

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Every Journey Deserves Hope: CatholicCare Victoria's 2026 Easter Appeal shares Zahra's story of courage and renewal**

As the Church journeys through Lent toward Easter, CatholicCare Victoria has launched its 2026 Easter Appeal, sharing the deeply personal stories of refugees and people seeking asylum rebuilding their lives in Australia.

At the heart of this year's Appeal is Zahra\*, an Afghan mother who arrived in Australia three years ago seeking safety, dignity and a future for her children after fleeing violence and oppression.

"CatholicCare did not just teach me how to survive," Zahra says. "They gave me strength. They helped me raise my voice. They reminded me that I am human."

Easter is a season of renewal, grounded in the Christian belief that hope can rise even from suffering. For many people supported by CatholicCare Victoria, this renewal is not symbolic but deeply personal. Zahra's journey has been marked by conflict, forced displacement and separation from her children — a separation she describes as heartbreak beyond words.

"When I landed in Australia, I felt like I had died — a body without a soul," she recalls. "A mother's heart is not divided by distance. It is broken by it."

Arriving alone, traumatised and physically unwell, Zahra faced overwhelming uncertainty. Through CatholicCare Victoria's Asylum Seeker Support Program, she encountered accompaniment: people who listened to her story, affirmed her dignity and walked beside her as she began to rebuild her life.

With support, Zahra has accessed medical care, studied English, completed first aid and food safety qualifications, and begun training in healthcare — determined one day to give back to the community that supported her.

"They are not just a service," she says of CatholicCare. "They are building the human. They are building the future of a person."

Zahra's story is one of six being shared through the Easter Appeal via a series of short videos, offering insight into the realities of displacement and the impact of compassionate, practical support.

As Christians reflect on Christ's suffering, death and resurrection, the Appeal invites the faithful to consider how they are called to walk with those who are broken-hearted. As Scripture reminds us, "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted, and saves those whose spirit is crushed" (Psalm 34:18).

Zahra's journey is not yet complete. Her deepest hope remains to be reunited with her children. Yet today, she stands stronger and no longer alone.

"Please don't close the door of hope," she says. "For people like me, CatholicCare is the door that is light."

To watch Zahra's story and learn more about CatholicCare Victoria's 2026 Easter Appeal, visit [www.catholiccarevic.org.au/easter-appeal](http://www.catholiccarevic.org.au/easter-appeal).

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