

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING FOCUS: OPTION FOR THE POOR

Jesus tells us to care for those who are most in need in the world. He reminds us of our Christian duty to give a voice to those who go unheard and to help those who are most vulnerable.

MARIA'S STORY

Fighting between armed forces made life in Cumbitara, Colombia, dangerous for Maria and her family—so dangerous that 8 years ago they were forced to relocate. They left their home one morning with nothing but a suitcase of clothes.

It wasn't easy making a new life in Nariño, a region of Colombia known for its coffee. People made fun of Maria and her family because they were outsiders. It was also hard to find work, and Maria's father left home for months at a time to do dangerous work in a mine.

All that changed when the family bought a little piece of land through the CRS Borderlands project. On it, they grow gourmet coffee that is sold in the United States. And Maria, now 18 years old, is passionate about coffee too. She was chosen for a special program and is earning a degree in farming.

The program, run by the local university and CRS' Borderlands project staff, trains young people to become leaders in the coffee industry. During her first semester, she learned from staff as they traveled to farms, teaching growers new ways to plant and harvest.

Coffee, which Maria knew nothing about before starting the program, is now her favorite subject. She's even traveled to Seattle, Washington, to attend a conference on specialty coffee.

"It is in my blood," she says. "Coffee is so much a part of everyday life—not just for me and my family, but globally. It's not just a plant or something you drink, it brings people together."

Now she has a new career goal: to help neighboring coffee farmers make a living growing the best coffee possible.



Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS

FACTS TO CONSIDER

- Colombia has the world's largest number of internally displaced people: 4.7 million men, women and children have been forced to flee their homes because of armed conflict.
- The Borderlands Coffee project helps 3,200 small-scale farmers in conflict-affected communities along the Colombia-Ecuador border increase their incomes and gain access to new jobs. The project promotes environmentally sensitive agriculture techniques to increase crop yields, which helps communities overcome hunger while protecting God's creation.

Visit coffeelands.crs.org to learn more.

For downloadable photos,
visit crsricebowl.org/photos

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn why farmers are important and share their prayers for farmers around the world.

MATERIALS

Maria's story, Bible, copies of Colombia Activity Sheet: Grades 1–3, strips of colored paper, tape or glue

DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)

1. Read Maria's story.
2. Reflect:
 - Why do we need people to become farmers?
 - What do farmers grow for us to eat and drink?
 - How do farmers learn to grow food? Do they work alone or with help?
 - How can we help farmers like Maria?

ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

1. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9–10.
2. Invite students to reflect on the reading by sharing a time when they worked with another person and achieved a better result than if they had worked alone.
3. Pass out copies of the Colombia Activity Sheet: Grades 1–3 and explain that you are going to make a prayer chain for Maria and other farmers.
4. Invite students to share what they wrote on their prayer strips.
5. Help students attach their prayer strips together as one chain, and hang it in your classroom.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Bless the prayer chain by praying the following:

Loving God,

Help us to love all of our neighbors, near and far, as Jesus taught us. May we always keep those in need in our hearts and minds. Bless these prayers we have made, and let this prayer chain remind us to care for everyone in our one human family during Lent.

Amen

AT HOME

1. Watch the video of Maria's story.
2. Say a special prayer for Maria and the farmers of Colombia at mealtime.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 10 MINUTES

1. Read Maria's story
2. Discussion, Step 2

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING FOCUS: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As human beings, we have the right to live and grow in peace. Because we have this right, we have the responsibility to make sure others enjoy the same rights too.

HONGKHAM'S STORY

Hongkham lives close to where she grew up in Nongdeune, Laos, with her husband and their five boys. Her husband is a farmer, and her family relied on his crops for food and income. When Hongkham's husband got sick, the family had to sell a lot of what they owned—including their land—to pay for medicine. Soon, the family faced real hunger.

Then Hongkham found an opportunity to use her love of cooking to help her family and community through CRS' school literacy and hunger program. She volunteers as a cook at her children's school, which provides free school lunches for students, literacy training for teachers and principals, and nutrition training. Hongkham uses that training in the school kitchen—and when she's cooking for her family at home.

She also receives a monthly ration of food to take home, which helps her family grow and thrive. But the best part about CRS' program is that students are learning to read and write. Hongkham says that before the program started, students would go home and often wouldn't return for afternoon classes. But now, students return to school after morning classes to receive a free and nutritious lunch. She even sees the change in her own children—in their studies and their health.

Good nutrition has made a real difference in the lives of the people of Laos.



