

Labor Day Resources

Reflections on Catholic Teaching on Work

<https://www.usccb.org/committees/domestic-justice-and-human-development/labor-employment>

Reflections on Catholic Teaching on Work

- Catholic teaching tells us that not only are workers due a “just wage” with which they can provide for their families’ needs; they also deserve opportunities for rest and dignity-affirming benefits such as quality health care and paid time off. In addition, work should be something that enhances one’s human dignity (see [Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church](#), nos. 284, 287, 301, 302).
- The experience of many workers in low-wage jobs tells us that we must give serious consideration to how we can address areas of inequality in our economic systems. We are called to prioritize the well-being of the human person over the capital they produce (see St. John Paul II in [Laborem Exercens](#), no. 12, on “The Priority of Labor”). In our country today, corporate consolidation of wealth and power in monopoly organizations has led to lower wages for workers. Lower wages mean many workers cannot sufficiently provide for their families or fully participate in the economy and society (see St. John Paul II in [Centessimus Annus](#), no. 48).
- How can we empower workers whose dignity and rights are not fully recognized? One way to do this is by supporting those organizations and businesses that promote employee ownership. The [Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#) funds several cooperatives and other employee-owned projects that help low-wage workers to achieve fair wages, stable employment, job training opportunities, and better benefits.
- Catholic teaching holds that central to promoting the dignity of work and rights of workers is building solidarity with and among workers. The Church has long looked towards the important role played by labor unions in the effort to protect the needs and rights of workers in situations of inequality and injustice (see [Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church](#), no. 305). As we seek to build greater solidarity with those workers in our community fighting for their rights, how can you show greater support of and involvement with the work of these labor unions?
- Where in your local community or around the world do you see the dignity of work or the rights of workers eroded? *[Note to homilist: If possible, try to offer at least one recent example of what you have seen in the news or in your own community. Possible examples might include sub-family wages for low-skill work; failure to provide maternity or family leave or other benefits; the wage gap that especially affects minorities and women; bad work conditions or withholding of wages from migrant workers; irresponsible corporate practices leading to environmental contamination, etc.]*

How Can Catholics Respond?

- In the workplace, if we are business owners, managers, or supervisors, we can help ensure that our businesses and organizations are offering family wages and the dignity-affirming benefits that our long Catholic tradition affirms should be available for all workers and their families.
- As we listen to the needs of those in our community, we are challenged to support those organizations that are empowering their employees to be owners and decision-makers. [Find a](#)

Labor Day Sample Prayers of the Faithful

[local CCHD funded group](#) that supports employee ownership in your community and get involved in creating a more just economic system.

- We can also join local efforts to support a just wage/family wage, which is a wage at which workers and their families can have access to what they need to fulfill basic needs and thrive.
- We can use our purchasing power to help protect human dignity. We can be educated consumers, support local businesses and ethically-produced products, and let companies know when we are unhappy with their labor practices.
- Learn about efforts in your parish or local community to assist workers and their families, or to support their needs through advocacy or other efforts and get involved.



Copyright © 2021, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. All rights reserved. This text may be reproduced in whole or in part without alteration for nonprofit educational use, provided such reprints are not sold and include this notice. This resource and many others are available at usccb.org/jphd.

Excerpt from the Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America, second typical edition © 2001, 1998, 1997, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. Used with permission. All rights reserved. No portion of this text may be reproduced by any means without permission in writing from the copyright owner.