

Unlock Food Opportunities. End Poverty.

How is Food connected to:

- Our Faith?
- The Catholic Campaign for Human Development?
- An Individual in Poverty?

Read on to learn more about the link between food, faith, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), and poverty. Use this information to guide the creation of your artwork.

Why FOOD is Important

It might seem like everyone should know why food is important: We all need to eat to survive! That is not the only thing that is important about food, though. Fresh produce can be increasingly scarce in urban centers where sometimes even grocery stores aren't nearby. Family farms are in danger of extinction. The rise of large 'factory' farms and the current economy makes small farming a difficult prospect, but people want, and deserve to have the option of buying food that is grown naturally and without harming the environment.

Questions:

1. Have you ever planted something and watched it grow? A vegetable garden, flowers in a window box, a houseplant, or even a bean seed in a paper cup as a grade school project. How did you feel about the experience of growing something?
2. Where does your food come from? Do you get fresh produce from the grocery store, a farmers market, or maybe straight from a farm? What would your meals be like if you didn't have access to fresh fruits and vegetables? What would you be missing out on if there wasn't a grocery store that served your neighborhood?

What our FAITH Teaches

Catholic social teaching, expressed in a series of documents written by Popes and Catholic Bishops, helps us to apply Scripture and the traditions of the Catholic faith to situations that occur in our present day world. *Care for God's Creation* is one of the themes found in Catholic social teaching.

The world that God created has been entrusted to us. Our use of it must be directed by God's plan for creation, not simply for our own benefit. Our stewardship of the Earth is a form of participation in God's act of creating and

sustaining the world. In our use of creation, we must be guided by a concern for generations to come. We show our respect for the Creator by our care for creation.

– United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Faithful Citizenship

Our Bishops also address the importance of food and farms in their statement *Economic Justice for All* (#228) where they tell us:

Farm owners and farm workers are the immediate stewards of the natural resources required to produce the food that is necessary to sustain life. These resources must be understood as gifts of a generous God. When they are seen in that light and when the human race is perceived as a single moral community, we gain a sense of the substantial responsibility we bear as a nation for the world food system. Meeting human needs today and in the future demands an increased sense of stewardship and conservation from owners, managers, and regulators of all resources, especially those required for the production of food.

We read about God's gift of the earth in the first chapter of Genesis, the story of creation. People were created in the image of God who also gives this message:

"See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground, I give all the green plants for food." And so it happened. *Genesis 1:29-30*

Jesus reinforces the importance of food, and that no one goes without, in his actions and parables. Jesus feeds five thousand hungry travelers in Matthew 14. In Luke 5 he helps the fishermen make an abundant catch, and in Matthew 25 the parable of the last judgment illustrates the significance of feeding the hungry:

Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food...' Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.' *Matthew 25:34-35 & 40*

Taking ACTION

Not everyone has the desire to farm the land, but those who do are stewards of the earth in a special way. **Access** to healthy food **is a right** that everyone shares. Here is what one group of people, with help from CCHD, did to **unlock** better opportunities for their community while promoting care for God's creation.

Build It and They Will Come: Small Farm Produce Nourishes Solidarity in New Orleans

Adapted from an article by Chris Kelly

It's Saturday morning in downtown New Orleans, and the Crescent City Farmers Market is in full swing. Johnnie Clark has made his weekly trip into the city to sell fresh produce at the market. Clark, a small family farmer, hails from Independence, Louisiana, about 65 miles north of New Orleans, where he and five other low-income, family farmers have joined forces to sell their produce. They rent a tractor – buying one would be too expensive – to plant and harvest their crops, provide work for eight men and women who clean, process and package the produce, and take advantage of the opportunity to sell their products to the hundreds of urban shoppers who gather at the market to purchase a wide variety of fresh, often organically grown, Louisiana fruits and vegetables. Living in an area where just about everyone is on public assistance, Clark says the \$135 he brings home each week from the Crescent City Farmers Market helps to alleviate some of his workers' poverty.

The poverty in Louisiana makes it hard for family owned farms, like Clark's, to operate full-time, so community leaders came together in 1995 with a goal to creatively invest in farmers and small-scale farms. From that meeting, the Crescent City Farmers Market was born to help limited resource farmers – most of whom own 20 acres or less – find a market for their products.

CCHD helped by providing more than \$47,000 worth of grants over three years. "CCHD helps enterprises like Crescent City grow by providing grants to low-income areas when banks won't," said Tom Costanza, Director of the CCHD programs for the Archdiocese of New Orleans. This idea has grown into a market that has given new life to 2 dozen family farms, sells \$500,000 worth of goods annually, and has helped more than 1 dozen new small businesses get off the ground.

One of the most successful small businesses that began in the market is the Riverside Pasta Company, a partnership run by residents from the nearby St. Thomas public housing development. These low-income residents are trying to find opportunities, like Johnnie Clark is doing with his produce, to work their way out of poverty. In 1996, local CCHD seed money and grants from the City of New Orleans helped to supply the residents with the money to buy materials, advertising, and the technical expertise to teach them how to make fresh pasta. Their items regularly sell out at the market, and the partnership is now looking at ways to operate independently of the farmers market.

The Crescent City Farmers Market has created an opportunity for people who are considered the 'working poor' to see themselves as entrepreneurs as they create ways to leave poverty behind. Soon the Crescent City Farmers Market will be on its own, with vendors supporting their farms and businesses by selling to urban dwellers who continue to be eager for fresh produce. "There's real solidarity being built between urban and rural, and poor and non-poor," says Andy Slettebak, CCHD Grants Representative. Tom Costanza agrees. "The Crescent City Farmers Market is reflective of what we hope an economically-just society looks like."

The United States Catholic Bishops created the Catholic Campaign for Human Development to help poor people bring themselves out of poverty. CCHD provides money in the form of grants to groups in the United States, like Crescent City Farmers Market, that are changing the structures that cause poverty. CCHD also offers opportunities for “transformative” education. The goal of transformative education is to help people change their attitudes about the poor and to create better relationships between the poor and the non-poor through interaction, discussion and personal reflection on experiences and scripture. The work of CCHD is supported by a collection taken up nationwide in most Catholic parishes the weekend before Thanksgiving.

As an individual or a group of artists you may want to reflect on these questions as you begin to think about how to represent ‘**Unlock Opportunities. End Poverty.**’ in your artwork.

- List the ways that food is important to you?
- What does our Catholic faith say about the importance of food and care for the earth?
- What were the problems faced by the small family farmers and urban communities in Louisiana?
- What approach was taken to solve these problems?
- How can you use your art project to describe the link between food, care for the earth and poverty?

If you want to read more about poverty in the USA and groups that work with CCHD to fight poverty visit these sites on the web:

www.usccb.org/cchd

www.povertyusa.org