

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 Stipe/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)

PURPOSE

To help young people understand the Catholic social teaching, or CST, principle Rights and Responsibilities through the story of Hongkham and Catholic Relief Services' literacy and hunger program in Laos, and to help young people explore basic human rights and our responsibilities as believing Catholics who are part of one human family.

CST PRINCIPLE: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Opening and Closing Prayers
 - *That I Might Find You There*
 - *Prayer for Peace & Justice*
- *Balloon Toss Discussion* handout
- *One Pound of Rice* handout
- 1-pound bag of rice
- A measuring scale that can measure ounces
- Snack-size resealable storage bags—1 per participant
- *Story of Hope: Laos*
- Make a poster listing basic human rights (Write them in a single column, leaving room on the right for another column.) It could read:

ALL PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO:

food
 clothing
 shelter
 education
 work
 respect
 information
 privacy
 one's conscience
 freedom of religion

OPENING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

That I May Find You There

GAME (10 MINUTES)

- *Balloon Toss Discussion*
- Use as an introduction to the Catholic social teaching principle Rights and Responsibilities.

OPENING ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)

- *One Pound of Rice*
- To demonstrate the need to promote the human right to food.

STORY OF HOPE: LAOS (15 MINUTES)

- Read or watch the video of Hongkham's story.
- Ask participants to share one thing that inspired them about Hongkham's story.

DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)

- Hang your premade poster listing the things all people have a right to, and read the list to students.
- Invite students to use the poster to identify the human rights that were promoted through CRS' literacy and hunger program in Laos.
- Ask the group to brainstorm at least one way they can promote or uphold each of those rights. Write their answers on the poster.

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SUMMARY (1 MINUTE)

- As we learned from Hongkham's story, human rights are closely connected. When you promote one—like the right to food—others, like the right to respect, work and education, are also enhanced. The more we work to protect the rights of individuals, the more the rights of all of us are protected.
- This Lent, let us take time to pray and think about what we can do to promote and protect human rights around the world, and in our own community.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Prayer for Peace and Justice, USCCB

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Talk as a family about the rights you have—and the responsibilities you have to others in your community. Brainstorm 1 or 2 things you can do to ensure that others have access to the same rights you have.





Lord of all nations,

I asked how you will know me.

*You answered that you will know
the ones who have fed you,
when they have fed the least
of your people.*

*Send me out to the most famished
land that I may find you there and
give of my portion to eat.*

*You answered that you will know
the ones who have given you water
when they have given water to
the least of your people.*

*Send me out to the driest land
That I may find you there and give
of my portion to drink.*

*You answered that you will know
the ones who have clothed you
When they have clothed the least
of your people.*

*Send me to where the elements have
made too large a claim that I may
find you there and share with you
my cloak.*

*You told me I will know you in the sick:
Send me among the most plagued.*

*You told me I will know you in the
prisoner: send me into the midst
of the darkest cell, into the slave
master's marketplace, for I seek you
with all my heart.*

*As you were revealed in your glory
to all nations through the miracle
of the Epiphany may you so be
revealed through all ages in the
faces of your people: in their joy and
in their struggle in their dignity and
in their vulnerability.*

*And when I find you in these, let them
ask who is this Lord who has sent
me, so that they may find you in me
as well.*

Amen

MATERIALS

- Toothpicks
- Masking tape
- Balloons
- Prize

PREPARATION

- Prior to the session, fully inflate one balloon for each small group.
- Have participants help each other tape toothpicks on the ends of their fingers so that the toothpicks extend out at least half an inch.
- Divide students into groups of six.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Have each small group stand in a circle with 4 feet between group members.
- Explain that each balloon represents basic human rights. For each round, you will tell them what right the balloon represents. There will be 10 rounds.
- Tell the groups they have 2 responsibilities:
 - To protect their balloon until the end of the activity
 - To have every group member care for your balloon as you each contribute to the discussion
- Before a group member speaks, he or she must have the balloon tossed to him or her.
- Each small group member must state why that right is important and give an example of how or where that right is currently being violated, without repeating what has already been said.
- The group member who has just shared should hold onto the balloon until you announce the next human right. They should then toss it to a member who has not already shared twice. Each group member should receive the balloon twice—

adjust this if you have different size groups.

- If a group pops its balloon, its members will be divided into the remaining groups and play will continue.
- Continue for 10 passes. The balloons represent the following human rights for one pass:
 1. Right to food
 2. Right to clothing
 3. Right to shelter
 4. Right to education
 5. Right to work
 6. Right to respect
 7. Right to information
 8. Right to privacy
 9. Right to follow one's conscience
 10. Right to freedom of religion
- Any group(s) with an intact balloon at the end are declared human rights champions. Award a simple prize like a piece of candy.

PROCESSING

- How did it feel to be responsible for your group's balloon when it was passed to you?
- Did you want to take responsibility for your group's balloon? How did you feel about others sharing the responsibility for your group's balloon?

To help illustrate the caloric intake for the millions of people who suffer from malnutrition, try the following:

MATERIALS

- 1-pound bag of rice
- Small food scale with ounce measurements
- 1 snack-size resealable bag per participant

INSTRUCTIONS

- Explain that rice is the main staple for millions of people in poverty.
- Pass the bag of rice among participants. Ask them to figure out how many people a 1-pound bag of rice would feed—and for how long. And ask them to figure out how many meals their families would be able to make from 1 pound of rice.
- Invite each participant to measure out a day's supply of rice, pour it into a storage bag and keep it in a conspicuous place at home this Lent to remind them of the millions of hungry people on our planet.



Photo by Jim Stipe/CRS



Photo by Jim Slipe/CBS

God, source of all light,

We are surrounded by the darkness of the injustices experienced by your people.

The poor, who are hungry and who search for shelter.

The sick, who seek relief, and the downtrodden, who seek help in their hopelessness.

Surround us, and fill us with your Spirit, who is Light.

Lead us in your way to be light to your people.

Help our parishes to be salt for the world as we share your love with those caught in the struggles of life.

We desire to be your presence to the least among us and to know your presence in them as we work through you to bring justice and peace to this world in desperate need.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever.

Amen