

## The Church serving the Kingdom of God

All around the world, members of the Church serve the Kingdom of God by serving their sisters and brothers. Here are some examples from the UK and from our overseas partners – groups that work alongside those living in poverty and injustice, with support from CAFOD.



**NICARAGUA** David and Rafael

**David and Rafael** are young leaders in their communities in Nicaragua, Central America. They have completed a three-year diploma in youth leadership run by the Sisters of the Guardian Angels.

The leaders meet together to study, share and have fun. They encourage opportunities and open doors for other young people, striving to give them a brighter future and to bring about change in their communities.

They say that being a perfect leader means “The ability to give of oneself,” and explain that to make a change you really have to be selfless especially with your time and gifts.

When asked, “What do the Sisters mean to you?” they said, “They were placed here to walk alongside those in need; they are lights in the darkness”. These young people are also lights in the darkness.



**PHILIPPINES** Hilda and Ronald

**Hilda and Ronald** both saved lives during Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 by helping people onto the hospital roof when the wards were flooded and by treating life-threatening injuries. Hilda helped Ronald’s wife, Maria Gracia, who was a patient at the time. Ronald says that Hilda saved Maria Gracia’s life.

Neither of them sees themselves as a hero. Ronald says he was simply trying to behave like a Christian: “I promised that if I survived the typhoon, I would support other people who are needy.” Ronald now works for Caritas Philippines managing projects that support other survivors, and helping people to prepare for future typhoons. The work is paying off: when Typhoon Hagupit hit the Philippines in December 2014, communities were much better prepared.



**SYRIA** Bishop Antoine

**Bishop Antoine Audo** S.J lives in Aleppo, Syria. It is a city split in two by the terrible conflict that began in Syria in 2011. About half of Aleppo’s Christians have fled the city.

As President of the Catholic charity Caritas Syria, the bishop organises emergency aid for tens of thousands of people of all faiths, delivering food, healthcare and shelter. Caritas Syria has centres across the country where people come to receive supplies, and its volunteers also do outreach visits to families who are at risk.

“We have to continue to support each other. We have to respect each other, to treat each other with dignity and to understand each other’s suffering. We have to start seeing ourselves not as Orthodox, Catholic, Sunni, Shiite or Alawite, but Syrians who can live together in peace.”



**D.R. CONGO**

**Thérèse**

**Thérèse Mema Mapenzi** (far right), from the Justice and Peace Commission run by the diocese in Bukavu, eastern DRC, works with survivors of rape. In this conflict-ridden area, women are often blamed for being raped and are abandoned by their husbands and families. Children born of rape are frequently despised by their community and bullied at school.

Thérèse says: "When I talk to a survivor, I am able to help her by sending her to hospital where she recovers. We set her up in a small group with other women where she is able to talk and laugh."

"I make myself available to these people who are forgotten by their communities, who are discriminated against. I tell them they are important. This gives me hope that what I am doing [for each woman] is something that is good for her and her life. I give a message of hope and tell her she can start a new life."



**COLOMBIA**

**Fr Sterlin**

**Fr Sterlin Londoño** lives in the diocese of Quibdó, Colombia, where armed groups have taken control of different areas, pushing people off their land to make way for illegal and polluting mines, cattle ranches and banana plantations: "In the last few years, around a thousand people have been murdered. We have had to collect their bodies and bury them ourselves."

"As a local priest, for the last 30 years I have been helping people in my community to live a life free from fear. For afro-Colombian communities this means protecting their land and its natural resources. So local communities got together to set up an organisation called COCOMOPOCA."

In 1997, COCOMOPOCA was in the early stages of applying for legal rights to the ancestral land. The community finally achieved the rights to their land in 2011. A few days later they discovered that a large mining company had also been granted concessions to mine part of the land: "So disheartening... but at least now the communities knew there was an appeal process they could follow. We continue to fight for their land. We haven't lost hope and we will not lose hope."



**UK**

**Beth and Ania**

**Beth and Ania** live in Kent, England. Both are involved in the Youth SVP (St Vincent de Paul) group in their parish. Beth has helped with SVP activities all her life, as her grandmother is a leader. Ania, who joined the group just over a year ago, says: "After Sunday Mass we collect donated food from the back of church and sort it out. Then we have a short meeting. There are 14 in the group. Everyone's Y7-12."

Beth says: "We serve our community by visiting the elderly people at home and by doing the food bank. We also fundraise. We help with things like the Christmas party for the elderly. We give them a meal and provide entertainment... It makes me feel like I'm making a difference to the world in a little way."

- Give an example of how the Kingdom is already present in the world.
- Give an example of how the Kingdom is yet to come,
- In the stories above, how is each person serving the Kingdom of God?
- If someone asked you, 'Where is the Kingdom of God?' what would you say?