

Ecumenical Advocacy Days
April 5-8, 2013
Doubletree Chrystal City
Arlington, VA

Brother David Andrews, CSC
A Place at God's Table: Food Policy for a Healthy World
"Missing at the Table"
I. Sacred Foods Project 2005-2008

I was a member of the Sacred Foods Project launched in July, 2005, the project was housed in ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal and worked in partnership with [Faith in Place](#), [The Food Alliance](#), the [Islamic Society of North America](#), the [National Catholic Rural Life Conference](#), the [National Council of Churches](#), the [Presbyterian Church \(USA\)](#) and [The Shalom Center](#) as well as other faith-based institutions, businesses and nonprofit organizations. We developed together 8 principles for the food system I'd like to use as a framework for this talk.

Preface: The Web of Life.

We celebrate God's creation of a self-sustaining web of life in which plants, animals, land, water, air, and human beings are interwoven. There are many relationships in this web that can heal or damage the web itself. Among these, food production is one of the more significant forces. So we must choose ways of producing food that protect and heal the web of life.

Dimension 1. Growing Food in Ways that Protect and Heal the Web of Life Conservation in the farm bill.

Food production, as one of the more significant forces in the natural world, affects the delicate balance of plants, animals, human beings, land, water and air – interdependent in seeking sustenance and survival. Farming and grazing together occupy one quarter of the world's lands and are the leading cause of deforestation and loss of natural lands. In order to maintain this balance for future generations, we human beings must choose to produce our food in ways that protect the web of life, preserve the living spaces that other life-forms need, and learn to use methods that return vibrant health to our soil and

water. Some strands of our traditions focus on finding ways to produce food for an ever growing human population without continuing to encroach on natural and sensitive areas, and others focus on limiting human populations. Our work is not finished, its only in the bud.

Dimension 2. Humane Treatment of animals

All our traditions agree that animals must be treated humanely and their suffering minimized. Some strands of our traditions focus on using animals for food through methods of maintenance and slaughter that minimize suffering; others suggest vegetarianism.

Confined Animal Feeding Operations: I served for two years on the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production and travelled throughout the US looking at the treatment of animals for food production. I serve on a faith advisory committee for the Humane Society of the United States. With Food and Water Watch and other NGOs I do not support or the cruel and inhumane treatment of animals in confined animal feeding operations where poultry are caged, beef cattle are housed in disgusting feedlots, pigs are raised in massive cement prisons. All are treated with anti-biotics to encourage growth and to keep them healthy in otherwise unhealthy conditions. Genetically engineered Salmon or other food animals being created to supplant nature. They should at least be labeled so we can make our own choices. We have a right to know.

I participated in four out of five GIPSA workshops around the country looking at the antitrust implications of our food system. I support a Farm Bill that challenges anti-trust concentration in the food system and that recognized and deals with the Agency Capture of the USDA whether by Monsanto or others and the United Nations by the global compact and the world water council. The new effort early in the Obama administration to confront anti-trust in seeds, livestock, retail, etc., was a bold move that got abandoned once big money got involved. I was at a poultry meeting in Alabama where justice department lawyer Christine Varney handed her business card to a frightened poultry grower. "If anybody threatens you, come to me." Well Christine Varney has resigned, as has the chief administrator of the USDA's anti-trust effort Dudley Butler, as have all the other significant leaders in this effort.. All gone!

Our work of reform is in the bud.

Gerry Hagstrom, an agriculture reporter has written recently on Kathleen Merrigan's departure from the USDA at the end of April. He has written what I believe can be termed a "hermeneutic of suspicion." She is "leaving" did she resign? Or was she fired? It is not clear. What is clear is that her focus on small and medium farms, food hubs, organics are all at risk and now Monsanto is in the USDA and the White House in a new way!

Dimension 3. Protecting the integrity and diversity of life

The ways in which we produce food must respect the integrity and diversity of the world's plants and animals, as well as taking active steps to prevent the extinction of animal species and plant. We need to protect the biodiversity of the earth and its plants and animals. Some strands of our traditions emphasize concern for the integrity of the genetic line of plants and animals; others strongly encourage putting considerable effort into increasing food production and developing the health-giving properties of foods. There is a lot of focus on nutrition these days, some speak of Scaling Up Nutrition, others have rediscovered the health benefits of wild foods, grasses and plants not eaten by mainstream eaters but are learning to foster a new awareness.

Our work is not finished, it is only in the bud.

