

# SideSide

by



**LIBERIA:  
FISHING FOR A  
BETTER FUTURE**

P12

**FIVE IDEAS  
TO MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE  
THIS YEAR!**

P8

**RECLAIMING  
DEFORESTED  
LAND ON THE  
EDGE OF THE  
AMAZON**

P20

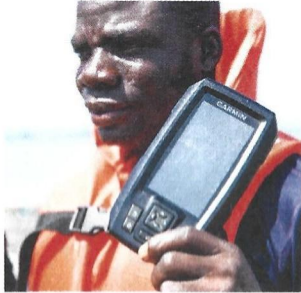
Page 4  
**OUR YEAR  
IN REVIEW**



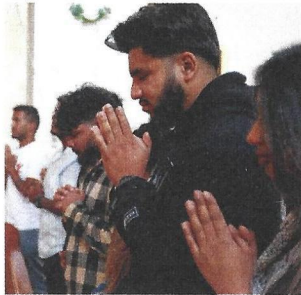
Page 20  
**"IT'S A STRUGGLE  
FOR JUSTICE"**



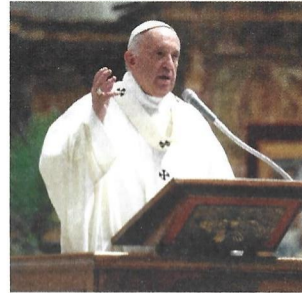
Page 12  
**LIBERIA: FISHING FOR  
A BETTER FUTURE**



Page 28  
**THE YEAR  
OF PRAYER**



Page 18  
**POPE FRANCIS'  
CALL TO ACTION**



We are the official aid agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

CAFOD acknowledges financial support from the UK Department for International Development towards its development programmes.

**Front cover photograph:** James shows off the life-changing technology that's helping to keep him safe (see page 12).

**Photographs:** Caritas Poland, Carielle Doe, Thom Flint, Celeste Iyino, Dmytro Minyailo / DEC, Joe Newman, Louise Norton, Nurudeen Sanni, Ben White, Giovanni Zennaro.

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## FOREWORD

### Happy New Year!

Welcome to your latest issue of *Side by Side*.

We are looking forward to setting off on a *Year of Prayer* together in 2024, in preparation for the *Year of Jubilee* next year. It's not just an opportunity for us to re-commit to making prayer a priority in our lives, it's also a chance for us to look forward in hope during a year that heralds a general election.



When Pope Francis chose "Pilgrims of Hope" as the Jubilee motto, he called on each one of us to play our part in restoring a climate of hope and universal fraternity by remembering the millions of men, women, young people and children around the world who are living in poverty. He wrote: "May the voices of the poor be heard throughout this time of preparation for the Jubilee."

Through the stories in your winter issue of *Side by Side*, you can hear the voices of men, women and children around the world and how, with your support, communities in Liberia are blending old traditions with new technology to help provide food for their families (page 12), and women like Wanda in Brazil are fighting for the right for somewhere to live (page 20).

Turn to page 28 to read some powerful suggestions about how to make this *Year of Prayer* as meaningful as possible. On pages 8-11, we also share some inspiring ideas for New Year's resolutions – including a call to sign up for *The Big Lent Walk*.

Not only is walking 200km during Lent a great way to raise money in solidarity with our sisters and brothers around the world, it is also a great way to take some time for reflection and prayer.

Thank you for your unwavering support – and for helping us to raise record funds to support more than one million people in the world's most marginalised communities last year (see pages 4-7), in spite of challenging economic times at home. By showing such solidarity, you are a sign of hope when we all need hope most. Thank you for always being there to listen to the voices of our sisters and brothers overseas, when they need to be heard.

Your compassion, generosity and commitment continue to inspire our work, each and every day.

**Christine Allen**  
CAFOD Director

## CONTENTS

- 4 Our year in review
- 8 Five ideas to make a difference this year!
- 12 Liberia: Fishing for a better future
- 16 Picture this
- 18 *Laudate Deum*: Pope Francis' climate call
- 20 "It's a struggle for justice"
- 24 New Year, New Voices
- 26 Who said what
- 28 Making prayer a priority
- 30 A prayer for the *Year of Prayer*
- 32 Ask an expert

# OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

**“In God, no act of love, no matter how small, and no generous effort will ever be lost.” Pope Francis**

This year, despite tough economic times in the UK, you have continued to give generously and to raise funds untiringly, particularly in response to the worsening global food crisis, ongoing emergencies in Afghanistan and Ukraine, and devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.

