



Sustaining Life on the Land

Reflections on Rural Life

QUOTES FOR USE IN BULLETINS

COMPILED BY SR. EDWARD ANN HOFFMANN, SND
DIOCESE OF TOLEDO

Every week 500 farmers go out of business.

USDA AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

The farm crisis is not over. Two thirds of farmers work jobs off the farm just to make ends meet.

USDA ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE

Farmers are twice as likely to live in poverty as are members of the general population.

USDA ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE

Economic decisions inherent in our land and food policies should first be critiqued by how they will impact the common good and community. We are never solely individuals devoted only to self-interest and competition. We are always members of a community, truly responsible for our brothers and sisters.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS

Every dollar generated from the land turns five times within the state and seven times nationally.

USDA ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE

The agricultural market is now concentrated in corporate holdings. About 94% of all farms are small farms, but they receive only 41% of all farm receipts.

USDA ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE

Nearly 94% of America's farm households have earnings from farm income, which hover at or below the poverty level.

USDA ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE

Three meat packing companies now control 82% of the beef slaughter market.

USDA ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE

The anti-hunger movement has made tremendous strides in 25 years, but ending hunger in the new millennium will require the recommitment of Christian people everywhere.

GRACE AT THE TABLE BY DAVID BECKMAN

God reminded the people of Israel "the land is mine; for you are strangers and guests with me." (Lv 25:23) Our Christian faith calls us to contemplate God's creative and sustaining action and to measure our own collaboration with the Creator in using the earth's resources to meet human needs.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR ALL US CATHOLIC BISHOPS

Among material resources, the greatest, unquestionably, is the land. Study how a society uses its land, and you can come to pretty reliable conclusions as to what its future will be. The land carries the topsoil, and the topsoil carries an immense variety of living things, including humans.

*SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL
BY E. F. SCHUMACHER*

For every farmer under the age of 35, there are two farmers over the age of 65.

USDA AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

We are concerned that the nation's food system may be in jeopardy as increasing numbers of farm bankruptcies and foreclosures result in increased concentration of land ownership. We are likewise concerned about the increasing damage to natural resources resulting from many modern agricultural practices; the overconsumption of water, the depletion of the topsoil, and the pollution of land and water... Our food production system is clearly in need of evaluation and reform.

*ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR ALL
US CATHOLIC BISHOPS*

The social teaching of the Church also condemns the intolerable injustices caused by the misappropriation of land by large landholders or national or international companies, at times with the support of State institutions, which trample every acquired right-sometimes even legal title to possession-in order to deprive small farmers and indigenous populations of their land.

*TOWARDS A BETTER
DISTRIBUTION OF LAND
PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE*

The question that seems to be at the heart of (the profound) changes in the global food system is whether the desperately poor of the world will be pressed into producing food for export to the more advantaged nations, while they themselves have neither land nor time to provide adequate food for their own families.

*GLOBALIZATION OF THE
FOOD SYSTEM
DR. WILLIAM HEFFERNAN*

Individuals have a right to private property, as usually the best way to do work, to serve oneself and family. But private property also needs to show that it truly serves the community. No one truly owns any part of creation. Rather all creation belongs only to God. We may be assigned to care for parts of it, but only if we serve the needs of others, along with our own needs. The Lord said to Moses... *"The land shall not be sold into perpetuity; for the land is mine, and you are but aliens who have become my tenants."* Lev 25:1,23

*AT HOME IN THE WEB OF LIFE
CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF APPALACHIA*

It is manifestly unjust that a privileged few should continue to accumulate excess goods, squandering available resources, while masses of people are living in conditions of misery at the very lowest level of subsistence.

JOHN PAUL II

There are some values that we mistakenly accept:

We value food for profit more than food for nutrition.

We value land as property rather than land as "home".

We value productivity more than sustainability.

We value bigness more than appropriateness.

We value agriculture as industry more than agriculture as culture and community.

We value ground as cursed more than ground as blessed.

We value the luxuries we acquire as a result of cheap food more than ecological stewardship and food health and security.

FRED KIRSHENMANN

Tax dollars being used to shore up economic and political power of a few make the powerlessness of the many inevitable.

*WORLD HUNGER
BY FRANCES MOORE LAPPE AND
JOSEPH COLLINS*

The world that God has created has been entrusted to us, yet our use of it must be directed by God's plan for creation, not simply by our own benefit... In our use of creation, we must be guided by our concern for the welfare of others, both around the world and for generations to come, and by a respect for the intrinsic worth and beauty of all God's creatures.

*FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP:
CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY FOR
A NEW MILLENNIUM
UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD*

A Nursery Rhyme for Today

This little church is concerned about the marketplace.

This little church is concerned about home.

This little church wants to know who has roast beef.

