

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

50 minutes

OBJECTIVE

Students will reflect on how they can give extra care to those who live in poverty.

MATERIALS

Map or globe, Maria's story, poster paper or whiteboard, markers, Colombia Activity Sheet: Grades 4–6

DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)

1. Locate Colombia on the map. How close is Colombia to your home?
2. Read Maria's story.
3. Write two columns on the board: one for Challenges and one for Hopes. Invite students to answer the following questions and record their answers on the board.
 - What challenges did Maria and her family face?
 - What parts of the story offer hope?

ACTIVITY (30 MINUTES)

1. Read Matthew 25:31–40.
2. Divide the class into small groups. Give each group one of the statements below. (Depending on class size, you may only need to select a few.)
 - I was hungry and you gave me food.
 - I was thirsty and you gave me drink.
 - I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
 - I was naked and you clothed me.
 - I was ill and you cared for me.
 - I was in prison and you visited me.
3. Each group should design a poster that represents how they can live out this part of the Gospel.
4. Invite students to present the posters to the class.
5. Discuss: How does Maria's story connect with the Gospel reading?

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Jesus, you teach us that whatever we do for the least of our brothers and sisters, we do for you. Help us to care for those who need it most, especially those who live in poverty.

Amen

AT HOME

1. Read Matthew 25:31–40 and talk about what was shared by each small group in class.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 10 MINUTES

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

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 consider how education gives people a brighter future.

MATERIALS

Map or globe, Hongkham's story, Laos Activity Sheet: Grades 4–6, whiteboard or poster paper, markers

DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)

1. Locate Laos on the map. How close is Laos to your home?
2. Read Hongkham's story.
3. Reflect:
 - Why did Hongkham's family have to sell their farm?
 - How did selling their farm affect their family?
 - How has Hongkham's work with CRS changed their lives?

ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

What would life be like if we didn't have access to education?

1. Divide the class into teams and give each team 5 minutes to generate a list of things that would be impossible to do if they couldn't read, write, do math, etc.
2. Relay Race: Line up the teams in front of the board. Give the first person in line a marker. The first person writes one item from the team's list and passes the marker to the next person. The object of the game is to generate as many answers as possible. Rules: Answers that repeat do not count (the first team to write an answer gets credit for it—after that, it doesn't count). All team members must participate. Team members must be prepared to explain their answers.
3. At the end of the relay race, review the class' answers.
4. Tally up points and determine the winning team.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

God of all knowledge,

Thank you for our schools, teachers, families and all those who help us to learn and grow. Be with the people of Laos and all those who face challenges giving their children an education. Thank you for all that we have learned through CRS Rice Bowl. Help us remember to pray for, and take action to support, our brothers and sisters in need throughout the world.

Amen

AT HOME

1. Read Hongkham's story and discuss it with your family.
2. Complete the Laos Activity Sheet: Grades 4–6.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 10 MINUTES

1. Read Hongkham's story
2. Complete the Laos Activity Sheet: Grades 4–6

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

45 minutes

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn that all people have value, and reflect on what it means to have our needs met.

MATERIALS

Map or globe, Odette’s story, labels of “Needs” and “Wants,” Rwanda Activity Sheet: Grades 4–6

DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

1. Locate Rwanda on the map. How far is Rwanda from your home?
2. Read Odette’s story.
 - How is Odette’s work with CRS helping to ensure that her daughter’s needs are met?
 - What signs of hope are found in the story?
3. Label the front of the room as “Needs” and the back of the room as “Wants.”
4. Name each item below and invite students to vote by walking to either the front or back of the room to identify if it is a need or a want. For each item, ask a few students to explain why they are describing it as a want or need.
 - Food
 - Clothing
 - Candy
 - Education
 - Toys
 - Love
 - Health care
 - Being listened to

ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)

1. Do the Rwanda Activity Sheet: Grades 4–6.
2. Read the definition of the Catholic social teaching principle Life and Dignity of the Human Person found at the top of the activity sheet so that students understand the principle.

CLOSING PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

1. Ask students to think about a need they are thankful is being met by God.
2. Invite students to share.
3. Pray the Our Father together.

