



## SESSION ONE ~ FOOD: A SACRED EXCHANGE

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

**Copy and pass out to participants.**

**Note:** Worker quotes are words of actual farm workers in North Carolina documented by Sister Evelyn Mattern in the 1990's, except Worker 4, an apple picker in Washington state, documented by the United Farm Workers of America, 2003.

*Worker 1:* We are only shoulders here, wanted because we do the work no one else wants to do.

*Worker 2:* The other day that we were at mass, I couldn't feel my face because it was cracked and that comes from the fertilizers. The fertilizer is alive. It is alive. It is alive in the soil! You pick it up and you start with this rash. Then it starts penetrating....

*Worker 1:* We are only shoulders here, wanted because we do the work no one else wants to do.

*Worker 3:* We were all shaking because it was so hot, almost dehydrated. You know what I did? I left them.... It was less than an hour before finishing, and I thought for \$6 I am not going to die here. I'm leaving. In the field, there were no shade trees. It is just a ditch full of weeds, but that's where I stayed, and it didn't matter if there were snakes or thorns. It didn't matter.... All I wanted was shade.

*Worker 1:* We are only shoulders here, wanted because we do the work no one else wants to do.

*Worker 4:* My husband, my five children and I had to move out from the apartment we rented because the landlord didn't want children in the building. So we went down by the river to live. We put a mattress in a big van and all slept there. People from Seattle donated food and clothing to us. We had to bathe in the river; this was during September, October, and November when it gets cold here. We didn't have electricity. We had to cook over an open fire with wood. We suffered a lot during that time.

*Worker 1:* We are only shoulders here, wanted because we do the work no one else wants to do.

*Reader:* Our food, which nourishes our bodies, hasn't yet been totally reduced to technological process. Some would have us forget where food comes from. They seem to believe it is a product of biology labs and machines, with a heavy sprinkling of fertilizers thrown in for good measure. Food nevertheless, at its most nourishing, remains a product of the wholly and holy cycle of nature: seed placed in earth, blessed by rain, harvested and cooked by human hands (and shoulders) as a meal for the body - and the body is community.

