

March focus: FOOD -- Lent is a natural time to connect your faith and your food!

“We know that approximately a third of all food produced is discarded, and ‘whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor.’ Still, attention needs to be paid to imbalances in population density, on both national and global levels, since a rise in consumption would lead to complex regional situations, as a result of the interplay between problems linked to environmental pollution, transport, waste treatment, loss of resources and quality of life.” ~Laudato Si #50

- Abstaining from meat on Friday's in Lent can kick off an important habit of eating less meat this year. Skipping meat one day a week is good for you, great for our nation's health, and fantastic for the planet. It takes approximately 1,850 gallons of water to produce a single pound of beef, as opposed to just 39 gallons of water to produce a pound of vegetables.
- Similarly, in a recent article for *The Atlantic* James Hamblin highlighted research that found one dietary change-replacing beef with beans-could get the U.S. as much as 74 percent of the way to meeting 2020 greenhouse-gas emission goals. As Hamblin notes, it's worth being reminded that individual choices matter.
- Try the S policy - no snacks, no seconds, no sweets — except on days that begin with the letter S.
- Consider fasting one day per month on the holy day of your choice. Fasting is an ancient and integral part of our faith tradition, and studies have shown that periodic fasting is healthy for you.
- Eat smaller portions. Take what you need and no more, do not throw away.
- Cook meals at home. Shop wisely not impulsively. Plan ahead & shop off a list.
- Food waste comprises more than 20 percent of garbage in landfills and is a significant source of methane gas – a greenhouse gas - as it rots, according the Environmental Protection Agency. Nationally, we waste almost 40% of all food produced. We can avoid wasting food by not over buying, properly storing it, and eating leftovers before they become scientific experiments. Avoid scraping edible food into the trash. If you have some vegetables and fruits that are past their prime, toss them in a blender with a little local honey and presto – a nutritious smoothie!
- Buy seasonally and local grown food. Local grown food items require less transportation, thus reducing gas usage.
- Plant a garden. If not at home, Ayer library has a nice one – lend a hand! Or check out Shirley's Community Garden through the Conservation Commission.
- Start composting! Create your own pile or Ayer Transfer Station has composting available.
- Regarding your favorite snack, look at the list of ingredients... how many of those ingredients do you recognize? Which ones are natural versus artificial?
- **Give THANKS!** The Holy Father reminds us to say grace before meals. “I ask all believers to return to this beautiful and meaningful custom. The moment of blessing, however brief, reminds us of our dependence on God for Life: it strengthens our feeling of gratitude for the gifts of creation: it acknowledges those who by their labors provide us with these goods.”