We need a climate friendly farm bill and to work on the conservation programs and to support them.

Dimension 4. No One Should Go Hungry

All our traditions share a strong commitment that no one should go hungry at the end of the day. This applies especially to the poor and at times of famine. Everyone should have access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally customary food. Each local community and the world-wide human community acting in concert share the responsibility for ending hunger and famine. Our traditions present a range of opinions about how best to do this. Most strands strongly encourage very localized and decentralized approaches (e.g. gleaning); some strands describe highly centralized approaches (e.g. Joseph's solution to famine in Egypt). It seems likely that both approaches will be taken in

today's world, though the

question remains whether it is better that we aim policy toward one over the other

The Human Right to food, 50 million hungry in this country, a billion around the world, work of Olivier De Schutter in the US. Roosevelt, rights based approach to food: The film A Place at the Table features Jim McGovern, MA., saying that we have a right to food. We should affirm and recognize the

Zero Hunger Challenge in the United States and in the world, not just to half the numbers by 2015!

We can support a reserves policy in Farm Bill and fair wages in public policy, minimum wage to workers

We have much to do to seek the right to food, so much is unfinished, our work is in the bud.

Eating is a Moral Act

At the National Catholic Rural Life Conference I was part of a campaign that is called Eating is a Moral Act. The campaign includes some cards articulating values for eaters. One includes a picture of a farmer and it shows a closeup of a farmer's hands.

He is wearing work gloves.

The hands are pressed together palm to palm and he holds them at waist level.

You do not see the farmer's face. Only his hands.

And wrapped around his gloved hands

are strands of twisted barbed wire ---like a rope---

binding them like those of a prisoner or a slave.

As I said, this photograph is part of a campaign addressed not to producers but to "eaters."

It is an informational campaign
meant to stimulate thinking about issues of justice
in the production of our food and the people who labor to produce it.
The campaign is called,
"Eating is a Moral Act"
and it attempts to
open our eyes to see what we otherwise ignore:
To take note of deficiencies of justice
in the midst of mounting riches for the few.....
--- To take note of the hard work of farming,
the dangerous working of fishing,
the tedious work of processing...the poorly supported work of waiting,
and washing, and serving....
all those raw and unsettling realities
not reflected in the soft glow of the candle light in fine restaurants;
human realities blanched pale in the glaring convenience of fast food,
economic oligopolies glossed over by plastic packaging by the handful of
companies
who control our eating
at bargain prices

and bargain basement wages.

"Look, take a good hard look at what you are overlooking!"

This is the cry of all prophetic voices

throughout the history of faith:

to see what is otherwise ignored!

Though it is difficult to admit,

we all have this tendency to overlook essential elements of justice.

Whether it is the food we eat or the clothes we wear or the services we use

we all have a tendency to take our comforts for granted.

And on the other side of this otherwise innocuous tendency

comes the surprised reaction when we are confronted with words

warning us

about the long-term results of our lack of attention.

This is our habit and it leads to sin,

the sin of overlooking

the wages paid

the pollution made

the plans laid by the rich

and those for whom the buck never stops.

Here in the United States and around the globe a few huge companies control much of the

food system and the public policies and politicians. OCM has published a study on the

revolving door, men and women who go from corporations to the department of agriculture and back again, from being enforcers of regulations to the ones being regulated. Are we surprised that the regulations support the big and harm the small and medium sized ranchers? Are we surprised that government fails to enforce the laws that are on the books? Should we be amazed that the regulations of the WTO are written for and by large food companies? Most of the world's farmers are small farmers, over a billion of them. Most of those are women. Are these facts part of the global calculus for food sovereignty and sustainability?

We would lessen the global impact of the huge food cartels and increase a global people's agenda. Will you support us in working to develop and sustain grassroots partnerships in the global food system? Food and Water Watch and others are working on food sovereignty through a network of action, advocacy and education.

Some would have us begin reciting the soothing mantras of neo-liberal doctrine:

"It's a global economy," our Davos economic forum participants tell us, "free markets benefit everyone."

And their automatic ritual suggest that we ignore disturbing reports of the 800 million who go hungry every day around the world

and pass over such facts that, since the passage of NAFTA,

the working poor in Mexico has climbed from 40% to 60% of the population.

We know many such chants.

Here is another one:

"The low wages of the maquiladores simply reflect

the lower standard of living in that country."

It's a comforting verse.

It numbs the gnawing fact that the average wage of \$5.00 a day in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico

must buy food that costs the same as across the river in El Paso, Texas.