Photo by Jim Sipe/CRS

FACTS TO CONSIDER

- Laos is a small, landlocked country of almost 7 million people.
- The country is one of the poorest in Southeast Asia, without adequate education, health services or infrastructure to support the development of its people.
- Catholic Relief Services works with the Laos government to ensure that children with disabilities have support and access to basic education.

For downloadable photos,
visit [csricebowl.org/photos](https://www.csricebowl.org/photos)

OBJECTIVE

Students will reflect on the importance of being responsible and caring for others by making “I Can Help” coupons to share at home.

MATERIALS

Markers, whiteboard or poster paper, Hongkham’s story, copies of the Laos Activity Sheet: Grades 1–3

DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

1. Define responsibility.
2. Discuss and list responses to these questions on the board:
 - What are the students’ responsibilities—and what are the teacher’s responsibilities?
 - What are the consequences of being irresponsible? What are the rewards of being responsible?
3. Read Hongkham’s story.
4. Reflect:
 - What responsibilities does Hongkham have?
 - How does CRS help Hongkham fulfill her responsibilities?
 - What responsibilities do we have to Hongkham?

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Pass out the Laos Activity Sheet: Grades 1–3 and explain that students will design “I Can Help” coupons for special tasks they will to do at home to help their families. Emphasize that it’s important for them to include tasks they don’t do regularly—and tasks they will be able to complete.
2. Invite students to share what they wrote on their coupons with the group.
3. Ask students to take their coupons home and present them to family members.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Loving and caring God,

Thank you for the rights we have as your children. Help us to share our gifts in ways that care for others, and to be responsible for making the world a better place for all.

Amen

AT HOME

1. Watch the video of Hongkham’s story.
2. Give your “I Can Help” coupons to your family members and complete your tasks.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 10 MINUTES

1. Discussion, Step 3–4

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING FOCUS: SACREDNESS AND DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

When God created us, he made us in his image and likeness. That means that every human being has a special value and purpose. We need to care for each other so that we can all be the people God calls us to be.

ODETTE'S STORY

Odette's daughter Olga could have easily become one of the many children in Rwanda who don't receive the nutrients they need to develop and grow.

But Odette started working with Catholic Relief Services even before she gave birth—to ensure her child would get the care she needed during the crucial first 1,000 days of life. The nutrition a child receives from the time he or she is in the womb until his or her second birthday can mean the difference between a promising future and one of poor health and limited opportunities.

CRS is working with communities in Rwanda to end child malnutrition by supporting health and nutrition programs, and teaching families to grow crops that add nutritious variety to their meals.

Because poverty is a major cause of malnutrition, CRS helps families find opportunities to earn an income. With a loan from her microfinance group, Odette started a business selling agricultural fertilizer so she could support her family.

Odette attends weekly classes that are helping her grow healthy crops on her farm. She's also taking courses on how to prepare nutritious meals from those crops. And she takes Olga to regular checkups to measure her weight and growth, and ensure she is healthy.

This year, Olga will reach a milestone: Her second birthday. Because Odette has been feeding her a variety of nutritious foods—many of which were grown in the family garden—Olga is growing up strong and healthy.



FACTS TO CONSIDER

- Approximately 80% of people in Rwanda are subsistence farmers.
- Approximately two-thirds of Rwandans live on less than \$1.25 a day.
- Young children often have difficulty getting good and healthy food—44% of children under the age of 5 are severely malnourished.
- In 2010, CRS and our local partners in Rwanda began working to reduce stunting rates of children under age 5 from 44% to 28% by 2017.
- CRS is teaching parents how to feed their children nutritious meals—and teaching them how to grow it.
- Mothers like Odette are benefiting from regular baby checkups, cooking demonstrations, agricultural trainings and microfinance meetings.

For downloadable photos, visit csrricebowl.org/photos

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn that they are special because they were made by God.

MATERIALS

Odette's story, markers, whiteboard or chart paper

DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)

1. Read Odette's story.
2. Reflect:
 - Catholic Relief Services is helping mothers like Odette ensure their children get the healthy food they need to grow and thrive.
 - Why is it important for the children of Rwanda—and all people—to have healthy food?
 - What does it mean if all people do not have access to healthy food?

ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

1. Explain the Catholic social teaching principle Sacredness and Dignity of the Human Person to students. Explain that when God created us, he made us in his image and likeness. This means that every human being has a special value and purpose. We need to care for each other so we can be the people God calls us to be.
2. Pass out copies of the Rwanda Activity Sheet: Grades 1–3 (available at crsricebowl.org/schools) and give students time to complete them.
3. Invite students to put their activity sheets in a visible location in the classroom to remind them that each person is made by God.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

1. Take a moment of silence and invite students to say a special prayer for Odette and her daughter Olga.
2. Pray the Hail Mary together.

