

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 recognize the importance of the Catholic social teaching principle Option for the Poor and identify ways to support others.

MATERIALS

Bibles, Maria's story, map or globe,
Colombia Activity Sheets: Grades 7–8

DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

1. Read Isaiah 58:5–7 silently or aloud as a group.
 - Why do you think it is important to God that we help the poor?
 - What opportunities do you give people if you feed them when they are hungry? Clothe them when they are naked?
2. Read Maria's story and find Colombia on the map so students can see where it is.
 - What opportunities did Maria and her family lose when they were forced to move because of violence?
 - What opportunities did Maria and her family gain when CRS helped them buy land?
 - How is Maria providing opportunities for others?

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Distribute the Colombia Activity Sheet: Grades 7–8 to each student.
2. Give students time to complete their sheets individually.
3. Invite students to share their completed sheets with the group.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

1. Invite students to silently call to mind Maria, her family and the people of Colombia.
2. Ask students to think about one thing they can do to keep our poorest brothers and sisters in mind as they live each day.
3. Have each student say one word that describes their intention for God's help to reach that goal.
4. Close with the Our Father.

AT HOME

1. Download the CRS Rice Bowl app.
2. Watch the video of Maria's story and cook the simple, meatless recipe for Colombia with your family.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 10 MINUTES

1. Discussion, Step 2
2. Draw a picture of a coffee cup, as illustrated on the activity sheet, on the whiteboard. As a class, follow the instructions and record the group's responses on the board

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 csrricebowl.org/photos

OBJECTIVE

Students will understand what rights belong to all people and recognize their own responsibility in helping others achieve those rights.

MATERIALS

Bibles, map or globe, Hongkham's story, copies of Laos Activity Sheets: Grades 7-8

DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

1. Read Tobit 4:5-11 individually or out loud as a group.
 - God has given us many blessings and rights. What are some of the rights that God has given you in your life?
 - We have a responsibility to care for those in need, and to make sure their rights are respected. How can we use the blessings God has given us to help those in need?
2. Read Hongkham's story and locate Laos on the map.
3. Reflect:
 - How were Hongkham and her family given opportunities?
 - How did Hongkham give back to others?
 - How can we give to those in need like Hongkham, so everyone can have the same opportunities we do?

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Hand out the Laos Activity Sheet: Grades 7-8 and explain that it is the Laos national flag (the circle is white, the section just outside the circle is blue and the outside stripes are red).
2. Invite students to complete the activity sheet using the instructions on the sheet.
3. If there is time, have students share their sheets with partners or with the whole class.

CLOSING PRAYER (15 MINUTES)

"Lectio Divina," or divine reading, is a way to pray with Scripture. Follow these steps to pray with the students:

- Have students sit in a comfortable position, separated from each other so they are not tempted to talk to each other.
- Read Luke 10:29-37, the story of the Good Samaritan, to the class. Be sure to read slowly and clearly so students hear every word.
- Take another moment of silence so the story sinks in.
- Tell students that you will read the story again, but that you want them to choose a person within the story and to imagine they are that person.
- Read the story aloud again, asking students to imagine they are the person they chose as you read. Tell them to picture themselves inside the story.
- Take another moment of silence after the second reading.
- Ask students to imagine how the person feels. How did they react to what happened?
- Read the story aloud one final time, asking students to place themselves within the story again, but paying attention to what God may be saying to them through their reactions.
- Take a final moment of silence and then ask students to say a silent prayer.

AT HOME

1. Take home a church bulletin or school newsletter and see how your community helps those in need. Discuss with your family and consider volunteering.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 10 MINUTES

1. Discussion, Steps 2 and 3

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 all human life is sacred and that all people possess an inherent dignity.

MATERIALS

Bible, map or globe, Rwanda
Activity Sheet: Grades 7–8

DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

1. Read Genesis 1:26–31 silently or aloud as a group.
2. Reflect:
 - All humans are created in the image of God and are therefore sacred. What does it mean to be sacred?
 - Is it easy to recognize the sacredness in ourselves? In others? Why or why not?
3. Read Odette's story silently or aloud as a group and locate Rwanda on a map for students' reference.
4. Reflect:
 - How is access to food and proper nutrition related to the sacredness of the human person?
 - How can you and your family help ensure that people around the world have access to food and proper nutrition?

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Distribute the Rwanda Activity Sheet: Grades 7–8 and give students time to complete it.
2. Have students share in pairs what they drew for each of the boxes.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Part of respecting another's dignity is recognizing God within them.

1. Invite students to silently pray that they will be open to seeing God in all people and that through their actions, they will respect the dignity of all those they encounter.
2. End with the Our Father together.

AT HOME

Consider asking your family to help you cook a healthy meal for a local shelter or soup kitchen for those in need.