AT HOME

1. Ask your parents to download the CRS Rice Bowl app.
2. Watch the video of Odette’s story and discuss it 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

45 minutes

OBJECTIVE

Students will broaden their understanding of community and put their faith into action through acts of kindness.

MATERIALS

Map or globe, Mayra's story, class roster of names for prayer partners, Honduras Activity Sheet: Grades 4–6

DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)

1. Locate Honduras on the map. What other countries are nearby? How close is Honduras to your home?
2. Read Mayra's story.
3. Reflect:
 - What are some reasons Mayra struggled in school?
 - How did Mayra finally improve her reading and math skills?
 - How does this story show that Mayra is part of a community where people care for one another?

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Complete the Honduras Activity Sheet: Grades 4–6, which asks students to generate acts of kindness they can perform at home, school or in the world.
2. In pairs or small groups, encourage students to share their responses with each other and with the whole class.
3. Assign each student a secret prayer partner. Encourage students to pray and perform small acts of kindness for their partners throughout the week. See if they can guess their partners at the end of the week (or keep it going until the end of Lent).

CLOSING PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

1. Read James 2:14–17.
2. Share special intentions, including prayers for Mayra and the people of Honduras, and for students' prayer partners.

Loving God,

You created us to live in community. Help us to care for our brothers and sisters here at home and throughout the world. Teach us to love one another and to turn that love into action.

Amen

AT HOME

1. Choose secret prayer partners at home and encourage each family member to perform acts of kindness for that person.

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

40 minutes

OBJECTIVE

Students will reflect on God's call to care for creation.

MATERIALS

Map or globe, Vaviroa's story, Madagascar Activity Sheet: Grades 4–6

DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)

1. Locate Madagascar on the map. How close is Madagascar to your home?
2. Read Vaviroa's story
3. Reflect:
 - How did the cyclone affect Vaviroa's family?
 - How did CRS' seed fair program help Vaviroa get back on her feet?
 - Why do you think Vaviroa received seeds, rather than just food?
 - What would it be like to live in a place where the weather has such a big impact on your family's survival?

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Brainstorm ways that we can take care of the world that God made.
2. Do the Madagascar Activity Sheet: Grades 4–6, which uses the letters in the word "Creation" to create an acrostic poem.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Take a moment of silence to think about all the living things on earth that God created.

Creator God,

You made the earth and all that lives on it. Thank you for the blessing of nature, all the plants and animals, the sky and stars, the people we encounter and even those we'll never meet. Thank you for every gift that fills our world with beauty and goodness. Help us to care for the earth that you made and keep us mindful that we are all part of one human family.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen

AT HOME

1. Read Vaviroa's story and discuss it with your family.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 10 MINUTES

1. Discussion, Steps 2 and 3

Jesus tells us to care for those who are most in need in the world.

Brainstorm ideas for your poster by answering the questions below and discussing them as a group. Afterward, draw pictures and illustrate your answers on the poster.

WRITE IN YOUR GROUP'S GOSPEL MESSAGE:

I was _____ and you _____.

How can we care for people the way Jesus described in this Gospel message?

What would the world be like if we lived out his message?

What words or pictures do you want to include on your poster?

Laos:

Rights and Responsibilities

Activity Sheet: **grades 4-6**

As human beings, we have the right to live and grow in peace, and to have access to basic necessities like food, water and education. In addition to these rights, we have the responsibility to make sure others can also enjoy these rights.

Hongkham's work as a cook helps her children stay in school. Learning to read, write, count, think and solve problems is important for all people.

Why is education important? Unscramble the words to decode the secret message below.

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Rwanda:

Sacredness and Dignity of the Human Person

Activity Sheet: **grades 4-6**

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 that God calls us to be.

Fill in the two circles by answering the questions.

How am I made in the image and likeness of God?

How should I treat others to show that they are made in God's same image?

Honduras:

Call to Family, Community and Participation



Activity Sheet: **grades 4–6**

Fabricio's acts of kindness had a big impact! He helped Mayra improve her reading and math skills. She became more confident at school and made new friends. Now she wants to help others.

What are some acts of kindness that YOU can do to follow God's call to live in a caring community?



HOME

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



SCHOOL

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



WORLD

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Use the letters in CREATION to write an acrostic poem that shows how God calls us to take care of all living things.

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