



## Pastoral Letter

World Food Day, 16 October 2026

“Solidarity for Food that is Healthy, Affordable,  
and Life-Giving”

*To be read at Masses on Saturday/Sunday,  
17/18 October 2026 in place of the homily*

Dear mothers and fathers, Sisters, Brothers and seminarians,  
my brother priests, young people, teenagers and children,

1. Every year, 16 October is observed as World Food Day. We Catholics of the Archdiocese of Jakarta observe it on the Sunday closest to that date, giving thanks for God’s saving work in the celebration of the Eucharist and drawing inspiration from the Word of God that we have heard.
2. Continuing the themes of World Food Day from previous years, this year the Archdiocese of Jakarta has chosen the theme “Solidarity for Food that is Healthy, Affordable, and Life-Giving”. Through this theme, we are invited to live out a spirituality of food as a source of life and to demonstrate social solidarity with our sisters and brothers who do not yet have access to healthy food.
3. The words of Jesus that we hear today remind us of the importance of social responsibility, which is also a form of obedience to God. Jesus said, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mt 22:21). As members of society, we are called to continually strengthen our concern for others and our social solidarity for the sake of the common good. This is a concrete expression of our obedience to God, who always cares for the salvation and well-being of His people. This is the main message proclaimed through the Prophet Isaiah (Isa 45:1, 4–6). Meanwhile, the Apostle Paul gives thanks because the community he founded continues in its work of faith and labour of love. This concern and social solidarity, this work of faith and labour of love, will bear fruit in peace and well-being, as the Apostle Paul tells us (1 Thess 1:1–3).

Dear sisters and brothers,

- 4.1. In reality, that peace and well-being are still far from what we hope for. Hunger remains an unresolved problem. Yet hunger can, in fact, be overcome.

The world already produces enough food to meet the nutritional needs of everyone. However, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reports that 645 million people around the world still suffer from hunger, and 2.69 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet (FAO, 16 October 2025). Pope Leo XIV, concerned by this reality in our world, invites us to pray that the Lord may awaken a new awareness within us: that we may learn to give thanks for every meal, to live simply, to share with joy, and to care for the fruits of the earth as His gift intended for everyone, not merely for a few (Pope's Prayer Intention for May: That Everyone May Have Food, Vatican News, 30 April 2026).

4.2. According to the same organisation, in Indonesia, more than 23 million people still cannot meet their nutritional needs, and more than 20 percent of children under five still suffer from stunting (impaired growth due to malnutrition). Indonesia is facing three major challenges: undernutrition, overnutrition, and micronutrient deficiency (a lack of essential vitamins and minerals). This situation is deeply troubling: some suffer from undernutrition while others suffer from overnutrition. This is a consequence of injustice and inequality in access to healthy food.

4.3. Meanwhile, our society is also facing the pressure of continually rising food prices. Indonesia's annual food inflation reached 4.06 percent in mid-2026. On the other hand, employment opportunities are becoming increasingly difficult to find. The average unemployment rate across DKI Jakarta, Tangerang and Bekasi is 6.30 percent (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 1 September 2026). As a result, low-income households find it increasingly difficult to afford their basic food needs. At the same time, land available for achieving food self-reliance is increasingly limited. Added to this is climate change, which gives rise to many highly complex problems that directly and indirectly disrupt the availability of healthy food.

5. In facing these challenges, it is not enough for us Catholics to rely on human efforts alone. We need to ground our efforts in Christian values, which we may call a spirituality of food. This spirituality reflects a way of life that grows from the experience of God's love and from the awareness that food is God's gift intended for all people. This awareness shapes our sensitivity towards our sisters and brothers who struggle to obtain food, moves us towards conversion from indifference and consumerism, and takes shape in shared choices and actions to provide food that is healthy, environmentally friendly, affordable, and life-giving.

6. Food is not first and foremost the fruit of our own labour, but the fruit of the soil, water, air and sun, of the hard work of farmers and fishers, and of the many hands of our sisters and brothers who contribute to providing it for us. Our prayer at meals can deepen our awareness

in faith: “Give us this day our daily bread.” We receive food as a gift from God that leads us towards a way of life that glorifies God. We eat only what we need, so that others may have their share. From this attitude grows respect for food and a refusal to waste it or throw it away as rubbish.

Dear sisters and brothers,

7. This year, we Catholics of the Archdiocese of Jakarta (KAJ) are deepening and striving to live out our care for creation. Next year (2027), we will enter the Year of the Eucharist. Both are sources of our faith as we respond to the problem of food. In the celebration of the Eucharist, by the power of the Holy Spirit, bread and wine are changed into the saving Body and Blood of Christ. These fruits of the earth and of human labour are blessed, broken and shared as a source of salvation for all the faithful who receive them. It would therefore be strange for a community to celebrate the Eucharistic Bread, broken and shared at the altar, while leaving our sisters and brothers around us with no bread to eat. The Eucharist invites us not only to receive Communion, but gradually to become Eucharistic persons, willing to be broken and shared for the life and salvation of others.

Dear brothers and sisters,

8. What can we do? Most important of all is to cultivate a fundamental attitude of gratitude for God’s gift of the food we eat each day. Food is the fruit of the earth and of the labour of the many people involved in providing it. In this way, we grow in care for food, for one another and for creation: choosing healthy food, eating only what we need, not throwing away leftovers, and growing in compassion for our sisters and brothers who still go hungry. Prayer at meals in our families and communities should become an expression of thanksgiving and a commitment to sharing the bread of life. The habit of eating together in families and communities is also a way of strengthening a spirituality of sharing, self-sacrifice, mutual service and unity, as we celebrate in the Eucharist.

9. I appreciate the initiatives of individuals and communities who grow food crops on whatever limited land is available, or who practise urban farming. These good initiatives should continue to be shared more widely. In addition, we can continue and expand the network of cooperation between consumers (the faithful of KAJ) and sustainable (environmentally friendly) farming groups outside KAJ, by becoming a consumer community that buys directly from sustainable farmers at a fair price. Our hope is that, in this way,

communities animated by the spirit of the Eucharist will become a concrete reality, sharing food, the source of life, in bonds of love.

10. In schools and non-formal educational settings, we should continue to develop education on sustainable food, establish school food gardens, organise food savings drives, share food with the hungry, give children live-in experiences with farming families, and pursue other creative initiatives.

11. As a shared movement, gatherings at the level of neighbourhood communities (lingkungan), districts (wilayah), parishes, categorical communities and the archdiocese should use the services of Micro and Small Enterprises (UMK) and SABUK (Sentra Bimbingan Usaha Kecil, the Small Business Guidance Centre) that provide local and environmentally friendly food and drink. We must ensure that no food or drink, or at least as little as possible, is left over at any gathering.

Dear sisters and brothers,

12. Finally, together with the priests and all who serve the faithful, I wish to thank all of you mothers and fathers, Sisters, Brothers, seminarians, young people, teenagers and children who, in your different roles, have shared the responsibility of building a spirit of compassion for our sisters and brothers in need. My thanks also go to the faithful who have sought to value food by eating only what they need, growing food crops where they live, and building communities that care for environmentally friendly food, for the common good and the integrity of creation. May the faithful of the Archdiocese of Jakarta continue to journey together in the spirit of being ever more loving, ever more caring and ever more faithful in bearing witness. Wishing you, your families and your communities good health and abundant blessings.

+ Ignatius Cardinal Suharyo  
Archbishop of Jakarta