



Bread for the World Louisiana

**The Twomey Center for Peace Through Justice
Loyola University New Orleans**

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Feed Every Child

Summer is here and most of our nation's children are looking forward to free time and fun in the sun. Summer can be a difficult time for low-income families. When kids who participate in free school lunch and school breakfast programs are on vacation from school, the cost of providing those 10 extra meals per week for each child adds up quickly.

On his radio show, Rush Limbaugh blasted successful school feeding programs and suggested "the best way to end childhood hunger this summer is to encourage kids to look for food in their local dumpsters."

Hungry children may be a laugh to Rush Limbaugh, but they are our future.

Nearly one in four children in the U.S. live on the brink of hunger. School feeding programs feed nearly 19 million children each day. Only 11% of those children receive meals in the summer.

Besides offending the dignity of children who live on the brink of hunger, Limbaugh raises several myths about hunger.

Myth: You can't be obese and malnourished.

Fact: Hunger and obesity can co-exist. Families who struggle to put food on the table often turn to low-quality, high-calorie food to satisfy their hunger. The combination can lead to obesity.

Myth: All people who work can earn enough to provide their children with the essentials necessary for good health.

Fact: In most areas of the U.S., a family of 4 needs to earn twice the poverty line to provide children with basic necessities. More than one in eight people in the U.S. lives below the poverty line – which was \$21,756 for a family of four in 2009. One in five children in the U.S. lives below the poverty line.

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THEIR LOCAL DUMPSTERS”**

- RUSH LIMBAUGH

Myth: No one in the U.S. goes hungry.

Fact: Nearly one in four children are at risk of hunger. Among African-Americans and Latinos, one in three children are at risk of hunger.

Myth: People always have a choice about whether or not they have access to healthy food.

Fact: It's easy to look at a person who is diabetic because of obesity and think that this person's problem is self-control – until you realize there are no places for her or him to buy healthy foods.

On the Blackfoot Indian reservation in Montana, for example, it's a half-day drive to the nearest supermarket. Nutrition programs are helpful, but they don't solve the food-access problem in a community with only fast food restaurants and convenience stores.

Myth: It's better to let children eat out of dumpsters than to offer them basic food assistance.

Fact: Nearly one in four children in the U.S. live on the brink of hunger. School feeding programs feed nearly 19 million children each day. Only 11% of those children receive meals in the summer.

Dumpster diving is not the solution.

Hungry kids have a hard time learning, fighting off disease, and thriving. That's why our nation's child nutrition programs – school lunches and breakfasts, summer feeding programs, and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program – are so critical. But for every 100 children receiving lunch assistance each school day, less than half receive breakfast assistance and only 11% access summer food programs.

Child nutrition programs could do far more to reduce hunger simply by reaching more kids. There are 101,000 schools operating the National School Lunch Program, but only 87,000 operating the School Breakfast Program. Only 34,700 Summer Food Service Program sites operate nationwide.

As a Christian voice to end hunger, we believe God cares deeply about the needs of hungry kids. In Matthew 25, Jesus tells his disciples: "When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat and when I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink...."

Whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me."

Read, reflect, and answer the questions.

Deuteronomy 24: 17-22; James 1:27

People, communities and government leaders are constantly admonished throughout the Old and New Testaments to care for the widows, orphans and strangers/aliens (immigrants). These were the most vulnerable groups in those societies, and God makes it clear that we all have a responsibility to the most vulnerable. How do children in our society become vulnerable to hunger and poverty? If children are disregarded or not well cared for by society, what does that say about relationships within the society? How should we be admonishing ourselves and others, including our leaders, to care for the most vulnerable?

PRAYER: Gracious God, you have blessed us with the joy and responsibility for the care of children. Help us to offer them support and provide true community, where they may all grow into the fullness of our hopes for them. Amen.

Nearly a quarter of America's children are hungry, and one-third is obese or overweight. The time for strong action is now.

ACT NOW

Urge your members of Congress to protect and strengthen key tax credits that make a difference for low-income workers and their families. Also to support a \$1 billion increase in funding for child nutrition.

POINTS TO MAKE:

- 1) The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) lifts more than 6.6 million Americans annually above the poverty line, including 3.3 million children.
- 2) School lunch, breakfast, and summer feeding programs are critical to making sure kids who live on the brink of hunger have enough to eat.

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Foreign Assistance That Works

President Obama and Secretary Hillary Clinton are mobilizing an international effort to reduce world hunger, mainly by helping poor farmers around the world increase their food production. Their program is well designed, with an explicit focus on reducing malnutrition. It is promoting a coordinated international response to local needs.

Bread for the World focuses on advocating for the changes needed to bring lasting improvements to hungry and poor people – so we know that building on what works is critical.

For the past couple of years, there has been considerable momentum in the international community to make progress on issues that are important to hungry and poor people particularly nutrition and agriculture.

Ensuring that mothers and babies have what they need is part of this newly energized effort. *The Washington Post* reports, “Maternal and child health....is gaining attention on the global health agenda. It is a major part of the Obama administration’s Global Health Initiative. Norway is devoting about 35% of its overseas development aid to maternal, newborn, and child health.”

The administration has requested additional funding from Congress for a USAID-led “concerted push” to reduce maternal mortality. Maternal/child health programs will expand strategies that work and coordinate with other development programs aimed at promoting health and nutrition. These include prevention and treatment of malaria and HIV, clean water, and efforts through the new Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative to improve nutrition during pregnancy and among young children.

USAID will also systemically invest in the elements of health systems and human resources needed to sustain gains, including ensuring that initiatives are country-owned and led since progress ultimately depends on

national and local efforts. One of the goals of Bread's 2009 Offering of Letters campaign for more effective development assistance is a more coordinated approach such as this.

Low-income families commonly suffer from an intergenerational cycle of malnutrition. Because of pervasive discrimination, women eat last and have higher rates of malnutrition than men. Stunted, malnourished women are at greater risk during childbirth, and their children have a less healthy start in life.

Grameen Danone Foods, Inc., a nutrition program sponsored by USAID, had just begun efforts to step up the production of yogurt, a good source of much needed protein and calcium. So far, the project has provided veterinary services to dairy farmers and is working to connect them with markets for their yogurt. U.S. based Helen Keller International has a homestead farming program in Bangladesh. A community is given a "demonstration farm" to learn how to raise poultry and grow fruits and vegetables, and local women farmers receive training and free supplies such as seeds.

Congress needs to approve the president's budget request for international affairs. President Obama has convinced other countries to provide most of the needed funding for this initiative, but Congress must do its part to maintain U.S. leadership of this international

effort to open opportunity to poor farmers and reduce world hunger.

Justice and Righteousness

In most languages, the word for "justice" is the same as the word for "righteousness." This is true in both Hebrew and Greek, the languages from which our Bibles are translated. In Spanish the word is "justicia." These words mean "right relationship": right relationship with God (righteousness/justicia) and right relationship among people (justice/justicia). Jesus summarized this as "loving God and loving neighbor."



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