

LENT | A Better 2022 | Tomorrow

**'The Lord's Prayer gives me courage,
hope and strength in tough situations.'**

(Thandekile)



Trócaire

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Thandekile outside her family home cooking dinner. Photo credit: Cynthia Matonhodze, Trócaire



HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

Throughout the booklet, we learn more about some families and communities in Zimbabwe, where Trócaire works with local partner organisations.

This resource has been designed for parish groups and members of the community to learn more about the Trócaire Lent Campaign.

We learn about Thandekile and her family, who have been dealing with the challenges of climate change and drought for several years, and whose lives have been hugely impacted by Covid-19. We hear how they face these challenges with courage, hope and strength. We also hear from one of Trócaire's partner organisations, Caritas Bulawayo.

This booklet contains activities that can be used by a liturgy group, a parish group or by individuals in your community, including:

- [Laudato Si' Goals: Practical Parish Actions](#)
- [Book of Prayers](#)

We recognise that any resources focusing on global issues can resonate with individuals because of their lived experience; therefore, we advise that you read through this resource and modify it if you feel that there is anything that may impact on an individual or a group.

Please adhere to current Covid-19 guidelines for your area in the delivery of these activities.

Trócaire staff are also available to guide your group through these activities in whatever way is safest for all participants and in line with government guidelines.

Additional Lenten resources, including our Book of Prayers, Religious Education Resource for Children, homily notes, reflections and Stations of the Cross are available [here](#).

It is important to note that there are many diverse experiences of how life is lived in Zimbabwe. Avoid reinforcing stereotypes as you move through this resource. While this family is feeling the impact of drought, climate change and bereavement, not everyone in or from Zimbabwe has the same experience. Where possible, focus on positive aspects of the country. Zimbabwe is only one country amongst many in the continent of Africa; therefore, avoid describing the families as 'living in Africa'. If you have access to the internet in your home, parish or school, encourage people to research five facts about Zimbabwe before starting any activity. Emphasise the diversity in the country and focus on positive aspects of its culture. Research corresponding facts about Ireland and compare.

Children feeding the hens outside Thandekile's house.
Photo credit: Cynthia Matonhodze, Trócaire



ABOUT TRÓCAIRE

Trócaire was established in 1973 as the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

The organisation was created as a response to the widening gap between rich and poor and our collective duty to reduce it. Trócaire is rooted in the principles of Catholic social teaching, which are based on the belief that God has a plan for creation, a plan to build his kingdom of peace, love and justice. In the words of Trócaire's founding document, in which the bishops of Ireland gave the organisation a strong and clear mandate, 'We know that we cannot claim to love God if we do not love our fellow men and women.' Saint John tells us, 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.'



Trócaire has worked through local partner organisations since its foundation. Partnership is at the heart of how Trócaire works. We work with local faith- and non-faith-based organisations who share our values and who are working on any, or all, of our core programme areas of women's empowerment, resource rights and humanitarian preparedness and response. These organisations understand the needs of their communities and are best placed to work with communities to deliver sustainable long-term change. Our role is to support our partners through technical advice, financial support and organisational development. Trócaire and our partners work with people of all faiths and none in line with the principles of Catholic social teaching. Trócaire and our partner organisations give courage, hope and strength to people around the world who are facing poverty and injustice.

Pope Francis emphasises the importance of human interconnectedness and social friendship in his recent encyclical, [Fratelli Tutti](#). We will see this come to life this Lent through the work of our partner organisation, [Caritas](#) Bulawayo.



In light of the words of the Gospel of St John and of Pope Francis, we invite you, along with your parish community or group, to participate in, share and respond to this parish booklet, in the joy of knowing that all things are possible through God.

LENT 2022

Food Shortage and Scarcity – Courage, Hope and Strength Needed

This Lent, we hear about how communities who were already facing huge challenges due to drought and food shortages, caused by climate change, were further impacted by Covid-19. This is seen in how Covid-19 impacted people's livelihoods and access to education and food security. We here in Ireland are also very familiar with the impact of Covid-19. We will learn more about the impact of the pandemic through the story of Thandekile and her two children, Nomatter and Forward, who live in Zimbabwe.



