

Seeds of Hope: The Church at the Service of Food Security

Good Practices



Introduction

Hunger is a scandal, an open wound on the body of humanity, and it summons all of us to a serious examination of conscience¹.

With these words from the *Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025*, Pope Francis denounced one of the most serious contradictions of contemporary societies: while a part of humanity lives in abundance, another part continues to suffer from a lack of or an inadequate access to water and food that qualitatively and quantitatively meets their needs, as a violation of the intrinsic dignity of the human person and his or her fundamental rights. The Magisterium has consistently spoken against the disparity between poverty and wealth. St. John Paul II, in line with the Second Vatican Council before him, said that this social gap is “intolerable for humanity”² and constitutes a scandal³ before which, as Christians, we cannot remain indifferent⁴. Therefore, the Church, affirms Pope Leo XIV, “ encourages all initiatives to put an end to the outrage of hunger in the world, making her own the sentiments of her Lord, Jesus, who, as the Gospels narrate, when he saw a great multitude coming to him to hear his word, was

1 POPE FRANCIS, *Spes non confundit*, *Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025*, 9 May 2024, n.16.

2 cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse on the occasion of the Inaugural Session of the World Food Summit*, 13 November 1996.

3 Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* ‘*Gaudium et spes*’, 7 December 1965, n. 88.

4 Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* ‘*Gaudium et spes*’, 7 December 1965, n. 69.

concerned first of all to feed them, and for this purpose asked the disciples to take charge of the problem, abundantly blessing the efforts they made (cf. Jn 6:1-13)”⁵. This Magisterial statement, while underscoring the Church’s enduring commitment to addressing hunger, makes clear that overcoming the unjust differences between poverty and wealth is seen as a moral imperative rooted in the Gospel, not simply as a social or economic issue.

As a timely response to this call during this Jubilee Year 2025, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development is promoting four good practices implemented by Churches on different continents, which contribute to ensuring the food security of their communities.

In this way, the Dicastery *seeks to spread seeds of hope and give visibility to good news*, by inspiring further projects that might be led by Catholics, who are urgently called to “become peacemakers working for the common good,”⁶ enabling *every human person to fully exercise their fundamental right to water and food*.



5 *Message of the Holy Father to Participants in the 44th Session of the FAO Conference* (30 June 2025) | LEO XIV.

6 *Ibid.*

I.

Overcoming hunger and thirst: an ethical imperative

Aware of the fact that hunger and thirst do not depend so much on material scarcity—Pope Francis reminded us that “there is enough food in the world for no one to go to sleep with an empty stomach!”⁷—but rather are caused by a scarcity of social resources, and that the problem of food insecurity must be addressed, in the long-term, by correcting the structures that cause it⁸, the Dicastery *recognises and emphasises the essential contribution of the local Churches in building development from below*. By promoting agricultural development and social justice, these local Churches have included the involvement of local communities in the choices and decisions related to the use of arable land and the correct use of traditional and innovative agricultural production techniques, assuming that these “have



been judged, after sufficient testing, to be appropriate, respectful of the environment and attentive to the needs of the most deprived peoples.”⁹

For the Church, in fact,

7 POPE FRANCIS, *Message on the occasion of the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste*, 29 September 2022.

8 Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate*, 29 June 2009, n. 27.

9 *Ibid.*



the commitment to fight hunger and thirst constitutes a duty of justice¹⁰, as well as a true ethical imperative¹¹, which is found in the Gospel: *Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink* (cf. Mt 25:34-35).

Moreover, the Holy See recognises the right to food as a fundamental human right and a condition for the exercise of other fundamental rights, beginning with the right to life¹².

The expression *right to food* means the right of every person to have regular, permanent and unlimited access - through direct production or purchasing - to quantitati-

10 JOHN PAUL II, *Allocution to the participants in the International Conference on Nutrition*, 5 December 1992.

11 BENEDICT XVI, *Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate*, cit., n. 27.

12 Cf. *ex plurimis* JOHN XXIII, *Pacem in terris*, 11 April 1963, n. 6; JOHN PAUL II, *Message for the First World Food Day*, 14 October 1981; BENEDICT XVI, *Encyclical Letter. Caritas in Veritate*, cit., n. 27; POPE FRANCIS, *Message for World Food Day 2024*, 15 October 2024.

vely and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food¹³, free from fears and threats, corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the person belongs, and that ensures, for each and every person, a fulfilling and dignified physical, mental and spiritual life.

