



Inspiration Through Spring Holy Days

to Unite and Support Justice for Farmworkers & Meatpackers

In this season of late Spring, the three major Abrahamic religions of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity each are marking significant Holy Days of Ramadan (April 23-May 23), Shavuot (May 28-30), and Pentecost (May 31). Despite substantial uniqueness among each holiday, all uplift sacred texts which highlight common themes faced by immigrant communities--especially during this crisis of COVID-19.

Each Holy Day celebration emphasizes the importance of inclusion and abundance available to all, made possible through the blessings and gifts of Allah, God, and the Holy Spirit. Each calls believers to share abundance with those in need, and to unite in giving witness to unity against exclusion, division, or fears of scarcity. In this time when agricultural workers and meatpackers are called essential while often scapegoated and devalued through lack of adequate protections and worker benefits, reflections on our shared Holy Days themes helps guide our actions to demonstrate deeper, more generous love during a time of global pandemic.

Ramadan

"Allah does not love the arrogant and the boastful, who are miserly and bid others to be miserly and conceal the bounty which Allah has bestowed on them. We have kept in readiness a humiliating chastisement for such deniers (of Allah's bounty)." (Quran 4:36)



The month of Ramadan celebrates the revelation to Muhammed of the Quran, "a guidance for the people and clear proof of guidance and criterion." Sacred practices of fasting, prayer, reflection and community are emphasized. Gratitude for blessings, and sharing blessings with people who are in need is a strong theme, with fasting helping Muslims feel and build compassion for those who are hungry. Many mosques regularly feed people who are poor, hold food drives during Ramadan, and practice justice. Gratitude for Allah's bounty and sharing abundance with needy people is a joyful practice for Muslims.

Shavuot

**וּבִקְצֹרְכֶם אֶת קְצִיר אֲרָצְכֶם לֹא תִכְלֶה לֹא תִקְצֹרְךָ וְלִקְט קְצִירְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט
לְעַנִּי וְלַגֵּר תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם**

"And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the Eternal am your God." Leviticus 23:22



The Book of Ruth is read on Shavuot. It tells the story of Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi as they return to Bethlehem from their tragic visit in Moab. Ruth goes to the fields to collect grain for herself and Naomi. Leviticus 23:22 states that the gleanings of the field belong to the poor, immigrants, orphans, or widows – and Ruth belongs to at least three of these groups. Ruth is extremely vulnerable as she is a Moabite woman, widow, and has arrived empty-handed in Bethlehem. In addition to the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, Shavuot is a harvest festival that encourages us to follow the Torah's teachings, and emphasizes all should have access to the provisions of the land.



“Suddenly from up in the sky there came a noise like a strong, driving wind.... Tongues of fire appeared and came to rest on each of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to speak in other languages and make bold proclamation as the Spirit prompted them.” Acts 2:2-4

God has sent the unifying power of the Spirit of God and called us to share the Good News, the promise of Jesus who reveals the essential unity of all things in the Creator of all things. We have been strengthened by the Spirit of love and called to build God’s beloved community where all must be made welcome. In God’s community “there is neither Jew nor Gentile...slave nor free, nor male and female, for all are one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3:28)

Stories: Both farmworkers and meatpacking workers—many from immigrant and refugee backgrounds—have been deemed essential to ensure our nation’s food supply. However, they have historically worked in dangerous conditions and close quarters with few protections; with now heightened risks under COVID. Aside from facing lacks of protective equipment and distancing safeguards, shutdowns due to Covid-19 have also brought to light the frequent absence of basic benefits such as sick days and unemployment insurance. To date, 14,000+ meatpackers have contracted COVID, in at least 181 plants. *Image below-CommunitytoCommunity in Washington state hold vigil for essential farmworkers at increased risks under COVID-19.*

One farmworker, Flor, says: “I work in the fields with tobacco and sweet potatoes, but I’ve been out of work since February because of the coronavirus.” José, a migrant worker who travelled from Florida with his family to work in sweet potato and blueberry fields, says, “Since the epidemic, we don’t have any work, or very little. With the children at home, we have even more expenses. We earn very little as it is, and (it) is not enough.” *4/26/2020, Danica Jorden, Common Dreams, [COVID-19 Sweeping Through Ranks of US Immigrant Farmworkers and Meatpackers](#)*



Actions: READ [this letter](#) from the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW) outlining essential worker protections for meatpacking workers & [this letter](#) of support for farmworkers during COVID-19. CALL your U.S. legislators to support these priorities at: (202) 224-3121. SIGN [this letter](#) to ensure worker benefits for farm workers, & TEXT “ShopSmart” to 23396 to take the #ShopSmart [pledge](#) to support our nation’s grocery, retail, & food industry workers. See [National Farmworker Ministry](#) for more ways to help. *(Image: CBS This Morning from [article here.](#))*

Prayer: Eternal God, Creator of the universe, there is no God but You. Great and wonderful are Your works, wondrous are your ways. Thank you for the many splendored varieties of Your creation. Thank You for the many ways we affirm Your presence and purpose, and the freedom to do so. Forgive our violation of Your creation. Forgive our violence toward each other, especially toward immigrant farms and meatpacking workers. We stand in awe and gratitude for Your persistent love and Your call to abandon division and exclusion, to look instead at the abundance of your love and your desire for unity, and inclusion for each and all of Your children: Christian, Jew, Muslim, as well as those with other faiths. Grant to all and our leaders attributes of the strong; mutual respect in words and deed, restraint in the exercise of power, and the will for peace with justice, for all. Eternal God, Creator of the universe, there is no God but You. Amen.

Reflections by the “Holy Days & Holidays” Team of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition.

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