Thandekile with her children, Forward (8) and Nomatter (11), all wearing their face masks amid the Covid-19 crisis. Photo credit: Cynthia Matonhodze, Trócaire

ABOUT ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe, officially the Republic of Zimbabwe, is a landlocked country located in south-east Africa, between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers.

It is bordered by South Africa to the south, Botswana to the south-west, Zambia to the north, and Mozambique to the east. The capital and largest city is Harare. The second largest city is Bulawayo. Zimbabwe has sixteen official languages, with English, Shona and Ndebele being the most common.

Zimbabwe has a population of 14.65 million and is ranked 150 of 189 countries on the Human Development Index. Agriculture accounts for 67 per cent of total employment but droughts and floods have increased significantly in recent years, posing a huge threat to the ability of people to grow enough food to feed themselves.

The Covid-19 pandemic has increased food insecurity and shortages. In 2020, 75 per cent of rural households faced moderate to severe food scarcity, compared to 42 per cent in 2019. The closure of borders to South Africa and Botswana

has had a negative impact on remittances (the money sent back to families from relatives working in another country) and resulted in job losses. Zimbabwe was once regarded as the great hope for Africa. But its enormous potential has been restricted by a series of climate-related and economic crises, compounded by political instability and Covid-19.

The Church holds a unique position in Zimbabwean civil society in terms of reach and influence. It has representation at all levels from international and national to local communities in every town and village. The Church also has unparalleled access to policymakers and decision-makers at all levels, including strong relationships with traditional leaders in rural communities.

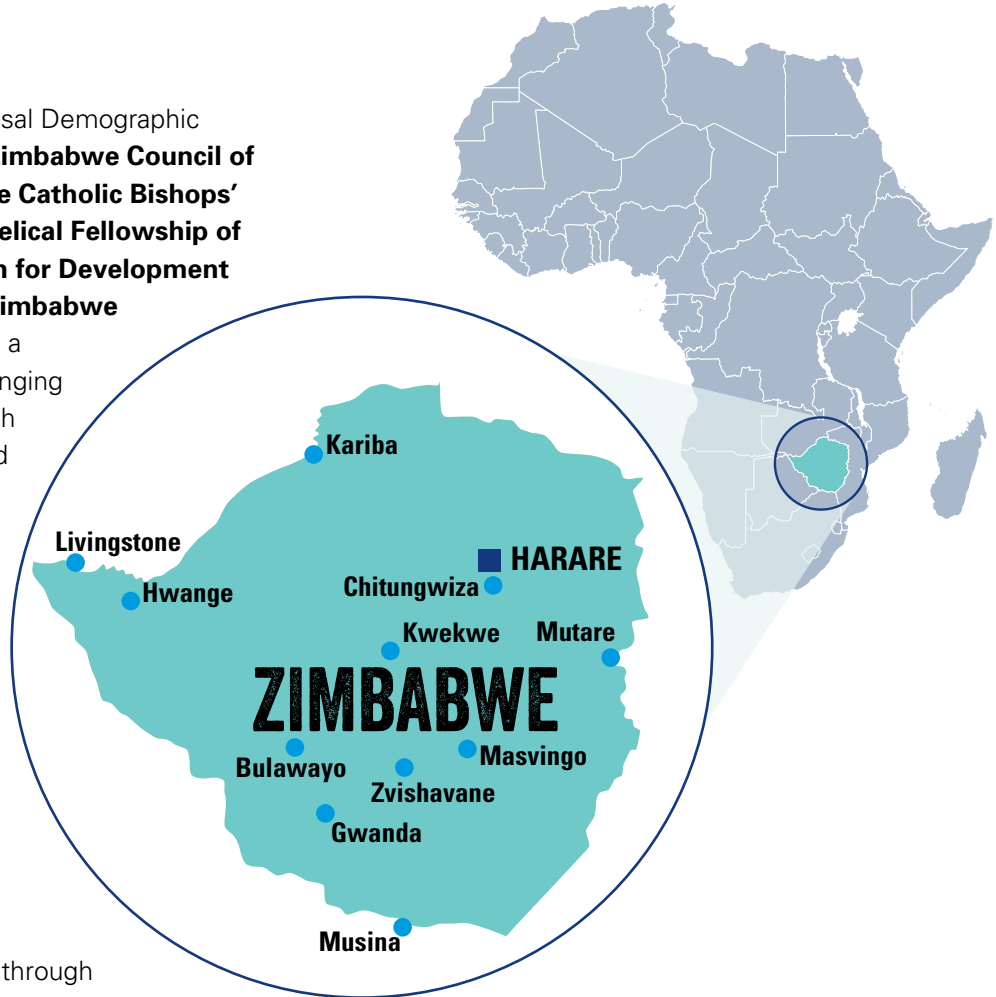
The Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations (ZHOCOD) is a grouping of four apex organisations that represent 77.2 per cent of the Zimbabwean