AT HOME

1. Ask parents to download the CRS Rice Bowl app and watch the video of Odette's story.
2. Prepare the simple, meatless meal from Rwanda as a family.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 10 MINUTES

1. Read Odette's story
2. Pray the closing prayer

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING FOCUS: CALL TO FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND PARTICIPATION

Human beings are social by nature—we need each other. We, like the early disciples, are called to come together and grow as a community, whether that community is in our classroom, workplace or family.

MAYRA'S STORY

Two years ago, Mayra was not a star pupil. She was very shy in the classroom and struggled with simple math and reading lessons. She often missed homework assignments and, some days, did not go to school.

Her teacher noticed and enrolled Mayra in the school's tutoring program. In the months that followed, Mayra and Fabricio, her tutor and classmate, spent many afternoons practicing reading and writing stories together. They made up games to practice math. And when they were done, they jumped rope and played in their neighborhood. In the process, the two became good friends.

"Fabricio never looked down on me because I had trouble learning," says Mayra. "He always treated me well."

The extra attention was what Mayra really needed. She lives with her grandmother, Lucia, who works hard to take care of Mayra. She picks coffee on a nearby farm and does laundry to earn money to put food on the table. But this means she doesn't always have time to help Mayra with her school work. In fact, like many people her age, Lucia cannot read.

That's why Fabricio's help was so important. Today, Mayra is proud of her reading and math skills. She does her homework and goes to class on time. She is more confident and has a new group of friends.

Mayra wants to be a teacher one day. But first, she will become a tutor so she can help her classmates—just as Fabricio helped her.



Photo by Oscar Luna/Silverlight for CRS

FACTS TO CONSIDER

- Nearly 65% of Hondurans—more than 5 million people—live on less than \$2 a day. In response, CRS Honduras is working on projects ranging from agriculture to education.
- The Food for Education project, which helped Mayra, benefits 53,863 children enrolled in 1,047 pre-primary and primary schools. The project improves literacy, attendance, retention and attentiveness.
- By providing regular meals at school, students are more likely to go to school—and have the energy to learn. For many students, this may be the best—and only—meal they receive all day.
- The project supplies basic educational materials, trains teachers to better support students and provides transportation so students can get to school.
- The project is improving the school with better classrooms, restrooms and safer environments. School gardens are being built to teach students about the importance of healthy food.

For downloadable photos,
visit crsricebowl.org/photos

OBJECTIVE

By reading and reflecting on Mayra's story, students will learn why it's important to share their gifts with others.

MATERIALS

Bible, Mayra's story, markers, whiteboard or chart paper, Honduras Activity Sheet: Grades 1-3

DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)

1. Read 1 Peter 4:10.
 - What are some of the gifts we have received from God?
 - What is God's message for us in this reading?
2. Read Mayra's story.
3. Reflect:
 - What are the ways Mayra and Fabricio are living out God's message from the Bible passage we read?
 - Ask students what things they can do to help others at school, home, church, at their friend's house, etc. List their ideas on the board.

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Do Honduras Activity Sheet: Grades 1-3.
2. In a large group, share and discuss the activity.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Dear God,

Thank you for showing us what it means to be a community that supports one another. Help us to live by Jesus' example and to show others that we care about them.

In your name we pray,

Amen

AT HOME

1. Watch the video about Mayra's story, and discuss it with your family.

**IF YOU ONLY HAVE
10 MINUTES**

1. Discussion, Steps 2 and 3

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING FOCUS: CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION

God created every plant, every mountaintop, every animal—everything. And God said that these things are good. We find God in these good things he made, and so we must take care of creation—for ourselves and for all of our human family.

VAVIROA'S STORY

Vaviroa is a smart, hardworking woman—with four children to feed. Though she had been raising her children alone for many years, their family was doing very well. They ate crops grown from Vaviroa's family farm, and they even made money selling extra vegetables in nearby villages.

Then, in 2013, Cyclone Haruna hit, destroying most of northern Tulear, the part of Madagascar where Vaviroa and her children lived. Her fields flooded, and her crops died. With no way to feed her family, Vaviroa needed some help. She was already a great farmer—she just needed extra support to get back on her feet. And that extra support came in the form of seeds.