This little church cares about those who have none.

This little church tries to reflect God's love of neighbor and says *We, We, We* all the way Home!

*JAMES TOBIN,
CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO*

Once we begin to understand hunger as real families coping with the most painful of human emotions, we can perceive its roots in their powerlessness.

*WORLD HUNGER
BY FRANCES MOORE LAPPE
AND JOSEPH COLLINS*

Poverty is the denial of all human rights. It is not created by the poor. It is created and sustained by the system we have built around us.

MUHAMMAD YUNER OF BANGLADESH

Burn down your cities and leave your farms and your cities will spring up again as if by magic, but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country.

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYANT

How we understand hunger determines what we think are its solutions.

*WORLD HUNGER
BY FRANCES MOORE LAPPE
AND JOSEPH COLLINS*

It is more likely that individuals are forced onto welfare rolls because jobs are not available, or other reasons that may be beyond their control.

*REPORT: WORK AFTER WELFARE
BY PAUL KLEPPNER*

In 1998, market share of the four largest firms for the United States ranged from 47% for wheat to almost 70% for corn.

USDA ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE

The top four cereal manufacturers accounted for about 85% of the sales in 1992.

*US CORPORATE AGRICULTURE FACTS
BY A. V. KREBS*

The anti-hunger movement has made tremendous strides in 25 years, but ending hunger in the new millennium will require the recommitment of Christian people everywhere.

*GRACE AT THE TABLE
BY DAVID BECKMANN*

Industrial agriculture has tended to look on the farmer as a "worker"- sort of obsolete but not yet dispensable machine-acting on the advice of scientists and economists. We have neglected the truth that a good farmer is a craftsman of the highest order, a kind of artist. It is the good work of good farmers, nothing else, that assures sufficiency of food over the long term.

WENDELL BERRY

God is giving us an opportunity to reduce human suffering dramatically. Hunger, though complex, can be overcome. The key is for each of us to help change the politics of hunger. ...Government policies are an essential but neglected part of the solution to hunger.

*GRACE AT THE TABLE
BY DAVID BECKMANN*

The following quotations were taken from readings included in material from U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference, Bread for the World, U.S. Catholic Rural Life Conference and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Most poor children are white; most are from working families; and the child poverty rate of rural America is higher than the nation as a whole.

Every third child in the world is chronically malnourished - too hungry to be active and happy.

The roots of hunger are poverty, violence and war, discrimination, environment degradation, and unequal distribution of resources, NOT overpopulation or natural disasters.

The problem of hunger is related to the question of who owns the land and how that resource is used.

In America, one farmer provides enough food and fiber for 128 people.

Food production is rapidly advancing to a vertically integrated system in which processors control every aspect of production and handling. Four corporations now control 40 to 80 percent of the markets in all communities.

The Right to Food

“Food like life is a basic human right. It is essential for the maintenance of life and an indispensable requirement of our God-given dignity. ...A just agricultural system will promote food security and food safety.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF OHIO
LIFE ON THE LAND

How can I be effectively involved in adoption of appropriate practices and policies which will ensure safe working conditions and just treatment of all agricultural laborers?

Savor the Earth

“When we humans are humble, we are faithful to who we are, children of our mother earth. With her we are all creatures of the one Creator and Redeemer.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF APPALACHIA
WEB OF LIFE

Take time to filter fertile soil through your fingers, praise God and allow it to be Holy Ground for you.

Gospel Versus Greed

“All economic choices and institutions must be judged by how they protect or undermine the life, dignity and fundamental rights of the human person.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF OHIO
LIFE ON THE LAND

How do my lifestyle choices reflect gospel values?

This is Holy Ground

“If we fail to care for our precious earth, and for the poor, then creation itself will rebel against us. Further, to undermine nature and the poor is to reject the word of God in creation.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF APPALACHIA
WEB OF LIFE

Do I allow myself to be enmeshed in materialism that does not reverence God’s creation?

Support Versus Convenience

“Facts prove that agriculture and food processing are a critical component of the state’s economy contributing \$56.2 billion annually and supporting one in six jobs.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF OHIO
LIFE ON THE LAND

How often do I consciously choose to purchase local produce in support of workers of our rural community?

Public Advocacy

“Though the Church will continue to serve farmers, farm workers, and hungry people, we must also seek ways in which we may help resolve the broader problems related to the food system and their impact on both rural and urban people.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF OHIO
LIFE ON THE LAND

What efforts can I direct toward advocacy of a just food system?

Quality Stewardship

“No one truly owns any part of creation. Rather, all creation belongs to God. We may be assigned to care for parts of it, but only if we serve the needs of others, along with our own needs.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF APPALACHIA
WEB OF LIFE

What evidence demonstrates local economy being undermined by business bureaucracies? Will my response make a difference?

