

FIFTH SUNDAY of LENT – 22 March

AHMAD from GAZA

When war intensified in Gaza in late 2023, Ahmad, a Caritas Jerusalem employee in their Media and Communications team, was forced to flee his home in northern Gaza. Like thousands of families, his family carried almost nothing as they sought safety in Khan Younis. Two months later, disaster struck again when the house where they were sheltering was bombed at night. Ahmad was buried under rubble, his eardrum ruptured. His brother survived with devastating injuries, including the loss of a leg.



Rows of tents provide temporary shelter for families in Gaza who have been forced to flee their homes. Photo: Caritas Jerusalem.

For two months Ahmad stayed with his brother in an overwhelmed hospital with few doctors and scarce supplies. His family was displaced several more times, sometimes living in tents, sometimes in borrowed homes, often leaving behind the few belongings they had managed to gather.

Despite personal suffering, Ahmad continued his role with Caritas Jerusalem, helping to support families in need.



Caritas Jerusalem staff member stocking up medical supplies in a clinic. Photo: Caritas Jerusalem.

“Thank God we work at Caritas, allowing us to serve people in the most challenging conditions despite the lack of medicine,” he explains.

“I hope this ordeal ends so we can go back to rebuild Gaza, our children’s future, our country, and our organisation.”

Ahmad’s story is a reminder that Caritas’ mission of accompaniment is lived not only through its programs, but through the courage and resilience of its frontline staff.

Together, we can *Unite Against Poverty this Lent* by donating to Project Compassion, helping people in Gaza and other vulnerable regions to rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

REFLECTION for FIFTH SUNDAY of LENT

Ezekiel 37:12-14 | Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8. R. v.7 | Romans 8:8-11 | John 11:1-45

It must be difficult for somebody who has never experienced love to understand the Gospels. They are so full of different emotions, many of them tender. Just think of the beautiful reconciliation between Jesus and Peter after the resurrection. Jesus allows Peter to say that he loves him on no less than three occasions. Thankfully, most of us can write down a long list of people we have loved and who have loved us. Many names would appear on both lists! We keep a special place in our hearts and prayers for the people we know who have died. Even after a long time, their memory will still bring a tear to our eyes. That sorrow comes from a place of deep gratitude. God changes the world one heart at a time.

When we encounter today's Gospel, the story of the raising of Lazarus, we are in a world of emotion. Martha and Mary are grieving for their brother. Jesus loves these two women. Thomas, the twin, is full of bravado and bluster, just as he was later when he wanted proof of the resurrection. Both Martha and Mary are disappointed, even angry, that Jesus has not come sooner. Jesus weeps at the grave of his friend. The mourners who have come to comfort the family must also have been sensitive to the situation. When Jesus says, 'I am the resurrection and the life', he is not explaining an idea. He is responding to the deepest longings of our hearts, as he always does. Today's Psalm reminds us, 'My soul is longing for the Lord more than the watcher for daybreak.'

Over the last few weeks, we have shared some of the stories presented to us by Caritas Australia to make us more aware of the inspirational work we can support through Project Compassion. They call us to *Unite Against Poverty*.

This week Project Compassion asks us to learn more about the work of Caritas Australia in humanitarian emergencies. There are so many situations around the world that require a timely response. Caritas is active in the aftermath of earthquakes, floods, storms, plagues, drought and failed harvests. Of course, there will be time to enquire about the causes and to ask if climate change may have been a factor or if poor building standards caused problems. But first, people and communities need to survive, and Caritas has a lot of experience in this area. Your generosity to Project Compassion makes a wonderful difference to people in need. Thank you for helping to bring light to dark places. Jesus says about Lazarus, 'unbind him, let him go free.' We too can set people free.

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POVERTY
this Lent



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Thank you for standing with us, as we
Unite Against Poverty this Lent.