Over half of the income that we have raised as your agency this year to deliver on our shared mission has come from you – the Catholic community of England and Wales.

We are so appreciative that you have entrusted us with this £37.4 million to make a difference to the lives of our global family, especially at a

time when household budgets are under pressure.

Thanks to your generosity, we have been able to reach more than one million of the most vulnerable and marginalised people around the world through our global aid network – helping them to survive and thrive, now and into the future.

Thank you so much for everything you have helped to achieve – hand in hand with our global Church family. With your support, we can provide help where it’s needed, when it’s needed most.

**This page:** Your support helped staff and volunteers from Caritas Poland to provide refugees fleeing Ukraine with emergency supplies.



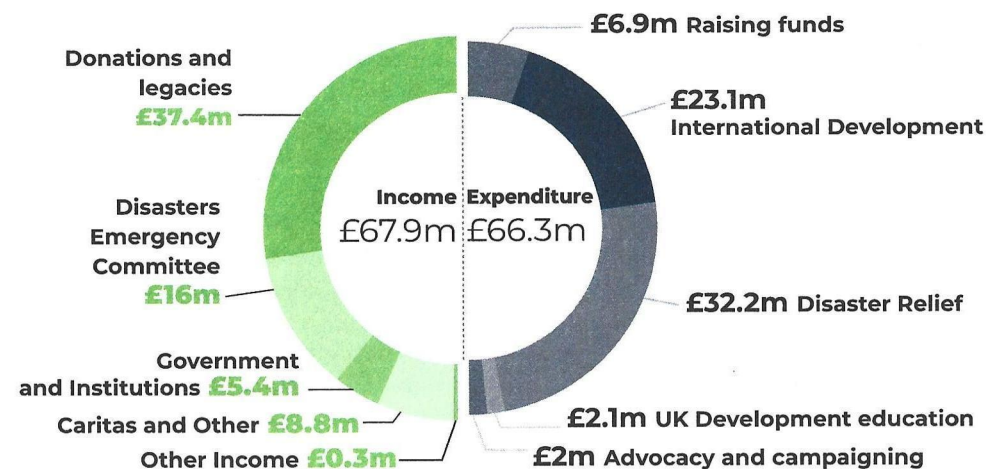
## WHAT YOU HELPED TO RAISE AND HOW FUNDS WERE SPENT

The majority of our work is carried out by supporting local partner organisations through our global aid network.

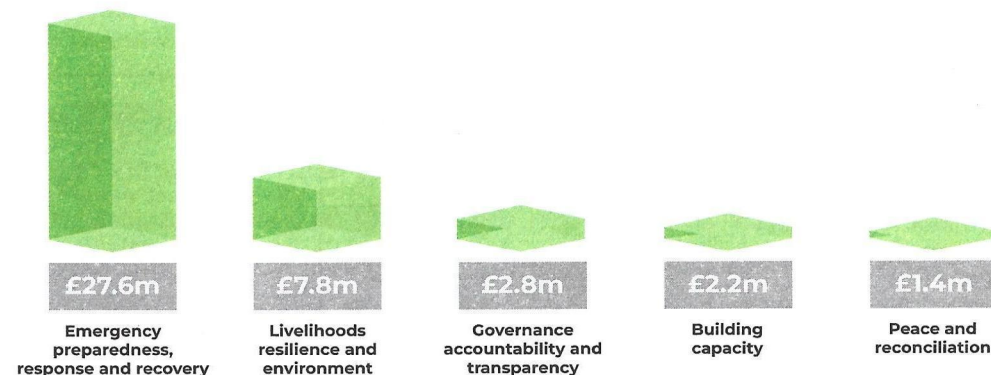
Last year, we spent **£66.3 million** in total; of this, **£59.4 million** (90 per cent) was spent on the delivery of our mission through charitable activities and **£6.9 million** (10 per cent) was spent on raising this money.

Thanks to your generosity, we were able to give more than **£41.8 million** to local partner organisations – directly reaching more than **one million** vulnerable and marginalised people in **42 countries**.

