

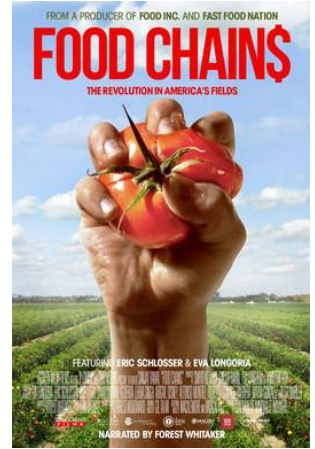
Farmworker Justice Introduction – Documentary & Discussion

About the Movie:

Food Chains: The Revolution in America's Fields

In this exposé, an intrepid group of Florida farmworkers battle to defeat the \$4 trillion global supermarket industry through their ingenious Fair Food program, which partners with growers and retailers to improve working conditions for farm laborers in the United States. The narrative of the film focuses on an intrepid and highly lauded group of tomato pickers from Southern Florida – the Coalition of Immokalee Workers or CIW – who are revolutionizing farm labor. Their story is one of hope and promise for the triumph of morality over corporate greed – to ensure a dignified life for farm workers and a more humane, transparent food chain.

<https://fairfoodprogram.org/>



Why This Film

- For those being introduced to the issues and injustices that farm workers face, this film is incredibly well done, touching on many of the issues – low wages, poor living conditions, and a system that diminishes their dignity.
- Even though it is not a Catholic film, many Catholic teachings & values are present in the film (see next section)
- It is an important reminder of how we, as consumers, play a role in the livelihood of the farm workers when we buy produce. It gives tangible steps we can take to help make a difference.

A Few Connections to Our Faith & Agape Service Project

- To preface the movie, you could highlight one or more of these. You could have students read the short paragraph and challenge students to see how that theme is present in the film.
 - Or break your entire group into 3 small groups, give each group one of these focus themes and ask them to share a few examples of how it is present in the film during the discussion portion.

Catholic Social Teaching: The Dignity of Work & The Rights of Workers:

- “The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God’s creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected--the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.” (From USCCB)
- Great, short film [explaining this CST](#), the rights of workers, & our responsibility as consumers

Two Feet of Love in Action:

- “Catholic disciples on mission are called to put Two Feet of Love in Action! This foundational tool describes two distinct, but complementary, ways we can put the Gospel in action in response to God's love: social justice (addressing systemic, root causes of problems that affect many people) and charitable works (short-term, emergency assistance for individuals).” (From USCCB)
- Great, short film [explaining Two Feet](#)
- Food Chains is an important reminder that we must work for change and social justice, in addition to charitable works.

Subsidiarity, Monopoly Power and Wage Suppression:

- “In 1919, the “Bishops’ Program” committed an entire section to the “Abolition and Control of Monopolies.” They stated unequivocally that “human beings cannot be trusted with the immense opportunities for oppression and extortion that go with the possession of monopoly power.” The Church teaches that monopolies undermine the principle of subsidiarity, and the State has a right to intervene when monopolies obstruct development. The bishops have highlighted the problem of over-concentrated ownership in the context of farming, noting that although prices for food go down, it has led owners to “underpay farm workers, and oppose farmworker unionization.” (From USCCB)
- Our church acknowledges the issues that come with corporate monopolies and how those at the bottom of the supply chain are often the ones suffering and are overlooked.

Where to Watch

- iTunes/Apple+: Rent for \$4.99
- YouTube: Rent for \$1.99
- [YouTube: watch for free with ads](#)

Things to Be Aware Of

- **Skip this part** (topics of sexual assault, slavery, & use of language)
 - Pause at 55:50 (right after they finish talking about lack of field inspectors)
 - Skip to 1:02:17
- Film is 82 minutes long
- Could skip the segment on the wine industry in Napa Valley
 - 34:25-41:15

Opening Prayer:

- Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow. (Isaiah 1: 17)
- True justice comes about in people's lives when they themselves are just in their decisions; it is expressed in their pursuit of justice for the poor and the weak. While it is true that the word "justice" can be a synonym for faithfulness to God's will in every aspect of our life, if we give the word too general a meaning, we forget that it is shown especially in justice towards those who are most vulnerable: "Seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Is 1:17). – Pope Francis, Gaudete Et Exsultate, No. 79

Film notes and quotes by theme/category are included at the end of this document for your assistance in leading a discussion.

