



THE OFFICE FOR CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY

Of the Archdiocese of Hartford

Please forward to:

Pastors, Associate Pastors, Deacons, Liturgy Teams, Pro-Life Committees, Social Ministry/Social Concerns Committees, Religious Education and Youth Ministry Leaders, and other Parish Leadership Groups.

**You and Your Parish Are Cordially Invited
To Participate in a Global Solidarity Project
On Hunger and Food Security.**

Last year, the Office for Catholic Social Justice Ministry Global Solidarity Team focused on specific issues in months with five Sundays, and sent out packets like this one in January, April, and July, reflecting on the themes of “Human Trafficking,” “Migration,” and “Fair Trade.”

With the busy fall and holiday seasons behind us, we are happy to once again have an opportunity to offer resources on another important theme, **Hunger and Food Security**.

Hunger and Food Security are major concerns of the *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Relief Services (CRS)* and other organizations such as *Bread for the World* and the *National Catholic Rural Life Conference*.

In the coming weeks you will also hear from us about **CRS Rice Bowl** (formerly called *Operation Rice Bowl*) with many resources that you can use in your parish during Lent. In the meantime, please check out the *CRS Rice Bowl* website at www.crsricebowl.org and click on resources for parishes and schools where you will find a host of activities for the Lenten season.

Mary Breen, OCSJM Global Solidarity Team Member
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Hunger in Connecticut

The Questions

What do we know about hunger and food insecurity in our state?

Who is hungry and what agencies and programs are in place to help people who are hungry?

What is being done to help end hunger in our state?

The Current Situation

In 2009, when our country suffered a deep recession and people lost their jobs and homes, the numbers of people using emergency food resources rose steadily. The largest jump in food stamp use was in the suburbs, and the elderly poor were hit very hard. Seniors, people who have been independent all their lives, are often reluctant to go to a food pantry or soup kitchen. Before the recession, 1,370,000 people in Connecticut were food insecure. (*End Hunger CT Report, 2009*) Since the recession began, use of emergency food sources has risen 30 percent. (*"Roadmap to End Childhood Hunger in America by 2015," 2009*)

Food Insecurity is the lack of assured access at all times to enough food for healthy, active lives; **hunger** is the uneasy or painful sensation caused by lack of food. According to [End Hunger Connecticut](#), a state advocacy group, 11.4 percent of state residents are food insecure; 4.6 percent are very food insecure—a 60 percent increase from 2006. Hunger affects us in a variety of ways, says [Foodshare](#), greater Hartford's food bank. Undernourished pregnant women are more likely to give birth to stillborn or unhealthy babies. Undernourished infants and children are susceptible to learning deficits and other developmental problems. Hungry teens are less likely to graduate from high school and attend college. Hungry adults are often less likely to enjoy good health and are often less energetic and productive, conditions which affect their ability to care for children and find or keep a job.

Addressing the Problem

Across the state, 110,000 children (or 1 out of 5) are hungry, according to the [Connecticut Food Bank](#), the state's largest distributor of emergency food. The Food Bank distributes 33 tons of food every business day to 60 community-based programs, such as soup kitchens, food pantries and shelters, and to low-income child- and adult-care food programs. Over and above donated food, Connecticut relies on federally-funded programs to help children, families and individuals in need.



The primary source of food support is the **Federal Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)**, formerly known as food stamps. **SNAP** provides low-income households with electronic benefits that are used like cash in grocery stores and at some farmers' markets. Non-food items of any kind cannot be purchased through SNAP. SNAP funds are federal, but the state processes applications, decides eligibility, and allots benefits. A household with four people is eligible for food stamps if gross monthly income does not exceed \$3,400. Each family member receives \$14 worth of food per month. *Even though more people now receive food stamps, only 75 percent of those eligible receive food assistance.*

The School Breakfast Program offers free and reduced-price meals to children who qualify for the [National School Lunch Program](#). Research supports the importance of eating a good breakfast for improved performance in school. Children who eat breakfast see the nurse less frequently, have better concentration, and have fewer behavior problems. *Here in Connecticut participation rates in the School Breakfast program are low, only 58.4 percent of eligible children. We are last in the nation in the percentage of schools who participate. If participation reaches 60 percent, the state would receive an additional \$7.6 million in federal assistance.*

Hunger in Connecticut

WIC, the **Women, Infants and Children Program**, is a federal grant program helping mothers and their children five and under have access to strictly nutritious food. *For every dollar spent on WIC funding, Connecticut saves between \$1.77 and \$3.13 in medical costs.*



The state- and federally-funded assistance programs, together with the regional and local food banks, soup kitchens and food pantries, all operating tirelessly and effectively, are still only short-term solutions and do not provide adequate food support for what has become a long-standing situation of need.

