

Labor Day Statement- Pastoral Aids:

Points for Theological Reflection as you prepare your homily:

This year's Labor Day Statement focuses on the issues of young adult unemployment and underemployment, debt and family formation, and immigration. Our readings for this year have the ability to speak to the very timely issues of the dignity of work, and the right to honor our work. What are some ways that you are working to address one of these topics in your parish community?

In the First Reading from the Prophet Jeremiah (Jer 20:7-9), we see that the text is broken into 2 parts—the lament and the resolution. The lament expresses a frustration of “being duped” by God and perhaps feeling mocked by others. How might this echo various scenarios of work for some people of today? In the second section, the resolution, the writer accepts that to be silent about God's work is wrong- such silence becomes a fire burning in our hearts- it is heavy to ignore. In what way have you experienced the burden that comes with not sharing fully in what God calls each of us to do with right relationships?

In the Second Reading, St. Paul is reminding the Romans (Rom 12:1-2) in his letter that we are called to do what is right- not what is popular. We are neither to be conformists of “this age,” nor to let adversity hold us back from fulfilling our mission. We must live for God. When we live for God, then we can properly discern how our work can be a creative endeavor in which we glorify God. How are you discerning the will of God in your work? Are you attending to the needs of the young adults who are participating in your parish?

The Gospel reading from St. Matthew (Mt 16: 21-27) is a familiar text. But how can we read this pericope from a perspective of labor and remind ourselves of the dignity of work in this story? Jesus speaks of self-denial and submission to God's will. Where can we find God's will during a day dedicated to human dignity and work? Jesus speaks to the disciples of the need to carry their own cross and follow him. What is a “cross” that you are carrying? How can this cross inform and even transform your understanding of the dignity of work? How can you share this understanding with your parish this Labor Day?

Parish Activity Suggestions:

- Have the Parish host a Labor Day Picnic/Potluck
 - Have the opening prayer of the picnic be a prayer celebrating the dignity of work and those who are under appreciated in their work.
- Have the Parish host a Panel Discussion about the Dignity of Work- what this means, why dignity in our work is an important topic to the parish and the universal Church. Invite 3 young adults(18-40 years old) to be on the panel specifically to speak about raising a family, living as a single person, what underemployment means, how unemployment affects their ability to live and work for the common good and to give personal testimony about their experience. (The goal of the Panel discussion would be to allow people to share the personal stories about how work informs their ability to live into the understanding that they desire dignity in the work they do, that they are also imbued with God's care and love.)
 - [“Primer on Labor and Catholic social teaching”](#)
 - [“Primer on Poverty and the Common Good”](#).
 - [Catholic Social Teaching](#).
- To learn more about the minimum wage- use this calculator to help your parish understand what this all means. <http://livingwage.mit.edu/>

Examination of Conscience for Workers:

In last year's Labor Day Statement Pastoral Aids we featured the [Vocation of a Business Leader's Examination of Conscience](#). This year we would like to pass along an Examination of Conscience for Workers.

- Do I see my work as gift from God? How is this reflected in my attitude at my work?
- Do I see my work as vocation?
- Do I promote a culture of life through my work?
- Do I live a divided life, where I separate the Gospel principles from my work?
- Do I seek the sacraments regularly and with attention to how they support and inform my work practices?
- Am I sharing my spiritual life/understanding of work with others in my work life?
- Am I taking seriously, the dignity of the person in my work, as an employee? Am I being just in my attentiveness to my personal performance? Am I promoting integral human development while ensuring that the company I work for is efficient?

Prayers of the Faithful:

Possible Responses:

Lord, hear our prayer.

In your mercy, hear us Lord.

In your compassion, answer us God.

Possible Prayers:

We pray for renewal of spirit for the men, women and children who must work in jobs that ignore the dignity of their personhood. We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the men and women who are not able to find jobs. We pray for their continued perseverance and determination as they continue to seek ways in which to participate in God's creation and work. We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the men and women who own companies, who lead companies and who make decisions regarding safe work conditions and adequate wages. We pray that these leaders will act in the best interests of their laborers. We pray to the Lord.

We pray for union leaders, national and local, who are responsible for speaking for workers. May they be guided by the grace and wisdom of the Holy Spirit to be servant leaders. We pray to the Lord.

We pray for men, women and children who suffer from our lack of solidarity in their daily struggle to survive. May we be aware of our responsibility to be in relationship with our brothers and sisters in the world. We pray to the Lord.

We pray that as we are reminded that it is right and just to receive a fair wage for work, we may strive to promote dignity and respect for all in the workplace. We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who have lost their lives while working, that they might be welcomed into the

heavenly kingdom; and for their families, that they might be comforted and find security. We pray to the Lord.

Scripture References on Labor for consideration:

- Genesis 2: 2-3
- Exodus 20: 9-10 & 15; 23: 12; 34: 21
- Leviticus 23: 3
- Numbers 8: 25-26
- Deuteronomy 5: 13-14; 24: 1-15
- 1 Chronicles 28: 20
- Psalm 28:4; 82: 3-4; 90: 17; 94: 16
- Proverbs 22: 22-23
- Sirach 38:8
- Jeremiah 17: 22; 22: 13
- Isaiah 58: 10, 12
- Nehemiah 5: 9-11
- Matthew 20; 22: 36-40
- James 2: 14-17

Quotes from Church Documents:

“No consideration of the problems associated with development could fail to highlight the direct link between poverty and unemployment. In many cases, poverty results from a violation of the dignity of human work, either because work opportunities are limited (through unemployment or underemployment), or ‘because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it, especially the right to a just wage and to the personal security of the worker and his or her family”

Charity in Truth, § 63.

“Work must be an escape from poverty, not another version of it.”

A Place at the Table, §17.

“Catholic social teaching supports the rights of workers to choose whether to organize, join a union, and bargain collectively, and to exercise these rights without reprisal...workers, owners, employers and unions should work together to create decent jobs, build a more just economy, and advance the common good.”

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, §76

“Business is a vocation, and a noble vocation, provided that those engaged in it see themselves challenged by a greater meaning in life; this will enable them truly to serve the common good by striving to increase the goods of this world and to make them more accessible to all.”

The Joy of the Gospel, §203.

“The dignity of each human person and the pursuit of the common good are concerns which ought to shape all economic policies.”

The Joy of the Gospel, §203.

“Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a ‘disposable’ culture which is now spreading. It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society’s underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised—they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the ‘exploited’ but the outcast, the ‘leftovers’”.

The Joy of the Gospel, §53.