population (UNFPA Inter-censal Demographic Survey, 2017). Comprising **Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC), Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ)** and **Union for Development of Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe (UDACIZA)**, ZHOCD acts as a central unifying structure bringing together the Christian Church around common themes and objectives.

The Church, thus, has a significantly unique position in the country and Trócaire maintains a strategic position with the Church as one of its major partners through the various Church organisations implementing projects in our areas of operation.

With your support, Trócaire, through our partner organisations, works with marginalised communities living in poverty in Zimbabwe. We work with rural communities to help improve food production. We also work with women to protect them from violence and encourage them to have a stronger voice. Our partners also work with human rights defenders who hold the government of Zimbabwe to account.

Trócaire has worked with local partners in Zimbabwe since the country became independent in 1980. Our programmes in Zimbabwe support communities and families in the following ways:



- Human rights work
- Gender-based violence and [SASA Faith Programme](#)
- Food insecurity and climate change
- Agroecology
- Impact of Covid-19

In Thandekile's community, Trócaire's partner [Caritas](#) Bulawayo operates community gardens in which local people can plant vegetables, store seeds, and learn about watershed management and planting methods. The garden is also used for Covid-19 awareness training.

Impact of Trócaire's work in Zimbabwe	160,000 people supported by Trócaire donors in 2020
Supported with humanitarian aid	25,000 people
Supported by human rights programmes	65,000 people
Supported through women's empowerment programmes	49,000 people
Supported with climate resilient food production and access to safe water	21,000 women



Thandekile with her children at dinner time and Thandekile holding a photo of her deceased husband, Donovan. Photo credit: Cynthia Matonhodze, Trócaire

MEET THANDEKILE, NOMATTER AND FORWARD

Thandekile is a thirty-one-year-old mother of two children. Her daughter's name is Nomatter and she is aged eleven, and her son's name is Forward and he is aged eight.

As their village is close to the border with South Africa, many families in the community have relatives working and living in South Africa.

Thandekile and her family are facing hunger because Covid-19 has compounded the effects of drought caused by climate change, and reduced the ways in which people can earn a living.

After losing her husband, Donovan, to Covid-19, she now hopes that the love of strangers can help her and her children to survive.

In November 2020, the family's already fragile world was turned upside down when Covid-19 hit. Thandekile's husband, Donovan (35), died from Covid-19 while working in South Africa to earn an income to provide for his family. Left widowed, now Thandekile's greatest fear is that she will die from Covid-19 and there will be no one to look after her children.

The last time Thandekile spoke to Donovan, he had just finished his day's work in South Africa and had been feeling fine. The following day, Thandekile was told that Donovan was unable to talk or breathe and he was rushed to the hospital, where he died from Covid-19.

Devastated, Thandekile says that his death was so sudden that their children are struggling to accept the fact that they will never see or speak to their father again:

'The death of my husband hit me very hard, and I was bed-ridden for days. I did not know how I was going to move on and raise my children without the presence of their father,' she says. 'His death greatly affected my children too. Donovan was a good father to our children and a good husband to me.'

The impact of Covid-19 has been felt greatly by Thandekile and her community in Zimbabwe. Grieving for her husband meant that Thandekile struggled even more to provide food for her family. She couldn't engage in farming activities, which delayed the planting of crops and made them even more vulnerable to heavy rainfall.

'My life was very hard financially since he was the breadwinner. It also affected my ability to earn an income as at times I would be so stressed and too sick to even go out and work. I did not have the

means to pay school fees for the children, to buy uniforms and all our other basic needs because I had no source of income.'

'I pray that the Lord keeps me so that I raise them until they are old enough to take care of themselves,' she says. Thandekile places great trust in her faith and what she says about the Lord's Prayer is truly inspirational:

'The Lord's Prayer gives me courage, hope and strength in tough situations.'

