

First Fridays for Food Security: October 7, 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.

Hunger and Respect Life Month

October is set aside as Respect Life Month, when the bishops remind us to cherish and nurture life from conception to natural death.

Hunger threatens human life at all stages, and those who are most dependent on others are those most at risk.

If a child is conceived while his or her mother is using an IUD or some forms of hormonal birth control, he or she may fail to implant successfully in the womb and so would die for lack of nutrients at the earliest, most delicate stages of life. The abortion drug, RU-486, works by disrupting an established pregnancy, effectively starving the developing embryo; and then a second drug is given later to expel him or her up to 49 days’ gestation. The drug “Ella” is marketed as an emergency contraceptive, even though it is an analogue of RU-486 and can work in a similar abortifacient manner by denying essential nutrients even weeks into an established pregnancy. These injustices against life are often perpetuated out of ignorance about the mechanisms involved in family planning methods.

Food security concerns begin in the womb, but certainly don’t end there.

When women don’t have access to a healthy food supply during pregnancy, their growing children can miscarry, or be born with birth defects or low birth weight, conditions that can be fatal. Malnutrition also makes it difficult if not impossible for mothers to nurse their newborns. Mother and child alike suffer and it has a



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profound impact on their whole family. To respect the inherent dignity of women and children, we must address their nutritional needs both during pregnancy and after birth.

In-between the beginning and end-of-life issues, millions of children fortunate enough to be born then die from hunger and malnutrition. And famine doesn't discriminate – it claims male and female, the young and the old alike. Those who work to remedy widespread food supply discrepancies are serving the cause of life.

Finally, far too often, basic nutrition and hydration are denied to those who are elderly, handicapped, or otherwise incapacitated. But the provision of food and water for those who cannot feed themselves is basic care – whether given by mouth, IV or other medical device. Euthanasia advocates claim to act in “mercy” but this is a fundamental distortion. The deliberate withholding of nutrition as a means of hastening death is never merciful or compassionate as it is an offense against the God-given dignity of the human person. Instead, we are called to true “com-*passion*” – to “suffer with” – those who are weak and rely on us for their food security.

How You Can Respond

This year's Respect Life Program theme is “I came so that all might have life and have it to the full” (cf. John 10:10). Take a look at the “Life Matters” series of pamphlets in this year's [Respect Life Program](#), then pray on the question: How is God calling me to receive the “fullness” of life from him – and how can I share it with others?

On October 7, join the Facebook First Friday event and follow the instructions in this handout to fast in solidarity with all who are food insecure – from womb to tomb. Act locally by making contribution to your local food pantry or pregnancy help center – or by taking the time to visit someone living in a nursing home. Finally, consider advocating for systemic food security through the USCCB's action center { www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/take-action-now } where [multiple action alerts](#) address the urgent needs of the poor and vulnerable at home and abroad.

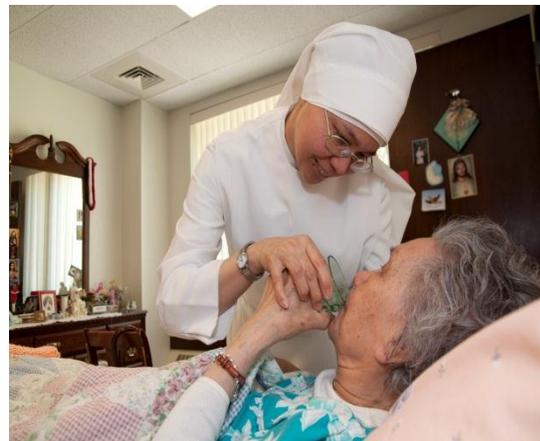


Table Prayer

We begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

Please read the following passage from the family Bible: John 10:1-10

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,
you came so that we might share
in the fullness of life.
Enliven in us
respect for all human life.
Help us to see you in all people,
especially the most vulnerable, the
unborn, the disabled, the poor, the
hungry, the elderly, and the forgotten

May our actions help to meet their
needs so that they may live in peace
according to their dignity.

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



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