Forging a New Commitment

The primary cause of hunger in Connecticut is poverty, and long-term solutions are needed.

1. A comprehensive solution to hunger requires the cooperation and commitment of all parts of society. Toward this end, **Foodshare** and other anti-hunger organizations are building a network of citizens working with local government, social service agencies, faith groups and schools to come up with solutions that target the root causes of hunger. Called **Hunger Action Teams**, these coalitions are operating in several towns now. More are needed.



2. The **No Kid Hungry Campaign**, begun in 2011, is another example of government and non-profit partnership. The campaign is working with **End Hunger Connecticut**, **Share Our Strength**, and **Governor Malloy** to help end childhood hunger in Connecticut by 2015. They are connecting kids with School Breakfast and Summer Food programs, and offering parents courses on buying and preparing nutritious food.

3. Supermarkets are needed in urban areas to provide access to healthier food. Information about nutritious food and food quality needs to be readily available to families, along with information about how to make good food choices with limited resources. We need to broaden people's awareness of, and participation in, existing food programs, particularly the School Breakfast Program and the Summer Food Service Program.

4. State and local community groups need to increase access to **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance**.

5. Advocacy for the preservation of **SNAP**, over and above assuring that everyone who qualifies takes part in the program, is also needed at the national level, which means political advocacy.

For more information, about eligibility and participation numbers, as well as ideas for getting involved, go to www.endhungerct.org, www.nokidhungry.org, www.handsonhartford.org, and www.foodshare.org.

Myths About Hunger

Myth: *There is not enough food to go around.*

Reality: There is enough food in the world to make most people fat.

- Enough food is available to provide two kilos per person per day worldwide: a kilo of grain, beans and nuts, about a half-kilo of fruits and vegetables, and nearly a half-kilo of meat, milk and eggs!
- Even most “hungry countries” have enough food for all their people—many are net exporters of food.

Myth: *Nature is to blame.*

Reality: Food is always available for those who can afford it. Starvation in hard times hits only the poorest, when natural events are the final push over the brink.

- Millions live on the brink of disaster in South Asia, Africa and elsewhere because they are deprived of land by a powerful few, trapped in the grip of debt, or miserably paid.
- Human institutions and policies determine who eats and who starves. In the West, many homeless people die from the cold every winter, yet responsibility doesn’t lie with the weather.

Myth: *There are too many people in the world to feed.*

Reality: Birthrates are falling rapidly worldwide; nowhere does population density explain hunger.

- Rapid population growth is a serious concern for many countries. But for every Bangladesh, a densely populated and hungry country, we find a Nigeria, Brazil or Bolivia, where abundant food coexists with hunger.
- Rapid population growth is not the root cause of hunger. Like hunger itself, it results from inequities that deprive people, especially poor women, of economic opportunity and security. This is especially true where land, jobs, education, healthcare and old-age security are beyond the reach of most people.

Myth: *It’s a trade-off: the environment or food.*

Reality: Industrial agriculture is degrading soil and undercutting our food production sources. Environmentally sound alternatives can be more productive than destructive ones.

- Large corporations are mainly responsible for deforestation—creating and profiting from developed-country consumer demand for tropical hardwoods and out-of-season or exotic food items.
- While poorly paid farm workers and their families go hungry, they are nevertheless required to use pesticides to give a blemish-free cosmetic appearance to produce.

Myths About Hunger

Myth: *We need large farms.*

Reality: Small farmers achieve four-to-five times more output per acre; land reform can increase production.

- Without secure tenure, tenant farmers in the Third World have little incentive to invest in improvements, rotate crops, or leave land fallow for the sake of long-term soil fertility.
- Redistribution of land can increase production. A World Bank study of northeast Brazil estimates that redistributing farmland into smaller holdings would raise output by an astonishing 80 percent.

Myth: *The free market can end hunger.*

Reality: The market only works when poor people have money to buy food.

- Every economy on earth combines the market with government to allocate resources and distribute goods. Government has a vital role to play in countering the tendency toward economic concentration, through genuine tax, credit, and land reforms to disperse buying to the poor.
- Recent trends toward privatization and deregulation are taking us in the opposite direction.

