

*Isaiah 58:6. Is not this the fast that I choose:*

*to loose the bonds of injustice,  
to undo the thongs of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free,*

More than 20 years ago, farmworkers in Immokalee Decided break these Bonds Isaiah tells us about. And they searched not only for the freedom but to seek value to their dignity.

In 1997, six farmworkers under took a fast that lasted more than 30 days, to prick the conscience of the growers about shameful wages and conditions, and in doing so demonstrated to the world beyond what was then the forgotten town of Immokalee, that behind the rosy tomato that appeared on their dinner plate, were men and women facing conditions of grave exploitation.

These six farmworkers chose to use their own bodies. to let their message be heard. Bodies that day after day confronted violence and misery in the fields.

Their sacrifice watered the ground of support from congregations in Naples and Ft. Myers. It created understanding, outrage, and determination among people beyond Immokalee.

And we are confident because we have plowed this field before and the fruit is beautiful!

Thanks to the people of faith, students and consumers, we have been victorious, bringing 14 corporation to the tables, representing, 90% of the tomato growers in florida and in this—we have started cleansing injustice off the land.

Sowing seeds that have started to bear the fruits of freedom, dignity, respect and hope.

The Fair Food program is that seed, that has expanded its roots to six states on the east coast. For the first time, our farmworkers have the right to report abuses in the field, they have the right to protect their health and well being, right to drink water, to take rest, without retaliation. Basic human rights.

But one of the most important changes is that women are able to work free from sexual harassment, for so many years we, women, have suffered in silence.

We hushed ourselves to violence and harassment, so many years, thanks to the Fair Food Program these tears have dried up and our dignity is no longer being stepped on.

These are the bonds that we have been able to break ourselves from, a created a new day for justice, as Isaiah says:

*The your light will break forth like the dawn and your healing will quickly appear then your righteousness will go before you and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.*

Although we have achieved changes with thousands of workers, it is outrageous to think there are corporations who ignore humanity and only want to continue exploiting, us-workers, for an economic gain.

But we know - we know that their willful disregard of farmworkers humanity will not go unanswered. Your fast, your letters, our protests answer such disregard with the insistence that we believe that every person is a child of God and every person should be treated with dignity and respect.

Today we are here, breaking one more fast, a fast for justice, but we are also here to demand of Wendy's to sign the agreement that guarantees protection for human rights, so that we as women no longer have to keep sacrificing our dignity in order provide food for our families.

For many years women have had to lower their head, to feed our children. Today thanks to the Fair Food Program, we are respected, and we are going unity in solidarity with other who are still suffering violence, we are going to continue to fight for those who are under the bonds of injustice.

As the gospel of Matthew reminds us, it is about what we do when we see one another of us imprisoned, hungry, suffering. And what we are doing continuing to build a new kind of economy, a structural solution to the immoral operations of supply chains that chew up human beings.

And your witness as the religious community to this, your contribution to this movement, your willingness to unite together and stand shoulder-to-shoulder with us demonstrates the kind of world God longs for.

A world where, in Isaiah's words, the "light breaks forth as the morning" and our common well-being is achieved.

Together, we are showing Wendy's that we are not alone, that we are not going to permit Wendy's to support violence against women. That we as women, as farmworkers are not alone, and that we are stronger than ever, that we are against violence.

In a few moments you will have the opportunity to write your own message to Wendy's that we will deliver with flowers of hope during our protest this evening. Let your words come from deep within you, from that strong and loving place that caused you to take up this fast. Have confidence that your words will now meet up with the fast you have taken to pierce through the callousness and fear that are driving Wendy's executives.

Let your hearts reach out and call upon them, human being to human being, to become part of this new world of justice we are creating together.

Now our voices sing the melody of hope, our tears have risen as strength. Violence against women must stop, and we are in on this path, let us keep fighting for justice and let God guide our path.

Because our God is God of Justice, a God of universal love. God will guide us, because just like us God believes in justice and in love for others.