Before Covid-19, Thandekile and her family were already facing hunger as droughts and heavy rainfall caused their plants and crops to fail. The family would often go nights without eating, as food was not always available in their community. Thandekile was determined to provide for her two children and began buying and selling women's clothes in order to make money; however, the impact of Covid-19 took this away as well, because of travel and business restrictions.

'My wish is to be able to provide for all their needs, so I hope that my business will grow. My hope is that my children will be able to continue in school and be successful in life. The greatest gift that people can give to one another in life is food and money because we need it to survive. What gives me hope is that I am still alive despite all that we have been through as a family. Whatever the problems you have been through in life, it is important to dust yourself off and move on, have hope

and work hard for the children even if it's very difficult. I thank the people of Ireland for all the help you give to us. Please do not tire.'

Thandekile believes that it is always possible for things to get better. In the future, she is hoping to set up a shop near her home, where she can sell the clothes that she buys. This will make it much easier for her to do her work and help her develop her business. She dreams that one day she will be able to get a driving licence and buy a car, have a nice house and that her children will have good lives too.

Nomatter (11) and Forward (8) go to the local primary school. Before they walk to school, they fetch water from the borehole, wash the dishes and mop the floors in their one-room home. The school has many beautiful flowers and trees, and there are many kind teachers. They both like playing with their friends at school and writing. Thandekile helps both of them with their homework in the evening and they always eat their dinner together and chat about the day.

It is not just that Thandekile finds it difficult to feed her children, to pay their school fees and afford basic essentials, including medicine, because she does not have a regular income. With the help of Trócaire supporters in Ireland, however, the family can dare to dream of a brighter future where they can provide for themselves. This Lent, Trócaire supporters in Ireland are helping Thandekile and thousands like her by providing them with the tools, equipment, knowledge and support they need to ensure they can grow enough food for themselves going forward, despite the impacts of climate change and Covid-19.

| Thandekile helping her children with their homework. Photo credit: Cynthia Matonhodze, Trócaire



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP: CARITAS BULAWAYO

Trócaire is committed to building long-term relationships based upon mutual trust. We have worked with some of our partner organisations for over twenty years. Working in partnership stems from the belief that a vibrant civil society is fundamental to a just world.

Trócaire partners with the local Caritas agency in the Archdiocese of Bulawayo. Caritas Bulawayo was formed in 1972 in the Archdiocese of Bulawayo through the Zimbabwean Bishop's Conference and at formation it was known as the Catholic Development Commission.

Caritas Bulawayo focuses on food security, water and sanitation, care for creation and disaster preparedness.

Caritas Bulawayo works with Thandekile's community to ensure that they benefit from the sustainable use and management of natural resources. Through agroecological training given in the local farms and villages, and mentorship and support to the local farmers, Caritas Bulawayo ensures that Thandekile and her family can manage the impacts of climate change, adopt different farming methods, have an improved family diet of healthy foods and have enough to eat. During the months when their own local produce often runs out, Caritas provides Thandekile's community with food aid and other related assistance.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, Caritas Bulawayo has been promoting health and safety guidelines, and supporting mask wearing and hand hygiene whenever farmers are engaged in training and during community gatherings. Caritas Bulawayo has also provided the community with handwashing facilities at key places, such as local schools and hospitals. Covid-19 guideline posters, similar to those we are familiar with in Ireland, are displayed at key community areas, such as local shops, meeting points, churches and community gardens. This has seen Thandekile and her family adopt Covid-19 practices, such as handwashing, social distancing and wearing masks.



Having worked in partnership with local organisations for almost fifty years, Trócaire believes that local people should play a leading role in the development processes in their communities. Trócaire's new strategic plan (2021–2025) has committed to a 'step change' in the approach to partnership, which involves shifting power more profoundly to local and national partners in the countries where it works through a process called localisation.

Localisation is a collective process that aims to ensure that local and national groups, whether civil society organisations or public institutions, are at the centre of humanitarian and development work. Localisation requires a shift in power relations between international and local organisations, both in terms of strategic decision-making and control of resources.

'Localisation provides an opportunity for local partners to showcase their skills, their strength, and knowledge. Localisation is key because that will serve as a catalyst for ensuring local organisations are also empowered, and they are able to take on responsibilities on their own.'

