

First Fridays for Food Security: April 6, 2012



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 the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly called food stamps).^{*} 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 form 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 help you be open to the Holy Spirit and walk in solidarity with all those for whom access to adequate, nutritious food is difficult.

When should I fast?

The first Friday of every month through April 6, 2012. If desired, individuals or families can choose to extend the fast to cover the whole first week of the month or more than one day a month.

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.

^{*} Assistance is awarded to make up the difference between a family's personal

A Good Friday Reflection on Food Security

Today, on Good Friday, we reflect on the passion and death of Christ. The passion reminds us in a special way that “the Lord hears the cry of the multitudes” and that “the compassionate gaze of Christ” falls upon all who suffer (Pope Benedict XVI, Lenten Message, 2006). Thus, we recall our journey during the past eleven months to fast on the first Friday of each month in solidarity with our brothers and sisters experiencing food insecurity.

As Catholics, we are called to be concerned about the food insecurity experienced by so many of our brothers and sisters, including 17.4 million households in the United States and 925 million people around the world who are undernourished. We have also taken time to reflect on several themes ranging from the Sacred Heart of Jesus to food deserts in the United States. However, the theme that sits at the core of these monthly reflections is the dignity of human life.

Hunger threatens the dignity of human life at all stages, and those who are most dependent on others are those most at risk. When women don't have access to a healthy food supply during pregnancy, they can miscarry, or their growing



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children can be born with birth defects or low birth weight, conditions that can be fatal. After birth, children remain at risk, with 1 in 5 children in the U.S. living in a household that at times runs out of food.

Farm workers, who play a vital role in the world economy, are routinely exploited and are also at risk. Many farm workers are migrants unfamiliar with protections afforded to them and who are easily taken advantage of by unscrupulous employers. The poverty rate among farm workers is 60%; an astonishing 75% make less than \$10,000 per year! Workers are unable to purchase the fruits of their own labor.

Finally, there are food “deserts” that exist in many poor neighborhoods in our country where supermarkets that stock fresh, healthy food are simply not available. With an inability to purchase healthy food, people who are considered low-income have no choice but to buy over-priced high fat and high sugar products from convenience stores. This puts those who are poor at higher risk of diabetes, obesity and premature death. Food insecurity can affect people at all stages in life.

How You Can Respond

On this Good Friday, the First Friday of April, take time, possibly in front of the Blessed Sacrament or an image of the Sacred Heart, to see the world through the eyes of those suffering around us: What would it feel like to only serve one meal to your family each day? If you didn't have access to transportation, how would you buy groceries? Without a just wage, how could you help your pregnant wife to eat healthy meals for two?

Send an email or make a phone call to your elected officials to urge legislators to prioritize our brothers and sisters experiencing food insecurity at home and around the world. Visit the USCCB [Action Center](#) to take action now.

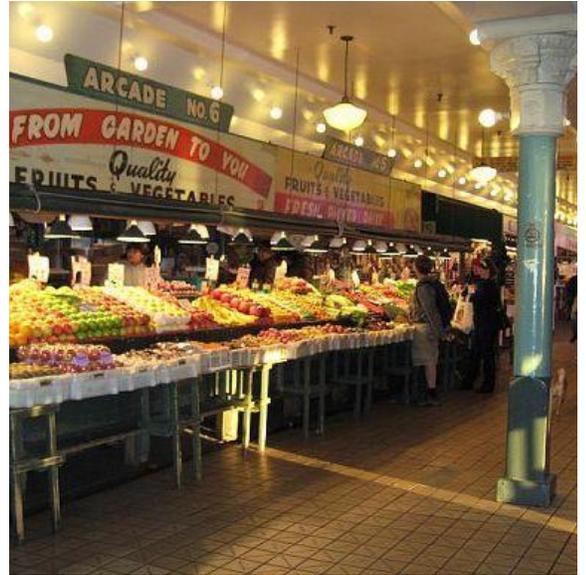


Table Prayer

We begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

Please read the following passage from the family Bible: John 19:25-27

Lord Jesus Christ,

On this Good Friday, we stand before your cross, the sign of your great love for all human beings.

You accepted the pain, suffering, and humiliation so that we might live forever with you in heaven.

May we be strengthened to follow in your footsteps and take up our crosses each day, trusting in you entirely and caring for our brothers and sisters that they may live in dignity. Amen.

