

# BLESSED

## by the hands that HARVEST

This year, Harvest of Justice invites us to be mindful of and gives thanks for the many ways that we, individually and collectively, are blessed by farm workers, those whose hands pick, lift, pack and carry the vegetables and fruits we enjoy. In these times, when unfair claims are made that immigrants are a drain on society, it is especially important that we herald the contributions farm workers, whether documented or not, make in our communities, to our economy, and to our lives.



A 2004 study by the Inter-American Development Bank found that more than 90 cents out of every dollar earned by immigrants stays in their adopted communities, creating a huge boost to local economies. These same localities are enriched by the inclusion of people with strong values of faith, family and work. They bring new art and music. And they come with open hands and ready hearts.

Without the labor of more than two million farm

workers, it would be impossible to support the multi-billion dollar fruit and vegetable industry in the U.S. Most are from Latin America. During the growing and harvesting season, they work long days, often 10-12 hours, six and seven days a week. The work is literally back-breaking. Farm workers harvest lettuce in



Arizona, prune grape vines in California, climb ladders for apples in Washington, stoop for cucumbers in North Carolina, and pick tomatoes in Florida.

### And what do farm workers receive in return for their labor?

Their average annual income is below \$10,000. Farm workers are routinely exposed to toxic pesticides and dangerous working conditions. Yet, the great majority are not covered by unemployment insurance, workmen's compensation, sick leave, or health coverage. Most are separated from their families; and because of draconian border measures, many are not able to return to their homes each year. Farm workers are some of the most vulnerable and exploited workers in this country.

In Psalm 82 we are told that 'All the foundations of the earth are shaken by injustice.' Of all the blessings we receive from farm workers, perhaps none is more cherished than the holiest of gifts...to seek justice with farm workers and still the shaking of the foundations of the earth.

**That's what we do at the National Farm Worker Ministry.**

**Join us.**



438 North Skinker Blvd.  
St. Louis, MO 63130  
314.726.6470  
nfwm@nfwm.org  
www.nfwm.org



**The National Farm Worker Ministry**  
supports farm workers who are organizing  
for equality and justice.  
It educates people of faith  
and their institutions about the conditions  
facing farm workers in this country,  
and activates them to stand with farm workers  
in their struggle for justice.

**Contact NFWM for action updates, boycott news and a shopping guide for Union Label Food Products to purchase. For additional worship resources go to <www.nfwm.org>.**

PRAYERS & TEXT: Julie Taylor, Alicia Alvarado, OP, Rev. Steve Witte, Virginia Nesmith, and Susan Alan

COVER PHOTO: Shiho Fukada  
OTHER PHOTOS from Coalition of Immokalee Workers

LAYOUT & DESIGN: Gen Cassani, SSND  
School Sisters of Notre Dame SHALOM  
North America, 2006  
PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

# The HARVEST

## of Justice



# BLESSED

by the hands that harvest

## TABLE PRAYERS

# The Harvest of Justice TABLE

We are blessed by farm workers, those whose hands pick, lift, pack and carry the vegetables and fruits we enjoy. We are blessed by farm workers, those whose hands pick, lift, pack and carry the vegetables and fruits we enjoy. We are blessed by farm workers, . . .

## PRAYERS



God of Life, you have blest our nation with many gifts from the farm worker community. They who come to this nation with few possessions have much to teach us about living. Having little, they share the wealth of their experiences, the simplicity of their lives, and most of all their spirit. Help us to learn to live the simple generosity demonstrated by farm workers.  
Amen

Gracious God,  
I most often come to my table blissfully ignoring the efforts that brought this bounty. I give thanks for the food and the hands that prepared it. But I do not as often give thanks for the hands that harvested it.

I am blessed by hands that work so hard. Those hands call me to gratitude . . . to a mindfulness that the food I enjoy comes to me cheaply but comes from someone else at a greater price.

Forgive me for overlooking this reality. Help me rise from my table, grateful and determined to work for justice for farm workers.  
Amen

‘All the foundations of the earth are shaken by injustice.’  
God calls us to heal the fissures and restore the balance.

We give thanks that we can participate with farm workers in mending our broken world.

We give thanks for their example of non-violent resistance to greed and exploitation, for their determination to see that all God’s gifts are mutually shared.

We give thanks for this the holiest of gifts... to restore justice and still the very foundations of the earth.  
Amen

Hallelujah!

We count our blessings as we start the day with oranges and bananas, slice the strawberries on our cereal.

Enjoy our salad at lunch, crunchy with carrots, bright with tomatoes.

Counting still at dinner, as we fill our plates with green beans, squash, and potatoes.

Grateful to God.  
Grateful to the farm workers,  
Whose plates are not nearly so full.  
Amen

We are blessed by farm workers, those whose hands pick, lift, pack and carry the vegetables and fruits we enjoy. We are blessed by farm workers, those whose hands pick, lift, pack and carry the vegetables



We give thanks for farm workers, who teach us to pray in the midst of struggles, where God’s blessings abound, so that we raise our eyes and hearts to the heavens from where love and justice rain down.

We give thanks for farm workers, who teach us to hope for a new day when all of God’s children can live together in peace, equality and solidarity, so that we work for the day when farm workers, growers, and corporations sit at the table together and bargain in good faith.

We give thanks for farm workers, who teach us to share the earth’s goodness with all those around us at the table of plenty, so that we open our arms, hearts and homes to the most vulnerable in our society. Amen

We are blessed by farm workers, those whose hands pick, lift, pack and carry the vegetables and fruits we enjoy. We are blessed by farm workers, . . .