Esteem for the Worker

“No one person - grower, worker, packer, shipper, retailer, or consumer - is greater than others in the eyes of God.”

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Do I hold reservations based on the type of worker? Or, do I unconditionally give credit and respect regardless of occupation?

Farming is a Way of Life

“Above all, we seek to explore the links between concern for the person and for the earth, between natural and social ecology.”

US CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
RENEWING THE EARTH

How do I respond to urban sprawl as it extends to fertile farm land and enmeshes the rural way of life with commercial blitz?

Active Accountability

“A principle of Catholic social teaching is called subsidiarity which means “help”. According to this principle, political and business bureaucracies as well as giant multinational corporations should help smaller ones and not undermine them.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF APPALACHIA
WEB OF LIFE

How can I personally promote the principle in purchase of food, clothing and commodities?

Taste Home Grown Products

“We need to stop and look at the state of agriculture in Ohio and examine what the loss of diversity in production and the loss of productive farmland is costing us?”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF OHIO
LIFE ON THE LAND

Do I consciously seek ways to support rural producers of locally grown food?

Step Forward

“It is our hope that the Ohio Catholic Rural Life Conference will be able to encourage all those involved in Ohio’s agricultural system as well as those who benefit from it to join together in reflection and action.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF OHIO
LIFE ON THE LAND

In which particular urban/rural conservation programs can I direct my interest and assistance?

Effective Outreach

“We call on a more effective use of education, pastoral ministry, and public advocacy as means for developing a deeper response and involvement in the food system.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF OHIO
LIFE ON THE LAND

Could we offer our buildings to groups convening who are working to seek just solutions in our community?

Debt Relief to Poor Countries

“People themselves have a right to help shape their own economy, with priorities appropriate to their social, cultural and ecological context. But many heavily indebted countries pay 40% or more of their budgets in debt servicing.”

JUBILEE 2000

Can we find the political will in the United States to help rid the poor countries of their unpayable foreign debts? If so, we can begin the serious work of eradicating poverty.

Walk in Their Shoes

“The economy exists for the person, not the person for the economy. A fundamental moral measure of any economy is how the poor and vulnerable are faring.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF OHIO
LIFE ON THE LAND

How do my lifestyle choices, especially my consumption choices reflect awareness for the poor and vulnerable?

I Am My Brother’s Keeper

“The dignity of the human person challenges us to look to the needs of the people within our communities and to respond to needs brought about by changing agricultural policies and practices.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF OHIO
LIFE ON THE LAND

How am I called to help parish and diocesan rural life efforts become more effective in addressing issues relating to food production and land Use?

Ethics Versus Human Dignity

“Human dignity is a key ethical foundation for sustainable community. The deepest meaning of the image of God within us is that we are co-creators with God, that we share in God’s own creativity.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF APPALACHIA
WEB OF LIFE

Consumer society rejects this teaching and tries to convince us that we are what we buy and consume; that our joy is not from our creative power; and that we need what others say we need. How am I caught in this mode of modern consumerism?

Health Coverage for the Working Poor

“The fulfillment of the basic needs of the poor is of the highest priority... Policies and programs at all levels should support the strength and stability of families, especially those adversely affected by the economy.”

U.S. BISHOPS
ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR ALL

Knowing that 7 out of 10 low wage workers do not have health coverage, what efforts can I pursue to urge government leaders to address health care issues?

Jubilee Justice

“Forgiving the debts of the poorest countries is no panacea for eliminating poverty. It is, however, a necessary first step. Debtor governments do not have the resources to service their debts and feed their people.”

JO MARIE BRIESBADER
CENTER OF CONCERN

Responding to the biblical call to Jubilee Justice promotes a qualitatively different behavior toward the most vulnerable. Can I forgive my debtors in a spirit of forgiving love?

Quality of Life

“Our economy remains a human creation which reflects our choices about what we value.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF OHIO
LIFE ON THE LAND

How have I enhanced the quality of life by my values?

Ethical Principles of Land Use

“Called by God to be responsible stewards of God’s creation, all persons should work together to care for its natural resources, which include diverse topography, natural habitat, waterways, and fertile soil.”

DIOCESE OF CLEVELAND
TASK FORCE

Do I assist and support zoning regulations that protect the rights of land owners and the common good of the community?

Take a Specific Stance

“If welfare reform is to promote self-sufficiency, workers must be able to secure jobs that pay enough to allow families to cover household necessities and work-related expenses.”

PAUL KLEPPER
WELFARE TO WORK

How can our faith community work in partnership with our county Department of Human Services in the areas of job development and job related supportive services?