Suggested Discussion Questions for After Film

- What did you learn? What part of the film impacted you the most? What will you take away from this?
- We saw conditions from 1960 in the news report 'Harvest of Shame': "terrible poverty & exploitation hidden from view". It is 62 years later and the same statement could be said. With so much constant progress in most other aspects of American life, how is this still the same?
- Who is really creating the poverty of the farm workers? Who has the power to make the change in the livelihood of farm workers?
- Multiple times in the film, the treatment of the farm workers was justified with the charity that they were given by those in 'power'. But this was refuted with commentary on the need for justice, not charity. **"This is justice and not charity. Because we are earning that cent. Anyone can give charity and feel good about oneself, but to give justice to someone who has been demanding it, that is harder to accept."** What is the difference between charity & justice? How do they both need to be present to bring about change?
- **"I ask every consumer to take into consideration, the fact that you can do something about this. To make people's lives better."** **"If you eat, you are affected. Everybody should be concerned with where our food comes from and who picks it."** As consumers, what role do we play in this injustice? What can we do?
- How does this demonstrate the influence of a group of unified, peaceful people fighting for justice & dignity?

Food Chains – Notes From the Film

- “We live like animals in cramped houses”
 - Kids at babysitter’s 5am-8pm
- “The breeze of the pesticides feels good, they never tell you the risks”
- “You come to the realization of how little you mean to the people you are working for”
- \$42.27 for the whole day of work
- The history of farm labor in the US is a history of exploitation
 - Most people have no idea that they are connected to this system every time they buy fresh fruits & veggies
- Super market corporations make half a trillion a year
 - Pennies more on fresh fruits & veggies could eliminate the poverty of farm workers
- CIW (Coalition of Immokalee Workers)
 - Fair Food Program
 - Pay an extra penny per pound of tomatoes they buy that is passed onto the farm worker
 - Eradicate abuse
 - “We are demanding a dignified life for ourselves”
- Terrible poverty & exploitation hidden from view – 1960 Edward R Murrow Report “Harvest of Shame”
 - “We used to own our slaves, now we just rent them”
 - Shocking amount of money made by the super markets
 - “Agriculture is doing great as long as you are not the farmer”
 - 4 super markets own almost all of the industry and can constantly demand lower prices
- Tomato Picking
 - Average worker picks 4,000lbs per day, earning \$40/day or 1 penny/pound!!!!
 - CIW – asking Publix to pay 1 penny more per pound
 - This would double farm worker wages
 - Costing Publix 1 million in the 2 BILLION profit every year
 - If the cost was passed onto the consumer: A family of 4, would only have to pay 44 more cents/year for their annual tomato purchases
- “You are poor because you are making others rich.”
- Put people over profits

Cesar Chavez & Dolores Huerta

- “A certain kind of exploitation of migrant labor as perfected in California”
- United Farm Workers Union

Wine Industry & Napa Valley

- Cost of labor for a bottle of wine is 25 CENTS, but sold for very high profit
- Beauty of landscape disguises the remarkable poverty
- Two cultures that parallel each other “them & us”
 - Demise of affordable housing
 - Homeless farm workers, working 8-12 hours a day but can’t afford rent
 - ECONOMIC APARTHID – when your shift is over you have to travel far in order to be able to afford a home
 - **They are not charity, they are entitled to be paid well**

Migrant Farm Workers

- ~3 million migrant farm workers in the US
 - Many are undocumented
 - Meaning you are not protected & therefore don’t challenge unfair/unlawful working conditions
- Our country is dependent on migrant farm worker labor, but those same people are demonized for being born in a different country
- In our economy there is much space for gratitude for the people who are doing the hard labor to feed us

- 200 million people who are living outside the countries where they were born
 - Tremendous flow of workers from poor countries to rich countries
- Farm worker issues are more than immigrant issues, they are **human rights issues**
 - Wave after wave after wave of migrants have been used to make the system work

Bottom of the Chain

- People at the bottom of most supply chains are taken advantage of
- “In the end, they are not people to you. They are just a means to make money and a means to a profit”
- **“This is justice and not charity. Because we are earning that cent. Anyone can give charity and feel good about oneself, but to give justice to someone who has been demanding it, that is harder to accept.”**

Women Farm Workers

- Sexual harassment is estimated to be around 80% for female farm workers
- Skip this part (topics of sexual assault, slavery, & use of language)
 - Pause at 55:50 (right after they finish talking about lack of field inspectors)
 - Skip to 1:02:17

The Way Forward

- “We might be just one drop of water, but in time water breaks rocks.”
- “If we cannot win this fight, then we have lost of the soul of America.”
- Breaking the fast by breaking bread
- **“I ask every consumer to take into consideration, the fact that you can do something about this. To make people’s lives better.”**
- **“If you eat, you are affected. Everybody should be concerned with where our food comes from and who picks it.”**
- “When I think of the great problems that this country is facing and how difficult some of them are going to be to solve; this isn’t one of them.”