





# Ava's Story

Ava is six years old and lives with her dad. Ava's dad has two jobs. In the day he works as a cleaner and at night he works as a waiter in a restaurant. He works six days a week to earn enough money to pay for their home, food and bills. Ava's auntie looks after her most of the time. Ava and her dad only see each other for a few hours every week and they both wish they could spend more time together.



Rats have always been a problem in Ava's local area. The rats started breeding in their home and one morning Ava woke up to find two at the end of her bed. Ava's dad asked someone to come to their flat to remove the rats. An inspector came to Ava's home and said that the infestation was so bad that Ava and her dad would have to leave immediately.

They packed up all of their belongings in three black bags and were sent to a hostel. They were told that they would have to stay there for just a few days while new accommodation was sorted out. Six months later they are still in the hostel.



Ava does not like the hostel. Living in one room without a kitchen, they cannot keep any fresh food or cook anything. When they first moved in, Ava would wake up with itchy red marks on her skin. The mattresses and bedding were infested with bed bugs.



To avoid getting bitten, Ava and her dad slept on the floor and used their coats to keep them warm. They found it very difficult to sleep and Ava would arrive at school tired and distracted.

Ava's auntie did not have the money to help Ava and her dad, but spoke to Ava's school to see if they could help. The school applied for the Catholic Children's Society's Crisis Fund.

Within 24 hours Ava and her dad were given new beds and bedding so that they could have a good night's sleep. The next day, Ava came into school with a big smile on her face.

# Reflection



Spend a minute quietly thinking about Ava's story.

What problems did Ava and her family face?

How did the Catholic Children's Society help Ava's family?

How do you feel after hearing Ava's story?



# Prayer



Dear Lord

This Lent, help us on our journey to grow closer to you. Guide us as we put our faith into action and help children like Ava.

Amen

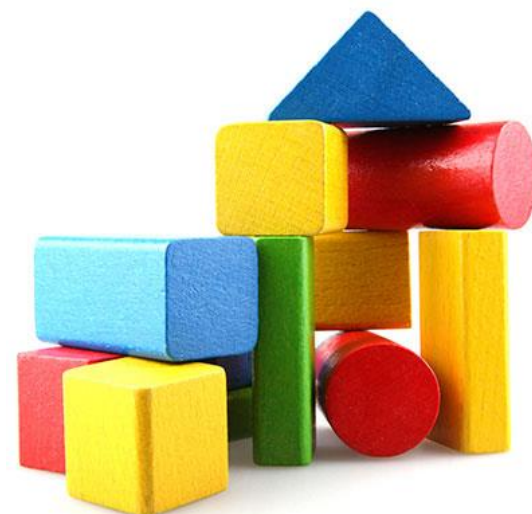




# Luisa's Story

Luisa is three years old and lives with her mum and little sister. The family moved to six months ago. They had never even visited London before and Luisa's mum was very anxious about moving somewhere new. All three of them lived in one small room where Luisa's mum cooked and they all slept.

Luisa and her sister love to play, especially with building blocks. Where they used to live, Luisa would visit her friend's house and use the blocks to build castles. Her castles were always the tallest and strongest.





When they moved to London, Luisa could not visit her friend's house and play with building blocks anymore. Luisa's mum did not have the money to buy her children toys.



One day, Luisa's mum took her children to St Francis Family Centre. They loved it straight away. Now they had a safe space to play with lots of toys, including building blocks. Luisa and her sister made lots of friends.

The family smiled a lot more and were much happier.

However, every day they turned up to the Family Centre wearing the same clothes. Luisa would wear a pair of jeans and a scruffy yellow jumper. This was all she had. The family didn't even have any socks for the cold winter days. Luisa had to wear shoes that were too small for her. Her feet were very sore.

Thanks to the generous donations of people in the community, St Francis Family Centre gave the family new coats, shoes, scarves and hats.





Luisa could borrow toys from the toy library every week so she always had something to play with. St Francis also gave Luisa's mum food she could prepare in the room they lived in so they wouldn't go hungry.

After seven months, Luisa's family were given a bigger home and moved out of the area.

Luisa's mum said that being at St Francis Family Centre had been the best thing that had happened to her and her children.

# Reflection



Spend a minute quietly thinking about Luisa's story.

What problems did Luisa and her family face?

How did the Catholic Children's Society help Luisa's family?

How do you feel after hearing Luisa's story?



# Prayer



Dear Lord  
This Lent, help us on our journey to grow  
closer to you. Guide us as we put our faith  
into action and help children like Luisa.  
Amen



# Luke's Story





Luke is four years old and lives with his mum, dad and three year old sister. Luke loved his home. He had his own bedroom filled with his toys.

Luke's dad worked as a chef in a local pub. He worked long hours but loved his job. Luke's mum stays at home to look after his sister.

One night everything changed. At about 3am, Luke was woken by a scream. It was his mum. When Luke opened his eyes, all he saw was thick smoke. He ran out of his room and saw his mum, dad and sister.



They grabbed towels from the bathroom and covered their faces as they ran out of the house.

Luckily the family made it out safely. arrived and put out the fire, but the house was completely destroyed. Luke's family's home and all of their belongings were gone.