This right complements the intimately connected notion of *food security*, by which is meant the condition in which every individual has, at all times, physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, enabling them to satisfy their energy needs and food preferences in order to lead a healthy and active life¹⁴, and which constitutes one of the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*¹⁵.



13 Cf. United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment N. 12, <https://docs.un.org/en/E/C.12/1999/5>.

14 Rome Declaration on Food Security, adopted by the World Food Summit, 13 November 1996.

15 UNGA, Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 25 September 2015, Objective n. 2: "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture".

To this definition, the perspective of integral human development would add additional essential elements, namely: first, access to food should be ensured to every person without discrimination on the basis of ethnic or national origin, gender, religion, political opinion or social condition; and second, the way food is produced, and in particular its *social and environmental sustainability, is of importance*. In other words, it is necessary to ensure, on the one hand, that the rights of agricultural workers are fully respected and promoted and that the full participation of local communities is involved and, on the other hand, that food is produced with respect for creation, our common home, with special attention to the preservation of biodiversity.



II.

The methodology followed

In the light of these considerations, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development identified good practices on every continent that have been implemented or promoted by the local Churches. These practices, with a view to ensuring the self-determination of local populations, included the full participation of the local communities, and aimed at ensuring access - without discrimination based on ethnic or national affiliation, gender, religion gender, religion, political opinion or social condition - to water and food, which are quantitatively and qualitatively adequate, corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people and produced in both a socially sustainable (dignity and rights of workers) and environmentally sustainable (respect for creation and biodiversity) manner.

To help discern which practices would be promoted, the Dicastery developed these evaluation criteria, (I) alignment with the principles of the Church's social doctrine, (II) access to food and its characteristics, and (III) food production. A detailed survey of the criteria is listed below:

I – GENERAL CRITERIA (some applicable principles from the social teaching of the Church)	
A. Subsidiarity and participation	The practice must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be conceived, realized or sponsored by a local Church • respond to the real needs of the local population • in the case in which the practice was not conceived locally, it must involve the local community in the decision-making process as a protagonist from the very beginning.
B. Common good and universal destination of the goods of the earth	The practice must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bring benefits to the community in its complexity • improve the self-sufficiency of the community in the long run • contribute to an adequate sharing of natural resources, technical innovation and know-how
C. Solidarity and respect for fundamental values	The practice must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitate the integration of persons or groups in situations of vulnerability • in culturally diverse societies, contribute to dialogue and trust among the diverse communities • sustain the creation of local networks and the construction of community
II – CRITERIA OF FOOD SECURITY (access without discrimination to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and culturally acceptable food)	
A. Equitable access to water and food	The practice must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide equitable access to food and/or water without discrimination based on racial, ethnic, national, gender, religious, political or social distinctions • improve access to food and water for specific groups that are marginalised or excluded from the traditional economy
B. Quantitative and qualitative adequacy	The food must satisfy quantitative (amount) and qualitative (nutritional and security) standards.

C. Cultural relevance	The food must respect cultural and religious norms and preferences
III – CRITERIA OF FOOD PRODUCTION (food produced in conformity with the principles of integral ecology)	
A. Dignity and rights of workers	<p>The practice must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respect the dignity and the rights of all the workers involved • guarantee the emancipation of women and a correct balance between professional and family life for men and women • take into consideration the satisfaction of the workers in terms of salaries and working conditions
B. Care for the environment	<p>The production, the processing and the distribution of the food must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote the conservation and care for the environment • contribute to the protection and restoration of the biodiversity and local farming practices • reduce to a minimum the carbon footprint and make a sustainable use of natural resources
C. Traditional understandings and technical innovation	<p>The practice must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seek a just balance between the appreciation of the understandings of the traditional farming practices and the introduction of technical innovations and know-how • introduce technical innovation and know-how in full respect of the needs and the fundamental values of the population, avoiding the creation of a structural dependence of the local community upon a third country or a company • contribute to increasing resilience in the face of social and environmental tensions

An encouraging number of good practices that meet these criteria were identified. From the list of projects collected, the Dicastery further limited its selection to good practices that highlight a variety of approaches, which use varied methods and styles, designed to meet the different challenges and opportunities existing in the local realities for which they were conceived, but at the same time are potentially replicable elsewhere.

The Dicastery applauds the many efforts to improve food security by applying the principles of integral human development as a fundamental and indispensable element in guaranteeing the dignity, freedom and full realisation of the human person in all his or her aspects.



