

Good morning/afternoon/evening everyone,

Thank you Fr xxxxx for allowing me to speak to you all today to tell you about this year's WEE BOX Appeal.

Firstly, on behalf of SCIAF, thank you. Your generosity, this year, last year, and for decades, has changed lives. And it continues to change lives in ways that most of us will never fully see. But today, I want to take you there, just for a few moments.

This Lent, our appeal focuses on Ethiopia- a country full of hope, resilience, and faith. For years, communities have been building a better future: children going to school, families successfully farming, young people growing up with bright futures. But in recent years, much of that progress has been undone by war, displacement, drought, flooding, and drastic cuts to aid.

Behind all of these challenges there still lies a basic need for many: access to clean safe water.

Clean water- the most basic gift of life- is becoming harder and harder to reach for many communities. Families walk miles to fill a single water carrier. Wells have been destroyed. Water pumps no longer work. And without water, schools close, crops fail, young people drop out of education, and entire communities are pushed to breaking point.

But I want to share with you a voice from Ethiopia- a priest from SCIAF's long-term partner, the Adigrat Diocesan Catholic Secretariat, Father Abraha spoke to our team during a recent visit. He said:

"With no water there is no life. Many places still have no water at all, but little by little we are managing to help them."

He went on to say:

"I appreciate the Scottish people very much. Scottish people are our pillars. They are still helping us. We are very grateful for what you have done- and what you will do in the future."

In a place where homes, farms, and entire water systems have been destroyed. In the middle of all that loss, they speak of **you** with gratitude.

Father Abraha also said:

"When everyone escaped from the war, the Church remained. The Church was a voice for everybody... We serve all human beings, without discrimination."

That is **our** Church.

The Catholic Church in Scotland and across the world.

A Church that stays.

A Church that protects.

A Church that brings water to people who have none.

And you- the Catholic community of Scotland- are part of that mission.

Every WEE BOX, every coin, every prayer, every act of solidarity becomes a lifeline.

Because when clean water flows in a village:

Children return to school.

Women and girls have time for education and work, not long, dangerous walks for water.

Families grow more food.

Communities flourish again.

And hope returns.

Your generosity doesn't just deliver water. It delivers dignity. It delivers opportunity. It delivers hope.

Pope Leo reminds us that "love for the poor... is the evangelical hallmark of a Church faithful to the heart of God."

That is what you live out when you support SCIAF. You proclaim the gospel not only with words, but with clean water, with shelter, with food, with hope.

And so today, I simply want to say, on behalf of all of us: thank you.

Thank you for letting faith become action.

Thank you for standing with your sisters and brothers in Ethiopia, and across the world.

Thank you for proving- year after year- regardless of the hardships we face here in Scotland, that our Church is a Church of compassion, courage, and love.

This Lent, please continue to support the WEE BOX Appeal and if you can support us in your SCIAF Parish collection.

Inside every box is the power to rebuild a life.

To restore a community.

To let water flow again.

From Scotland to Ethiopia, your compassion keeps hope flowing.

Thank you and may God bless you.