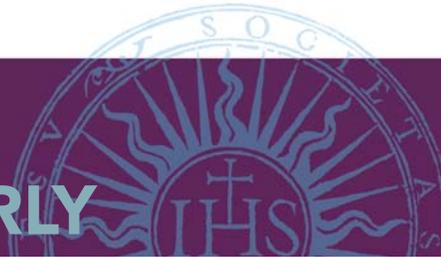


JustSouth QUARTERLY



FALL 2013



“I was hungry...”

MATTHEW 25:35

THE RELENTLESS ASSAULT ON AMERICA'S HUNGRY

BY FRED KAMMER, S.J.

There is widespread hunger in the land of plenty. In the United States, nearly 49 million Americans, including 16.2 million children, live in households where it is a struggle to put food on the table each month.¹ Among children, more than one in five children is at risk of hunger; among African-Americans and Latinos, nearly one in three children is at risk of hunger.²

While the nation’s nutrition safety net includes special programs for children and nursing mothers and infants, as well as commodity programs for local food banks and soup kitchens, it is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that provides our “first line of defense against hunger.”³

SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, enables low-income families to buy food, using an electronic debit card in more than 246,000 approved retail stores, and to be able to consume it in their own family home—not in a soup kitchen. In FY2012, SNAP served around 46 million people monthly.⁴ One in seven people in the United States is enrolled in SNAP. Nearly half are children.⁵ About half of all children will receive SNAP benefits at some point

before age 20, and, among African-American children, 90 percent will participate in SNAP before age 20.⁶

The monthly SNAP benefit is based on family size and an estimate of costs to buy food to prepare nutritious, low-cost meals for various-sized households. Family eligibility depends on available financial resources and both monthly “gross income” (less than 130 percent of the federal poverty level) and “net income” after certain deductions (less than the federal poverty level).

Because eligibility is based on income and resources, a downturn in the economy causes a growing number of families to become eligible for SNAP; thus it really is the “last resort” for the unemployed or underemployed. For example, between 2007 and 2011, SNAP participation nearly doubled due to the Great Recession, increasing by 18 million people.⁷ When SNAP benefits are added to a family’s other monthly income, it actually reduces the number of families and children living in poverty (income below the federal poverty line). In 2011, SNAP kept 2.9 percent of nearly 2.2 million children out of poverty.⁸

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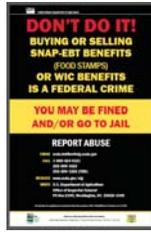
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COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES



Ironically, instead of applauding SNAP's effectiveness in reducing the number of families living in poverty and meeting basic food needs for millions of hungry families, some policy makers have reacted to the growth of SNAP over the years by making more and more hungry people ineligible. Those efforts have included the following:⁹

- ▶ In 1996, under so-called welfare reform, a House amendment limited food stamps to only three months out of every three years for unemployed people between the ages of 18 and 50 who were not raising minor children. Any month in which a person was not employed or in a work or training program for at least 20 hours a week would count against the three-month limit, and after three such months of receiving benefits, a person would be ineligible for the next 33 months.
- ▶ The 1996 law also removed SNAP eligibility for most lawfully present non-citizens. (Undocumented persons have never been eligible for food stamps or SNAP.) Laws enacted in 1998 and 2002 restored eligibility to certain lawfully present non-citizens, including children, persons receiving disability benefits, and those here for five years. SNAP participation historically has been low among eligible non-citizens: In 2008, the rate of participation for non-citizens was 51 percent and for citizen children living with non-citizen adults was 55 percent, compared to national participation rates of 67 percent for all eligible individuals and 86 percent for all eligible children.¹⁰
- ▶ On November 1, 2013, an across-the-board SNAP benefit cut for more than 47 million Americans, including 22 million children, will take effect. For instance, every family of four receiving SNAP will see its benefits cut \$36 a month or about \$400 for the rest of the fiscal year.

