

Good morning/evening everyone. My name is XXX and I work/volunteer for Trócaire. I'd like to thank Fr XX for giving me the opportunity to speak to you this evening about our Lenten Appeal for 2023, a very special year for Trócaire as we celebrate our 50th Anniversary.

or

This weekend, our homily is on behalf of Trócaire, the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland which is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2023.

The face on the Trócaire box in this anniversary year is 8-year-old Nasteha Mahat from the Gedo region of Somalia in East Africa. The Mahat family had to leave their farm and village when the last of their goats died from drought and they had absolutely nothing left. Some months before, Nasteha's two-year-old sister, Ardo, had died of dehydration.

Nasteha, with her parents Mahat and Ambiyu and siblings, had to walk for three days with little food or water. Ambiyu, her mother, was 5 months pregnant and had twin toddlers, one of whom she strapped to her front, the other to her back. After that exhausting journey, the family finally reached a camp for internally displaced people in the Gedo region of Somalia where Trócaire has been running the health service for 30 years. In fact, there, Trócaire is known locally as the mother of health, because of our ongoing commitment to healthcare and to the people there.

When Ambiyu later gave birth on the floor of their makeshift shelter in the camp and became seriously ill afterwards, Trócaire was there to give her the treatment she needed and to save her life.

Our team in Gedo have told us that Nasteha is a strong and resilient girl, who really encapsulates the spirit of her parents, who despite the enormous odds stacked against them, live in hope of finding new ways so that *they* can provide for their family and earn an income so they can educate their children. Your support can help make that hope a reality.

Nasteha's family is one of thousands of families in Somalia who are on the brink of starvation due to a prolonged and unrelenting drought which has destroyed crops and livestock and left people with no option but to leave their homes and farms in search of help. You may have seen reports in recent months on the television about the devastating hunger crisis there which has left 8.3 million people, more than half the population of the country, at risk of starvation. The situation there is critical and urgent, we cannot simply look away.

The scriptural quote on the box this year is 'hold fast to love and justice' – from the book of Hosea. And I would like to thank you and your families from the bottom of my heart for holding fast to love and justice through your generous support of the work of Trócaire for the past 50 years.

Trócaire, working through fantastic local partners on the ground and with the people of Ireland, has helped change the lives of millions of people over the last half century. Trócaire is your agency and is working on behalf of all of you here today.

The values of courage, hope and strength are exactly why the Bishops of Ireland founded Trócaire 50 years ago and today those values have never been more relevant or more necessary.

Today I ask you to pray for peace and to pray for the Mahat family and all those other families affected by conflict and climate change around the world.

We remember the thousands of people who have been killed or injured recently in the earthquakes in Syria and Turkey. Buildings have been destroyed and the infrastructure devastated. Trócaire is working with our partner Caritas Syria to support those affected by this terrible event.

We remember people in Ukraine and other countries affected by conflict including South Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and pray for the millions of people around the world who are in crisis and at risk of being forgotten and left behind.

Lent is a time when we have the opportunity to recommit our support to our brothers and sisters around the world through the Trócaire Lenten Appeal. **[Last Lent your Parish/Diocese donated £1. We thank you so much for that generosity].**

Your help is needed now more than ever so please take a Trócaire box with you today or go online to Trocaire.org to see how you can donate. A QR code is accessible on this year's big box here on the altar if you would like to scan before go home today.

For over half a century, your donations have reached millions of vulnerable people and communities around the world, communities like those of the Mahat family in the Gedo region of Somalia.

Your ongoing support will help us to continue with this vital work and to continue to change lives.

Thank you.