



ARCHDIOCESE *of* KINGSTON

August 22, 2022

Dear Pastors and Deacons,

The rising cost of living has been in recent headlines, with local alarm bells ringing over the growing demand for emergency food support. More and more individuals and families are accessing food banks and emergency food assistance programs as they are unable to afford essentials such as rent and groceries. As a result, local agencies and charities are having difficulty keeping up with the demand. Local parish food support ministries are also seeing an increase in usage. Food insecurity, described by PROOF (a food insecurity policy research program) as the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints, is a chronic problem in our Archdiocese and across Canada. Research shows that food insecurity negatively impacts physical, mental, and social health, and costs our healthcare system greatly.

Church teaching urges us to treat one another with dignity and compassion. We can heed Christ's call to care for the most vulnerable by supporting new or existing ministries through our time or treasure, and by leveraging our networks and resources to advocate for social change. Considering the rising demand for food support in our communities, parishes are asked to prayerfully consider the following suggestions to help alleviate the strain of food insecurity locally:

- Pastors and deacons may preach or support parish-wide learning (study or bible program) on the topics of Christian charity, the Corporal Acts of Mercy, and/or Catholic Social Teaching to help educate the parish community and galvanize parishioners' concern for the needs of their neighbours.
- Parishes and parishioners are encouraged to educate themselves on why food insecurity is a serious community concern.
- If you do not currently operate a food ministry, consider starting a parish food pantry at the back of your Church or parish office for parishioners and local community members struggling to afford groceries.
- Begin or support a parish community garden to provide fresh produce to parishioners or local food ministries or charities.
- Call your local food pantry or food bank to see what they need most, as opposed to donating surplus items you may have on hand. Local agency need will depend on location, size, and population served. Cash donations are sometimes preferred, and personal hygiene items are often overlooked.
- If your parish currently operates a parish food pantry, collects donations for the local food bank, or has a community garden, please promote these ministries in your bulletin and ask for donations and/or volunteers. You may also share contact details for local food programs for those struggling.
- Consider making an appeal after mass for parishioners to donate money or food stuffs to your current food or poverty-reduction ministries.
- If your parish is already active in addressing food insecurity or other social ministries, respectfully ask parishioners to consider increasing their donations for a short time to help alleviate strain on our local food support systems.

- As Catholics, we are called to provide tangible, charitable supports to ease the pains of our brothers and sisters in immediate need. We are also called to create a more just and loving society that addresses the root causes of inequality. To that end, food pantries and food banks are not enough. Encourage parishioners to send letters to our political leaders to address food insecurity through political will.

We appreciate that many of our parishes are already doing much to help lessen the stress caused by food insecurity and rising inflation in our local communities. We constantly give thanks for how our parishes continue to build the Kingdom of God despite difficult circumstances, often responding in new and innovative ways. The above suggestions are not intended to minimize the important work already being done in this or other areas of ministry, but to complement existing efforts. In addition, we want to encourage parishes to begin a new initiative where possible, based on a period of community prayer and discernment.

It may be impossible for some parishes and parishioners to start a new ministry or increase their financial support to existing projects at this time due to their own financial constraints. In these cases, parishes and their faithful are encouraged to focus on education and prayer to help address the needs of our communities.

The outreach office is curating a list of resources to assist parishes in their social justice ministries. In the meantime, pastors, parishioners, and lay leaders are encouraged to contact the office directly for resource suggestions and community needs information. Resources consulted for this letter can be found below.

Local press coverage on the increase demand for food supports:

- <https://www.intelligencer.ca/news/local-news/kingston-food-bank-calls-for-social-assistance-rate-rise-to-address-food-insecurity>
- <https://www.thewhig.com/news/local-news/alarm-bells-need-to-be-ringing-demand-for-food-support-skyrockets-as-cost-of-living-rises>

National food insecurity statistics coverage:

- <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/one-in-five-canadians-reported-going-hungry-due-to-rising-food-prices-1.5934570>

Information about food insecurity, why it is a pressing concern for our communities, and the latest Canadian statistics:

- <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>

Yours in Christ,



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