

First Fridays for Food Security: December 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 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 Migration

According to the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#) (FAO), “an estimated 925 million people are chronically undernourished and unable to obtain sufficient food to meet even minimum energy needs. Approximately 200 million children under five years of age suffer from acute or chronic symptoms of malnutrition.”

The lack of access to food can result from a wide range of causes, including war, environmental degradation, government corruption, and an inability to provide relief aid to those who are most in need. Today, the Horn of Africa is a place where food insecurity is particularly pronounced, with as much as 70% of the population in Eritrea and Somalia consistently [undernourished](#).

While the consequences of chronic food insecurity are many, one effect is the large scale migration from rural to overcrowded urban centers or from one country to another. Given the stresses and strains caused by food insecurity internationally, it should come as no surprise that one factor in the current immigration debate today focuses on this topic.



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

3211 4th St. NE · Washington, DC 20017 · (202)541-3000 · www.usccb.org

First Fridays for Food Security: December 2, 2011

What the Church Teaches

The bishops have consistently emphasized that the only long term solution to unauthorized migration is the development of effective solutions to its [root causes](#). Food insecurity is one such cause. To this end, the USCCB, along with Catholic Relief Services, has repeatedly called on the U.S. government to “tackle poverty at its root through fair trade, foreign assistance increases and debt [forgiveness](#).” Not surprisingly, responding to the root causes of unauthorized migration is also an essential component of the bishops’ call for comprehensive immigration reform.

How You Can Respond

On December 2, join the Facebook event and follow the instructions in this handout to fast in solidarity with all those who are food insecure.

[Join](#) the Justice for Immigrants Campaign and learn more about the root causes of migration and how you can help to solve the problem.

Consider donating the money you save to Catholic Relief Services or to a related institution that provides support internationally to those in need.

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 foreign aid is increased and not cut.



Table Prayer

We begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

Please read the following passage from the family Bible: Deuteronomy 24:17-22.

Prayer:

God, you are full of compassion.

You look with special care on those who are most vulnerable, including the hungry and refugees.

May we become more aware of those who must travel far from their homes to get the necessities of life.

May we open our hearts more fully to help our brothers and sisters as you have taught us to do.

Amen.

As children of one heavenly Father we pray:

Our Father.....



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

3211 4th St. NE • Washington, DC 20017 • (202)541-3000 • www.usccb.org