

## **Labor Day Statement Supplemental Aids:**

### **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 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. May we 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.

#### **Questions for Theological Reflection:**

You may wish to place your reflections in your Labor Day Homily. As Sunday is our day of rest, it is also appropriate to incorporate these reflections into other weekend homilies as well. Reminding parishioners of their inherent dignity and the dignity of their work is a good and useful cue of God's abiding love for all. Also, pay attention to those who are looking for work or are struggling with their employee/er at this time.

- What is the current unemployment rate in your town or city? How does this compare with your church? (Statistics can be found online at [www.povertyusa.org](http://www.povertyusa.org) )
- God allows us to work in creative and life-giving ways. We participate in the creative work of God. How do you express gratitude for your ability to work?
- Consider “shadowing” a worker (factory, railroad, dishwasher, busboy, teacher, nurse, CNA, CEO, etc.) from your parish and then share your experience in your homily after reflection.
- What is the difference between a minimum wage and a living wage? Do your parishioners understand this distinction? <http://www.povertyusa.org/wages-versus-prices/>
- Do you have a story that you could share highlighting worker injustices that have affected a parishioner (without breaking confidentiality)?
- What is wage theft? Does it affect people in your parish? [http://wagetheft.org/wordpress/?page\\_id=1511#whatis](http://wagetheft.org/wordpress/?page_id=1511#whatis)
  - 60% of nursing home workers have had their wages stolen
  - Almost 50 percent of all day laborers (construction) have had wages stolen
  - 100% of poultry plant workers have had their wages stolen<sup>1</sup>
- How is our sacramental life affected by our work and sense of dignity that comes from being able to provide for basic needs? How does this contribute to our gifts for the common good?
- Who in your community is most directly affected by growing inequality?
- How can you and your parishioners support the businesses that honor the work of their laborers? Do you know the company leaders?

#### **Scripture References to consider:**

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

Psalms 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:**

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<sup>1</sup> Wage Theft in America: Why Millions of Working Americans are not Getting Paid- And What we can Do about It. Kim Bobo. The New Press, New York, 2009. Page 7.

“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

### **Prayers:**

As the sun rises to bring in the new day:

We remember those who descend into the earth, their work begins in darkness, pulling from the earth, the resources we steward.

We remember those who work inside a building away from the light and brightness of the day.

We remember those who work outside in the harsh elements of our world, the bitter cold and sweltering heat of extremes.

We remember those who do not have a job to go to, who are struggling to meet the needs of their daily living expenses, for whom the day becomes long and arduous.

As the sun sets to bring in the evening of rest:

We remember those who work in the night.

We remember those who are trying to recover from their labor and toils of the day.

We remember those who participate in unsafe and dangerous work. We pray for a renewed sense of dignity in their lives and in their work.

God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the worker. Make a place in our hearts for compassion to the men and women who labor tirelessly for basic necessities. Ensure a place for the men and women who are struggling to find work. Grant us your wisdom to greet and care for those who are unable to work due to illness or circumstances that prevent their participation. Be with the children who are not able to run and play, but instead must put in a hard day's work to help their family afford to eat, to live. Be with us all, Christ Jesus, as we go about the busyness of our work. Hold us accountable not only for our actions, but most importantly to each of our neighbors. May we continue to work together to bring about your reign! We ask this in your holy name, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“Persons in management face many hard choices each day, choices on which the well-being of many others depends. Commitment to the public good and not simply the private good of their firms is at the

heart of what it means to call their work a vocation and not simply a career or a job.” *Economic Justice for All §11*

“Good business decisions are those rooted in principles at the foundational level, such as respect for human dignity and service to the common good, and a vision of a business as a community of persons. Principles on the practical level keep the business leader focused on...organizing productive and meaningful work, recognizing the *human dignity* of employees and their right and duty to flourish in their work, and structuring workplaces with *subsidiarity* that designs, equips and trusts employees to do their best work...” (The Vocation of the Business Leader)

#### **Examination of Conscience for the Business Leader:<sup>2</sup>**

- Do I see work as a gift from God?
- Is my work as a “co-creator” truly participating in God’s original creative act?
- Do I promote a culture of life through my work?
- Have I been living a divided life, separating Gospel principles from my work?
- Am I receiving the sacraments regularly and with attention to how they support and inform my business practices?
- Am I reading the Scriptures and praying with the will to avoid the risk of a divided life?
- Am I sharing my spiritual path with other Christian business practitioners (my peers)?
- Am I seeking to nourish my business life by learning more about the Church’s social teaching?
- Do I believe that taking seriously the dignity of the person in my business decision-making will promote integral human development while making my company more efficient, more agile, and more profitable?

#### **Organizing Good and Productive Work:**

- Do I provide conditions which allow my employees appropriate autonomy at each level? In other words, am I organizing human resources mindful of the subsidiarity principle in my company management system?
- Am I making sure that the company provides safe working conditions, living wages, training, and the opportunity for employees to organize themselves?
- Have I embedded a set of comprehensively defined values and integrated that into my performance measurement process? Am I honest with my employees about their performance?
- In all countries where my company is engaged, is it honoring the dignity of those indirectly employed and contributing to the development of the communities hosting these operations? (Do I follow the same standard of morality in all geographic locations?)
- Do I place the dignity of all workers above profit margins?

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<sup>2</sup> [“The Vocation of the Business Leader”](#) The Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice, 2012.