# Friday, February 19, 2010

**GO MEAT FREE TODAY… (Lenten Carbon Fast 2010)**

*"Today, the great gift of (God's Creation) is exposed to serious dangers and lifestyles which can degrade it. Environmental pollution is making particularly unsustainable the lives of the poor of the world. In dialogue with Christians of various confessions, we must pledge ourselves to take care of creation and to share its resources in solidarity."*

**- Pope Benedict XVI, August 27, 2006**

Did you know that enjoying a vegetarian diet one day a week is a way to reduce the carbon footprint of your food supply? In May 2009, the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization published a report showing that meat production accounts for 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. In addition to the environmental benefits, eating a plant based diet is said to reduce the risk of heart disease, help you maintain a healthy weight and improve the overall quality of your diet—as long as healthy, meat-free alternatives are included in your diet. It can also reduce your risk of chronic preventable conditions like cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity.

Last year, the United Nations climate chief, Rajendra Pachauri, provoked a global debate when he said having a meat-free day every week was the biggest single contribution people could make to curbing climate change in their personal lives, because of the chemicals sprayed on feed crops and the methane emitted by cattle and sheep.

One reason to begin eating one meatless meal per week is to promote personal well-being through healthy eating habits. By cutting out meat one day a week, one can reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease, lower one's cholesterol and reduce the risk of cancer, diabetes and obesity. A once-a-week vegetarian diet will provide a high intake of fiber and a feeling of fullness without the calories that accompany the saturated fats found in meat.

A second reason is to better our environment. By eliminating meat once a week, we are reducing our carbon footprint, lowering our water usage and helping to reduce our country's dependence on fossil fuels. From the Meatless Monday website (www.meatlessmonday.com), "About 40 calories of fossil fuel energy go into every calorie of feed-lot beef in the US. Compare this to the 2.2 calories of fossil fuel energy needed to produce one calorie of plant based protein."

Michael Pollan, a professor of journalism at the University of California, said on the Oprah show: "Even one meatless day a week – which is what we do in my household – if everybody in America did that, it would be the equivalent of taking 20 million mid-size sedans off the road."