We ignore many things at home as well.

We ignore the growing poverty in rural America with 50 million on SNAP.

We are ignorant of the loss of over 300,000 family farms in the last twenty years.

We are aware of the lack of fairness in court rulings against the beef check off, the bias of our Supreme Court especially its five Catholic members to the principles of greed of Ann Rand rather than the compassion of Jesus: in People United and in Monsanto rulings, the overturning of jury decisions by judges in the Picket Case, the lack of anti-trust

enforcement and of misconduct in the Packers and Stockyard Administration.

"Take a look at what you'd rather ignore!"

But it's so distressing to be reminded of this, you say.

It's so frustrating to be aware of injustice

and not be able to do anything about it.

Indeed, what is the purpose of this criticism?

What can sincere people do in a world
where injustice exists and will always exist?
Why bring up these unpleasant facts?
These are valid protests.
This is meant to be a program of joy and peace.
Eating is a moral act, and sometimes a religious act.
Yet, the gratitude for holy food
and the salvation it brings
is fully expressed only when we remember
that unleavened bread was first eaten by slaves on the run
and the cup of some drink is a cup of suffering.
Just as I believe that Bread and Wine transformed,
so are we transformed...
transformed into people of compassion,
people who see what others overlook,
people who can begin to trace the vague outlines
of a prophetic vision of justice and peace
we can be artisans of a new humanity and defenders of nature
we can recognize that eating is a moral act, indeed a spiritual act.
and a grand table can be set. A table that reflects a diverse landscape

where food is a
common thread of unity where the table includes those now missing
Where bankers sit next to farmers,
boarder guards converse with the undocumented
and ranchers share toasts with environmentalists.

A table that celebrates sustainability and lives out a vision rooted in
spirituality.

Where work gloves lie next to linen napkins,
hands are scrubbed, feet are washed,
thirst is quenched, hunger satisfied
and there's no hint of injustice,
no whisper of enslavement...no sign of barbed wire anywhere!

Eating is a moral act. Our tables need to include those who've been
excluded. Our talk needs to include our farmer, and ranchers, our
families, their communities, our environment, our landscape, our
countryside, religious and moral values. We are what we eat, by our
choices we shape our world. We are in a new age with new possibilities.
We are at a time where the public insists on authenticity, integrity,
honesty, truthfulness! Let us lift up these virtues and values for our age
and help restore America to its moral purpose, to be a city on a hill,
holding close to the values of land, community, democracy, and family.

Increasingly scholars are giving a new attention to food in an economic,
social and development framework. Food is not like any other economic
entity; it is dependent on weather, seasons, natural biological processes.

It is not like mechanical production of any type. Food has a special purpose: it feeds people, keeps them alive. Food is a necessity for life, not a luxury. It is essential. Food has come to be evaluated as so important in the order of goods that there is acknowledged a right to food in recent world food summits. The United States is one of the few countries in the world that formally does not accept the idea of a right to food. But there have developed approaches to food security at the community and household levels that build upon the notion that every community has the right to food and the right to a nutritionally beneficial, culturally appropriate food system. Some of these approaches do not require the acceptance of the notion of the right to food legally or constitutionally in order to appropriate strategies to secure food provisioning as an essential element in the community and in the economy. The United Nations has a special rapporteur on the right to food who has articulated a framework on the right to food:

“The right to food is the right to have regular, permanent and free access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensures a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear” (E/CN.4/2001/53, para. 14).
Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Jean Ziegler

The right to food is not just a right to a particular good, like individual food products, it is a right to a good of order, a system. The United Nations Special Rapporteur talks about a "collective...life" which is the life of the community considered as a whole. In their articulation of "food sovereignty" as part of their perspective on food security and the right to food, Via Campesina (a network of peasant farmers and fishers) states the following:

In order to guarantee the independence and food sovereignty of all of the world's peoples, it is essential that food is produced through diversified, community based production systems. Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to

which they want to be self reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets, and; to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources. Food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather, it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production. (see website: www.viacampesina.org)

iant local living economies, communities and nations will not find themselves pitted against one another for jobs, markets, and resources. In the absence of such competition, the free sharing of information, knowledge, and technology will become natural, to the mutual benefit of all. (economies for life, by David Korten, www.livingeconomies.org)

