

Social Justice Week: 9-15 September 2012 Caritas NZ

## *Our Daily Bread: Putting food on the table*

*"To those who have hunger give bread.  
And to those who have bread give the hunger for justice."*

*Prayer from Latin America*



Food is necessary for our survival and flourishing. The gathering and sharing of food is a fundamental aspect of community. It is the way we show *manaakitanga* or hospitality to each other. It is the way we show *aroha* or love.

For many, it is an increasing struggle to put food on the table.

*Do I recognise the food I eat every day as 'fruit of the earth and work of human hands'?*



In the world 925 million people go hungry. In many countries, hunger means malnutrition, increases in child deaths, stunting and poor cognitive development. Hunger is both a result and a cause of poverty. People who live with constant severe hunger find it difficult to focus on much more than daily survival. Hunger of this kind is brutal because people are unable to achieve their potential as human beings in fundamental aspects of their lives, such as education, community, and spirituality. Competition for food can lead to conflict.

*How can I better understand why there are hungry people?*

In New Zealand, 33.7% of the population live with low to moderate food insecurity and 7.3% live with severe food insecurity. This means children arriving at school hungry with nothing for lunch, or families having inadequate diets. People who don't have enough money often have no choice but to live on cheap carbohydrates and fat – like bread and margarine - which lack protein and essential nutrients, leading to health conditions such as diabetes. In developed countries like New Zealand, obesity can be a manifestation of hunger.

*What do I think would be Christ's response to hunger in New Zealand?*



Authorities ranging from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation to the World Bank agree that currently there is enough food being produced in the world to feed everyone. We have the capacity to maintain food production in an environmentally sustainable way. Hunger in our world in our time is not so much a result of production as of distribution.

*When I experience high food prices, how much do I think of the effect on people who are worse off than me?*



In considering our response as Catholics to hunger and food insecurity, a key principle of Catholic social teaching is the Universal Destination of Goods - God intended the goods of the earth to be used and enjoyed by all people. When the accumulation of wealth and goods by some sectors of the community deprives others of what they need to survive, we have to tackle the systems that perpetuate these inequalities.

*What do I think would be Christ's response to hunger in the world?*

## Key principles of Catholic social teaching:

**Human dignity:** Every single person is created in the image of God, and is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family. It is from our human dignity that all other rights and responsibilities flow.

**Respect for human life:** Human life at every stage is precious and therefore worthy of protection and respect.

**Human equality:** Equality of all people comes from their inherent human dignity. Differences in talents are part of God's plan, but social, cultural and economic

discrimination are not.

**Preferential protection for the poor and vulnerable:** Our Catholic tradition instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. It is especially important that we look at public policy decisions in terms of how they affect the poor.

**Association:** The human person is not only sacred but also social. People achieve fulfillment by association with others – in families and other social institutions.

**Participation:** People have a right and duty to participate in society, seeking together the well being of all. Everyone has the right not to be shut out of participating in those institutions necessary for human fulfillment, such as work, education and political participation.

**Common good:** The common good is about respecting the rights and responsibilities of all people. The individual does not have unfettered rights at the expense of others, but nor are individual rights to be subordinated to the needs of the group.

**Solidarity:** We are one human family. The principle of solidarity requires of us that we not concern ourselves solely with our own lives. Our responsibilities to each other call us to work globally for justice.

**Stewardship:** We have a responsibility to care for the gifts that God has given us, including the environment, our personal talents and other resources.

**Universal destination of goods:** The earth and all it produces are intended for every person. Private ownership is acceptable, but there is also a responsibility to ensure all have enough to live in dignity.

**Subsidiarity:** No higher level of organisation should perform any function that can best be handled at a lower level by those who are closer to the issues or problems, such as families or communities.

Food is not merely a commodity; access to food is a human right. Food cannot be treated simply as any other product because people depend on food for survival. Food should not be subject to speculation, resulting in price swings which have immediate impacts on the lives of the poorest.

## Do I recognise food as a human right?



Our participation in the Eucharist demands that we address the needs of people in the world who do not have what they need to survive, including those in our own country. "A Eucharist that does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented" (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*).

## Does my participation in the Eucharist make me hunger for justice?



Taken from: "The Hunger in our Midst" New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference  
available to download from <http://www.caritas.org.nz/>

## From the Liturgy of the Eucharist:

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,

For through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you:

Fruit of the earth and work of human hands,

It will become for us the bread of life.

Kia whakapāinga koe, e te Ariki te Atua o nga mea katoa,

Nā tou manaaki i whiwhi a mātou ki te taro ka tāpae atu nei ki ā koe:

He hua nō te oneone, ā, nā te ringa tangata i mahi,

Ka meinga ko te taro o te ora.