We shared **594 grants** with our partners who are working with communities experiencing poverty, helping them to: prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies; support people to make a living while protecting the environment; skill up local organisations; support governance, accountability and transparency initiatives; and promote peace and reconciliation.



## HOW YOUR DONATIONS WERE SPENT TO HELP PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD



## REACHING THE MOST REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Through our global Church network, we work with local experts and organisations to ensure no one is beyond the reach of the support they need to thrive. Bernard Balibuno is CAFOD's country director for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is recovering from years of devastating civil war. He told us: "The network of the Catholic Church and other faith organisations in the country is huge. Through the dioceses we are able to support people in areas where nobody else can go. The positive change that CAFOD has brought in the country is to share hope with the people and the communities we work with."

## WORKING HAND IN HAND WITH VOLUNTEERS

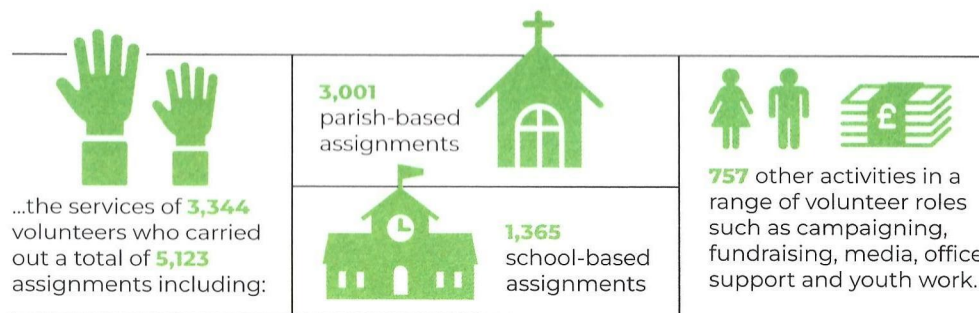
Thank you to each and every one of the thousands of volunteers who've been involved in our work over the past year in countless different ways – whether by fundraising or campaigning, or joining in prayer.

Volunteering is also critical to the work supported by CAFOD partners around the world – wherever we work, local people do what they can to help their communities, often in challenging circumstances.

From food distribution in places affected by the drought in East Africa to environmental work in the Amazon, communities are sharing their own skills and energy to transform community life. Funds shared by CAFOD – often raised by volunteers – helps to support other volunteers to make a difference.

We thank all those involved who give their time to reach out in love to our global family, standing side by side with them to help end poverty and injustice.

**Last year, we were grateful for the thousands of volunteers who gave their time to make a real difference.**



**This page:**  
CAFOD volunteers making a difference at a parish in Hounslow.

## "CHANGE IS POSSIBLE"

One of our dedicated volunteers Jessica, who helps amplify the voices of our sisters and brothers overseas using social media in the Southwark diocese, told us:

***"CAFOD has helped me to regain that empathy that seemed lost because of how the world works nowadays. It was important for me to remember my Catholic values and to never give up on humanity. CAFOD was a key element to remind me change is possible and light always shines."***



# FIVE IDEAS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE THIS YEAR!

As the New Year gets underway, what better way to make a change in your own life – as well as helping people around the world build the lives they want – than trying out some of our New Year’s resolutions? Even the smallest act can make a big difference...

**Done!**



## RESOLUTION 1 SIGN UP FOR THE BIG LENT WALK!

This Lent, why not challenge yourself to walk 200km over 40 days by taking on *The Big Lent Walk*? You can walk whenever and wherever you like over 40 days – whether alone or with friends and family. Every step you take and every pound you raise will help people around the world stand up to poverty.

[walk.cafod.org.uk](http://walk.cafod.org.uk)

**Tick here**

## RESOLUTION 2 JOIN OUR LENT REFLECTIONS

Join us on a journey through the season of Lent by signing up to our daily emails. Each email will contain a reflection on one of the readings of the day, stories of our global family, a prayer and suggested action you might like to take as we prepare for Easter.

[cafod.org.uk/lentcalendar](http://cafod.org.uk/lentcalendar)



**Tick here**



### RESOLUTION 3 STAND UP FOR JUSTICE

Join our latest campaigns and find new ways to put your faith into action. From sharing petitions to writing to your MP, by coming together our actions can help to tackle the root causes of poverty – from the climate emergency to the global food system.