- ▶ In June 2013, the House Agriculture Committee proposed a severe bill to cut SNAP by more than \$20 billion over the coming decade—nearly all of it coming from ending or cutting benefits for low-income families and individuals. The bill would have knocked nearly 2 million people off SNAP, primarily those in low-income working families and elderly individuals. Some working-poor families would be cut adrift simply because they own a modest car needed to go to work. Hundreds of thousands of other poor recipients would see their benefits reduced.
- ▶ If that were not enough, when the committee's bill came to the House floor, lawmakers added one of the most extreme SNAP measures in history: It would allow states to end benefits to large numbers of low-income people who want a job but cannot find one and to keep half the savings to use for any purpose state politicians want, including tax cuts or plugging holes in state budgets.
- ▶ Then, on September 16, the House Republican leadership introduced a bill to combine \$20.5 billion in cuts over ten years from the unsuccessful June bill with an additional \$19 billion dollar set of cuts by ending state waivers under the 1996 welfare law that had allowed states to suspend the three-month cut-off in localities with high unemployment or insufficient jobs. The bill's \$39 billion dollar savings come by denying benefits to 3.9 million people in 2014 and an additional 3 million people each year of the following decade. These include some of our most destitute adults, as well as many low-income children, elders, and poor working families. On September 19, the House passed this bill by a 217-210 vote!

Earlier in July, Bishop Stephen Blaire, writing for the Catholic bishops, urged the

House to “resist harmful changes and cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program” and “prevent cuts and harmful structural changes to nutrition programs such as SNAP that will harm hungry children, poor families, vulnerable seniors and workers who are underemployed or unable to find employment.”¹¹ He continued:

Adequate and nutritious food is a basic need and a fundamental human right that is integral to protecting the life and dignity of the human person. SNAP is one of the most effective and important federal programs to combat hunger in the nation by helping to feed millions of persons in need every year.¹²

Bishop Blaire reminded us that Catholic tradition is strong on the need for government involvement in confronting hunger and poverty:

Government has an indispensable role in safeguarding the common good of all. SNAP, as a crucial part of the Farm Bill, helps relieve pressure on overwhelmed parishes, charities, food banks, pantries and other emergency food providers across the country who could not begin to meet the need for food assistance if SNAP eligibility or benefits were reduced.

Why, one then might ask, do we even need local efforts when we have the SNAP program and other governmental nutrition programs? First, millions of people are ineligible for SNAP. In addition, more than 90 percent of SNAP benefits are used up by the third week of the month.¹³ Charity workers across the country know well that government benefits generally are insufficient to get families through the month, and so hungry people crowd food kitchens and pantries near the end of each month.

When we look at the widespread reality of hunger in our own country, it is clear that our elected officials should be doing more, not less, to ensure our nutrition safety net. *As a nation, our assault should be on hunger, not on those who are hungry!*

—Endnotes on back cover



Catholic Social Thought and Hunger

“Today the peoples in hunger are making a dramatic appeal to the peoples blessed with abundance.”

—Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 1967, no. 3

Consideration of hunger in Catholic social thought begins with the concept of human rights articulated, for example, by Pope John XXIII in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* in 1963. There, Pope John grounded human rights in the principle that “every human being is a person, that is, his nature is endowed with intelligence and free will” and “because he is a person he has rights and obligations flowing directly and simultaneously from his very nature.”¹ These rights, the pope continued, are universal and inviolable.

Pope John then began his enumeration of human rights: “Every man has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services.”² While the pope also laid out rights pertaining to a worthy standard of living, moral and cultural values, worship, choosing a state of life, economic and political life, immigration, and association, he began with food.

The right to food tops the list of rights because hunger is such a fundamental assault on human life itself—and so widespread. It is listed first in the beatitudes of Jesus when he declares, “I was hungry and you fed me.”³ The Catholic bishops at the Second Vatican Council cast the hunger reality and our response in the light of early Church teaching in these words:

Since there are so many people in this world afflicted with hunger, this sacred Council urges all, both individuals and governments, to remember the saying of the Fathers: “Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him you have killed him.”⁴

Two significant twentieth-century insights develop this teaching: First, that care for the hungry person on the street where I live is now universalized—“the social question has become worldwide,” as Pope Paul VI put it. He explained, “Today the peoples in hunger are making a dramatic appeal to the peoples blessed with abundance.”⁵

The second key development, reflecting the worldwide nature of the social question, is the important necessity for both individual action and systemic change

to confront hunger and to secure the right to food for all people. The Vatican Council named this in its urgent call to “individuals and governments.” This dual emphasis runs through much of modern Catholic social teaching. We see this interplay of individuals and structures most recently in discussions of hunger in *Caritas in Veritate* by Pope Benedict XVI. There Benedict first cites the “dramatic appeal” of Pope Paul on human responsibility as an example of “vocation”—free people calling on other free people to assume shared responsibility.⁶

