



The Northern Voice

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Welcome to the inaugural edition of *The Northern Voice*, the newsletter of the Fields of Justice collaborative. Fields of Justice includes individuals and representatives of parish families in the northern part of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. We hope you'll join us as we explore the justice issues facing our region, our country, and our world, and seek ways to address these issues with prayer, information, and action.

January's Focus: ***Food Insecurity***

What is food insecurity?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Although hunger and food insecurity are closely related, they are distinct concepts. Hunger refers to a *personal, physical sensation of discomfort*, while food insecurity refers to a *lack of available financial resources for food at the household level*.

Extensive research reveals food insecurity is a complex problem. Many people do not have the resources to meet their basic needs, challenges which increase a family's risk of food insecurity. Though food insecurity is closely related to poverty, not all people living below the poverty line experience food insecurity and people living above the poverty line can experience food insecurity.

Food insecurity does not exist in isolation, as low-income families are affected by multiple, overlapping issues like lack of affordable housing, social isolation, economic/social disadvantage resulting from structural racism, chronic or acute health problems, high medical costs, and low wages.

DID YOU KNOW?

Local and regional food banks can often buy food for pennies per pound, much more cheaply than we can purchase in the grocery. Check with your local food bank, and then consider making a monetary donation, which may go much further than donating food.

Who suffers from food insecurity?

Food insecurity isn't an individual problem—it affects whole households and communities. While there is no single face of food insecurity, it is particularly high among:

- * households with incomes near or below the federal poverty line;
- * households with children, particularly those headed by single women or single men;
- * women and men living alone;
- * Black- and Hispanic-headed households.

According to Bread for the World, nearly 15 percent of U.S. households — more than 40 million Americans, including 12 million children — struggle to put food on the table. Churches and charities help address the immediate needs from hunger in direct ways. But the federal government also has many safety-net programs to address food insecurity, including SNAP (formerly known as food stamps), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and the National School Lunch Program. These government programs provide many times more hunger-related assistance than private charities.

Even with more than one in five U.S. children at risk of hunger (one in three among African-American and Latino children), funding for these critical anti-hunger programs is being challenged.

What Can We Do?

1. Pray, as individuals and parish families.

A Prayer for Food Systems

God of Abundance,

When you created the earth, you ensured its miraculous ability to sustain all life and we give thanks for the earth and its abundant resources. Open our minds and hearts to appreciate that the food we eat is part of a story that is bigger than ourselves. We remember and celebrate the farmers, ranchers, fishers, processors, transporters, retailers, grocers, restaurateurs, and everyone in between who have a role in providing food to people throughout the world. Inspire us by your grace to advocate for sustainable and just food systems so that all people receive the nutrition they need to live a healthy life. We pray this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.



A Universal Prayer (invite your parish family to use this at liturgies!)

For those facing hunger and food insecurity, for farmers and all food production workers, and for our strength to take up the effort to end hunger in our world, we pray to the Lord....

2. Learn.

The following sites provide information about hunger and food insecurity in America and around the world, which you can use to educate yourself and inform your parish family:

Bread for the World (bread.org):

Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad.

Feeding America (feedingamerica.org)

The Feeding America network is the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization, working to connect people with food and end hunger.

Povertyusa.org, from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (the U.S. bishops)

(These sites were the major source of information for the newsletter.)



3. Act.

Join Fields of Justice as we organize a spring Offering of Letters (using the Bread for the World model) from individuals and parish families to our elected officials, encouraging their support for anti-hunger efforts. Here's a template; the letter can be sent regular mail or via the elected official's website.

Dear Senators Brown/ Portman AND Dear Representative _____ (<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>)

Hunger is reaching historic levels. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to devastate communities across the United States with a disproportionate impact on Black, Latino, and Native American families, and immigrants, and worsening the effects of hunger and poverty around the globe. The pandemic has exposed vulnerabilities in our safety net and food systems from farm to fork. And child hunger both in the U.S. and abroad has skyrocketed.

Specifically, Congress should:

Make the expansion of the child tax credit permanent and available to all children regardless of immigration status. The CTC expansion will lift millions of children out of poverty, as well as help reduce hunger and narrow the racial wealth gap exacerbated by unemployment amid COVID-19.

Increase U.S. leadership and funding for global nutrition programs without which an entire generation may be denied of the God-given right to flourish. Now more than ever, my faith calls me to stand with affected people in my community and around the world. Let us work together to ensure U.S. policies help people move out of poverty and feed their families in the United States and across the globe.

Sincerely, YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS



Catholic disciples in mission are called to put **Two Feet of Love in Action!** This tool describes two distinct but complementary ways we can put the Gospel in action in response to God's love: social justice and charitable works.

Social Justice: We step with this foot when we work to address the root causes of problems facing our communities by advocating for just public policies and helping change the social structures that contribute to suffering and injustice at home and around the world.

Charitable Works are our "response to immediate needs and specific situations: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for and healing the sick, visiting those in prison, etc." We step with the Charitable Works foot when we assist others locally and globally to meet their immediate, short-term needs. Examples include providing food, clothing, shelter, or monetary assistance to help those in need. (from the US Bishops)

How do we in the Northern Area put both feet into action for our brothers and sisters?