**(Ibrahim Fatu Kamara, Programme Director,
Action for Advocacy and Development,
Sierra Leone)**



Archbishop Alex Thomas (Archbishop of Bulawayo). Photo credit: Archdiocesan office, Bulawayo; Fr Innocent Ndlovu, Archdiocese of Bulawayo. Photo credit: Cynthia Matonhodze, Trócaire

MEET ARCHBISHOP ALEX AND FR INNOCENT

Archbishop Alex is a native of Kerala in India. He comes from a very traditional Catholic family. He joined the order of Divine Word Missionaries in 1975 and was educated in different parts of India in various seminaries. God ordained him a priest in 1988. Alex came to Zimbabwe in 1989 and since then he has been working in rural areas.

In 2009, Alex was appointed archbishop of Bulawayo. The archdiocese covers an area of 69,000 square kilometres with a difficult terrain – strong vehicles are needed to reach most of the rural missions. The archdiocese has about one hundred priests, serving in all the missions and parishes.

Archbishop Alex is very conscious of the effects of climate change in his archdiocese.

'The water is scarce, there is always drought and food scarcity, and that is the background we have, and the people are poor.'

Since 2011, the archdiocese, through Caritas Bulawayo, has worked in partnership with Trócaire. Nine programmes have been completed in the fields of livelihoods, food security, water and sanitation, womens' empowerment, establishing small-scale vegetable gardens and helping the schools with infrastructure.

The archdiocese and Trócaire work through Caritas Bulawayo. Caritas has staff living in the rural areas

and they do an extremely good job. They are well qualified, they know the local people, they know the language and the culture of the people, so it is very easy for them to interact with and provide education and training for people.

'Trócaire personnel are very good and understanding of the needs of the people. They come and discuss with our Caritas staff. They also go into the field with us to see what is the situation, so they are really on the ground in that way. They train the local people in new eco-friendly farming methods. I should say our partnership with Trócaire is extremely good.'

Archbishop Alex tells us that Covid-19 has left a lasting impact on many people in his area, particularly regarding funerals. Like here in Ireland, many people had to bury their loved ones without the usual customs in place and this is something that can never be recovered. He says that Covid-19 has worsened the effects of drought and climate change.

Archbishop Alex really appreciates the support of the bishops, priests and the people of Ireland. The first and foremost thing that the people of Ireland can do is to pray for the people of Zimbabwe. He has the following to say, which embraces the gift of faith we all share as faith communities in two different countries:

'And, of course, we feel that the Catholics elsewhere are in communion. In the spirit of faith and in the spirit of humanity, so I want to appreciate it. I also like to appeal to them to open their hearts as much as possible; especially with regard to food shortages, livelihoods, sanitation, education and health, these are our needs.

And I would say that we have nothing much to give you back, we are always grateful to you, and every Sunday, when our people gather, we can assure you of our prayers for your generosity.

I can only encourage you all to keep this partnership in the spirit of our faith.'

Father Innocent Ndlovu is a priest of the Archdiocese of Bulawayo. Father Innocent is also an accomplished author. He has the following to say:

'It is my pleasure to serve the people, particularly our people. I'm a local priest, born and bred here. I'm working in my own home parish. I never thought I would do that. But I'm receiving some degree of satisfaction in assisting my own people.'

Father Innocent hopes that the people in the communities and parishes he works with are healthy, both spiritually and physically, and free from Covid-19. He also wants them to be able to come together and gather again giving glory to God.

His biggest concerns are the suffering and the hunger that he sees in the people that he works with. They need relief from poverty and hunger, caused by climate change and droughts and exacerbated by Covid-19. Many people are suffering. Parishioners depend heavily on family members working in South Africa, particularly as they are so close to the border. In almost every family there is at least one member working in South Africa, and during the pandemic they could not send money home to their families.

Father Innocent goes on to say:

'Covid-19 has had a terrible impact, particularly on children because children need a regular supply of food. We heavily depend on South Africa. We're on the southern border of South Africa, and if our people are not able to access food, to buy groceries because of Covid, children are heavily affected.'