Then, in a more detailed discussion of hunger, Benedict emphasizes the need for “a network of economic institutions capable of guaranteeing regular access to sufficient food and water;” “eliminating the structural causes” of food insecurity; “promoting the agricultural development of poorer countries;” “investing in rural infrastructures, irrigation systems, transport, organization of markets;” and the necessity “to cultivate a public conscience that considers *food and access to water as universal rights of all human beings, without distinction or discrimination.*”⁷

For Christians and all people of good will, the reality of hunger today calls for feeding the individual hungry person, developing community solutions such as food banks and soup kitchens, and legislation and action by governments and economic institutions at all levels to make the kinds of systemic changes that end hunger and assure the right to food for all.

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- 7 *Ibid.*, no. 27 (emphasis in original).



ONE FAMILY UNDER GOD: W

BY SUE WEISHAR, PH.D.



The U.S. Catholic Church has been a strong and prophetic voice in the struggle to reform our nation's broken immigration system. Now that Congress finally appears willing to substantially address the issue, Catholic advocates across the country have doubled down on efforts to pass comprehensive and compassionate immigration reform legislation that includes a path to citizenship for more than 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. On June 5, Archbishop Gregory Aymond led a Spirit-filled prayer service for immigration reform at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans where he prayed that every human being be treated with dignity and respect and for public officials to have the courage and wisdom to reform our current immigration laws. The event was organized by the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans, and the Jesuit Social Research Institute. The immigration stories of three of the individuals who addressed the standing-room-only gathering follow.



Pictures from top: Salvador and Maribel Tejada, who first entered the U.S. without authorization in the early 1980's, explained how being able to legalize their status transformed their lives; Archbishop Aymond speaking with members of an immigrant family; Jennifer and Juan Molina after Jennifer's testimony; Edelberto Cruz Carranza became overwhelmed with emotion telling his story. Jacinta Gonzales, Lead Organizer for the Congress of Day Laborers, interpreted for Mr. Carranza. Photos by Christine Bordelon, courtesy of the *Clarion Herald*.

Witnessing for Immigration Reform

Testimony of Edelberto Cruz Carranza

Good evening. My name is Edelberto Cruz Carranza. I came to New Orleans in 2007 to work in the construction industry and help rebuild New Orleans. I am from Nicaragua and am a member of St. Anthony of Padua Church and the Congress of Day Laborers. The Congress fights for the dignity and rights of all workers helping to rebuild New Orleans.

In Jeremiah, as we just read, it says:

*Practice honesty and integrity;
Rescue the victim who has been wronged
From the hands of his oppressor;
Do not exploit the stranger.*

I understand the significance of those words. In August 2011, I was working for a construction company at a site in Kenner. About two dozen of my fellow workers and I had not been paid in two weeks. We went to the office to complain, and instead of the company redressing our wrongs, we were arrested by ICE in a violent and cruel raid. I can tell you that experience was the worst moment of my life. After spending 56 hours in jail, I suffered the humiliation of wearing an ankle bracelet for 90 days as though I were some kind of an animal. Despite ongoing investigations by multiple federal labor and civil rights agencies, ICE has refused to grant me and my fellow workers prosecutorial discretion and close our cases. Some of the victims and witnesses from the raid have already been deported.

God sent his son to redeem the world, yet he was condemned and crucified. I feel that immigrant workers in this city are often condemned and crucified. Please continue to pray that the crucifixion of immigrants through deportation and broken families ends and that the U.S. Congress votes for just and comprehensive immigration reform. Thank you.

Testimony of Jennifer Molina

My name is Jenifer Molina. I am from New Orleans and grew up in Lakeview and Metairie. I met and fell in love with Juan Molina in 1994. Juan is from Honduras, and when we met, he was undocumented. I worried about him being deported every single day we were together. Thank God we got good advice from Catholic Charities, and we moved up the date of our marriage so Juan could legalize under a provision of immigration law that was about to expire. It was not until later that I came to see what a nightmare our life would have been if we had waited.

After Juan was able to legalize, he studied English at Delgado, then got an associate's degree and went on to the University of New Orleans to get a bachelor's degree in accounting. After Katrina, Juan started his own business and is working hard to make it a success. We are the parents of three wonderful boys. Manuel and Miguel are both altar servers at St. Anthony of Padua church.

