

## Global Day of Prayer to End Famine- 10 June 2018

### Famine & Hunger

#### Facts:

East Africa, the horn of Africa, Yemen and northeast Nigeria continue to be gripped by a devastating food crisis. Across these regions, 30 million people are experiencing shocking levels of hunger. Famine is already likely happening in parts of northern Nigeria and the adjoining Lake Chad basin, while Yemen and Somalia are currently very vulnerable. South Sudan is being pushed back from the brink, but the food crisis continues to spread across the country. 27 million people lack safe water, increasing the threat of cholera and spreading other water-borne diseases and diarrhoea. Brutal conflicts in South Sudan, Yemen, and Nigeria have driven millions of people from their homes and left millions more in need of emergency food. Persistent drought has caused crops to fail and cattle to die in parts of Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya – causing severe food and water shortages. Last year there was a funding gap of 29 % of the amount required. Inadequate action and response in this most massive hunger emergency in the world will lead to untold misery, malnutrition, and deaths. The United Nations estimates that as many as 1.4 million children could die of starvation in the coming months.

But it is vital to realize that famine is only the tip of the iceberg of food insecurity that is experienced globally. In 2017, almost 124 million people across 51 countries and territories faced crisis levels of acute food insecurity or worse.

#### Reflection:

In the desolate places and the wilderness, God calls us to repent, to pray, to fast and to share food.

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.”* Matthew 14:15-18

The wilderness is a barren place, lonely, deserted, uninhabitable, and desolate- literally and metaphorically. Though in this particular context, people find themselves in need of food, and Jesus demanded action, it is also in the wilderness that John the Baptist preached repentance. It was to a wilderness that the spirit led Jesus, immediately following his baptism, to fast and be tested in preparation for his ministry. Desolation and wilderness invite us to grieve, pray, repent, fast and to share food.

Needs arise under challenging circumstances. The easy way out of the situation is to refer the problem back to the person or community who are in need, like Jesus’s disciples who wanted to send the crowds away so that the people could go into the villages and buy

food for themselves. We often hear similar responses from ourselves, to people who are in desperate situations and are hungry and thirsty. Why didn't you prepare for the hard times? Haven't you saved any money? Why don't you stop fighting each other? We do not have the resources to respond to your needs. Why don't you demand help from your government?

The thirty million people facing the risk of famine need more from the rest of the world. Jesus commands us- 'You give them something to eat.'

It is not necessarily out of our plenty, that we are asked to give. We are called to share what we have, regardless of our situation! We are not to worry if the little we provide is enough for everyone in need. "For thus says the Lord: 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.'" (1 Kings 17:14). God can work through us to feed many. God did so through the little boy who shared the two fish and five loaves of bread (*John 6:9*). It is the poor widow of Zarephath who fed Prophet Elijah, the hungry stranger, with the very last of her resources (*1 Kings 17:8-16*), and the man from Baal-shalishah, whose limited contribution to Elisha enabled the feeding of a hundred people (*2 Kings 4:42-44*).

In the desolate places and the wilderness, God calls us to repent, to pray, to fast and to share food.

### Prayer:

O Lord, open our eyes;

Help us to perceive the needs of people who are hungry.

O Lord, open our hearts and minds;

Help us to be one with those who are experiencing famine and are in desperate situations.

O Lord, open our hearts and minds;

Forgive us for the inaction and for the insufficient responses to the needs of the hungry and the thirsty

O Lord, strengthen us to advocate and mobilize action to overcome hunger;

Help us to respond to those in need, sharing our resources and urging others to do the same.