Such systems of more self-reliant local living economies are part of what the late Dr. Thomas Lyson of Cornell University advocates in his notion of "civic agriculture". "Civic agriculture producers are oriented toward local markets and meeting the needs of local consumers rather than national or international mass markets. Civic agriculture is viewed as an integral part of rural communities, not merely as production of commodities. Civic agriculture farmers are concerned more with high quality and valued added products than with quantity (yield) and least cost production practices." (Lyson, Catholic Rural Life, Spring 2001, p. 40) (www.ncrlc.com)

Thus, there can be compared two distinct approaches to agricultural productions, one which focuses on commodities, the other which focuses on re-inhabiting the landscape in a focus on community:

Problems of Commodity Production:

1. corporate dominance of processing of commodities
2. over-supply, dumping, prices below the cost of production
3. increasing scale of operations
4. decreasing numbers of intact rural communities, depopulation
5. lack of economic vitality
6. absentee landlords and owners
7. increasing dependence on immigrant laborers
8. environmental problems with scale related practices (e.g., cafo lagoons)
9. labor problems with scale

10. reliance on fossil fuels

Re-inhabiting the landscapes as an alternative to the problems of commodity production.

1. A decentralized capitalism
2. new social technologies with new frameworks such as asset based community development, appreciative inquiry.
3. An economic development method which moves from recruitment to self-organized activity, bringing from the outside in to working from the inside out.
4. New opportunities in food: import replacement in the food/ag sector with a focus on more local sources of food
5. Energy, bio-fuels, food, amenities, agro-tourism.
6. New models for decision-making: local economic sovereignty, governance structures and systems.
7. Diversification processes

Economic thinking has been dominated by corporate and government economists who tend to think only of the profits for companies and pay little attention to the economic end as precisely the well-being of communities. The economic thinking of Korten, Jane Jacobs, E. F .Schumacher is buttressed by the economic work of the late Canadian thinker Bernard Lonergan in his works "Toward a New Political Economy" (Toronto University Press, 1999) and "Macro Economic Dynamic Analysis" (Toronto University Press, 1999). Economic writing taking Lonergan's approach and applying it to food and trade has been done by Bruce Anderson (See the Journal of Macrodynamics Analysis: www.lonergan.on.ca/economics/economics.htm) of Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia and Steven Martin (Seton Hall University, New Jersey) (See also Catholic Rural Life Magazine online at www.ncrlc.com for articles by Anderson and Martin applying Lonergan economics to trade, community life and to general economic theory.)

What is a Food Policy Council?

Food Policy Councils (FPCs) bring together stakeholders from diverse food-related sectors to examine how the food system is operating and to develop recommendations on how to improve it. FPCs may take many forms, but are typically either commissioned by state or local government, or predominately a grassroots effort. Food policy councils

have been successful at educating officials and the public, shaping public policy, improving coordination between existing programs, and starting new programs. Examples include mapping and publicizing local food resources; creating new transit routes to connect underserved areas with full-service grocery stores; persuading government agencies to purchase from local farmers; and organizing community gardens and farmers' markets.

While FPC's are not a new concept, their structures, practices, and policies are still evolving. Although the first Food Policy Council started 20 years ago in the city of Knoxville, only in the last five years have Food Policy Councils really gained momentum, and today there are almost 50 councils nationwide.

Food Charters in Canada

A Food Charter is a declaration, much like the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom and the US Declaration of Independence, which defines a common ideal. While the latter define personal rights and freedoms, a Food Charter articulates a common approach to food security. It is carefully crafted by the community and encompasses all areas that are related to food production, consumption, distribution, equity and quality.

Food Charters are tools for social justice and change. They identify the rights of all residents to adequate amounts of safe, nutritious, affordable and culturally acceptable food and foster environmental stewardship and sustainability.

Food Charters are also key to economic stability. As Roberts pointed out, one-sixth of the average municipal budget is spent directly on food. This includes the one-third of the garbage budget that is used to haul food waste. An astounding 20 percent of all in-city car trips are made to buy food and the food service industry is a major employer and source of revenues for most cities. In Toronto's case, it's the largest employer, generating jobs, disposable incomes and other financial benefits.

According to Yes! Magazine ("Food to Stay", by Gary Nabhan, Winter

2007) buying locally, from local producers, has a dramatic ripple effect on the community. "For every dollar spent at a local business, 45 cents is reinvested locally. For every dollar spent at a corporate chain, only 15 cents is reinvested locally."