Myth: *Free trade is the answer.*

Reality: In many poor countries, exports of food crops have boomed, squeezing out food for local production, while hunger has continued.

- The trade-promotion formula has proven an abject failure at alleviating hunger.
- While soybean exports boomed in Brazil—to feed Japanese and European livestock—hunger in Brazil spread from 1/3 to 2/3 of the population. Here the majority of the people have been made too poor to buy the food grown on their own country's soil, while those who control agricultural resources orient production to lucrative markets abroad.

Myth: *The victims are too hungry to fight for their rights.*

Reality: Wherever people suffer needlessly they are also fighting for their rights. People in the rich world can help to remove the obstacles to those rights.

- If poor people were truly passive, few of them could even survive.
- Around the world, from the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico, to the farmers' movement in India, change is underway. People will feed themselves if allowed to do so.
- Obstacles are often created by large corporation, Western governments, the World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies.

Used with permission; "Education For Justice" of the Center of Concern, and "Food First Institute."

PRAYER RESOURCES

FROM THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC RURAL LIFE CONFERENCE

The following resources are designed to help parishes and faith groups put on a rightful spirit while trying to understand and act against hunger and poverty in the world today. Here you will find additional scriptural passages and suggestions for liturgy and prayer, as well as blessings for special occasions.

Prayers of Praise and Thanksgiving from Scripture

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| Ps 8 | The Majesty of God and the Dignity of Man |
| Ps 65 | Thanksgiving for God's Blessings |
| Ps 104 | Praise of God the Creator |
| Ps 146 | Trust in God Alone |
| Ps 147 | Zion's Grateful Praise to Her Bountiful Lord |
| Jn 1:1-5 | In the Beginning was the Word |
| Rev 21:1-4 | New Heavens and New Earth |
| Ps 85 | Peace and Justice |
| Isaiah 55 | An Invitation To Grace |
| Isaiah 65:17-25 | The World Renewed |
| Lv 25:23-28 | The Land is God's/Restoration of Property |

Blessing for the Products of Human Labor

Almighty and ever-living God,
you have made us stewards over the created world,
so that in all things we might honor the demands of charity
Graciously hear our prayers,
that your blessing may come upon all those
who use these objects for their needs.
Let them always see you as the good surpassing every good
and love their neighbor with upright hearts.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

(from Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers, 323.)

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

God our Creator, All good gifts of the earth come from Your generous hands.
Yet, this abundance is not shared equally among us.
While some are satisfied, others go hungry.
Too many women around the world are desperate to feed and care for their children;
Yet they are underserved or passed over or exploited.
If only we would be mindful that each and every one of us must pray in earnest:
Give us this day OUR daily bread.
Then we will do much more than feed our individual selves.
R. Amen.

PRAYER RESOURCES

FROM THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC RURAL LIFE CONFERENCE

Litany for the End of Hunger and Deprivation

Leader: Let us pray for the poor, hungry, and neglected all over the world, that their cries for daily bread may inspire works of compassion and mercy among those to whom much has been given.

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Let us pray for the farmers with limited or marginal land throughout the world, for those who lack access to water and other resources, and for the light of research and support services to shine in the lives of all God's people.

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Let us pray for an end to the divisions and inequalities that scar God's creation, particularly the barriers to freedom faced by God's children throughout the world because of gender; that all who have been formed in God's image might have equality in pursuit of the blessings of creation.

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Let us pray for the health of women, children, and families around the world, especially for an end to maternal and child mortality, that in building healthy families, all God's people may be empowered to strengthen their communities and repair the breaches which divide nations and peoples.

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Let us pray for an end to pandemic disease throughout the world, particularly those exacerbated by lack of nutritious food and outright hunger; that plagues of death may no longer fuel poverty, destabilize nations, and inhibit reconciliation and restoration throughout the world.

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Let us pray for an end to the waste and desecration of God's creation, for access to the fruits of creation to be shared equally among all people, and for communities and nations to find sustenance in the fruits of the earth and the water God has given us.

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Let us pray for all nations and people who already enjoy the abundance of creation and the blessings of prosperity, that their hearts may be lifted up to the needs of the poor and afflicted, and partnerships between rich and poor for the reconciliation of the world may flourish and grow.

People: Lord, hear our prayer.