

## COFFEE AND DOUGHNUTS AFTER MASS



Crude oil is the most traded commodity in the world. Coffee is number two. Both are sources of fuel: coffee is the cure for fatigue. Coffee is also one beverage around which conversations form and bring people together.

Small-scale crude oil supply businesses are not profitable. A small-scale coffee bean farmer has a chance at profitability, which, in Third-World country terms, means moving just above the poverty line and allowing communities to invest in infrastructure such as sanitation facilities and health clinics.

The surest way to ensure that small-scale coffee bean farmers achieve profitability is to guarantee them a fair wage. The viability of a fair wage depends on the coffee beans attaining a fair price. Fair prices are achieved through fair trade.

October is Fair Trade Month. Fair trade supports farmers and craftspeople in developing countries who are socially and economically marginalized. These producers lack economic opportunity and face steep hurdles in finding markets and customers for their goods.

Fair trade is not free trade. Free trade is a policy by which a government does not discriminate against imports or interfere with exports by applying tariffs (to imports) or subsidies (to exports). Free trade benefits owners. Fair trade intentionally promotes the dignity of workers by ensuring fair wages and by helping vulnerable producers maintain their livelihoods when traditional economic structures shut them out.

“It is good for people to realize that purchasing is always a moral — and not simply economic — act. Hence the consumer has a specific social responsibility... Consumers should be continually educated regarding their daily role, which can be exercised with respect for moral principles without diminishing the intrinsic economic rationality of the act of purchasing... It can be helpful to promote new ways of marketing products from deprived areas of the world, so as to guarantee their producers a decent return.”  
Pope Benedict, *Charity in Truth (Caritas in Veritate)*, #66

Fair Trade creates opportunities for a response to this moral call in small but significant ways through the choices we make as consumers. By making the conscious choice to purchase Fair Trade items, we put the values of Catholic social teaching into action, and work to realize our vision of economic justice. One individual's response is significant but small. The response of a parish, a school, or an office yields a larger impact. Serving fair trade coffee is a common response. Purposefully tying the office coffee to Catholic teaching sets an example, not through words but action. Serving fair trade coffee provides an opportunity to evangelize and educate. Intentionally serving fair trade coffee is Catholic.

Fair trade coffee costs more. So does organic food. Oregon microbeer costs more. Non-sweatshop labor-produced shirts cost more. The choices we make as consumers to support the local economy, to not benefit from ill-gotten gains, and to eat local and nutritiously costs more. We make these moral choices daily.

### Five Things You Can Do to Support Fair Trade:

1. Designate your CRS contributions to its [Fair Trade Fund](#)
2. Advocate for changes in U.S. Policy on [Climate Change](#), because climate changes are catastrophic for third-world farmers
3. Advocate for [Comprehensive Immigration Reform](#) that addresses the root causes of immigration; local industries that create living wage jobs are more attractive to citizens than coming to America.
4. Support a Farm Bill and Federal Budget that fully funds global hunger programs such as [Food for Peace](#) and [Feed the Future](#).
5. **This October, make fair trade coffee your next moral consumer decision. [How?](#)**



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