Tick here  [cafod.org.uk/campaign](https://cafod.org.uk/campaign)

### RESOLUTION 4 MAKE A MONTHLY GIFT

Starting this January, you can make a big difference to our global family in some of the world's most marginalised communities by making a monthly donation to CAFOD. Because of our global reach and local presence, together we can make sure your gift reaches communities where it is needed most.

[cafod.org.uk/give](https://cafod.org.uk/give)

Tick here



### RESOLUTION 5 BECOME A CAFOD VOLUNTEER

Inspire your local Church community to be a force for positive change by becoming a CAFOD parish volunteer. Organise a fun parish event, share stories from the people we work with or bring others together to pray. Your commitment to building a better world will shine through and inspire fellow parishioners to get involved and make a difference too.

[cafod.org.uk/volunteer](https://cafod.org.uk/volunteer)

Tick here

**CAFOD**  
Catholic Agency for  
Overseas Development

**SCIAF**  
Uniting for a just world  
Caritas Scotland

**SIGN UP  
NOW**



# THE BIG LENT WALK

*WALK 200KM IN 40 DAYS  
TO HELP FIGHT  
GLOBAL POVERTY*



Challenge yourself and take on The Big Lent Walk!  
Walk when and where you choose over 40 days, alone or with friends.  
Raise money to help people as they overcome poverty.

**Take on a challenge like no other this Lent.**  
**Search for 'The Big Lent Walk'**

# LIBERIA: FISHING FOR A BETTER FUTURE

In our *Big Lent Feature*, we share an exclusive conversation with James the fisherman – who you will meet in your parish this Lent. We find out how his family is benefitting from a brilliant project that blends traditional skills with modern technology.



“Messi doesn’t want to be a fisherman,” says 30-year-old Cynthia nodding gently to her nine-year-old son. “He is afraid of the water.”

This small community, on the shoreline of Monrovia in Liberia, never rests. As Cynthia speaks, someone walks past selling water and snacks. A neighbour comes by asking if Cynthia will braid her hair for some cash.

Thirty feet away, near the shoreline, the fishermen’s canoes sit: handmade boats 12 feet long and two feet wide, each one decorated beautifully with family mottoes or prayers.

“Sometimes we hear about their boats capsizing...,” says Cynthia, looking out to sea. “Then we find the bodies afterwards.”

## FIVE MEN A MONTH DYING AT SEA

CAFOD’s Sampson Benin, who works with communities in Liberia, shares the grim facts: “Five men a month were dying in storms at sea here in Monrovia,” he says. “The impact of the deaths on the families and communities is devastating. Husbands, fathers and friends are gone forever – the grief is still palpable. The economic impact is catastrophic: in many cases, the fisherman will be one of the principal breadwinners in the home. Now gone, the family will instantly struggle.”

Cynthia’s partner, James, is back from the sea having fished through the night. He is one of the brave fishermen who make a living on the water. Today, he has a weighty catch

with him full of snapper and a fish the locals call ‘Bonny (Clupeidae)’. But he is not always so lucky.

The small-scale subsistence fishing that people survive on here is very different from the huge trawlers the fishermen encounter further out to sea. No matter how brilliant the local fishermen are, they are no match for the vast nets of the massive international boats.

James and Cynthia discuss the fish she will take to the market. She tells him the going price for some and how much profit she’ll take. They keep some for the home and a little for a neighbour, who is also struggling.

Before she leaves for a long shift trading in the market, Cynthia says: “Sometimes there wasn’t any food at all to eat. Sometimes we hoped that, if there was no food in the morning, we would get food in the evening to eat. But when the evening comes, there is no food. My son used to complain about hunger, but as time went on, he got used to it.”

Some nights, James has come home empty handed.

“Coming home with nothing you feel bad,” James says. “You have nothing to feed yourself. You have nothing to feed the boys who help you bring your boat in. You have nothing for your crew, for your family.”

## BLENDING OLD TRADITIONS WITH NEW TECHNOLOGY

James brings out a palm-sized device that he keeps next to other precious mementoes on his mantelpiece. The device is a GPS fishfinder and it is

changing lives here in Monrovia. The technology helps the men to find fish, to record where good fishing spots are and to find home if they’re blown off course.

It’s part of an innovative project, funded by donations like yours, which has transformed life here in Monrovia.