CRS' seed fair program gives vouchers to farmers and their families so they can buy seeds, farm tools and livestock at local seed fairs. The goods they buy help them replant and rebuild their communities. The fairs also give farmers a chance to sell their crops in a safe place to people who need them. And these seed fairs help the environment by giving farmers the tools they need to care for God's creation.

With the seeds she received at a CRS seed fair, Vaviroa has been able to replant her fields. Once again, her children are receiving the nutrients they need to grow and are able to attend school. Vaviroa is proud of all she's accomplished—and looking forward to the next planting season.



Photo by Heidi Henulis for CRS

FACTS TO CONSIDER

- In 2013, Cyclone Haruna raced through the Mozambique Channel and made landfall at Tulear, bringing with it heavy rains that washed away homes and destroyed crops.
- CRS' Diversification and Nutrition for Enhanced Resilience, or DiNER, FAARM program provides subsidized agricultural vouchers to farmers so they can purchase seeds, farm tools and livestock, among other goods, at organized agricultural fairs. The vendors also benefit because they can sell their goods to people who can buy them. DiNERs help farmers plant staple crops and encourage improved agricultural practices that build their resilience to floods and drought.
- For more than 50 years, CRS has supported food and nutrition programs for underprivileged mothers, children, the disabled and survivors of natural disaster.

For downloadable photos,
visit crsricebowl.org/photos

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the importance of hope and how they can care for creation.

MATERIALS

Bible, Vaviroa's story, Madagascar Activity Sheet: Grades 1–3, seeds, markers

DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

1. Read Matthew 13:31–32, the Parable of the Mustard Seed, and explain that Jesus often used symbols to convey important beliefs.
 - Why do you think a tiny seed can be a symbol of hope?
2. Read Vaviroa's story.
3. Reflect:
 - What do the new seeds represent for Vaviroa's family?

ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)

1. Explain that the seeds Vaviroa received to rebuild her farm are not only a form of hope for Vaviroa, but hope for all of creation.
2. Do the Madagascar Activity Sheet: Grades 1–3.
3. Ask volunteers to share their poem with the class.

CLOSING PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

Ask students to sit in a circle on the ground and begin the prayer by offering an intention of a hope for creation. Pass a seed to a student in the circle and let that student offer an intention for their hope to care for creation. They will then pass the seed to another child in the circle who will do the same.

AT HOME

1. Read Vaviroa's story and discuss it with your family.
2. Say a prayer for Vaviroa and offer special intentions for all those who grow food for their families, and all of the communities around the world.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 10 MINUTES

1. Read Vaviroa's story
2. Discussion, Step 3

Colombia:

Option for the Poor

Activity Sheet: **grades 1–3**

We can care for people around the world through prayer.

1. Fill out and decorate the two prayer strips.
2. Cut out your prayer strips.
3. Your teacher will help you connect your strips together as loops in a chain.

We can help others by ...

My prayer for Maria is ...

Laos:

Rights and Responsibilities



Activity Sheet: **grades 1–3**


1. Fill out and decorate your **“I Can Help” coupons**.
2. Cut out the coupons and take them home to give to family members.

To: _____

I will: _____

Because: _____

From: _____



“I Can Help” Coupon

To: _____

I will: _____

Because: _____

From: _____



“I Can Help” Coupon

To: _____

I will: _____

Because: _____

From: _____



“I Can Help” Coupon

Rwanda:

Sacredness and Dignity of the Human Person

Activity Sheet: **grades 1–3**

Each person is special because he or she is made by God. As you look at your hand, you can see the lines and shapes that are unique to you!

1. Trace your hand inside the box.
2. On each finger, write one way you are special—and one way you can share your gifts with the world.
3. Decorate your drawing.



Honduras:

Call to Family, Community and Participation



Activity Sheet: **grades 1–3**

Fabricio was able to share his gifts with Mayra, who now wants to share what she learned with others. By sharing what we have with each other, we can build and care for our community.



Draw a picture of Fabricio and Mayra studying or playing together.

A large, empty rectangular area with a decorative, scalloped border, intended for drawing a picture of Fabricio and Mayra studying or playing together.

Draw a picture of you helping someone in your community.

A large, empty rectangular area with a decorative, scalloped border, intended for drawing a picture of the student helping someone in their community.



Hope is a virtue that is very important to our faith. Vaviroa was able to find hope in the seeds she received to rebuild her farm after it was destroyed. We can also have hope that we can make a better world for everyone by caring for creation.

Write a poem about the hope you have for caring for creation. Start each line with one of the letters in the word “hope.”

H _____

O _____

P _____

E _____