

## Public Policy Weekend: Justice for Farmworkers

Here in our Diocese, parishes participate in the annual Public Policy Weekend every February, when parishioners speak out with one voice on an issue related to Catholic Social Teaching. This year that issue is the **Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act**, which would grant equal labor rights to the workers who milk cows, tend animals, and plant, harvest and pack fruits and vegetables in New York State.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Under New York State Labor Law, farmworkers do **NOT** have the right to:

- ◇ Overtime pay
- ◇ A day of rest per week if the worker chooses to take it
- ◇ Employer-provided disability insurance
- ◇ Public health protections including sanitation and housing standards
- ◇ Protections when bargaining collectively



*Farmworkers in Cayuga County*

These are basic rights granted to virtually all other workers in our state. The people who are the backbone of our state's multi-billion dollar agricultural industry are excluded from these protections. This bill would end those exclusions.

### Why does the Catholic Church care about this group of workers?

The Gospel demands that we stand on the side of the poor and marginalized, because that's what Jesus did. Farmworkers are among the most vulnerable workers in New York.

As Pope Francis consistently reminds us, our faith calls us to protect and welcome immigrants. In our part of New York State, many of those who have come to this country seeking a better life are farmworkers.

As Catholics, we believe in the fundamental dignity of human work and the rights of workers to decent wages, safe working conditions and protection when collectively redressing grievances. This has been part of our Church teaching for over a century. Protecting workplace dignity is fundamental to protecting human dignity.

### What about the farmers?

Agriculture is a multi-billion dollar industry in New York State, but we know many farms are struggling financially. We urge our state elected officials to address the needs of farmers along with farmworkers. Both deserve our support. We believe that public policies can be enacted that grant farmworkers their basic rights and that address the needs of farmers as well.