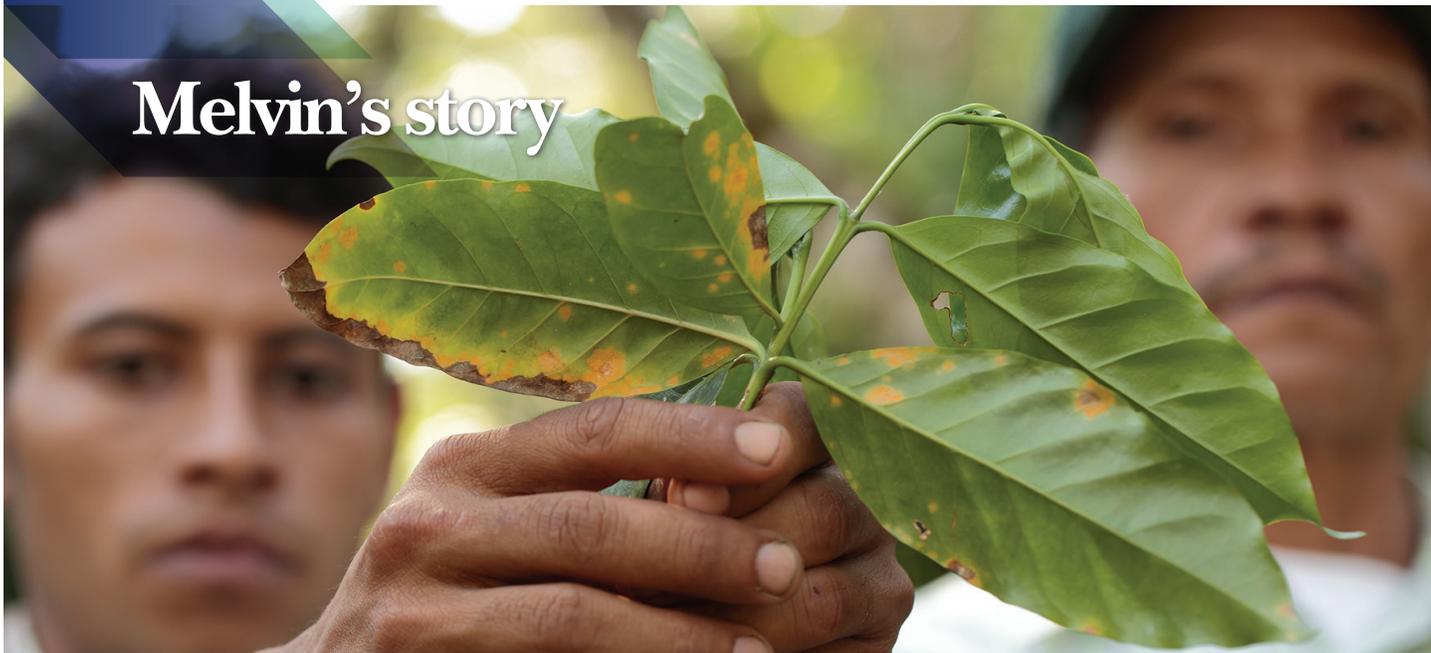


Melvin's story



Melvin Sánchez Ramírez makes his living as a coffee farmer in one of the poorest regions of Nicaragua. For him, his wife and his son, it has always been a challenge, but they've managed to get by. Then came coffee leaf rust. The fungus killed so many of Melvin's plants, he had no coffee to sell. His family struggled to put food on the table. Catholic Relief Services helped teach farmers like Melvin how to protect their plants from leaf rust and how to grow other crops, like plantains and sweet potatoes. Some farmers in the area are even learning to keep bees for honey and raise hens for eggs. Families like Melvin's, who rely on the earth for their food and work, are very aware of how caring for creation directly affects human life.

Top: Rising temperatures in Nicaragua mean farmers' coffee crops have been plagued by coffee leaf rust. CRS is showing them how to plant alternative crops for food and income. Above left: Nicaragua, the largest country in Central America, has a largely agricultural economy. Right: Melvin with his family. Map credit: OCHA. Photos by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS



CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION

God created every plant, every mountaintop, every animal—everything. And God said that these things are good. We must take care of creation—both for ourselves and for all of our human family.

care for God's creation

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: NICARAGUA

LESSON PLAN GRADES 4-6

35 Minutes

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the Catholic social teaching principle Care for God's Creation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching) through the story of Melvin Sánchez Ramírez, a coffee farmer in Nicaragua. Students will examine how growing different crops helps farmers.

MATERIALS

- Bible
- **Care for Creation Activity Sheet, Grades 4-6**
- **Melvin's Story**
- Pens or pencils
- Whiteboard and marker
- World map

DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

1. Read Genesis 2:15. Describe the Catholic social teaching principle Care for God's creation and emphasize that one reason we care for creation is because it directly affects the well-being of people. Tell students they will learn more about this as they reflect on **Melvin's Story**.
2. Locate Nicaragua on a map.
3. Distribute **Melvin's Story** and read it together.
4. Ask students to call out the different crops that are mentioned in **Melvin's Story**. Write these in one column on the whiteboard. In a second column, ask students to call out the different things that these crops need: water, soil, sunlight, human care, etc. Point out that each crop or animal needs different amounts of these resources.

ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1. Distribute the **Care for God's Creation Activity Sheet, Grades 4-6**, to each student.
2. Follow the instructions on the activity sheet. When you get to Part 2, invite students to look at the photo of coffee leaf rust in **Melvin's Story** and to read the photo caption.
3. Ask them to fill in Part 3 of the activity sheet and to share their answers with the class.
4. Highlight the relationship between creation and people. Emphasize that rural farmers who rely directly on creation for their food and work are especially sensitive to any changes in the environment.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Re-read Genesis 2:15

Loving God, we thank you for all of the gifts of the earth, and we pray that we always remember to cultivate and care for your creation. Amen

TAKING IT HOME

Encourage students to ask their families if they can go to the supermarket with them. Ask them to walk through the coffee aisle and to look at the packaging to see where the coffee was made. Tell them to look for labels that say "fair trade" or "organic," which mean creation was respected while the coffee was grown.

care for God's creation

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: NICARAGUA

ACTIVITY SHEET GRADES 4-6



You are a farmer in Nicaragua and must make \$100 to feed your family.

PART 1

This is your coffee farm.



PART 2

Your coffee plants have a sickness called coffee leaf rust and 70 percent of your crops have died this year. Cross off seven of your plants on your farm.

How much money will you make from selling your coffee? _____

Is this enough money to feed your family? Yes No

How much money do you still need? _____

PART 3

Pick a combination of the crops on the left to add to your farm. You must choose at least one of each crop. Remember, the total value of your crops, including coffee, needs to add up to at least \$100 to feed your family. Circle the crops you want.

How much money will you make from selling your new crops? _____

Is this enough money to feed your family? Yes No