

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 Yennals 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

PURPOSE

To help young people understand the Catholic social principle, or CST, Care for Creation through the story of Vaviroa and Catholic Relief Services' seed fair program; to help young people recognize the connection between suffering and resurrection in the lives of the poor—and in their own lives.

CST PRINCIPLE: 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, and so we must take care of creation—both for ourselves and for all of our human family.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Opening and Closing Prayers
 - *Prayer of Stewardship*
 - *Prayer for Our Earth*
- One penny for each participant
- One 11" clear latex balloon for each participant—available in party stores
- *Moving from Loss to Hope* handout
- 25 index cards for each small group
- Pens or pencils
- 1 copy of *Story of Hope: Madagascar* for each small group
- Electric handheld hair dryer
- Long extension cord

OPENING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Prayer of Stewardship

GAME (10 MINUTES)

- *Penny in a Balloon*
- Use as an introduction to the Catholic social teaching principle Care for Creation.

OPENING ACTIVITY (10-15 MINUTES)

- *Moving From Loss to Hope* handout
- Answer is: Loss=> Lose => Hose=> Hope

STORY OF HOPE: MADAGASCAR

(10 MINUTES)

- Give each small group a copy of Vaviroa's story.
- Ask the group where they can identify suffering, death and resurrection in the story of Vaviroa and her family. How did she turn disaster into hope and accomplishment?
- Write each idea on a separate index card and put them in order. Tell groups they do not have to identify 25 items because the leftover index cards are for the next activity.

DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

- Ask small groups to use the remainder of their index cards to identify the conditions farmers and other agricultural people need to thrive. If they are having trouble filling all their index cards, suggest that they think of things that destroy crops and then put that in the positive. For example, "drought" would be turned to "rain." If some groups think they can fill more cards, give them extra cards.
- When all of the groups have completed at least 25 cards, including the ones from Vaviroa's story, have them attempt to build a house of cards using the index cards. Tell them you're looking for the tallest house they can build.
- While participants are building their houses, discretely plug in the extension cord and hair dryer.
- When groups have completed their house, go around the room and blow them all down with the hair dryer.
- Point out that poor farmers are the ones most susceptible to the adverse effects of climate change.

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Photo by Oscar Lewis/Silverlight for CBS

SUMMARY (1 MINUTE)

- We learned some inspiring lessons from the story of Vaviroa and her family, like the power of resilience, trust, hope and determination. Her example of working with others through adversity provides a living example of resurrection and of our need to care for the earth.
- This Lent is about remembering Christ's suffering, identifying with it and anticipating Resurrection. No matter how difficult our circumstances or how hopeless the world seems, God has promised there will always be an Easter morning.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Prayer for Our Earth

FAMILY ACTIVITY

- Plant a family vegetable garden and donate produce to your local food pantry.
- Sign the Climate Covenant.

God of all creation,

*At the beginning of time, you placed
a single mandate on humankind—to
be stewards of creation.*

*To replenish and nurture through all
generations, what you have made.*

*We kneel today amid that same
creation—a world that is, in many
ways, more splendid than ever, but,
in too many ways, scarred beyond
recognition.*

Turn us from our unmindfulness.

Help our touch be light.

*Help us renew the world that supports
us, so we may once more know
creation, as it was in the beginning.*

Amen

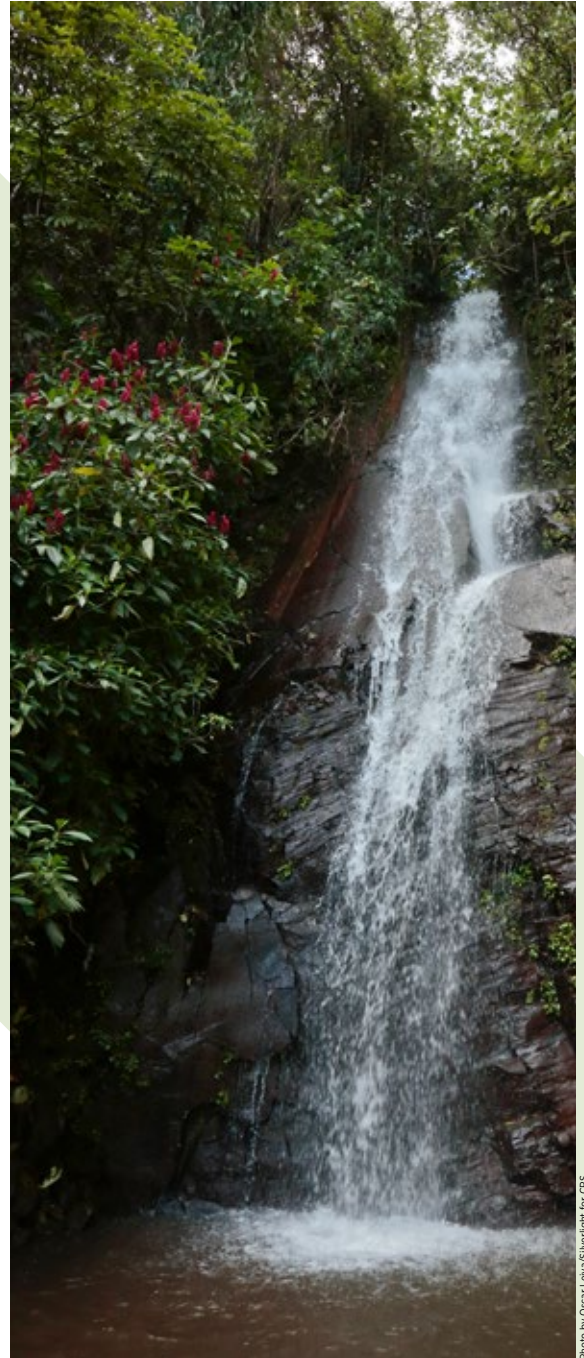


Photo by Oscar Lewis/Silverlight for CRS

MATERIALS

- One penny for each participant
- One 11" clear latex balloon for each participant

INSTRUCTIONS

- Have participants put the penny inside the deflated balloon. If the balloon neck is too thin, insert your fingers on either side of the neck, stretch it and drop the penny in.
- Have participants inflate the balloon and tie it off. *Make sure participants hold the balloon downward when inflating it, so the penny doesn't roll back into their throat.*
- Tell participants to hold the balloon in one hand and begin rotating it in a circle.
- At first the penny will bounce around inside the balloon. But if they keep going, the penny will eventually flip on its edge and begin rolling around the interior surface.
- Once it gets going, stop rotating it and hold the balloon still—the penny will continue to roll around on its own for up to a minute.

PROCESSING

- Point out that although you never touched the penny, except to insert it in the balloon, it was affected by what was happening to the environment around it. Even when you stopped rotating the balloon, the penny was still affected.
- Ask the following questions:
 - If this were an analogy for the earth, what are some ways changing the environment affects things on earth?
 - From what you have heard in the news or from other sources, what are some of the effects of climate change on the weather and our environment? How does it affect agriculture?



Photo by Heidi Yonulis for CRS

Instructions: Solve the puzzle below to turn “LOSS” into “HOPE.” You can change one letter per line and each line must spell a word.

To the right is an example of how to change “Dive” into “Home,” one letter at a time.

D	I	V	E
D	O	V	E
D	O	M	E
H	O	M	E

L	O	S	S
H	O	P	E

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 towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

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

—Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*

