

Statement by Cesar Chavez at the End of His 24-Day Fast for
Justice, Phoenix, Arizona, June 4, 1972

I want to thank you for coming today. Some of you have been to the Santa Rita Center many times. Some have made beautiful offerings at the Mass. I have received letters and telegrams and lettuce boycott pledges from all over the world. All of these expressions of your love and your support for the farm workers' struggle have strengthened my spirits and I am grateful. I want especially to honor the farm workers who have risked so much to go on strike for their rights. Your sacrifices will not be in vain!

I am weak in my body but I feel very strong in my spirit. I am happy to end the Fast because it is not an easy thing. But it is also not easy for my family and for many of you who have worried and worked and sacrificed. The Fast was meant as a call to sacrifice for justice and a reminder of how much suffering there is among farm workers. In fact, what is a few days without food in comparison to the daily pain of our brothers and sisters who do backbreaking work in the fields under inhumane conditions and without hope of ever breaking their cycle of poverty and misery. What a terrible irony it is that the very people who harvest the food we eat do not have enough food for their own children.

It is possible to become discouraged about the injustice we see everywhere. But God did not promise us that the world would be humane and just. He gives us the gift of life and allows us to choose the way we will use our limited time on this earth. It is an awesome opportunity. We should be thankful for the life we

have been given, thankful for the opportunity to do something about the suffering of our fellow man. We can choose to use our lives for others to bring about a better and more just world for our children. People who make that choice will know hardship and sacrifice. But if you give yourself totally to the non-violent struggle for peace and justice, you also find that people will give you their hearts and you will never go hungry and never be alone. And in giving of yourself you will discover a whole new life full of meaning and love.

Nan Freeman and Sal Santos have given their lives for our movement this past year. They were very young. It hurt us to lose them and it still hurts us. But the greatest tragedy is not to live and die, as we all must. The greatest tragedy is for a person to live and die without knowing the satisfaction of giving life for others. The greatest tragedy is to be born but not to live for fear of losing a little security or because we are afraid of loving and giving ourselves to other people.

Our opponents in the agricultural industry are very powerful and farm workers are still weak in money and influence. But we have another kind of power that comes from the justice of our cause. So long as we are willing to sacrifice for that cause, so long as we persist in non-violence and work to spread the message of our struggle, then millions of people around the world will respond from their hearts, will support our efforts . . . and in the end we will overcome. It can be done. We know it can be done. God give us the strength and patience to do it without

bitterness so that we can win both our friends and opponents to the cause of justice.