



Rt Rev. Joseph Toal STB KC*HS Bishop of Motherwell

To be shared with Parishioners on Sunday 27 March – SCIAF Sunday

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

I write on behalf of the Bishops of Scotland on this fourth Sunday of Lent to thank you for caring for others, and for the compassion you have shown to those around the world who are so dreadfully in need. Your generous and prayerful support has meant that our relief and development agency, SCIAF – the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund – has been able to support people to build brighter futures.

The faith and compassion of the Catholic peoples of Scotland reaches out with love far beyond its borders, to care for our sisters and brothers in the poorest parts of the world. As the development charity for the Church in Scotland, SCIAF harnesses that love and turns that faith into action.

The work that is achieved by our friends and partners overseas is the living embodiment of the light of Jesus Christ that shines from every Parish, every Diocese and from every Catholic across Scotland.

As Catholics, we are called to follow His example, to recognise that we are sisters and brothers in Christ, and to reach out to the poorest with love. This is why, during Lent, we ask you to give generously to support the vital work of SCIAF through their Wee Box, Big Change appeal.

Across the world, the Climate Emergency and extreme weather events are flooding homes, destroying crops and leaving people with little or no food to eat. More than 800 million people go hungry each day.

Families don't know how much food they will harvest, how much money they will make, or whether their children will even go to school. They do not know when the next storm might hit.

For our sisters and brothers caught in the eye of the storm, fear and uncertainty are ever present. Every day they live in hunger. Every day they live on the edge. And every day they are losing hope.

While climate change is global and threatens our Common Home, the most devastating effects are taking place *now* in places like Malawi.

Here, extreme weather events, cyclones, floods and droughts are wreaking havoc with people's lives. Families cannot harvest enough crops or catch enough fish. Feeding the family has become a desperate challenge.

Dry spells mean the community will struggle to access water because most boreholes dry up, and crops simply can't grow. When rains come, they are either too much or too little. Water moves with speed during rainy seasons, washing crops and topsoil away.

In January, this reality was clearer than ever as Cyclone Ana hit Malawi and caused widespread devastation, affecting more than 995,000 people with 46 deaths. Crops and animals were washed away in an instant, destroying livelihoods.

With climate change accelerating and extreme weather events becoming more common, communities in Malawi are scared of what tomorrow might bring.

But, by Acting in Hope and putting money in the special Lenten collection and filling your Wee Box, you can provide a lifeline to families living on the front line of the Climate Emergency, lifting them from their hunger.

In Malawi, SCIAF is providing local solutions to prevent hunger and tackle climate change. Your gifts will help people grow more food, protect local environments, and provide more secure incomes. Your gifts will teach organic farming techniques, provide more resilient and varied seed varieties, and offer access to money to pay for essentials such as school fees and healthcare.

Your support will not only change lives today, but it will give families the tools and training to survive the worst impacts of a changing climate tomorrow.

As Lent continues, and we look forward to the celebration of Christ's resurrection, please remember SCIAF and everyone they work with in your prayers.

Thank you for your continued generosity; know that it goes towards good work.

May God bless you and your families during the Holy season of Lent and throughout the year,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph Toal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Bishop Joseph Toal,
Bishop President of SCIAF
On behalf of the Bishop's Conference of Scotland**