I know so many people in our community who have so much potential like Juan, but that potential cannot be realized because of their legal status. It breaks my heart when I think of all the mothers I know who live in fear every single day that the father of their children could be deported.

We just heard in Paul's letter to the Corinthians that "if one part of the Body of Christ suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy." We are all suffering because of current immigration laws. I hope and pray that our leaders have the courage and wisdom to vote to reform our immigration system. Then 11 million undocumented immigrants can come out of the shadows and fully realize their God-given potential, and families can stay together.

Testimony of Gabriela*

Hello. My name is Gabriela, and in three days I will be 13 years old. My two sisters and I were born in the United States, but my mom was born in Mexico. We moved to New Orleans about eight years ago, and right away we started to attend Mass at a local Catholic church. I am an altar server there, and sometimes I help out with the English classes after Spanish Mass. I love our church—especially the enthusiasm people have for singing and praying. I attend a Catholic grade school on a scholarship where I am in the choir. I love my school—people are very loving and supportive, and I have a lot of friends there.

I wanted to speak today for all the kids who have parents who are undocumented—like my mom. Sometimes I worry what would happen to my sisters and me if my mom is stopped by the police. We would all be separated and placed in foster care if they sent my mom back to Mexico. She told me she would not take us to Mexico because it would be too dangerous for us there.

My mother came here to work hard and to help my grandmother and grandfather who I have never met, but my mom talks to them every day by telephone. Thank you for seeing that, like we just sang, "we are all God's people." Thank you for praying to change the immigration laws so families like mine can stay together and live in peace.

** Speaker's name was changed to protect her mother's identity.*

For a digital copy of One Family Under God: A Prayer Service for Comprehensive Immigration Reform to use in your diocese, please contact Martin Gutierrez at Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans at mgutierrez@ccano.org or Sue Weishar at sweishar@loyno.edu



Marching for Racial Justice in Cont



AUGUST 28, 1963: Civil rights activists Andrew J. Young (middle) and Julian Bond, holding hands during a civil rights rally in front of the Washington Monument. (Photo by Francis Miller//Time Life Pictures/Getty Images)

BY ALEX MIKULICH, PH.D.

Congressman John L. Lewis, who is the sole surviving speaker of the 1963 March on Washington, maintains that while we have come a long way since that famous day 50 years ago, we still have a long way to go to achieve racial justice in this land. “There is a lot of pain, a lot of hurt in America,” he recently said. Too many current events, he added, “remind us of our dark past.”¹

If we are going to contend with our dark past and achieve racial justice in this land, we will enforce universal voting rights; end racial profiling; dismantle the “cradle to prison” pipeline; and eliminate racial disparities in housing, health care, and employment, among many other policy changes.

While we must continue to work for these changes in public policy, the depth and breadth of changes require much deeper soul-searching and transformation. Congressman Lewis, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and all those who gave their lives for the civil rights struggle call us to a deeper conversion that goes well beyond law and public policy.

Congressman Lewis and Dr. King call white Americans—indeed, all of us—to a deeper transformation rooted in our baptismal promise to be continually transformed into God’s love.

If we seek authentic human liberation from white privilege and oppression, white people of faith need to enact collectively both a deeply contemplative orientation to God and radical protest against white racism.

By contemplative orientation, I suggest Constance Fitzgerald’s faithful, humble cry of the mystic who, in the midst of societal-spiritual decline and emptiness, is

*everywhere crying out for God...a great cry of desire for life, freedom, resurrection, a cry to the God of life who brings liberation out of every type of death, a cry for a new vision, a cry for a contemplative vision.*²

Fitzgerald’s practice of contemplation invites people of faith to open to our vulnerability, to our loss of meaning and empty imagination in the midst of societal moral and spiritual decline.

emplation and Protest

Silence and lack of passionate concern for the loss of life in our country tells much about us. The child who is murdered on the streets of New Orleans, the parent who dies of exposure attempting to cross the Mexican border for a better life, and people who die everywhere because of poverty reveal to economically privileged whites our own violence and how our desires daily deface the Image of Christ.