The environmental impact of buying local is even more dramatic. Supermarket produce travels up to 92 times farther than locally grown produce. The result is that the average food item we consume has traveled over 2,400 km. In addition, according to a recent report by Transport Canada, truck traffic in Canada has increased by one-third since 2000. The primary reason is "just-in-time" delivery practices. Truck trailers are a cheaper way to store food than warehousing it. As a result, thanks to this "just-in-time" delivery, even the wealthiest citizen is only a three-day food supply away from hunger.

With climate change being identified as the single greatest threat to our global environment, developing a local Food Charter that encourages local agriculture and reduces the number of trucks on the road seems like a no-brainer.

In addition to Toronto's policy, to date only Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Vancouver, the Greater Sudbury Area and the province of Manitoba have, or are developing, Food Charters.

This localization process is an alternative to global commodity production as a primary economic focus for rural communities. It is a model that is transposable in large part, with due attention to the distinct differences of other cultures, places, regions and food economies. It is a practice which fits well into the sustainable development framework. It seems ideally framed to support efforts to support small farmers and their communities here and around the world. It should be part of an agenda at building a global network which prizes concepts like food sovereignty, community based development, new regional and local governance. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has a Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Initiative (SARD) which is framed as government funded, FAO facilitated, grassroots led. It was formally launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) in Johannesburg, South Africa. (www.sard.org)

http://www.fao.org/wssd/sard/SARDO_en.htm) and (www.sardnews.org).

It is possible to envisage a global network of sustainable development efforts where localities, their landscapes and their communities are prized and not reduced to resource extraction opportunities for corporations. The movement from commodity to community is significant for our day. It is incumbent for a sustainable future for this to become more than a movement but a stabilized and strategic component for the survival of the planet. It will require preserving the capacities of rural communities to build on their own assets, to be assisted in such by local associations of concerned citizens, administrative units at the local level, local governments, regional co-operation, partnerships between civil society, private businesses, government officials (should at least not hinder progress). A new world is possible for people if we work on such endeavors as have a community focus to them.

Dimension 5. Fairness toward and empowerment of workers the theme that will be taken up by my partner: The Rev. Michael Livingston, National Policy Director for Interfaith Worker Justice
All our traditions agree that workers must be treated fairly, justly and humanely.

One out of every six people works to provide the food we eat – in the fields and in food transport, in restaurants and food preparation, and in food stores. We affirm their right to decent incomes, working conditions, and to organize themselves. Historic memory: racism, sexism, classism. LaDonna Redmond, recent apology and agreement.

Our work is in the bud, so much left to do.

Dimension 6: Responsible and ethical forms of business

All our traditions require that we act honestly, fairly, to the benefit of others, and in accordance with the ethical teachings of our faith traditions when dealing with customers, employees, partners, and the communities in which we conduct business. These relationships must be accessible to public

scrutiny and accountability. We have to avoid giving allegiance to campaigns of blue washing and green washing, including such activities by ngos. The specifics of how we conduct responsible and ethical business relationships, as well as the meaning and implications of accountability to the public, may be reflected in different ways by the various strands in our traditions. not blue washing or green washing but the real food challenge.

GIPSA, Packers and Stockyard We have mountains to scale, heights to be ascended, no time to rest on our laurels, so much is to be done.

Dimension 7. Food as an Aspect of Spirituality

All our traditions affirm that food is an element in spiritual celebration and experience. Whenever we eat, we consciously affirm that eating is a sacred, spiritual practice which celebrates the delicate interplay of plants, animals and people, land, air, and water that makes this possible and we commit ourselves again to maintaining this creation. All our traditions affirm that specific times and practices of great religious significance, such as Passover, the Mass, and Eid al-Adha, include food as a central element. Some of our traditions affirm that for religious reasons, certain foods may be forbidden to eat and others encouraged, either all the time or at specific times.

Spirituality for Sustainability:
A Spirituality for Sustainability:
What is spirituality?

It is a steepening, like soaking tea leaves. It is a steepening of the mind and heart, body and soul. We are the leaves, the bodies immersed in a broth of mystery, absorbing the way of Nature and the way of Transcendence.

Spirituality is a way of living. It is an attitude, a motivation, a feeling practiced and a practiced feeling. A feeling practiced becomes a habitual way of feeling. And a practiced feeling points to the recurrence as well

as the deepening that comes with a process of valuation, recurrent integration, and sustained conviction. Spirituality is not the end or purpose of living, the goal for which one lives. It is a manner, a style, process or method by which one lives in light of the goal. It is the stuff of character by which one creates character. Spirituality shows itself in the seasoning, which accompanies one's way of being.... like tea, one can be steeped! It is the steepening which gives character to one's spirituality. How are you steeped? Are you steeped into some tradition, a way of life and being which has informed your thoughts, your words, your choices and actions? How have you steeped yourself? Lightly or thoroughly?