Like his archbishop, Fr Innocent wants to thank the people of Ireland for their prayers and generosity, and recognises the impact of the partnership between Trócaire and Caritas Bulawayo. Such help from Caritas is helping many families living in poverty in his parish to survive the drought and learn to live with the Covid-19 pandemic. He says:

'Caritas has brought tremendous impact, particularly in alleviating the problems such as food shortages. Caritas helps the local community with food production through new farming methods. Caritas staff encourage and train the people to become self-sufficient.'

Father Innocent wants to remind us all that we live in a global village and whatever we can give in support of his parishioners is really appreciated because that support goes towards providing the basic necessities of life for people in the community.

Archbishop Alex and Fr Innocent are both delighted to hear that included in our [Book of Prayers](#), we have a prayer service for people who are suffering because of Covid-19. No other pandemic in recent times has reminded people how small our world is and how, in reality, the world is a global village and we are all connected. Our faith, prayers and hopes for a better and brighter tomorrow connect us all.

Children getting their temperatures checked as they enter school. Photo credit: Cynthia Matonhodze, Trócaire



PRACTICAL PARISH ACTIONS: LAUDATO SI' GOALS

People in Zimbabwe were already facing a daily struggle to provide food, water and education for their families and facing droughts due to climate change, but the Covid-19 pandemic has made this struggle even harder.



Action on climate change is urgent and important and will help provide a brighter future and tomorrow for your own family and local community as well as our brothers and sisters globally.

The Laudato Si' Goals that were launched by Pope Francis in May 2021 are profound actions of care and an excellent way of responding to the ecological crisis. Action is now needed more than ever. The Laudato Si' Goals guide is a blueprint for our actions. The guide provides a holistic approach and supports a spiritual and cultural revolution as we strive for total sustainability in the spirit of integral ecology and building for a better future together.

'Bring the whole human family together ... for we know that things can change.'

(Laudato Si', 13)

You will find a number of actions that you can take to lessen the impact of climate change on a local and global level at: <https://laudatosi-actionplatform.org/>

We propose that you, as a parish community, take on the following two Laudato Si' Goals this Lent and then carry on with the other goals in your own time.

Goal 1: Adoption of Simple Sustainable Lifestyles

The adoption of sustainable lifestyles is grounded in the idea of sufficiency and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy. Actions could include reducing waste and recycling, adopting sustainable dietary habits (opting for a more plant-based diet and reducing meat consumption), greater use of public transport, active mobility (walking, cycling), and avoiding single-use items (plastic).

Goal 2: Response to the Cry of the Poor

The response to the cry of the poor is a call to promote eco-justice, aware that we are called to defend human life from conception to death and all forms of life on earth. Actions could include projects to promote solidarity, with special attention given to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, refugees, migrants and children at risk, analysis and improvement of social systems and social service programmes.

These Laudato Si' Goals link with the following thoughts, which are from *The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor*, a pastoral letter from Archbishop Dermot Farrell, published in September 2021.

'God now calls us, individually and collectively, to work for the good of the planet and the good of all. All too often "religion" appears as if it is no more than an intellectual failure of nerve. However, true religion is not a flight from the world: faith that is alive provides a framework for people to make decisions and take action. As a church, and as a society, we need to reflect with greater depth, urgency, and seriousness about what

we must do about climate change. If not for your own sake, then for the sake of your children, and for the world's children – take action.'

Archbishop Farrell's call to action is a call to ensure our children and their futures are safe. Surely this call will inspire us as individuals and as a parish community to begin to put in place some of the *Laudato Si'* actions outlined above.

Other practical actions you can take:

- Take a moment to reflect on Thandekile's story and how daily life is for her and her children, Nomatter and Forward. Remember also that our actions in our daily lives have an impact on a global scale. Ask yourselves this question: Can I see any links between the above two goals and the lives of people living in Thandekile's community in Zimbabwe?
 - Encourage fellow parishioners and parish groups to participate in the prayer service and [Laudato Si' Goals](#)
 - Become a [volunteer](#) with Trócaire, working for a more just and sustainable world
 - More information and resources on all of Trócaire's campaigns are available on our [website](#)
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Thandekile enjoying the company of her children.
Photo credit: Cynthia Matonhodze, Trócaire

More resources, including our book of prayers, religious education resource for children, homily notes, Stations of the Cross, reflections, photos and videos are available [here](#)

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Cover photo: Thandekile and her children, Nomatter (11) and Forward (8). Photo credit: Cynthia Matonhodze, Trócaire

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