

ANNUAL 40-HOUR FAST

"LET JUSTICE SURGE LIKE WATER..."

Labor-Religion Coalition of NYS
800 Troy-Schenectady Road
Latham, NY 12110-2455

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"Way back in the beginning of our union, someone asked what we expected from the Church. I answered that...we wanted the Church to be present with us, beside us, willing to sacrifice for justice." - César Chávez

"LET JUSTICE SURGE LIKE WATER..."

Join us... Annual 40-Hour FAST

A time of prayer and reflection,
sacrifice and action for change.

- **Begins Monday, March 5, 2007 at 8 pm**
- **Concludes Wednesday, March 7 at noon**

"Is this not the fast that I choose...
to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into
your house?"

- Isaiah 58: 6-7



For justice, we invite you to fast during the 40 hours...

Why fast?

"Fasting is a transforming act – it has the moral power to bring about political change worthy of our state." - Bishop Howard Hubbard, Co-Chair of the Labor-Religion Coalition.

"Muslims fast from daybreak until dusk during the entire month of Ramadan. Denial of sustenance is one way Muslims share a connection to those who suffer from hunger and poverty." - Imam Djafer Sebkhauoui

"The 40-hour fast in New York is appropriate because workers...are hungering for economic & social justice, and our fasting is a manifestation of our identity with their cause." - Rabbi Balfour Brickner

Why 40 hours?

The number 40 has special significance in both religious and labor traditions.

The Hebrew Scriptures record that Moses spent 40 days and 40 nights on Mount Sinai when receiving the Law from God; the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years; the great flood in the story of Noah lasted 40 days and 40 nights.

For Christians, the 40 days of Lent are a time of sacrifice, prayer & action rooted in Jesus' 40 days of fasting in the desert.

The US labor movement, after many years of sacrifice and struggle, gained a 40 hour work-week for most workers.

How do I fast?

During the 40 hours you are invited to not eat solid food for one or more meals, the time between sunrise and sunset on March 6, or the entire 40 hours.

What is special about this FAST?

The Labor-Religion Coalition's 40-Hour FAST is both individual AND communal, private AND public. While participants experience the hunger pains brought on by going without solid food for one or more meals, they are asked to reflect on those in New York State who don't have adequate food or housing or health care or jobs that pay enough to support a family. Through reflection and prayer, fasters are encouraged "to hunger for justice and goodness" in whatever ways they can.

Religious and labor history demonstrates that fasting can make a moral statement about unjust laws or situations that need change. César Chávez, a leader in the struggle for farmworker justice, said, "When you sacrifice, you force others to sacrifice. It's an extremely powerful weapon." Chávez fasted many times in the hope his sacrifice and witness would bring about change for farmworkers as they sought fair wages, decent housing and health care, and safe working conditions.

Here in New York State, even today, farmworkers are excluded from many of the state's labor laws. Farmworkers are not considered "employees" and therefore have no right to overtime pay – even though they might work 70 or 80 hours a week. They are also denied the right to a day of rest each week and to the collective bargaining protections legally given other workers.

Low-income workers, both farmworkers and others in New York who work hard but fall further and further into debt. They do not need charity, but justice – which can be accomplished through simple changes in the laws of the state. Fasters can appreciate that the suffering of farmworkers is the result of unjust human laws, not the will of God.

Please consult the list of Labor-Religion Coalition contacts on the reverse side to learn more about what FAST activities are planned for your area.

Visit the FAST section of www.labor-religion.org for actions New Yorkers can take during this special time of fasting.