Tip: See if your parish or school has a connection with a local soup kitchen.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 10 MINUTES

1. Discussion, Steps 1, 3 and 4

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

Students recognize the role they play in their communities and view themselves as part of a larger, global Catholic community.

MATERIALS

Bibles, Mayra's story, map or globe, cut into 6 puzzle pieces for each small group of 6, blindfolds, Honduras Activity Sheet: Grades 7–8

DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

1. Read Romans 12:4–8 silently or aloud as a group.
 - What communities are you a part of (school, sports teams, family, etc.)? Write the different communities that students name on the board.
 - How do you contribute to each of these communities?
2. Put students into pairs or small groups and ask them to read Mayra's story. After students finish reading, locate Honduras on the map.
 - How are Mayra and Fabricio in community?
 - How can we follow Mayra's example and give back to our communities?

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Prior to class, print out the Honduras Activity Sheet: Grades 7–8 with the world map on it. Cut the map along the dotted lines into 6 puzzle pieces. Make one sheet for every 6 students in your class.
2. Separate students into groups of 6 and have each group sit in a circle. Blindfold all members except one in each group. If blindfolds are unavailable, have them close their eyes.
3. Give students the following instructions:
 - Each student will be given a puzzle piece. The group must put the puzzle together under the restrictions below.
 - If you are blindfolded, you will not be able to talk.
 - If you are not blindfolded, you can talk but you cannot use your hands.
4. Give each student a puzzle piece. For

the students who are not blindfolded, place their piece on the table in front of them. Give students time to put their puzzles together.

5. A puzzle is incomplete without ALL of its pieces, as a community is incomplete without ALL of its members.
 - After students have completed their puzzle and see that it makes a globe, have them take their puzzle piece back.
 - On the back of their puzzle piece, each student should answer the question: "How am I a member of the global community?"
 - Have students share with the class after they're finished. This should produce a larger list of how the class is part of the global community.

CLOSING PRAYER (15 MINUTES)

As Catholics we believe our community includes those who have gone before us and are now part of the Communion of Saints. One of the ways we ask them to pray for us is through the Litany of Saints.

1. Encourage each student to name a saint that is special to them, inviting the whole class to respond, "Pray for us."
2. After each student has shared the name of the saint, conclude by praying: "All you men and women, Saints of God, pray for us."
3. Pray the Our Father together.

AT HOME

1. Attend Mass as a family and be intentional about being involved in your faith community.
2. Have each person in your family share their favorite saint, and ask those saints to pray for your family and community.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 10 MINUTES

1. Discussion, Step 2

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.

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OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the Catholic social teaching principle Care for Creation and learn how they can practice it in their lives.

MATERIALS

Bibles, Vaviroa’s story, map or globe,
Madagascar Activity Sheets: Grades 7–8

DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

1. Read Genesis 1:1–31 silently or aloud as a group.
 - God made the world and it was good! Have you ever experienced God’s presence in creation?
 - God created the world as a gift for us. How does creation continue to give us gifts today?
 - What things can each of us do to care for creation and honor the gift God gave us?
2. Read Vaviroa’s story and locate Madagascar on a map. Students can read this story in small groups or aloud as a group.
 - How is creation helping Vaviroa and her family?
 - How does supporting farmers like Vaviroa honor the gift of creation?

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Distribute the Madagascar Activity Sheet: Grades 7–8.
2. Have students fill out the activity sheet as follows:
 - **Roots:** How are you being called to be a good steward of creation in your life? Write the answers in the roots of your picture.
 - **Tree Trunk and Branches:** What are the steps you must take to be good stewards in these areas? Write these steps on the tree trunk and branches of your picture (be specific!).
 - **Leaves:** What will be the benefits of your being a good steward? Write them on the leaves and fruit of your picture.
3. Have students share, with partners or in small groups, what they wrote on their trees. If there is time, make a class tree on the blackboard and fill it in with suggestions from the class.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Pope Francis wrote an encyclical about caring for creation called *Laudato Si’*, where he offered us this prayer:

A Prayer for Our Earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey toward your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

Amen

AT HOME

1. Make a meal from locally grown foods with your family. When you pray before your meal, thank God for the specific farms and farmers who helped bring the food to you.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 10 MINUTES

1. Discussion, Step 2
2. Draw a tree on the board and complete as a class following the instructions in the activity.



Activity Sheet: **grades 7–8**

Maria's family achieved a better life by farming coffee through the CRS Borderlands project. As part of our Catholic identity, we are called to ensure that all of our brothers and sisters have what they need to flourish.

Reflect on how we can care for all those in our global community:

- Around the edges of the coffee cup, below, write the names of people or places where we might encounter people in need. (Try to include people or groups of people on a local, national and global scale.)
- On the cup, below, write ways we are called to help people in need. These should be concrete things that students can actually do when they leave class.
- On the steam coming from the coffee, write the gifts that arise when we help the poor.



