

A Faith Response to Hunger

The Catholic Church proclaims the central truth that every human person is sacred. Created in God's image and likeness and redeemed by the death and resurrection of Christ, every person has fundamental human dignity that comes from God, not from any human attribute or accomplishment. Every person has a right to life and to the material and spiritual support required to live a truly human existence. **The right to a truly human life logically leads to the right to enough food to sustain a life with dignity.** (*"For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food" (Mt 25:35)*)



But the poverty and hunger that diminish the lives of millions in our own land and in so many other countries are fundamental threats to human life and dignity and demand a response from believers. The reality is that:

- 35 million people in the United States are hungry.
- Food stamp benefits average \$1 per person per meal. The minimum food stamp benefits, \$10 per month, have not increased in 30 years.
- Four out of five food stamp recipients in the U.S. are children.

One way to respond is by taking the Food Solidarity Challenge. This challenge, sponsored by a wide coalition of USCCB partners, including Catholic Charities USA, the Food and Research Action Center, and others, is for individuals or groups of any size.

The Food Solidarity Challenge

1. Choose a week during which you or your group will participate in the challenge. You can take the challenge during any week, but you might consider the weeks surrounding: World Food Day (Oct. 16), your diocese's Rural Life Day (usually in the Fall), or Human Rights Day (Dec. 10), or during Poverty Awareness Month (January).
2. Commit to using only the average food stamp benefit of \$3.00 per person per day to buy and consume food during that week.
3. Keep a journal of the items you buy and your experience during that week. What can you buy with \$3.00 a day? What choices do you have to make? What thoughts and emotions do you experience while making those choices?
4. Reflect on and discuss your experience with others. How can you better relate to those depending on food stamps on a regular basis? Is the current system just? What does your faith say about providing for the poor and vulnerable?

What else can I do?

Visit <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/takeaction.shtml> to take action with other faithful Catholics to urge adequate funding for nutrition programs in the United States.



Prayer for Food Justice



God of the hungry, God of the full,

We are all one family. Help us to remember, as we sit at table, those around us who experience the pangs of hunger each day.

We are all made in your image. Show us how to value the human dignity of all, through respect for the rights of all, including the right to food.

We are all your children. Grant us the desire to exist in solidarity with one another: caring, sharing, ensuring that all have enough.

We are all your hands in this world. Be with us as we work to fashion a food system that reflects your vision—of dignity, equality, and justice. Amen.