Sampson says: “We worked with the fishermen – learning how they fish, spending time with them out at sea to understand how they do things. Then we developed a training scheme with them to keep them safe and ensure they get a better catch. The fishfinder is part of the training – our idea was to marry the traditional methods of the fishermen with modern equipment.”

After James has rested from his long night at sea, he is keen to make something clear:

“Fishing means so much to me. It’s life. God comes first, then fishing,” he says.

“Through this project, I can send my children to school. This is the first time an NGO (charity) has come here to help us. To make sure we’re safe and to help us catch more fish. I want to say thanks for this. The changes really helped.”

**Previous spread:** You are helping to support fishermen like James with life-changing technology.

**Below:** James (right) on Monrovia’s shoreline with his partner Cynthia and their son.



**GIVE**



Give your Lenten gift today to help hardworking people like James get the tools they need to feed their families: [cafod.org.uk/lent](https://cafod.org.uk/lent)







**This page:** Our local partners in Gaza preparing hot meals for people who fled their homes in an effort to find safety from the conflict. This photo was sent from a phone by a member of partner staff.

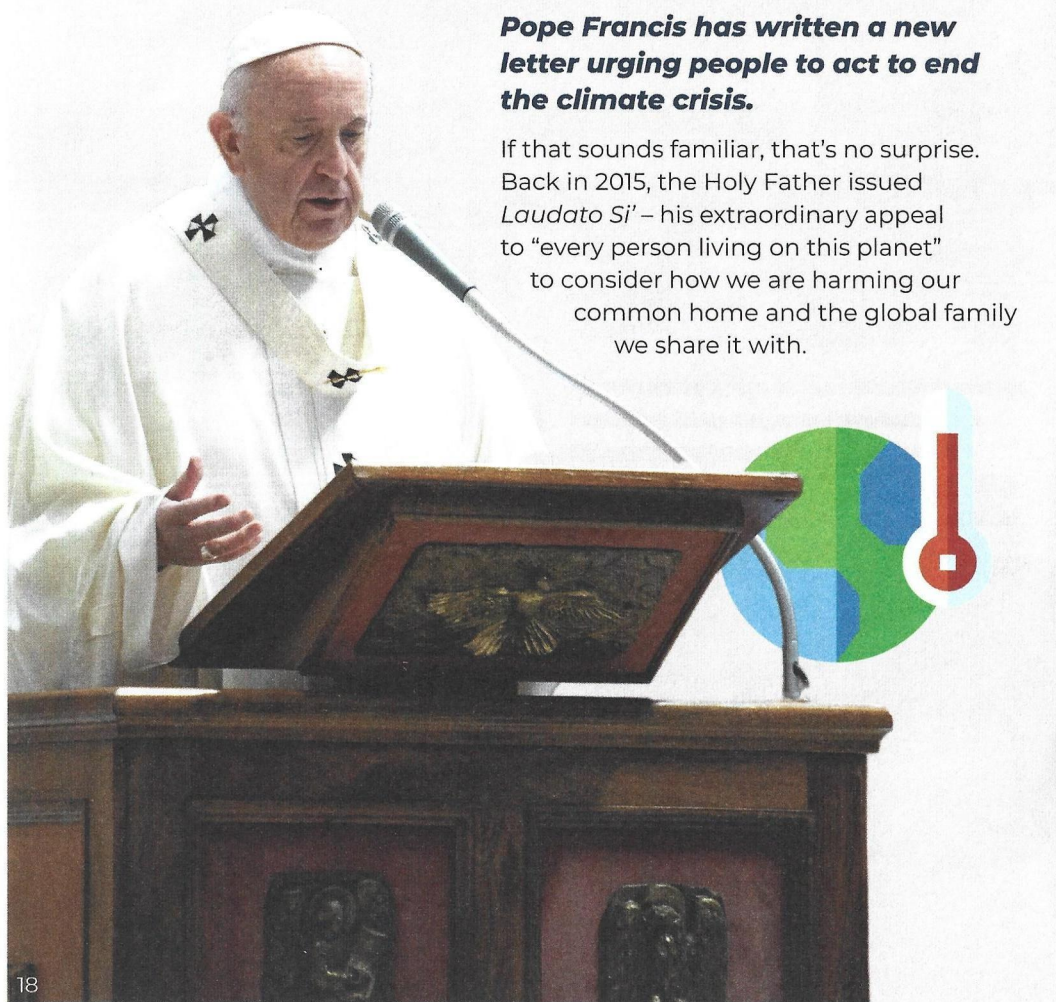
As in other parts of the world where people's lives have been uprooted by violence and protracted crises, including Afghanistan, our network of local trusted experts are responding to the needs of the people by providing shelter, food, water and counselling to those affected by the conflict.