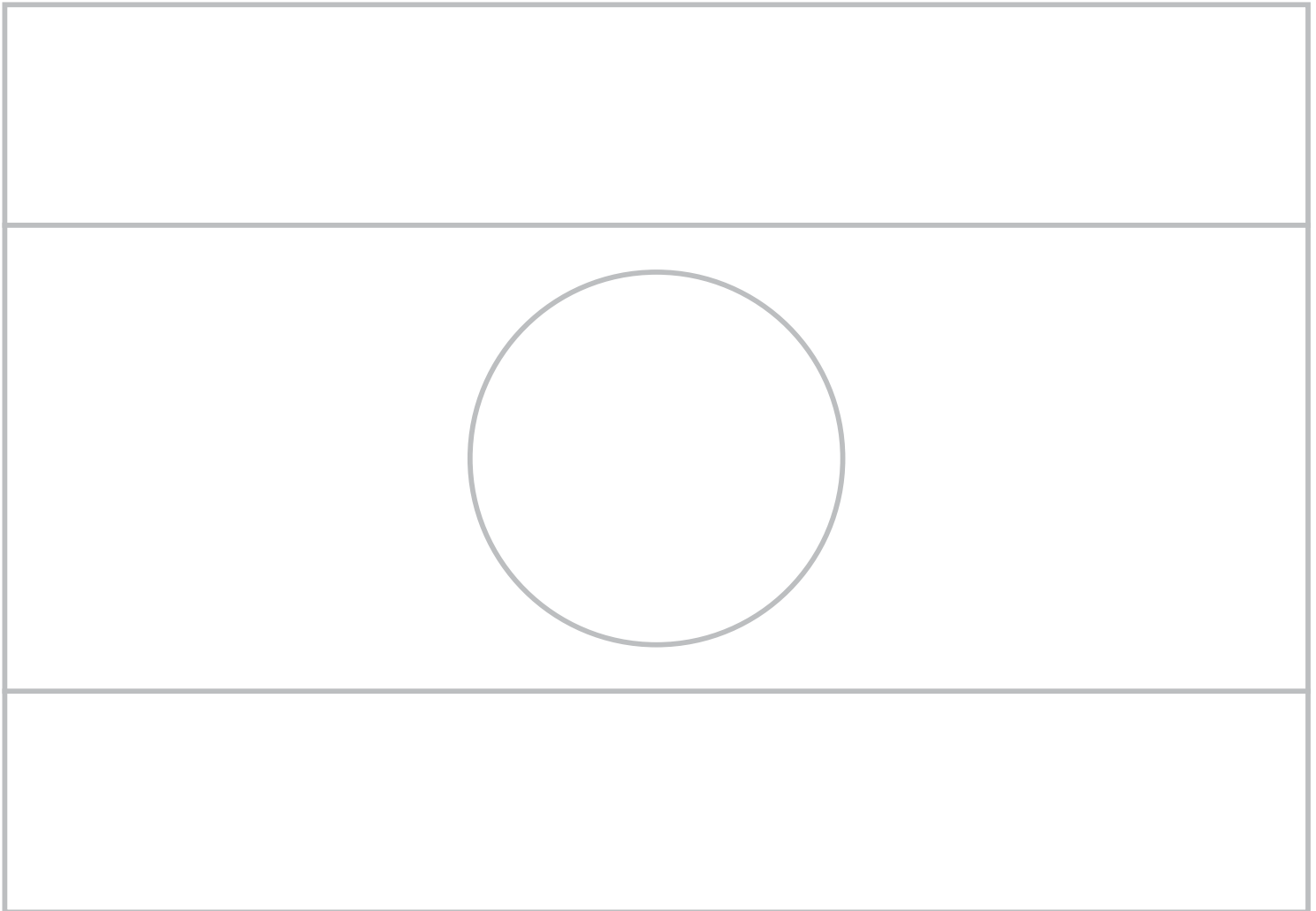
Laos:

Rights and Responsibilities



Activity Sheet: **grades 7-8**

1. The Laos national flag is below. Inside the circle, write some of the rights that were given to you by God.
2. In the section just around the center circle, write some benefits and opportunities that come from having those rights.
3. In the stripes on the edges, write concrete examples of how you can help those in need obtain their God-given rights.
4. Color the flag with the national colors of Laos. The circle is white, the section just outside of the circle is blue and the outside stripes are red.



Rwanda:

Sacredness and Dignity of the Human Person

Fill in each of the boxes on the activity sheet as follows.

Dignity Within Yourself.

Write or draw how you see God's presence and dignity within yourself.

Dignity Within Your Friend.