When Dr. King spoke of the triple evils of poverty, racism, and militarism, he was addressing our deepest desires as Americans and connecting our racism to larger, global realities. Our—North American whites’—seemingly unlimited desire for more comfort and pleasure, our insatiable desire to possess the world’s wealth and natural resources as our own, reveal our deadly combination of privileged ignorance and arrogance. Those who die before their time due to war, poverty, and U.S. urban violence reveal our loss of humanity.

Fitzgerald’s contemplative practice invites whites to acknowledge how our way of living is idolatrous, as we set our self-reliant humanity as an alternative to God. Leave no doubt that whites tend to live as if we are self-reliant.

Francis Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago, calls residential hyper-segregation “spatial racism” in his pastoral letter *Dwell in My Love*.³ He states that spatial racism creates a “visible chasm between rich and poor, and between whites and people of color.” This chasm includes how whites lack cross-racial empathy for brothers and sisters of color. Living this way excludes the possibility of racial solidarity.

Fitzgerald invites us to reflect also how technological prowess and multiple capitalist practices wreak devastation from the Mississippi River to the Gulf Coast and to the entire planet. Left to our own idolatry, the result is more of the same—insatiable consumer desire, increasing cynicism, and the “presumptive” resort to violence—whether it is shooting the young black male walking down our street or the drone bombing of defenseless Afghan communities.

Precisely at this point of “dead-endedness,” abandonment, and emptiness, Constance Fitzgerald wonders if God might be preparing us to experience transformed desire, personally and collectively, for new vision, love, courage, and hope that renews life across the face of the earth. The miracle in the midst of this emptiness, writes Fitzgerald, is that contemplative cries from people and the earth itself are “no longer silent and invisible, but rather prophetic and revolutionary.”⁴

If we attend and listen, we will hear the groans of people sick and tired of racial profiling, sick and tired of gun violence, sick and tired of unequal public education, sick and tired of whole families and communities being torn asunder by the “cradle to prison” pipeline.

We should recall the wisdom of Proverbs: “S/he who shuts her ear to the cry of the poor will [him or her]self call out and not be heard” (Prov 21:13). However, if we attend and listen to the groans within ourselves, from peoples everywhere, and from the earth, we may yet hear the cry of new life and a new creation.

When we hear these cries for freedom and life, then we must respond to Congressman Lewis’s prophetic call to re-affirm Dr. King’s dream and become “good troublemakers” for the Beloved Community.

John Lewis learned how nonviolence invites—and demands—ascetic practices of prayer, fasting, contemplation, and active nonviolence. Or, as Pope Paul VI wrote on the first World Day of Peace on January 1, 1968, racial justice and peace demands a “new training” that “must educate the new generations to reciprocal respect between nations, to brotherhood [and sisterhood] between peoples, to collaboration between races, with a view to their progress and development.”

Now is the time to attend to cries in our land for freedom and life. Now is the time to respond to those cries by nurturing practices of contemplation and protest for racial justice and peace that we may yet be transformed in heart, mind, and soul and yearn with all people for the Beloved Community.



What does this symbol used by JSRI and the Jesuits mean?

From the third century on, the names of Jesus are sometimes shortened, particularly in Christian inscriptions. Used as a symbol, one such contraction or *Christogram* was **IHS**—denoting the first three letters of the Greek name of Jesus, *iota-eta-sigma*, capitalized as **IHS**, then as **IHS** or **IHC**. Over time the three nails were added below and the cross above the **IHS** and the rays of the sun around this emblem of Christ. In the late Middle Ages, it was popularized by St. Vincent Ferrer and St. Bernardine of Siena in the 15th century, and then adopted by St. Ignatius of Loyola as the seal of the Society of Jesus in 1541. It can be found in widespread use in Christian art and architecture, especially in Jesuit sites and settings.

Popular interpretations of **IHS** have evolved, such as two Latin phrases: “Iesus Hominum Salvator” (“Jesus, Savior of humanity”), as used by Pope Francis in his homily to Jesuits at the Gesu Church in Rome on the feast of St. Ignatius, July 31, 2013; and “In Hoc Signo” (“In this sign...[you shall conquer]”), a reference, some say, to the legend surrounding the vision of Constantine before the victory over Maxentius at Milvian Bridge in 312 before which the emperor saw a sign of Christ in the sky and heard these words.

One commentator reported two interpretations of “IHS” in English: “I Have Suffered” and “In His Service.”

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The Relentless Assault on America's Hungry

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