

Planning your first Food Fast Retreat

If this is your first time organizing Food Fast, here is some information to keep in mind before you get started.

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FACE THE FAST

Theme

Food Fast invites youth to learn about the realities of people living in poverty and the reasons that they struggle to secure food for themselves and for their families. It also is one way youth can respond to the needs of the poor in our world.

It's easiest to understand food security when focusing on a particular aspect of the issue. This year, Food Fast examines agriculture as a way to secure food. As part of this theme, Food Fast will challenge youth to consider their relationship with food. Where does our food come from, how does it get to us, and what access do we have to a variety of foods? And how does our relationship with food relate to and impact the poor in our communities and around the world?

Catholic Social Teaching

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 food. This year, Food Fast will ask youth to reflect on this principle of Catholic social teaching.

Planning

Start planning 8 weeks before your Food Fast. Use the *How to Organize a Food Fast Retreat* timeline to help you plan your Food Fast. You can also use the *Guide to Organizing Food Fast Activities* to schedule sessions throughout the Food Fast. The guide is a suggested flow of activities.

Don't plan alone. Invite adult volunteers and/or youth leaders to help you plan the Food Fast. Organize volunteers into various teams that are responsible for logistics, marketing and fundraising.

Some groups choose to invite another parish or school to participate with them. By holding a joint Food Fast, you increase the number of participants and share the responsibility for organizing the retreat.

Promoting

Tell your faith community. It's important to announce to the youth group first that a Food Fast is scheduled and they are invited to attend. Use *Bulletin Announcements*, the Food Fast *Flier* and Food Fast *Posters* to invite youth participants to Face the Fast. You should also announce to your parish or school community that the youth group will be fasting for 24 hours in solidarity with the poor. Use the *Bulletin Announcements* or invite a participant to give an announcement at the end of mass asking for prayers and donations.

Tell your local community. Use the Food Fast *Press Release* to let your local community know about your Food Fast and how youth in your area are assisting the poor around the world. CRS can help you work with your local and diocesan newspaper. Email us at foodfast@crs.org.

Fundraising

Set a Goal. If your group wants to support the work of Catholic Relief Services, ask participants to set a goal and then decide how they will ask for donations. Use the CRS Food Fast personal fundraiser online and design a page for your group which can be emailed to family and friends asking for their support.

Need more help?

As you begin preparing your Food Fast, Catholic Relief Services staff is available to assist you. Please email us at foodfast@crs.org or call 1-866-608-5978 to ask questions, to learn about best practices or to find out more about Food Fast.