With nowhere else to go, the family went to a hotel. After weeks of waiting, the family were told that the fire was caused by an electrical fault and that they would not be able to move back into their home.

A week after the fire, Luke's dad was told that the pub was closing so he would lose his job. The family were still staying in the hotel and it was very expensive. All four of them shared one room, with no kitchen to cook in.

All of the family's savings were being spent on the hotel. With no job, Luke's dad was quickly running out of money. He was scared that his family were going to be homeless.

Luke's mum and dad found a new flat that was much cheaper than the hotel. However, they needed a deposit to move in.

Luke's school knew what was happening and contacted the Catholic Children's Society to see if they could help.

From the Crisis Fund, CCS gave Luke's family the money they needed for a new home. When the Headteacher told Luke's parents that they would be able to get their new home, they cried with relief.

Now Luke's dad has a new job and the family are feeling happy and very grateful to be in their new home.



# Reflection



Spend a minute quietly thinking about Luke's story.

What problems did Luke and his family face?

How did the Catholic Children's Society help Luke's family?

How do you feel after hearing Luke's story?



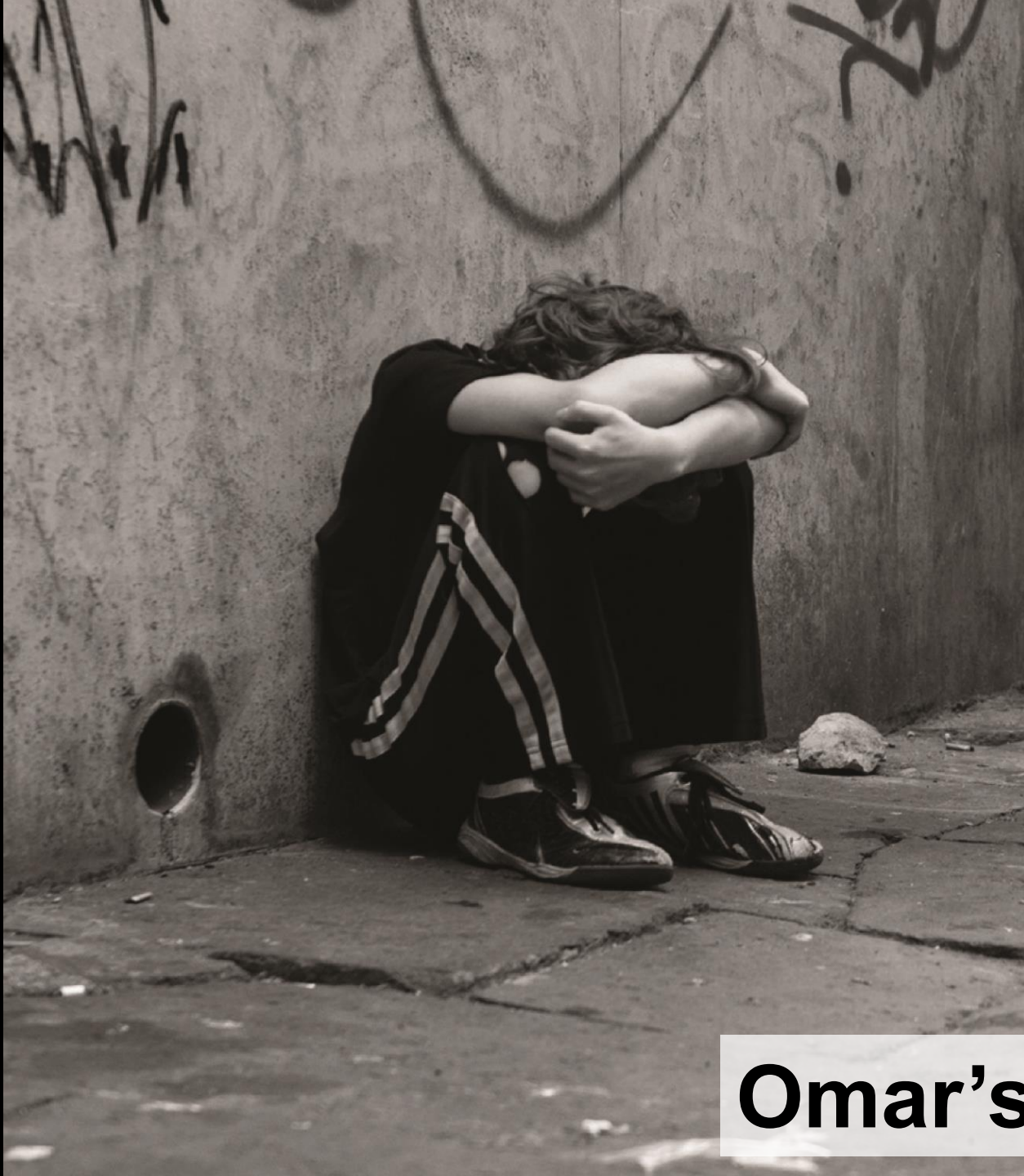
# Prayer



Dear Lord

This Lent, help us on our journey to grow closer to you. Guide us as we put our faith into action and help children like Luke.

