

First Fridays for Food Security: March 2, 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 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 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.

Global Food Insecurity

During the past eleven months, Catholics in the United States have fasted in solidarity with their brothers and sisters who experience food insecurity in the United States. As Catholics, we are part of a universal Church and a global Body of Christ. As we fast in solidarity with our brothers and sisters at home, we also look abroad, where 925 million people around the world are undernourished.

The Catholic Church has taken the lead in addressing global poverty. Catholic Relief Services, the international aid program of the U.S. bishops, manages programs in nearly 100 countries around the world to help persons in poverty beats the odds.

Lack of access to food can be intensified by factors such as changes in weather patterns due to climate change. In Madagascar, cyclical drought made it difficult for farmers like Robin Rasamimanana to yield enough produce. Using international assistance from the federal government, a Catholic Relief Services project installed treadle pumps, which allowed farmers like Robin to diversify their crops and increase their yield three-fold.



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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What the Church Teaches

In the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (*Charity in Truth*), Pope Benedict XVI articulated Catholic social teaching's vision of "a single family of peoples in solidarity"—a vision which is at "the heart of the Christian social message" (no. 13). Catholic social teaching calls us to care for one another—both at home and abroad—because we are all members of one family and we are all really responsible for all (no. 49).

How You Can Respond

For more than 35 years, CRS' [Operation Rice Bowl](#) has offered Catholics in the United States a way to connect with our brothers and sisters around the world who struggle with food insecurity, through prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Each week of Lent, your family can learn about a different country and [get recipes](#) from that country for simple, thrifty meals. Consider putting the money you save into your Rice Bowl in order to help those who are hungry.

At your parish or schools, consider planning a 24-hour [Food Fast retreat](#) to help young people pray, learn and act about global hunger.

During Lent, you can also join [Catholics Confront Global Poverty](#), the advocacy initiative of USCCB and CRS, to speak for and with those who are poor and vulnerable around the world. [Visit the Action Center](#) today to join with other Catholics to make your voice heard on issues that affect persons in poverty.



Photo by CRS/Sara A. Fajardo
In Madagascar, Robin Rasamimanana was able to triple his crop production with the help of a treadle pump installed by CRS with USAID/OFDA funding.

Table Prayer

We begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

Please read the following passage from the family Bible: 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27

Prayer:

Jesus, our Lord and our brother,
in this holy season of Lent
we remember that you suffered and died
that we might live with you forever.

Through our fasting, prayer, and almsgiving,
may we grow in solidarity with you
and with our brothers and sisters who share
your suffering,,
especially those who are hungry.
May we do all we can to meet their needs
and so grow closer to you in your Body,
the Church.

Please hear our humble prayer.

Amen.

