

First Fridays for Food Security: September 2, 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 stamps (i.e. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP).* 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 through 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.

Kids and Hunger

It will soon be that time when kids go back to school. But in today's economy there are justifiable concerns about childhood hunger and lack of adequate nutrition. More than 50 million Americans are facing food insecurity. Sadly, 17.2 million, or approximately 1 in 4, are children, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

As a people of faith dedicated to the life and dignity of the human person, we must work together as a society to promote the common good and combat what Pope Benedict XVI has consistently called the “scandal of hunger.”



Because private charity alone is insufficient to provide for the great needs of hungry children, the Church continues to promote a positive cooperative relationship with government and other sectors of society to provide nutritious food for hungry kids. Many federal programs reach out to help feed hungry kids through schools, churches and other civic organizations.



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These important programs include:

- **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**
- **Women, Infants and Children (WIC)**
- **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**
- **The National School Lunch and Breakfast programs**

As the U.S. Bishops wrote in *For I was Hungry and You Gave Me Food*, “when the economy fails to provide the jobs and income necessary to prevent hunger and malnutrition, the various local, state, and national food assistance programs must be funded and expanded to provide food to all in need.”

What the Church Teaches

In *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that love for God and neighbor must propel us both to directly serve individuals who are in need, and to work for the common good of all (no. 7).

We must see our fellow human beings as members of our human family—as brothers and sisters. When we come to this recognition and act on it, we are practicing solidarity.

We act in solidarity when we prioritize the needs of the “least ones” (Mt. 25:45) in our daily actions. We must also work to ensure that protecting the vulnerable is a central priority of laws and policies.

How You Can Respond

On September 2, join the [Facebook event](#) and follow the instructions in this handout to fast in solidarity with all those who are food insecure. Pray for children in the U.S. and also those currently affected by famine in East Africa.

Donate to Catholic Relief Services to help children suffering from hunger globally; volunteer with a Catholic Charities agency or organize a food basket drive in your parish to help those in need locally.

Consider how you are called to advocate on behalf of those in need. Check the USCCB [Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development web site](#) to take part in an action alert to ensure that hungry children and other poor and vulnerable persons are prioritized in public policy decisions.



Table Prayer

We begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

Please read the following passage from the family Bible: Matthew 18:1-5

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,

In your great goodness, you became human, being born into a poor family.

We ask you to look with kindness on those children in our nation and in our world who do not have enough to eat. Kindle in our hearts the fire of love for our brothers and sisters, so that we may do all we can to meet their needs.

We ask this through you, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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