

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.



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

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

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.



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 _____



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

C

R

E

A

T

I

O

N



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.

