



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

**To be shared with Parishioners on Sunday 22 March – SCIAF Sunday**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I write on behalf of the bishops of Scotland on this the fourth Sunday of Lent to thank you for your generous and prayerful support for SCIAF – the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund.

In the Gospels we hear of many occasions when Jesus heals the sick, reaching out in love and mercy to those marginalised by society. In today's Gospel we hear of Jesus healing the blind man, and in that act of mercy He reaches out to someone who would have been shunned by his community.

We as Christians are called to follow the example of Jesus in these acts of love towards our brothers and sisters. SCIAF is the embodiment of this. SCIAF was founded to give the church in Scotland the opportunity to show its love for our poorest and most vulnerable brothers and sisters around the world, and that is why during Lent, we ask you to give generously to support the vital work SCIAF does on our behalf.

Last year your generous support meant SCIAF could send £235,000 to help survivors of Cyclone Idai in Malawi and Mozambique. SCIAF supporters helped bring around an ambitious climate change bill which will help Scotland reduce emissions, protecting our brothers and sisters in countries vulnerable to the changing climate. In total you helped over 2.7 million people in some of the poorest communities in the world to overcome huge challenges from hunger and poverty, to war and natural disasters.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is coming to the end of a devastating war that has lasted for more than twenty years causing much destruction in the area. Many people have been killed, displaced and many are still in need. The Church has remained strong and continues to give hope and courage to people in this country and we ask you now for your prayers for the priests and The Religious who are continuing to work in these difficult circumstances.

You will see pictures of Angela and her children from DR Congo on the SCIAF WEE BOX this year. She has been helped to rebuild her life following a brutal attack.

SCIAF, together with partners in DR Congo, has been working to support people like Angela and many other survivors of violence, in particular violence against women and girls. It is heartening to know that through SCIAF, Angela has been given the medical care she needs, trauma counselling, and is learning the skills she needs to earn a living for her family.

However, there are many more women and girls who urgently need our help right now.

Please support the WEE BOX appeal during this holy season and in today's special collection.

Just £15 will help a mum register her child with an official birth certificate, which entitles them to healthcare and schooling.

This year I am delighted that all donations to SCIAF's WEE BOX, Big Change appeal, made before Wednesday 20th May, will be doubled by the UK government. Your donations will help SCIAF's life changing work around the world, while match funding from the UK government will transform the lives of 4,000 extremely vulnerable women affected by sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

With your support we can help people in DR Congo build a brighter future.

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

May God bless you and your families during the holy season of Lent and throughout the year.

*+ Joseph Toal*

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