Conclusion



The good practices proposed below have a distinct motivation, different from other worthy development projects aimed at improving the living conditions of local communities, insofar as they have been implemented by the local Churches in response to the Lord's invitation to give food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty. They fulfill an ethical imperative that grows out of and is a direct expression of the Christian faith. These practices stand as a testimony of Christ's love for humanity.

In promoting these practices and criteria, the Dicastery hopes that they may bear abundant fruit and be a source of inspiration for all people of good will, moving towards the ultimate goal of giving concrete shape and form to the words of the Lord: *I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly* (Jn 10:10).





Maní, Yucatán, Mexico

LOCAL CHURCH:
Archdiocese of Yucatan

U YITS KA'AN

Escuela de Agricultura Ecológica



The Escuela de Agricultura Ecológica U Yits Ka'an is a school of ecological agriculture created by the local Church more than 30 years ago to support local communities facing hunger and poverty. The school promotes ethical and justice-based agricultural practices derived from traditional Maya and agroecology combined with constant updates from science and academia. Throughout its long history, the school has faced many challenges, which it has overcome by applying the principle of “learning by doing” and building a wide network of small farmers, NGOs and universities. This multidisciplinary project has been able to adapt to changing needs and perspectives within local communities, while supporting collective processes of advocacy and care for the most vulnerable, as well as environmental protection.

TIME FRAME

- Current state: IN OPERATION – 30 years
- Began in 1995

INFORMATION ONLINE

https://www.facebook.com/uyitskaan/?locale=es_LA



Zolotnykivska AH, UKRAINE,

LOCAL CHURCH

Archeparchy of Ternopil-Zboriv t

Zarvanytsia Agro



The Mariano Zarvanytsia Spiritual Centre in the municipality of Zolotnyky, Ternopil region, promotes a multi-level approach to support food security in the area. The project began in 2006 with the opening of a farm, “Zarvanytsia Agro”, and focuses on activities that create businesses, develop tourism and finance agricultural and infrastructure projects such as water bottling, production of various crops, animal husbandry, cooperative activities for dairy products, beekeeping, oil production and straw production.

TIME FRAME

- Current state: IN OPERATION
- Began in 2006

INFORMATION ONLINE

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1226132854154430>



ANGOLA, AFRICA

LOCAL CHURCH:

Caritas of the Diocese of Dundo,
Caritas of the Diocese of Luena, Caritas of the Diocese of
Saurimo with the support of ROSTO SOLIDARIO

“Kulima ku tatuisa kulla” Cultivarpara garantir la segurança alimentar



‘Kulima Ku Tatuisa Kulia’, which in the Chócue language means ‘to cultivate is to ensure food security’, was a two-year project created locally in 2022 by the synergetic work of several Caritas (Cáritas Angola, Cáritas Diocesana de Dundo, Cáritas Arquidiocesana de Saurimo, Cáritas Diocesana de Luena and Cáritas Portuguesa) with the support of the Portuguese NGO Rosto Solidário. In order to ensure food security, the project worked to diversify food production within the communities by enabling families to take an active role in growing their own food, promoting the long-term sustainability of crops and self-sufficiency beyond the life of the project. By learning sustainable farming techniques and forming local farming associations with an ecological orientation, families were able to meet their own food and nutritional needs.

TIME FRAME

- Current state: CLOSED – 2 years
- Began in December 2022
- Closed in November 2024

INFORMATION ONLINE

<https://caritas.pt/2023/noticias-noticias/kulima-ku-tatuisa-kulia/>



CAMBODIA, ASIA

LOCAL CHURCH
Caritas Cambodia

Labor to Farmer



Caritas Cambodia launched the “Labor to Farmer project” in 2015 to help small farmers adopt organic farming and form co-operatives using the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), a community-based certification model. Supported by the local church, the project has improved food security, promoted environmentally friendly farming and increased farmers' income through sustainable techniques such as multi-cropping and natural fertilisers. Another Caritas programme strengthened organic standards, helping farmers to reduce costs and better market their produce. The project's success was recognised in 2016, when Chou Saw An won Cambodia's Best Farmer of the Year award.

TIME FRAME

- Current state: IN OPERATION
- Began in 2015

INFORMATION ONLINE

<https://www.caritascambodia.org>

**Scan the QR code to watch the videos
of the projects.**



