION 2026

Looking for inspiration for Project Compassion 2027? Take a look at these amazing stories of how parishes and communities around the country turned their compassion into action in 2026...



Stepping up for clean water

Last year, members of the Adelaide Spanish Speaking Community, based in Seaton Catholic Parish, took on The Long Walk for Water in a powerful display of solidarity with the 292 million people around the world who walk long distances each day just to collect water. The intrepid team raised both funds and awareness by walking in their local area, including hosting a family walk to further unite their community in a shared pursuit of justice and hope.



Pancakes with purpose

The Diocese of Sandhurst continued a proud tradition by publicly launching Project Compassion 2026 within their local community. Over 200 attendees gathered in Bendigo, where the Diocesan Administrator launched the campaign and commissioned two representatives from each of eight participating parishes across the diocese. During the event, a team of volunteer chefs produced over 1,000 free pancakes which were distributed around the community by roving teams, spreading the word of Project Compassion far and wide and inspiring others to join the movement.



The power of community

In 2026, Caritas Australia's Diocesan Director for the Archdiocese of Hobart, Penny Edman, took on The Long Walk for Water for the second year running. Penny walked for 30 minutes each day for 40 days on behalf of South Hobart Catholic Parish, who fully embraced the challenge alongside her by inviting parishioners to support her journey through their Sunday bulletin. Together, the parish community put their faith into action and walked alongside their global neighbours in solidarity.

FUNDRAISING FOR PROJECT COMPASSION



During this sacred season, we are called to put our faith into action and live out the Gospel through love, compassion and service to others.

Fundraising for Project Compassion is a way to answer that call. It provides an opportunity for your parish community to come together in faith and solidarity and to uphold the God-given dignity of our brothers and sisters around the world through their generosity and sacrifice.



Here's how your parish can *Unite Against Poverty this Lent*:

- **Hold Project Compassion collections during Mass**

  Use your donation envelopes and boxes to host collections throughout Lent, inviting parishioners to embrace the spirit of almsgiving and support vulnerable communities in building a more just future.

  If you'd like to provide your parishioners with an opportunity to donate online, you can also set up an online fundraising page for your parish. Online giving allows parishioners to donate whenever it suits them and reduces the need to manage cash. An online page is also a great way to track your parish's impact in real time, helping your community see the power of their collective generosity.

  Head to **projectcompassion.org.au/parish** to find out more.

- **Host a morning tea after Mass**

  Bring your parish community together in faith and action by hosting a Lent event, like a morning tea after Mass. It's a simple yet powerful way to foster connection and belonging amongst your congregation while turning your collective generosity and sacrifice into hope for vulnerable communities around the world.



Bishop Columba Mc-Beth-Green with representatives from the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes.

Do your parishioners want to get involved in Project Compassion outside of Mass?

Why not encourage them to take on The Long Walk for Water, a Lenten walking challenge that asks us to step up in solidarity with the 292 million people around the world who must walk over 30 minutes each day to collect water. Find out more at projectcompassion.org.au/the-long-walk-for-water

No matter how you choose to support, every act of charity, every prayer and every action your parish community takes this Lent will help to create a world where everyone has the tools they need to face poverty, injustice and disaster.



For more information on fundraising for Project Compassion, visit projectcompassion.org.au/parish or scan the QR code below.

SCAN HERE TO FIND OUT MORE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



Patricia with her family outside their family home in Solomon Islands.
Photo: Caritas Australia.

Scan to get in contact with your Diocesan Director

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