

Activity: Food for Thought

(60 minutes)

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FACE THE FAST

Objectives

Through this activity participants will:

- realize that the Catholic social teaching principle *Option for the Poor* challenges us to be aware of the hunger, food insecurity, malnutrition and poor nutrition that the poor face every day.
- learn how different communities have a stake in and make a contribution to food security issues around the world.
- explore ways that Food Fast participants can begin to think about ethical eating as they work to promote the common good in their own communities.

Activity Summary

Through role play, participants will learn about the responsibilities and perspectives of various community groups and organizations that must work together to resolve issues related to food security.

Materials Needed

- copy of *Role Play Cards*
- copy of *Food Situation: What's your response?* for each group

Procedure

Divide the large group into 6 small groups. Give each group a one *Role Play Card* and *Food Situation: What's your response?*. Each small group will assume the role identified on their card. They should read the description and think about how their role in the larger community (both local and global) relates to the general population's ability to access food.

Give groups 20 minutes to read about their role, ask clarifying questions, and consider how their role relates to the food situation. Each group should also come up with a response to the situation. Each group should identify a representative to speak for them.

Bring all groups together and read aloud *Food Situation: What's your response?*. Invite each group representative to explain his/her group's position related to the situation.

After each representative has presented, have the groups work together to come to a common decision to resolve the situation.

- What actions or factors need to change in each role so that all people have more reliable access to nutritious food?
- What behaviors should continue or change in each role?
- How can a preferential option for the poor be a guide for change?

Remind participants that, in the real world, groups must often compromise with one another, but encourage them not to compromise so that the poor suffer. Allow the discussion to continue for 30 minutes. Moderate as necessary.

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Role Play Cards

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Urban Farmer

You are young adult members of an urban parish, and you have developed a program that plants vegetable gardens in abandoned lots where row houses have been demolished. The neighborhood has high poverty and crime rates and no place to buy healthy food—there are no supermarkets in the area, only local stores with canned and packaged foods. Fresh vegetables and fruits are a real luxury here. Your group teaches local children to be “farmers” and to grow food that they will eat together as a “farm” community. They are also able to take extra food home to their families. You teach sustainable methods of growing produce and taking care of the soil. You have recently received a grant for a greenhouse, and you plan to diversify and expand your plant growth. You also connect ecological and liturgical seasons, so you celebrate holidays and feast days with awareness of the gifts of growing food and the abundance of the earth.

Community Gardener

You have always loved to garden, and you have decided, with other members of your parish, to locate a large area of land for a community garden. You invite both young people and retired adults to have plots of land in your large planting space. This multi-generational group fosters community as participants share seeds, tools, responsibilities and conversations. Older adults receive access to fresh food, companionship, and help with their gardening efforts. Youth and young adults learn gardening skills, healthy eating habits, and lessons and wisdom from a wide range of adults.

Commercial Farmer

You are a farmer who owns, operates and manages a large, commercial farm. In an increasingly industrialized and integrated food production market, you are one link in the chain of crop cultivation, food processing and product distribution. You understand that global trade can affect the price of food, and you are concerned that imports will impact the value of your crops. You also understand that the export of your crops to other countries likewise affects foreign, local markets. However, in order to support your family you must sell your crops for the highest price possible. Your crop yields are still subject to unpredictable weather patterns and unfavorable growing seasons; although you have invested in agricultural technologies that help to reduce the impact of these events.

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Role Play Cards

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FACE THE FAST

Parish Youth Group Member

You are a member of your parish's youth group, and you regularly volunteer with a soup kitchen. You understand the importance of helping people who are homeless and hungry gain access to regular, nutritious meals, and you practice this commitment by serving those in your local community. You are also concerned about poverty and hunger in developing countries around the world. You want your faith community to respond to the needs of the poor both in the United States and around the world.

Catholic Relief Services Staff

You are an agriculture expert at Catholic Relief Services. You help farmers around the world improve their crop yields through alternative farming methods, improved seed choices and better access to markets. You have seen firsthand how helping farmers change the way they cultivate crops increases the amount of food they can produce. Using new methods, farmers are able to increase their income and ensure that their families eat nutritious foods on a regular basis.

Subsistence Farmer

You are a subsistence farmer, and you are only able to feed your family when you make a good harvest. In productive years, you have a surplus of crops, which you bring to a local market as a way to earn an income. The income allows you to buy necessities for your families, send your children to school and save money for the future. But you are also vulnerable to changes in the weather, to delicate socio-economic-political relations in your country, and to a variety of other external factors. If any one factor disrupts this fragile equilibrium, you will not have enough food or income to support your family.

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Handout:

Food Situation:

What's your response?

FACE THE FAST

Food Situation

Nearly **one billion** people, or about one sixth of the planet's population, are suffering from hunger. Lack of employment, minimal access to markets, limited agricultural technologies and expertise, poor water sanitation and health, illiteracy, soil infertility, environmental degradation, droughts, floods, and harsh weather conditions are some of the factors that contribute to food insecurity issues around the world.

Oftentimes, poor families must consume less nutritious foods in order to survive; otherwise, they will not have any food at all. As food prices continue to increase, the poor will have to make more difficult choices about what they can eat.

What's your response?

Reflect on the role your group has been given and consider how your role is impacted by the availability of food. Select a speaker to represent your group. Develop your response to the following questions:

- How are you bringing food to a community?
- What role do you have in ensuring people have access to food?
- Are you guided by a preferential option for the poor? Why or why not?
- Who are your partners in your work?
- How can your group improve people's access to food in your local and global communities?

Preferential Option for the Poor

The Gospel calls us to assist those most in need and to reach out to the most vulnerable members of society. The *Option for the Poor and Vulnerable* reminds us that as Catholics we have a responsibility to ensure that every person has access to basic material necessities, including food.