Amen



# Omar's Story



Omar is nine years old. Six months ago he moved to the UK from Syria with his mum, dad and four year old brother. Omar's family loved Syria. Before the war, Omar used to go to school, play in the park with his friends, and go to restaurants with his family. This all changed when the war began in 2011. Their home town suffered many bombings. Omar's school closed. The parks and restaurants closed.



Too scared to leave the house, the family locked themselves away for four months.

Omar's dad only risked leaving to get food



and drink for the family. The family decided it was now too dangerous. Taking just one bag each, Omar's family left everything else behind.

Trekking across northern Syria, the family faced many challenges. The van they were travelling in broke down and they had to complete most of the journey on foot. When Omar's family reached the coast of Turkey, they had to board a small overcrowded boat. Omar saw another boat capsize because it was too full. Omar's family could not help.

They arrived in Greece. Omar's mum has a long-term illness. Because of this, the family were granted residency in the UK.

The family now live in the outskirts of London. They are so happy and grateful to be safe. When Omar started school, his teacher noticed that he was very quiet and withdrawn.

One day, at lunchtime, Omar's teacher found him crying in the corner of the playground. Omar started seeing a CCS therapist at school.



At first Omar would not speak, but after a few sessions he started drawing pictures of what he had seen on his journey from Syria. The therapist also found out that Omar and his brother were sleeping huddled in blankets on the floor.

The family were so grateful for their home that they didn't want to ask for anything else. Omar's Headteacher applied for the CCS Crisis Fund. Within just 24 hours, Omar and his brother had new beds and bedding. Now the family feel like they have a proper home.



# Reflection



Spend a minute quietly thinking about Omar's story.

What problems did Omar and his family face?

How did the Catholic Children's Society help Omar's family?

How do you feel after hearing Omar's story?



# Prayer



Dear Lord

This Lent, help us on our journey to grow closer to you. Guide us as we put our faith into action and help children like Omar.

Amen





# **Adenji's Story**

Adenji is now 16 years old and lives with his mum, dad, brother and two sisters.

Adenji's family moved to Tower Hamlets when he was four years old. They all lived in a small two bed flat. Adenji shared a single bed with his two brothers.

When the family moved to the area they didn't know anyone. They felt very alone and didn't know where to turn. Then they found St Francis Family Centre.



Adenji found it hard to make friends when he first started at St Francis. One minute he would be playing with other children, the next he would be screaming and trying to hit them.

Adenji was behaving like this at home too and his parents didn't know what to do.

One of the Nursery Nurses at St Francis worked closely with Adenji to give him the help and support he needed to settle in.





Adenji loved games and began to see that it was more fun when he played with other children. He began making friends and getting involved in activities, learning to share and work with others. This meant that he was much more prepared to start school.

When he started school, his teachers commented on what a lovely, kind boy he was. He easily made friends and enjoyed school.

12 years on from starting at St Francis Family Centre, Adenji has just received fantastic GCSE grades. His mum still drops in to St Francis. She says that the Family Centre helped to turn their lives around and gave them all hope.

Adenji is excited to begin his A Levels and hopes to train as a doctor.

Adenji is a happy, popular, confident 16 year old. His parents are grateful to St Francis for helping the family when they needed it most and leading Adeniji on such a successful path.

# Reflection



Spend a minute quietly thinking about Adenji's story.

What problems did Adenji and his family face?

How did the Catholic Children's Society help Adenji's family?

How do you feel after hearing Adenji's story?



# Prayer



Dear Lord  
This Lent, help us on our journey to grow  
closer to you. Guide us as we put our faith  
into action and help children like Adenji.  
Amen



# **Sasha's Story**



Sasha is 7 years old. She has one brother who is 15 and a sister who is 21. Her sister goes to university.



Sasha's mum brought up her four children on her own. She had no other family to help her and worked hard to support her family. She was working as a successful lawyer when, three years ago, she became very ill. Sasha's life changed forever.

Sasha's mum had to stop work and received money to help her whilst she was ill. This was much less than Sasha's mum used to earn, so the family moved to a smaller home. The family all helped to look after their mum.



Late last year their mum sadly died. Sasha's sister decided to take a year out of university to look after her younger brother and sister. They had no other family to help them.

Sasha's family were upset and still in shock, but knew that they had to organise their mum's funeral. A funeral is very expensive and the money that their mum was receiving to look after the family stopped when she died. They were given just £50 a week to buy food for Sasha and her brother.

Whilst trying to grieve for their mum, they were also very worried about how they would find the money to pay for the funeral.

Sasha's Headteacher contacted the Catholic Children's Society and applied to the Crisis Fund.

Within 24 hours, the Catholic Children's Society gave the family the money they needed to pay for the funeral. Sasha and her siblings were able to say goodbye to their mum.

# Reflection



Spend a minute quietly thinking about Sasha's story.

What problems did Sasha and her family face?

How did the Catholic Children's Society help Sasha's family?

How do you feel after hearing Sasha's story?



# Prayer



Dear Lord

This Lent, help us on our journey to grow closer to you. Guide us as we put our faith into action and help children like Sasha.

Amen