

# First Fridays for Food Security: January 6, 2012



## 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 stamp allotments.\* 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 type 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 make you open to the Holy Spirit and help you to 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.

\* Food stamps are awarded to make up the difference between a family’s personal resources and the amount allotted by the USDA Modified Thrifty Food Plan.

## Respect Life: Lift the Yoke of Hunger

The federal government reported that 17.2 million households (14.5 %) were food insecure in 2010. Translation: 1 in 5 children live in a household that at times runs out of food and 1 in 4 Americans participate in a federal nutrition/food program.

Among the Tohono O’odham people of the American Southwest, most of whom live on a reservation straddling the Arizona-Mexico border, unemployment is 70%, 95% live below the poverty line and life expectancy is just 54 years.

Nearly 1 in 2 O’odham (*sounds like “autumn”*) could contract diabetes in their lifetime. Recent screening of school children revealed 100% are pre-diabetic.

## Church Teaching

Pope Benedict XVI’s 2010 World Food Day message reminded us that “*liberation from the yoke of hunger is the first concrete expression of the right to life...*” As John Paul II noted two decades earlier in *Centesimus Annus*, “*It is a strict duty of justice and truth not to allow fundamental human needs to remain unsatisfied, and not to allow those burdened by such needs to perish. It is also necessary to help these needy people to acquire expertise, to enter the circle of exchange, and to develop their skills in order to make the best use of their capacities and resources*” (no. 34).



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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## The People Respond

Today the remaining 25,000 Tohono O’odham are experiencing a new hope and vitality, thanks in part to the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). The O’odham pinpoint three reasons why their levels of obesity and diabetes have been “off the charts”: They disconnected from traditional ways of living. The only grocery store on the reservation offers over-priced products and few options for produce and low sugar, low fat content foods. Twenty years ago there were no farmers left among the O’odham. Some elders remembered their parents farming, but they didn’t farm. Young people no longer recognized beans, corn, squash and melons – staples of their traditional diet – as real food.

In 1994, basket weaver Terrol Johnson with two missionaries created a craft coop, from which grew *Tohono O’odham Community Action (TOCA)*, a CCHD empowerment project. TOCA spawned several entrepreneurial offshoots including one that provides native food through 4 school gardens and a community garden. *YOUTH – Young O’odhams United Through Health* develops leaders 14-24 years old who promote healthy choices. *New Generation of O’odham Farmers*, a one year apprenticeship trains young people to save indigenous seeds, grow and prepare natural foods and educate the community. At the community garden all ages farm, sing, share stories, wisdom and dreams. TOCA = health and empowerment!

## How You Can Respond

On January 6, join the First Fridays Facebook event and follow the instructions on page 1 to fast in solidarity with all those who are food insecure.

January is Poverty Awareness Month. Sign-up for the [Poverty USA Facebook event](#). Continue the conversation and take action to reduce poverty in America.



Tohono O’odham Youth Farmers

## Table Prayer

*We begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.*

*Please read the following passage from the family Bible: Psalm 145*

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,

In this holy season, we celebrate your incarnation. You became one like us, becoming one with all human beings, especially the poor, the lowly, and the migrant.

We ask that you look with kindness on those in need and that you fill our hearts with your love, so that we may see you when we look upon those in need.

We ask this in your name, you who live and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



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