

First Fridays for Food Security: August 5, 2011



What is First Fridays for Food Security?

On every first Friday for a year, eat meals that cost only as much as is allotted for a family of your size by the [USDA Modified Thrifty Food Plan](#). (You will need to divide the weekly cost by seven.) This plan is used as the basis for food stamp allotments.* Many individuals or families may notice a disparity between the cost of their normal meals and the amount allotted in the food plan. The “cutting back” that will likely be required in order to stay “in budget” can be considered a type of fasting.

Why fast?

“Voluntary fasting from food creates in us a greater openness to God's Spirit and deepens our compassion for those who are forced to go without food. The discomfort brought about by fasting unites us to the sufferings of Christ. Fasting should bring to mind the sufferings of all those for whom Christ suffered.” (United States Catholic Bishops, *Penitential Practices for Today's Catholics*, 2000)

Participating in this fast can make you open to the Holy Spirit and help you to walk in solidarity with all those for whom access to adequate, nutritious food is difficult.

When should I fast?

Every first Friday between May 6, 2011 and April 6, 2012. If desired, individuals or families can choose to extend the fast for the entire week.

Where will this event take place?

Individuals and families all around the U.S. are invited to participate from their own communities. On each first Friday, those participating can visit the [Facebook event page](#) to discuss their experiences and activities. There, they can also access prayer and educational resources from USCCB.

* Food stamps are awarded to make up the difference between a family's personal resources and the amount allotted by the USDA Modified Thrifty Food Plan.

Farm workers in the United States

Living in the United States, we have grown accustomed to supermarket produce sections that provide us with a seemingly endless supply of fresh fruits and vegetables, all at relatively reasonable prices.



This bounty, however, comes at a steep price: the lives and dignity of farm workers. Farm workers occupy a special place in the world economy because they grow and harvest our sustenance. Despite this distinguished position, farm workers are routinely exploited and exposed to harsh and unsafe conditions. Given that many farm workers are migrants who are newly arrived in this country and unfamiliar with protections afforded to them, they are easily taken advantage of by unscrupulous employers. (USCCB: [For I was Hungry](#))

According to the Department of Labor, the poverty rate among farm workers is 60%; an astonishing 75% make less than \$10,000 per year. With such modest incomes, workers cannot afford to purchase the fruit of their labor. For Catholics, this is a moral tragedy and a situation that demands justice.



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What the Church Teaches

The inherent dignity of work is a central tenet of Catholic Social Teaching. Work allows us to contribute to God's creation and realize our humanity more fully. When work becomes exploitive, we strip the laborer of his or her dignity. The economy exists for the worker, not the worker for the economy. ([A Catholic Framework for Economic Life](#)) These dangers are more acute in the agricultural sector.

In *Laborem Exercens*, Blessed John Paul II notes:

Agricultural work involves considerable difficulties, including unremitting and sometimes exhausting physical effort and a lack of appreciation on the part of society, to the point of making agricultural people feel that they are social outcasts. . . .

In many situations radical and urgent changes are therefore needed in order to restore to agriculture--and to rural people--their just value as the basis for a healthy economy, within the social community's development as a whole. Thus it is necessary to proclaim and promote the dignity of work, of all work but especially of agricultural work, in which man so eloquently "subdues" the earth he has received as a gift from God and affirms his "dominion" in the visible world. (#21)

How You Can Respond

Join the [Facebook event](#) and follow the instructions on page 1 to fast in solidarity with those who work to grow and harvest our food. Share the event with your friends and family to educate them on the plight of farm workers here in the U.S. and around the world.

Advocate for protections for migrant farm workers by joining the U.S. Catholic bishops' [Justice for Immigrants Campaign](#).

Be mindful of the struggle of farm workers for dignity, and when possible, consider purchasing goods from markets and companies that ensure just treatment of farm workers and pay a wage that is sufficient to support a family. As more consumers become concerned with the treatment of farm workers, fair trade movements and products are becoming more prevalent in the marketplace.



Table Prayer

We begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

Please read the following passage from the family Bible:

James 5:1-8

Prayer:

Lord Jesus,
during your earthly ministry,
you gave special care to the forgotten and ignored,
to those of lowest rank.

We ask you to turn our eyes and hearts to those in need
that we may use our hands to reach out to them
and our voices to call for the justice you preached. Amen.

Pledging ourselves to the justice of God's kingdom we pray:

Our Father.....

