



A Day of Prayer -

Thirst and Starvation in Somalia

10th of December 2011
World Human Rights Day

Sponsored by

The Carmelite NGO

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For I was hungry and you gave me food: I was thirsty and you gave me drink (Mt 25:35)

In Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, and surrounding countries, a severe drought, conflict and lack of governance have led to massive numbers of people going hungry. Famine has been declared in several districts of Somalia. Because goats and cattle are dying of thirst and starvation, people who herd livestock are losing their source of food. Particularly in Somalia, hundreds of thousands of children are malnourished. This present situation represents the peak of a long-term process.

According to a 30 September report by the United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 13 million people in the region are in need of emergency assistance. Particularly in Somalia, hundreds of thousands are at risk of death without urgent intervention. In Ethiopia, due to the combined drought, crop and livestock losses, millions of people will not have enough to eat or enough water for the next 3 to 6 months.

The refugee camps are overcrowded with great problems regarding security, aid distribution and health issues. In addition, there is the problem of refugees who continuously shift towards the borders of neighboring states, usually with a regular high mortality rate, especially among children. The local population who welcomes the refugees should also be supported.

By U.N. estimates it will take well over half a million tons of food to provide for Somalia alone over the next year. Yet only 30,000 tons of food monthly are being sent from donor countries. Worse still, other African countries under serious threat of mass starvation - such as southern Sudan - are being ignored because they are not yet in the news. We are witnessing situations where food is used as a weapon and not as a resource to be equitably distributed. Elsewhere governments have difficulty in finding ways to deal with their surplus food.

Why This Is Happening

1. The current situation is due to a number of factors:

lack of water
violent conflicts,
a weak central government,
corruption,
the insecurity of land tenure,
a continued lack of basic services.

2. The international community is currently facing a grave economic and financial crisis. Statistics bear witness to the dramatic growth in the number of people suffering from hunger, made worse by the rise in price of foodstuffs, the reduction in economic resources available to the poorest peoples, and their limited access to markets and to food – notwithstanding the known fact that the world has enough food for all its inhabitants.

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights - Article 25

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond control.

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Pope Benedict at the World Food Summit 2011:

Nor must the fundamental rights of the individual be forgotten, which include, of course, the right to sufficient, healthy and nutritious food, and likewise water; these rights take on an important role in the realization of

others, beginning with the primary one, the right to life. It is necessary, then, to cultivate “a public conscience that considers food and access to water as universal rights of all human beings, without distinction or discrimination” (Caritas in Veritate, 27).



Josette Sheeran, at the World Food Summit 2011:

Josette Sheeran, Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) also stressed the fundamental role of women:

“Women are the secret weapon against hunger. They are a powerful force in the fight against malnutrition,” she said. “When women have food, children eat. When they are helped to grow food, communities eat. So, an important key to fighting hunger is to provide women with knowledge and skills, capital and tools, to help achieve food security for themselves, their family, and their community.”



Let Us Reflect on the Word of God

The Widow of Zarephath

I Kg 17: 7-16

But after a while the wadi dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink.” As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” But she said, “As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering



a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." Elijah said to her, "Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make

me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth." She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil ail, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah.

A poor widow, with her only son, thinks that there will be no more food for either of them after their next and last meal.

A prophet comes and surprises her.

He leads her into a different way of looking at her situation.

She shares the little she has with him

And reaps the benefits.

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Jesus Feeds the Crowd

Mt 14:14-21

When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food

for themselves.”
Jesus said to them,
“They need not go
away; you give them
something to eat.”
They replied, “We
have nothing here
but five loaves and
two fish.” And he
said, “Bring them
here to me.” Then he



ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

A large crowd gathered in a lonely and infertile place to hear the word of the Lord ...

The crowd does not think about eating, but Jesus does ...

The disciples wonder where will they find food to feed all the people that need to eat ...

There solution is to send the people away to somewhere else ...

Jesus, says no. They must stay where they are ...

Even though it is a desert place there is enough food in that place for all to eat, with lots left over ...

This happens when the people begin to share what they have ...

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Let us pray: Lord, hear our prayer

Help us to use all your gifts - knowledge, natural resources, human energy - to meet the needs of the hungry.

Help us to see that we can live on less so that we have more to share with those in need.

Forgive our selfishness and thoughtlessness. Forgive the wrong decisions we make. Forgive the suffering we have caused. Help us not to wander down these laneways anymore.

Give strength to women, who are so sorely tested, expected to do much more than they are permitted to do.

Help children, born into a world that will not provide for them. Make their future brighter by changing the way we behave.

Protect the gift of your creation, the home you have built for all to live in. Share with us your wisdom so that we too make look upon creation in the same way that you do.



Commitments and Actions For Making a Difference in the Future:

The International Community must act with common purpose to give peace and stability to the Horn of Africa. The Churches and all people of good will must act together in one unified effort.

Education must be geared towards greater knowledge and responsibility in the matter of the dignity and needs of the human person, the protection of creation and the distribution of the goods of the earth, the necessary skills for producing food.

Food must cease to be subject of market forces and speculation.

Resources for Information and Action

FAO.org

WFP.org

OXFAM.org

Bread.org

CatholicReliefServices.org

MercyCorps.org

Psalm 147:7-12

Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre.

He covers the heavens with clouds,
prepares rain for the earth,
makes grass grow on the hills.
He gives to the animals their food,
and to the young ravens when they cry.

His delight is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his pleasure in the speed of a runner;
but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him,
in those who hope in his steadfast love.
Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem!
Praise your God, O Zion!

For he strengthens the bars of your gates;
he blesses your children within you.
He grants peace within your borders;
he fills you with the finest of wheat.



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