



SEEKING A

Harvest *of Justice*

A few weeks ago I finally heard a vital truth announced on national headlines: "It's inexcusable that those people that pick our fruits and vegetables ... don't get the right working conditions." Unfortunately, the occasion for Gov. Schwarzenegger's statement was yet another needless farm worker death due to heat exhaustion -- this time a 17 year old young woman pruning grapes in California.

As Teresa Niedda, Director of the Farm Worker Health and Safety Institute wrote recently, "Farm workers are treated like second-class citizens living in third world conditions within one of the richest countries in the world. They have fewer rights and legal protections than workers in any other industry."

Health, environmental and animal rights activists urge us to know more about how and where our food is grown. At National Farm Worker Ministry we urge you to know more about *the people* who plant, tend and harvest our fruits and vegetables, who care for the cows providing our meat, milk and cheese, and who tend the nursery plants we use in our own gardens.

It is our privilege at NFWM to come to know farm workers, our pain to know of their substandard wages and commonplace abuse, and our pride to stand with them as they

organize to win justice and equality for themselves, their families and their communities.

We respond to our experience by educating others about the well-hidden reality of farm workers' lives and then involving people in action — leafleting at grocery stores, writing letters to government or corporations, holding vigils at shareholder meetings, marching - whatever it takes to bring public attention so that decision-makers act more fairly toward farm workers.

And there are victories to share along the way when migrant housing standards are improved or labor agreements are won which improve wages and working conditions and provide workers for the first time with a voice to speak up about abuse.

In this prayer pamphlet we share with you the privilege of knowing the people who labor to produce our food. We hope you will hear their words deeply, reflect on all they give us, and commit yourself to joining them as they seek justice.

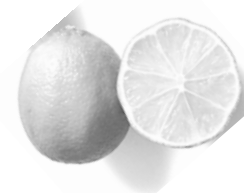
Get in touch with us - we have lots of ways for you to be involved!



The National Farm Worker Ministry is an interfaith organization supporting farm workers who are organizing for equality and justice. We educate people of faith and their institutions about the conditions facing farm workers in this country, and activate them to stand with farm workers in their struggle for justice.

Contact NFWM for:

- Action Updates,
 - Boycott News
 - Shopping Guide for union label foods
 - Religious Education curriculum
 - additional Worship Resources
- nfwm@nfwm.org



PRAYERS & TEXT: By Ginnie Druhe; quotes from *Fingers to the Bone*, Human Rights Watch; *With These Hands*, by Daniel Rothenberg and *Forged under the Sun: The Life of Maria Elena Lucas*, by Maria Elena Lucas.

TRANSLATION: Ginnie Druhe & Lariza Garzon

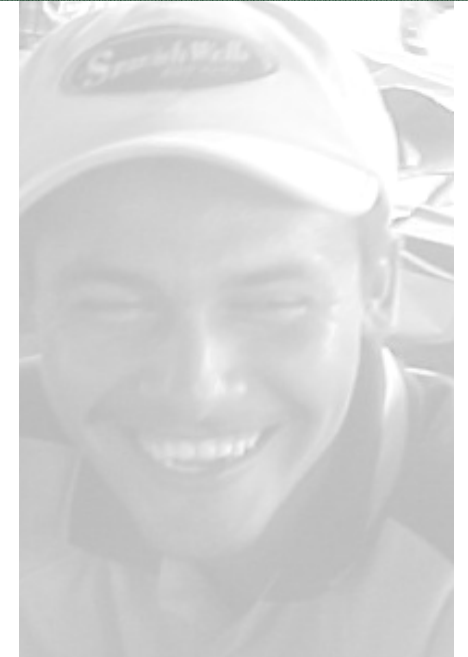
LAYOUT & DESIGN: Ginnie Druhe

PHOTO: NFWM staff

PRINTING: Printing Department, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Milwaukee, WI

SEEKING A

Harvest



of Justice

TABLE PRAYERS

from the

National Farm Worker Ministry

young

Damaris started working in the broccoli and lettuce fields when she was 13 years old... During the five months of the peak season, she usually worked 14 hours a day... She was exposed to pesticide drift and fell ill, yet was required to keep working. — Human Rights Watch report

Merciful God, there is poison in the fields. Child workers in the fields. Parents in the fields. Death in the fields. As Woody Guthrie prayed so many years ago, "Is this the best way we can grow our big orchards? Is this the best way we can grow our good fruit?" O God, we pray give us courage, determination, rage, in seeking an end to poisons in the fields, for all our sakes. Amen.



dignified

"Your dusty face and your sad brown eyes give beauty, life, and grace to the crops in the fields that you water with your tears in your battle to survive...."

— Maria Elena Lucas, farmworker & poet

God of wisdom, it is so easy to believe that the rich and powerful have the solutions to all our problems, and that the poor and powerless have nothing to contribute. Open our blind eyes, deaf ears and ignorant hearts to seek and announce the truth of farm workers' lives so they may be treated with the dignity they deserve. Amen.



skilled

"The people we hire -- most people don't think much of them, but they're skilled labor. I grow sweet corn, peppers, tomatoes and melons, and a person who doesn't know what they're doing can ruin you in a day." Phil Prutch, Colorado vegetable farmer

God, bless the farm worker, and move our hearts to remember and bless them as well. The farm worker shares in your power as midwife to creation. Help us to serve as midwife to the living wage they deserve for their labor. Amen.

the workers who feed us are....



generous

"Farm workers work very hard. They pick tons of fruits & vegetables every day to feed the nation. ... The people who feed us should earn enough so that they can nourish their own bodies. — Dolores Huerta, co-founder, UFW

Gracious God, the farm worker fills our hunger for fresh and beautiful food and we are nourished and blessed. Help us in turn to nourish and bless the farm worker by joining with their struggle for just treatment in the fields. Amen.



calling on us

"Farm workers give us much more than they ask for. [Yet because] they have been excluded from basic legal protections... they can be abused and exploited." — Dr. Ed Zuroweste, Chambersburg, PA

Gentle God, give us humility to hear the truth of farm workers' lives and courage to speak that truth to the power of governments & corporations that don't want to hear. Keep us mindful of those who pay the price when we fall silent. Give us faith to keep speaking and creativity in joining our voice with others -- for "power concedes nothing without a demand." (Frederick Douglass) Amen.