Write or draw how you see God's presence and dignity within a friend or someone you know.

Dignity Within Your Neighbor.

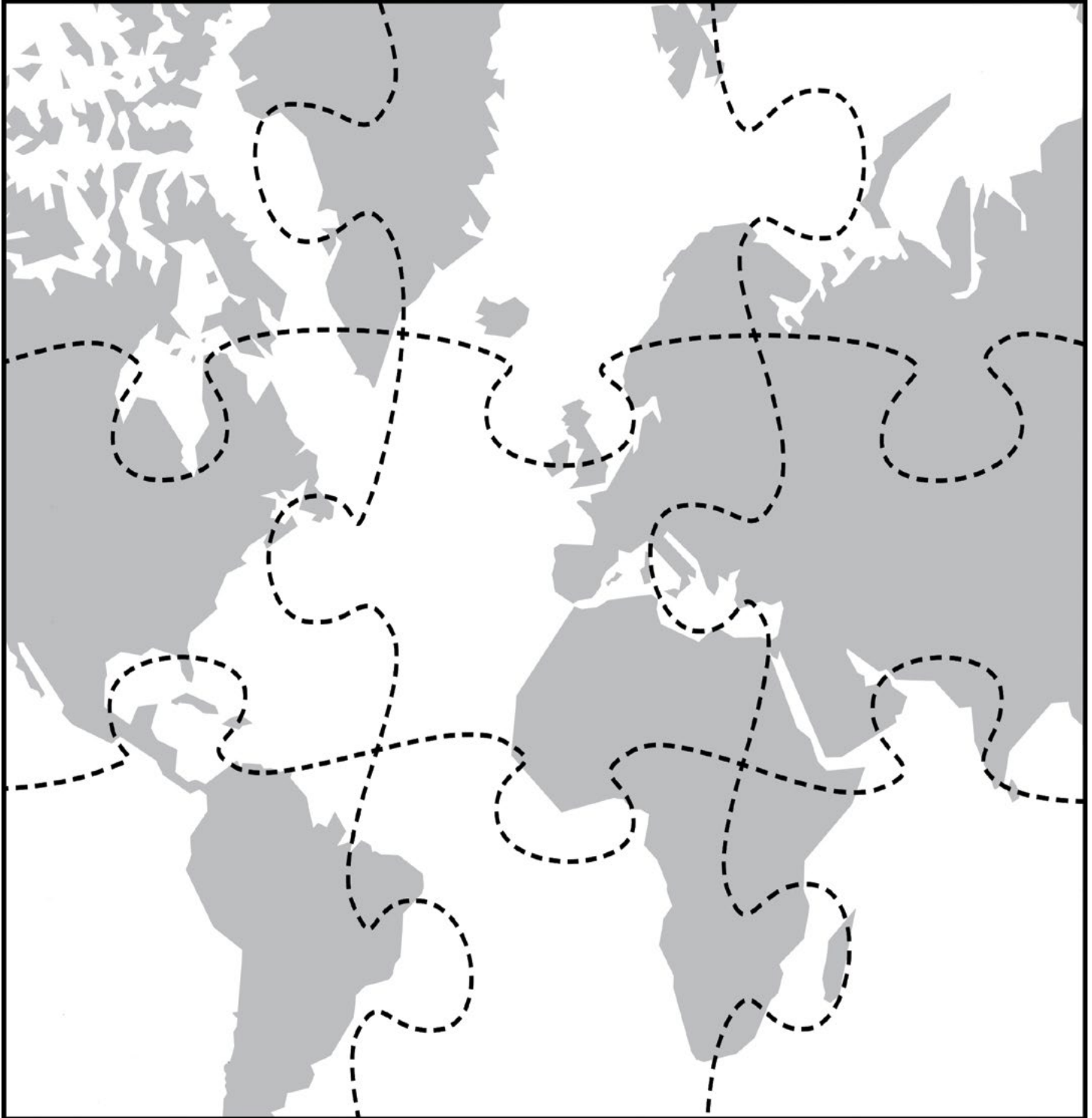
Write or draw how you see God's presence and dignity in those you have not met personally, but who are still our brothers and sisters.

Honduras:

Call to Family, Community and Participation

Activity Sheet: **grades 7–8**

Cut sheet into 6 pieces and follow instructions for game in lesson plan.



Caring for creation requires planning and hard work.

Fill out the sections of the tree to illustrate your plan to care for creation as follows:

- **Roots:** How are you being called to be a good steward of creation? Write the answers in the roots of your picture.
- **Tree Trunk and Branches:** What are the steps you must take to be good stewards in these areas? Write the steps on the tree trunk and branches of your picture (be specific!).
- **Leaves:** What will be the benefits of your being a good steward? Write them on the leaves and fruit of your picture.

