

# First Fridays for Food Security: February 3, 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?

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.

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

## Food Insecurity and Climate Change

For the past ten months, Catholics in the U.S. have been fasting on First Fridays in solidarity with persons living in poverty in the U.S.

Food insecurity is also a serious problem globally and is often intensified by climate change. According to a recent [report](#) by the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#), climate change will significantly affect the availability of water for growing food and for crop production globally. This will disproportionately affect poor people in rural areas whose livelihoods are closely connected to agriculture and natural resources.

In Ethiopia, as in other countries in the Horn of Africa, crops and livestock are being destroyed by drought, which is one of the effects of climate change. According to Lane Bunkers, Catholic Relief Services' country representative in Ethiopia, drought is having a serious impact on farmers' agricultural practices. He said, “That's changing because peasant farmers who rely on rain-fed agriculture can no longer rely on the rain.” Bunkers added, “Land degradation and climate change are serious realities in Ethiopia.”

The [Ethiopian Catholic Church](#) is working with partners such as CRS and Caritas on humanitarian projects to improve food security and help vulnerable communities adapt to climate change.



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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## What the Church Teaches

The Catholic Church brings a distinct perspective to the debate about climate change by lifting up the moral dimensions of this issue and the needs of poor and vulnerable people here at home and around the world. As Catholics our faith calls us to care for all of God's creation, especially the 'least of these' (Mt 25:40). Pope Benedict XVI expressed a clear need for solidarity with creation and those affected by climate change in his [2010 World Day of Peace Message](#). Our Holy Father further insisted in his [Address to the Diplomatic Corps](#) this month, "Environmental protection and the connection between fighting poverty and fighting climate change are important areas for the promotion of integral human development."

## How You Can Respond

- On February 3, join the Facebook event and follow the instructions in this handout to fast in solidarity with all those who are food insecure.
- Take the [St. Francis Pledge](#) to Care for Creation and the Poor at the Catholic Climate Covenant web site.
- Learn more about how climate change is related to global poverty and how you can help to solve the problem at the [Catholics Confront Global Poverty](#) web site.
- Read the bishops' statement on [Global Climate Change](#).
- Consider donating the money you save to Catholic Relief Services or to a related institution that helps vulnerable communities to respond to the effects of climate change.
- Check the USCCB [Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development](#) and [Environmental Justice Program](#) web site to receive future action alerts and information on environment and climate change.



Photo by CRS/Kevin Kostic

In Ethiopia, as in other countries in the Horn of Africa, crops and livestock are being destroyed by drought.

## Table Prayer

*We begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.*

*Please read the following passage from the family Bible: Daniel 3: 62-76.*

### Prayer:

God our Father,  
You created the earth and all that is in it and set human beings to care for it. As we gather at this table to share the fruits of this earth, let us remember those who, this day, do not have enough to eat. In solidarity as your family, may we come to their aid through our sacrifices and prayers.

Amen.



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