Thanksgiving Day A Time Of Gratitude

There is no official ‘Thanks to God’ on Thanksgiving Day, but prayers of gratitude have been offered since long before the 1620 American tradition began. Gratitude is the source by which the Pilgrims decided to begin with a prayer of thanks at the historic feast with the Wampanoag Indians. Years later, both George Washington and Abraham Lincoln issued Thanksgiving Day Proclamations.

For a way to express their thankfulness for survival and the first harvest, the deeply religious Pilgrims looked to the Bible. They found the celebrated Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), or Feast of Ingathering. The ingathering of Israelites (delivered from the desert of Sinai) and their harvest were celebrated in this feast and is the most joyous of all feasts still today. (Leviticus 23).

Another reference to giving thanks is found in the account of ‘setting' what Samuel called the Ebenezer Stone. This was a memorial to remind the Israelites to be grateful for God’s help during an attack from the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:10-12).

All early celebrations had one common theme – God. Thanksgiving was directed toward God, the Creator, Protector, and Provider of all.

Today, Thanksgiving is a time to pray and thank God for the continuous graces we receive. Families and friends join in friendship and gratitude and share a Thanksgiving Day dinner that begins with a prayer.

Loving God, we give thanks for the pleasure of gathering together for this Thanksgiving. We give thanks for this food, prepared by loving hands. We give thanks for life, the freedom to enjoy it all and all other blessings. As we partake of this food, we pray for health and strength to carry on and try to live as You would have us. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.
The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2010

The number of undernourished people in the world remains unacceptably high at near the one billion mark despite an expected decline in 2010 for the first time since 1995. This decline is largely attributable to increased economic growth foreseen in 2010, particularly in developing countries, and the fall in international food prices since 2008. The recent increase in food prices, if it persists, will create additional obstacles in the fight to further reduce hunger.

However, a total of 925 million people are still estimated to be undernourished in 2010, representing almost 16% of the population of developing countries. The fact that nearly a billion people remain hungry even after the recent food and financial crises have largely passed indicates a deeper structural problem that gravely threatens the ability to achieve internationally agreed goals on hunger reduction: the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) and the 1996 World Food Summit goal. It is also evident that economic growth, while essential, will not be sufficient in itself to eliminate hunger within an acceptable period of time.

The majority of the world’s undernourished people live in developing countries. Two-thirds live in just 7 countries (Bangladesh, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia and Pakistan) and over 40% live in China and India.

Around the world, 178 million children under 5 years are stunted, low height for age. Of all stunted children, 90% live in just 36 countries, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa and South and Central Asia.

UNDERNOURISHMENT IN 2010 BY REGION (MILLIONS)

![Pie chart showing undernourishment by region](image)

WHAT IS FOOD SECURITY?

**FOOD SECURITY** exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

**FOOD INSECURITY** exists when people do not have adequate physical, social or economic access to food as defined by food security.

**UNDERNOURISHMENT** exists when caloric intake is below the minimum dietary energy
requirement (MDER). The MDER is the amount of energy needed for light activity and to maintain a minimum acceptable weight for attained height. It varies by country and from year to year depending on the gender and age structure of the population.

**MALNUTRITION** is not having enough nourishing food, with adequate amounts of protein, vitamins, minerals and calories to support physical and mental growth and development. Children who survive early childhood malnutrition suffer irreversible harm— including poor physical growth, compromised immune function, and impaired cognitive ability.

The spike in the price of staple foods in 2007-08 and the global economic crisis pushed an additional 100 million people into poverty and set back progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – a stark reminder that progress is still fragile and a lot remains to be done. But it’s not too late.

The past year has seen increasing international political momentum on hunger and poverty issues. The U.S. launched Feed the Future, a new global hunger and food security initiative, as well as the Global Health Initiative. At the 2010 G-8 summit of leading donor nations, leaders of the world’s wealthiest nations pledged $5 billion over 5 years to maternal and child health.

As governments, civil society, and communities work to meet the MDGs, it becomes increasingly clear that the goals are interconnected; this, the solutions must be too. The efforts of developing countries and effective development assistance must break down the “silos” between sectors such as health, education, and agriculture, and support country-led development strategies.

**The number of undernourished people in the world remains unacceptably high at near the one billion mark.**

The U.S. is in the midst of planning for more effective development assistance – the subject both of Bread for the World’s 2009 Offering of Letters and our forthcoming 2011 Offering of Letters. The Obama administration has conducted 2 detailed assessments of current policy and will be issuing its conclusions and implementing recommendations in the coming months. Congress has begun to draft a new Foreign Assistance Act to replace legislation enacted in 1961.

**SIGNS OF PROGRESS**

Despite progress on the MDGs, millions of people are still trapped in poverty. However, some progress is being made.
Since 2001, 1.6 billion people have gained access to safe drinking water.

In 2007, 86% of children in the developing world were completing primary school. Two notable success stories are Mozambique and Tanzania, which have doubled their primary school attendance rates to nearly 100%.

Almost two-thirds of developing countries send as many girls as boys to primary school. The gender gap is also narrowing in secondary school enrollment and completion.

In 2000, measles caused 750,000 deaths. Today, the death toll has been reduced by nearly 80%.

Since 2000, U.S. poverty-focused development assistance has tripled, and currently totals a little over $28 billion, this amount represents less than 1% of the federal budget.

**What Can I Do?**

A recent poll showed that 87% of Americans believe the U.S. should be involved in a worldwide effort to fight global poverty as part of the MDGs. U.S. development assistance accounts for about 0.2% of our gross national income. Anti-hunger and poverty advocates can build more support for the U.S. role in the MDGs by continuing to devote resources and educational efforts to the goals. In addition to educating themselves and members of Congress about effective development assistance programs, advocates must also urge Congress to approve policies and funding that will enable the U.S. to help. The future of the world’s poorest billion people is at stake.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 2011**

**30TH ANNUAL WALK FOR THE HUNGRY**

**THEME FOR THE WALK IS**

**A REVOLUTION IN KINDNESS**

We challenge all participants to identify 30 different ways to be kind to one’s neighbor. When Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment He replied, “You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all your mind. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Matt. 22:37-40

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