

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

Have you ever had to pray for the most basic necessities of life - bread, rice, beans, water, a roof and walls to shelter you? Probably, most of us take our daily bread for granted. We may pray for health, joy, friendship, love, faith, hope - "whatever we need to live". Yet, daily bread, let alone healthy nutrition, may not be available to almost 4 million Canadian adults and children.

Bishop Michael has recently made a submission to the Provincial Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, in support of a provincial campaign for a \$100 healthy food supplement. It was launched in 2009 by many civic groups in recognition of the vast and widening gap between a healthy food basket, as suggested by health professionals, and the budget of those living on social assistance. Social justice is one of the areas of emphasis in the Diocese of Niagara, and having the means for nutritious food is one aspect of social justice in Canada today. "Food justice would exist if all people had access to adequate food at all times. Food justice is the concept that society should arrange its relationships so everyone can have sufficient food." (Canadian Foodgrains Bank).

Globally, the situation has much worsened in recent months due to escalating food prices. Even before the economic downturn, 40% of the people on earth, or 1,720,000,000, live on \$1.45 or less a day. If that isn't bad enough and beyond our imagination, a sharp rise in basic food prices in the past six months has pushed 42,000,000 additional adults and children into abject despair and chronic hunger. The cost of maize (corn) and sorghum in Kenya and Sudan has doubled, that of rice in India and Philippines has shot up by 40%. If you have to spend at least 80-90% of your earnings on basic staples, the mathematics tell you that you can only eat half of what you did before. Food security has become a matter of life and death. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports that, currently, about 6.5 million children under five die every year of malnutrition and hunger-related diseases. This translates into 18,000 deaths a day.

The reasons for the food crisis are complex and vary in detail from area to area: growth in emerging nations like China leads to rising meat consumption, and hence rising demand for animal feed. Agricultural raw materials, especially cotton, compete for land and other resources with food crops, as does the subsidized production of ethanol, which consumes a lot of corn. Extreme weather events, from heat waves in Russia to droughts in Brazil and East Africa, to unprecedented flooding in Asia and Australia, have severely reduced the production of staple foods.

Now, before you stop reading in frustration or helplessness, think again. There are ways of **being the change that we want to see in governments and in the world.**

- 👉 We need to inform ourselves and listen to the voices of those without voice.
- 👉 In solidarity we can experience hunger pangs as part of our Lenten exercise.
- 👉 We can cut out any meat consumption on two days a week.
- 👉 We can pray for plentiful rains in East Africa during the long rainy season, March to May.

- 👉 We can put healthy food into the Food Bank barrel, e.g. real juice, canned fruit, milk powder.
- 👉 We can drive less and cut down on gas consumption.
- 👉 The lawn around your church, if you have any, may be converted into a community vegetable garden, a source of fresh vegetables for those who cannot afford them, or a great outreach to some New Canadian families.
- 👉 One or more farmers in your parish may set aside a field for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. See [/www.foodgrainsbank.ca/grain_donations.aspx](http://www.foodgrainsbank.ca/grain_donations.aspx).
- 👉 We can donate to PWRDF and enable our partners overseas to bring hope, health, food and social justice to the most vulnerable communities.

Here's one story:

Uhambingeto was a dry, desolate village in the Rift Valley of Tanzania, populated by the elderly, women, and children. The young had left the village, there was no hope there. Ten years later, through the development work of the Anglican Church of Tanzania and with support from PWRDF, the village was reborn and the ones that left are coming back. The clinic, water well, maternity ward and children's daycare are the pride and joy of villagers. The farmers' training program brought food security to households. At the end of the program a village elder said to PWRDF staff, *"When you came we were in darkness. Today you leave us with light. Here are two candle holders that we give to you as a symbol of the light that you brought to us."*