We have worked for many years in both Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory with partners who are Christian, Jewish, Muslim and secular. We joined Pope Francis' urgent call for peace and an end to the violence.

# Laudate Deum: THREE THINGS WE CAN LEARN FROM POPE FRANCIS' CLIMATE CALL TO ACTION

**Pope Francis has written a new letter urging people to act to end the climate crisis.**

If that sounds familiar, that's no surprise. Back in 2015, the Holy Father issued *Laudato Si'* – his extraordinary appeal to “every person living on this planet” to consider how we are harming our common home and the global family we share it with.



## LAUDATO SI' PART 2?

*Laudato Si'* had an impact. It was cited by world leaders in the run-up to the climate talks in Paris in 2015 as a key influence on negotiations.

But we know that governments aren't meeting the commitments they made in Paris to cut greenhouse gas emissions and to avoid dangerous global temperature rises.

We're seeing the effects of that failure, with devastating floods hitting millions of people in Pakistan, and many more millions in East Africa facing an historic food crisis.

That's where *Laudate Deum* comes in.

This letter from the Pope expressly warns that not enough is being done. Pope Francis has sent another message to the world to demand that we speed up action to tackle the climate crisis.

Here are three key messages from *Laudate Deum*:

### 1. TIME IS RUNNING OUT TO TACKLE THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Pope Francis warns that the clock is ticking and that some effects of the climate crisis are becoming irreversible.

He reminds us that the effects of the climate crisis will be felt across society, but that the effects “are borne by the most vulnerable people, whether at home or around the world”. This is an injustice, given the responsibility the world's richest countries and people have for driving the climate crisis. Emissions from low-income countries are dwarfed by

those of richer nations – historically and currently.

### 2. WE NEED TO CONSIGN FOSSIL FUELS TO HISTORY

Burning oil, gas and coal is burning our planet. Pope Francis insists “the necessary transition towards clean energy sources such as wind and solar energy, and the abandonment of fossil fuels, is not progressing at the necessary speed”. The Pope calls on leaders to speed up the switch from polluting fossil fuels to renewable energy.

### 3. LEADERS MUST PUT THE GLOBAL COMMON GOOD AHEAD OF SELF-INTEREST

Pope Francis repeats his plea that leaders must put the interests of our common home and our global family first. The Holy Father laments that some governments are prioritising what they consider to be their national interests, even if it costs the earth. He warns: “Those who will have to suffer the consequences [...] will not forget this failure of conscience and responsibility”.

## ACT

If you've been inspired by the Pope's message, go to [cafod.org.uk/campaign](https://cafod.org.uk/campaign) to join our call for action on the climate crisis.

**This page:** Wanda with one of her daughters outside their home.



# “IT’S A STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE”

## MEET THE COMMUNITY RECLAIMING DEFORESTED LAND ON THE EDGE OF THE AMAZON

***The gunmen came in the middle of the night, while Wanda and her family were in bed.***

“I woke up the children. We were running and screaming. I threw a blanket over the children and I crept underneath. We hid and waited. At one point, I peered out and saw the bullets flying.”

In the Amazon region of Brazil, where Wanda lives, land rights are a matter of life and death. It’s all too common for wealthy and powerful groups to claim public land through force, fraud or undue influence.

Wanda is part of a community of farmers trying to reclaim some of the disputed land. They have faced threats, intimidation and terrifying violence from people trying to remove them from the land.

### GIVING THE LAND NEW LIFE

“Before we were here there was nothing,” says Wanda. “Now we have potato, sweetcorn. In this country, everything you plant, bears fruit. Look over there – we’ve got pumpkin and manioc (a root vegetable also known as cassava) growing. I’ve eaten watermelon, it wasn’t even me who planted it, I just weeded it. Our land is very good.”