Food for Thought

“There are still hundreds of millions of women, men and children chronically hungry, malnourished and starving. In 1986, the U.S. Catholic Bishops called it appalling that there were 500 million people chronically hungry. In 1996 there were 840 million.”

JAMES HUG, S.J.
CENTER OF CONCERN

How can I respond to the frail voice of hunger crying out for help?

Action Through Representation

“Encourage and support cooperatives as a way of giving both consumers and producers a measure of economic power and greater participation in the economic enterprise.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF OHIO
LIFE ON THE LAND

Do I utilize the measures available to influence legislators toward fair decisions for the good of all citizens, especially the powerless?

Respect for the Land

“People are God’s co-creators, called to form sustainable communities, and to develop sustainable livelihoods, all in the sacred creative communion with land and forest and water and air, indeed with all earth’s holy creatures.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF APPALACHIA
AT HOME IN THE WEB OF LIFE

How can our culture which is especially concerned with efficiency, actively foster respect for the land?

Face the Facts

“Not enough people with power care to put an end to the hunger, the malnutrition, the brain damage, the misery, the tragedy, the bitterness and resentment, the death by starvation.”

JAMES HUG, S.J.
CENTER OF CONCERN

What efforts can I direct to our affluent society to truly search the causes of destructive ideologies and constrictive financial policies that thrust such an assault on hungry people?

Outreach to the Vulnerable

“We know that millions of people suffer the ravages of hunger and malnutrition every day here in the United States. Our churches, parishes, and charitable institutions who feed millions of people every year... cannot substitute for fair and equitable public policy and for action by society in general, and by government to end hunger.”

U.S. BISHOPS
FOOD POLICY IN A HUNGRY WORLD

Besides my contributed services to the marginalized, what efforts can I direct toward reform of public policy?

Reach Out - Now

“There is presently more food on the planet. The increase of food production has outstripped population growth, making 15% more food per capita available today than twenty years ago.”

JAMES HUG, S.J.
CENTER OF CONCERN

With all the enhanced communication for witnessing the reality and solution to hunger, why do we not have capabilities for improving conditions in feeding the hungry?

Hunger for Justice

“Daily, we in the human family continue to starve into existence generations of future social problems. Two hundred million children under the age of five are undernourished; one of these dies every eight seconds.”

JIM HUG, S.J.
CENTER OF CONCERN

What measures of action can we apply locally to feed our hungry brothers?

Listen with Your Heart

“Anguish, grief, humiliation and fear are four dimensions of hunger. How we understand hunger determines what we think are its solutions.”

FRANCES MOORE LAPPE AND
JOSEPH COLLINS
WORLD HUNGER: TWELVE MYTHS

Can I begin to understand hunger as real families coping with the most painful of human emotions? If so, I may perceive its roots in their powerlessness.

Dimensions of Hunger

“More than one billion people are chronically hungry. Between 13 and 18 million people die each year because of hunger and starvation. Of 35,000 people who die of hunger each day, 26,000 are children.”

ENDING HUNGER

Statistics of the extent of poverty stagger the imagination but numbers cannot communicate the suffering. How can I help alleviate this brutal stigma of our world?

Urgent Need for Global Solidarity

“The nations of the world have chosen to lower their sights rather than rise to the challenge of feeding the hungry of the world. The budget of the Food and Agriculture Organization for fighting global hunger remains less than 5% of what people in a developed country spend each year to counter the effects of overeating.”

JIM HUG, S.J.
CENTER OF CONCERN

Respect your hungry brother in a spirit of repentance and a renewed hunger for justice.

Nature Shouts With Joy

“Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything that is beautiful; for beauty is God’s handwriting - wayside sacrament. Welcome it in every fair face, in every sky, in every fair flower, and thank God for it as a cup of blessing.”

RALPH W. EMERSON

My joyful response to the beauty of creation is also a sacrament of committed love to my Creator.

What a Privilege

“To own a bit of ground, to scratch it with a hoe, to plant seeds, and watch the renewal of life... this is the commonest delight of the race, the most satisfactory thing one can do.”

CHARLES WARNER

How numerous are the persons who are denied this privilege and right because of impoverished conditions in their country?

Protection Versus Depletion

“Moderate sized farms operated by families on a full time basis should be preserved and their economic viability protected... There is genuine social and economic value in maintaining a wide distribution in the ownership of productive property.”

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS
ECONOMIC PASTORAL

How can I become more aware of the struggles of farm families and become more supportive through prayers, outreach and public advocacy?

Justice For All

“We call all people; producers, consumers, community and civic leaders to reflect on the conditions and actions which challenge our rural communities and ultimately affect the lives of those who work within the system and those who enjoy the fruits of their labor.”

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF OHIO
LIFE ON THE LAND

How can I participate in systemic change whereby justice for all is acquired and maintained?