One can be steeped deeply or weakly as tea can be. Steepening is a matter of the mind and heart, body and behavior. It is a deepening, like a descent into a cool, refreshing spring. It is a thickening, like the fashioning of a community. A community can be profound as well as superficial, it can be intimate in its deep ecology and deep economy or it can be all surface. Community is the achievement of common meaning...what meanings are shared among the congregants? Are they developed and fashioned into a depth or are they undeveloped and only surface...like strangers passing in the night? Like a veneer that is removed with ease, that doesn't get absorbed for longevity and sustainability.

Dimension 8. Reflection on our Actions and Impact

The rhythm of Action and Reflection, renewed Action and renewed Reflection, is encouraged in our traditions in such forms as Sabbaths, Ramadan, and Lent, as well as other holidays when we refrain from our daily work and reflect on our roles in the web of life. Meaningful observance of these occasions can be expanded to include reflection on and assessment of the impact of human activity on the integrity of the web of life. In different ways, our traditions may choose to encourage reviews, similar to "environmental impact assessments," when considering whether to endorse new approaches to providing food. Some version of what is called the "precautionary principle," analogous

to the medical code's, "First do no harm," could be taken into account.

We need to go beyond cost benefit analysis to deeper and more holistic methods of computing risk. We don't seem to take seriously the extent of the destruction we've already sewn. Hannah Arendt once talked about the banality of evil, we get used to violence and accept it as part of our daily life....the drone driven mentality of seeking a hands off method of dealing death and judgment. Terminator seeds , technological methods of breeding and producing animals giving us fecal floods. This is the brave new world the government has given us.

USDA Meeting April 29th, G8 themes at USDA that the US encourages, production over holistic food systems.

GO!

I'd like to conclude with a little philosophy and poetry.

Philosophy: 1980: Alisdair McIntyre wrote in "After Virtue" that the barbarians have been ruling us for a long time. We have philosophers of the soil and earth like Wendell Berry, Aldo Leopold, Judy Wick, Nicolette Hahn Niman, Kathleen Merrigan, and others, who in McIntyre's book are identified as being new Saint Benedicts taking us beyond the current dark age of corporate control: "A crucial turning point in [the decline of the Roman empire] occurred when men and women of good will turned aside from the task of shoring up the Roman imperium and ceased to identify the continuation of civility and moral community with the maintenance of that imperium. What they set themselves to achieve instead...was the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness...This is what the food sovereignty movement is about. The table of the Lord is one at which all have a place. [W]e too have reached that turning point. What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us...We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict." Think to yourself who are the persons leading this effort in every community there are leaders, inspirers, occupiers, champions of

the poor and dispossessed. My work at the FAO is to amplify the voices of the peasants, fisherfolk, forest people, pastoralists who have solutions to global hunger, climate change, the financialization of nature, the plundering of earth.

I like to emphasize the Priority of the Poetic vision and poet Denise Levertov says that we've not gone down to the sea quite yet, she sees the possibility of hope in a new vision:

Matthew Arnold once called poets the "unacknowledged, real legislators" for our race. Listen to Denise Levertov in her poem:

Beginners

Dedicated to the memory of Karen Silkwood and Eliot Gralla

"From too much love of living,
Hope and desire set free,
Even the weariest river
Winds somewhere to the sea—"

But we have only begun
To love the earth.

We have only begun
To imagine the fullness of life.

How could we tire of hope?
—so much is in bud.

How can desire fail?
—we have only begun
to imagine justice and mercy,

only begun to envision

how it might be
to live as siblings with beast and flower,
not as oppressors.

Surely our river
cannot already be hastening
into the sea of nonbeing?

Surely it cannot drag, in the silt,
all that is innocent?

Not yet, not yet—
there is too much broken
that must be mended,

too much hurt
we have done to each other
that cannot yet be forgiven.

We have only begun to know
the power that is in us

if we would join
our solitudes in the communion of struggle.

So much is unfolding that must
complete its gesture,

so much is in bud.

11. Resiliency is possible in this new dark age, and this little light of mine is shining with those of many others of these ten or more years of the Ecumenical Advocacy Days articulating the globalization of solidarity and the contours of the thousand tasks yet to be accomplished. Thank you! And God Bless You!