A third of the farmable land in Brazil is claimed, legally or otherwise, by less than one per cent of the population. The constitution of Brazil states that land should be used to serve a purpose for society – such as providing food, or housing – but in many cases this land is mismanaged, run down and left to degrade. By occupying land that is not serving a purpose to society, and using environmentally friendly farming methods to grow food on it, Wanda’s community are fighting for their rights according to the constitution.

“When someone arrives with financial power, and encircles land, tears the forest down, says he’s a farmer, but he doesn’t really produce – then he says it’s his land. For what? To sell later,” says Wanda.

“We know the land never was theirs by right. It is in a public area. Our struggle is this: it’s a struggle for justice.”

Wanda loves her life in the encampment – her friends and neighbours work together, look out for one another, live, laugh and have fun together.

But they also live in fear. Fear that at any moment they could be forced from their homes and made to leave – or worse.

### A NIGHT OF TERROR

“In the last eviction, there were a lot of bullets,” Wanda remembers. “They were burning everything. They burned our tent we’d set up to educate the children. They ripped up our documents. They burned our books. They took our cellphones. One of them took my necklace from my neck. They burned my dog, they killed my pet. The dog was like a child to me.

“We’re still traumatised. There’s a lot of suffering.”

Your support is helping local human rights experts to fight for the rights of the landless communities in Brazil. Thanks to you, our local partners can work tirelessly to gather evidence

that land has been acquired or used illegally, to stand with communities facing violence and be a witness to human rights abuses, as well as bringing the perpetrators to court.

It is difficult, complex work, and it can take years to see progress – but Wanda is determined that her community will one day see their struggle bear fruit.

### FINDING THE COURAGE TO CARRY ON

The day after the eviction, the community’s leader called everyone together and asked if anyone wanted to give up.

“We got up and said ‘NEVER!’,” says Wanda, her fist raised proudly. “It’s not in vain the struggle. If one falls, ten will stand up.

“I yearn for a better Brazil. I want a better world for us and for other countries. Trying to be an example for my family. My own children. That’s the legacy I’m going to leave. To be a good human being.”

World Gifts like *Restore the rainforest* are helping people like Wanda right now – a huge thank you to everyone who bought a World Gift at Christmas! Find out more at [worldgifts.cafod.org.uk](http://worldgifts.cafod.org.uk)

This page: Wanda and her children show the blanket they hid under to stay safe.



This page: Your support is helping local human rights experts stand up for landless communities in Brazil.



# WHO SAID WHAT



“What the Pope has already said...is phenomenal. It is like he’s addressing the challenges of the communities that are least contributing to the damage to the environment but are experiencing the biggest brunt on their livelihoods. Whether you are poor, whether you are rich, whether you have means, whether you haven’t, we all have one earth – and this earth belongs to all of us.”

**Isacko, Director of Caritas Marsabit in Kenya, after the release of Pope Francis’ letter *Laudato Deum*.**



“It takes courage to be able to demand justice without spreading hatred. It takes courage to ask for mercy, to reject oppression, to promote equality without demanding uniformity, while remaining free. It takes courage today, even in our diocese and our communities, to maintain unity, to feel united to one another, even in the diversity of our opinions, sensitivities and visions.”

**Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, in a letter condemning the violence across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Find out the latest on our response to the crisis: [cafod.org.uk/ipc](https://cafod.org.uk/ipc)**



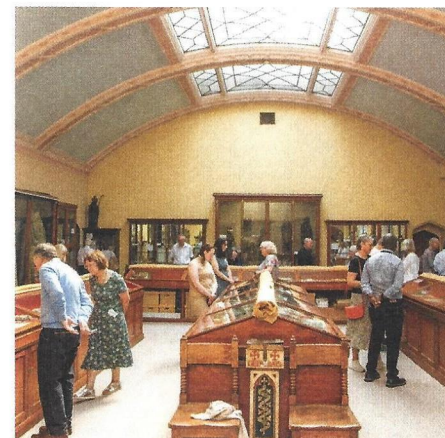
“The best thing is seeing the difference that you make and knowing that CAFOD works with partners in local communities and ensures that donations are used wisely.”

**Edna, who received a Papal Blessing for over 30 years volunteering for CAFOD in Portsmouth diocese.**



“How wonderful to be invited into @HolySpiritWA9 to present the CAFOD Harvest Assembly. Thank you for the warm welcome and for supporting the work of CAFOD.”

