

## CAFOD 'Walk for Water' campaign

CAFOD's campaign for Lent this year focuses on a dry and harsh mountainous region in the north of Ethiopia, where people have to walk and climb many hours every day to collect water.

CAFOD are asking us to walk 10,000 steps each day during Lent, just as Abdella does, read below. As that would be a huge challenge for most of us as individuals, we have set a target as a Parish to try and walk to Ethiopia by logging all the steps we each walk. Can we make it ?

If you want to take part, please contact Serga Collett (07474 724042 or email [collettserga@gmail.com](mailto:collettserga@gmail.com)) or Jim Infield (07952 705684, email [jim.infield1@gmail.com](mailto:jim.infield1@gmail.com)). The greater aim is to raise funds so CAFOD can provide more life enhancing water points – you can donate on our Just Giving Website here: <http://bit.ly/stlaurencewalk>

### Abdella's world

Abdella is 23 and he has big dreams – to make a better life for his family, to marry and have a family of his own, and not having to walk ten hours for water. He is a young man with hope. His home is in Afar in the mountainous Tigray region of northern Ethiopia.

An older man, the Pope, also has dreams and challenges us to 'Dare to Dream'. "This is a moment to dream big, to rethink our priorities — what we value, what we want, what we seek — and to commit to act in our daily life on what we have dreamed of. God asks us to dare to create something new."

Abdella walks ten hours a day through dry rocky mountains with his donkey to get water from a meagre and unclean source. That's two and a half hours each way, twice a day, every day. To do that he gets up at 5 am to miss the worst heat of the day, which soars to 45 degrees, an unimaginable temperature which we would be unable to stand in, let alone climb, the heat bouncing off the rock as well as the direct sunlight. There are some trees, but they offer little shade. He returns by 10 am. In the afternoon he must set off again. He must do much of the walk in the dark. But Abdella knows every step of the way, every rock, turn in the path, every dip and rise. How much water does he need to drink on the way up when the strong plastic jerry cans are empty, and on the way back.

We would carry snacks and food if we set out on a hike like that – what does he have to eat if anything ? It takes energy to make that climb twice a day, and of course strength and stamina – what if he twists an ankle, a constant risk ? Medicine and treatment are very expensive and far away. We can be sure he gets tired, physical effort has that effect on our bodies, however fit we are. It's Abdella's mental resilience that carries him through. It's beyond our imagination and experience to understand and feel what that kind of lifestyle is like and what it demands of the human spirit. You can see Abdella's journey for yourself and the harsh terrain in this [video](#)





Nearby another community benefits from harvesting the energy of the sun with solar panels which power pumps that draw water up from underground aquifers far below. No long treks for water. Channels lead off up to five kilometres away irrigating the green fields. Their lives are transformed. Drilling a well is not easy through rock and requires powerful machinery, unlike many places in the world where water is not far below the surface and simple rigs can be operated with manual labour - still costly but not dependant on sophisticated machines. This mountainous region is barely accessible by car, roads are rough and easily washed away in storms and by rockfall. Getting a heavy drilling rig in is a huge challenge itself. How, if at all, were wells dug in the past ? How did people know where these aquifers lie and at what distance underground ? Life can not exist without water, to drink obviously, to cultivate food, to eat and for animals to graze on.



You might be asking, why and how do people live in such inhospitable places ? Was there abundant water at one time? This particular place is actually the cradle of mankind, where the oldest human remains were found. The local CAFOD community worker explains clearly: 'these communities have always lived here, you can't just get up and move. Would the people whose precious water source you are moving into welcome you?'

#### **CAFOD's work and the recent conflict**

Recently we had a zoom call with a hundred CAFOD supporters from all over the country and the CAFOD representative Conor Molloy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Conor told us about Abdella who he has been working with, through CAFOD's partner in Afar in the north west, a long and difficult journey from the capital. Conor showed us a short video of Abdella collecting water and explained about CAFOD's work and their partners. There are only a very small number of Catholics

in the country and most Christians are Orthodox of course, an ancient church. About a third of the country is Muslim. Belief in God is core to everyone's lives.

On 4 November 2020, armed conflict broke out between the regional government and the Federal government in Tigray. The politics are complex and tense. Refugees are arriving at the border with neighbouring Sudan. As if life were not precarious enough already, people now have this conflict to contend with. The delicate solar panels on which their lives depend could so easily be destroyed in minutes. The insecurity, uncertainty, pain and fear that conflict brings is something most of us are extremely fortunate not to have been exposed to. And all this on top of their daily hardships.

### **All the privileges we have here in the UK**

Despite all the current problems with Coronavirus, we are still very privileged. Apart from peace and security, we can just reach for the light switch, turn on the kettle, start our computer, connect to the internet, charge our phones and so on... We go to the toilet and flush the chain, turn on the tap to wash our hands, go to the kitchen to fill the kettle for a cup of tea, to cook and wash up – and pure, clean water just comes out of the tap. The only energy we expend is turning the tap on and off. All of these services just 'on tap' without a thought, a basic expectation.

### **Taking action**

We can't just sit here and do nothing. How can we knowing people face such daily hardships ? It's time for us to dream and to act and to show solidarity with our brothers, regardless of religion, just as CAFOD does everywhere it operates, and the Pope encourages us to act.

Sign up, join in and start counting... See the St Laurence's website for up to date news and how we are making progress towards our target.

Thanks from the CAFOD team.