**Michelle, a CAFOD schools volunteer in Liverpool diocese.**



“The Gifts in Wills event held in partnership with St Mary’s College, Oscott was really interesting and enjoyable. It was a well-rounded day which inspired new interests and it was lovely to have time to reflect on our faith and what it means to us.”

**Bridget and Kevin Baker. If you would like to join an event in 2024, register at [cafod.org.uk/legacyevent](https://cafod.org.uk/legacyevent)**

# The Year of Prayer: Making prayer a priority

*In preparation for the 2025 Jubilee Year “Pilgrims of Hope”, 2024 has been designated a Year of Prayer by Pope Francis.*

“Lord, teach us to pray.” This request from Jesus’ disciples still resonates today. For many of us it can be challenging to sustain a life of prayer. We know how important it is to pray, and we want to pray, but it can still sometimes be a struggle. Praying for an end to poverty and injustice can seem an especially daunting task. Where do we begin?

The *Year of Prayer*, in preparation for the Jubilee, is an opportunity for us to re-commit to making prayer a priority and to deepen our relationship with the Lord.

Here are three ways you can pray for your global family and all creation during the *Year of Prayer*.

## PRAY WITH GOD’S WORD

*“Your word is a light to my feet and a lamp to my path.”*

(Psalm 119:105)

Each Friday we send out an email reflection and prayer, based on the Sunday gospel and written by our team of volunteers. Rooted in global justice, the reflections invite you to

ponder what God is saying to you and consider how you can respond. As the new year begins, why not sign up to receive them?

[cafod.org.uk/weekly-reflections](https://cafod.org.uk/weekly-reflections)

## JOIN WITH OTHERS

*“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”*

(Matthew 18:20)

The Bible is full of stories of community; of people praying and sharing life together. When we gather for Mass, we encounter Christ and are strengthened to live his love, in solidarity with all our global family.

Praying with others, whether in person or online, can be a great support in deepening our faith.

You can join us every Thursday morning on Zoom as we pray the rosary together. Or you might like to use our family prayer ideas at home, if you have younger children, available at [cafod.org.uk/yearofprayer](https://cafod.org.uk/yearofprayer)

## FIND SOME QUIET TIME

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*

(Matthew 11:28)

Think about where you could find some time, even if not every day, to intentionally spend with God. You might like to draw inspiration from our prayer resources or sign up for our Advent and Lent emails to help you pray during these special seasons.

We wish you all every grace and blessing as we begin this pilgrimage of prayer together.

## ACT



Sign up for our weekly prayer emails and find out more about the other resources mentioned.



# Symphony of prayer and praise

A prayer for the  
Year of Prayer

God of blessings,  
in this year ahead,  
give us a spirit of listening,  
of openness to your word  
and longing for your kingdom.

As we journey towards the Jubilee,  
a time of new beginnings,  
we pray for help and strength,  
to heal our relationships with each other  
and all creation.

Sing your song of love over us,  
renewing our faith and courage,  
so we may join our voices together,  
discovering new harmonies of hope,  
new melodies of reconciliation.

Attentive to the Spirit,  
and awake to the needs of the world,  
may we seek your life-giving presence,  
as we join as one global family,  
in a great symphony of prayer and praise.

Amen



# ASK AN EXPERT

Answered by Tetiana,  
President of Caritas Ukraine



Q

*What is the biggest challenge when responding to an emergency?*

A

The main challenge is being able to both react to the live situation on the ground and, at the same time, to be able to make plans going forward. This kind of conflict can throw you off balance.

We're so grateful to the Catholic community in England and Wales and to all the generous people who've contributed to the emergency appeal for Ukraine. It's really been the backbone of our response. It has helped us to be able to react to the situation as it changes day by day.

We've been able to move to different areas, depending on what's happening. In addition to supplying the basic needs of food, water, shelter and hygiene, we've also been able to provide counselling support. We've also started working on light repairs for homes that have been damaged by shelling.

Thank you so much to all the CAFOD supporters who have been so generously helping us – either with material support, or with prayers, or by contributing to our appeal to the UK Government to work towards a peaceful solution to the conflict. Together we hope to find a future of peace, support and recovery for the people of Ukraine.

ACT



Find out more about how your support helps respond to emergencies as and when they happen.

[cafod.org.uk/ert](https://cafod.org.uk/ert)

**cafod.org.uk**

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