

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, 6 September 2020: **Labor Day**

Scriptures: Ezekiel 33:7-9; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 18:15-20

Homily: Fr. Ken

In today's scripture reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Christians living in Rome, he affirmatively states that all the commandments can be summed up by a single command: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself".

In the United States, this weekend we celebrate Labor Day, a day first designated as a national holiday back in 1894. It is a day to honor workers, all workers nationwide. This year the official Labor Day statement of the United States Catholic Bishops focuses on rebuilding after the devastation of the global pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus.

"This Labor Day is a somber one", the statement notes. "The COVID-19 pandemic goes on. Economic circumstances for so many families are stressful or even dire. Anxiety is high. Millions are out of work and wondering how they will pay the bills. And for workers deemed 'essential' who continue to work outside the home, there is the heightened danger of exposure to the virus".

The statement focuses on the Biblical messages of the prophet Isaiah and the Book of Revelation, that in the midst of this suffering and distress, God is "doing something new". "The good news is that injustice does not need to have the last word. The Lord came to free us from sin, including the sins by which we diminish workers and ourselves". The sins of racism and economic injustice come to mind.

We are asked, for example, to examine our own purchasing choices, to ensure that the workers are "treated with dignity and respect", and afforded safe working conditions, and "receive a just wage".

The statement also includes mention of the 50th anniversary of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. It is celebrated as a “sign of great hope springing up at the roots”, and celebrated also the work of Catholic Charities and Catholic health care providers nationwide during the pandemic.

The Labor Day statement concludes by calling for solidarity and challenging all people to respond positively and progressively this Labor Day to the Old Testament Psalm, “Lead me in your justice, Lord” (Psalm 5:9).

Thus, this Labor Day weekend, I exhort each of you to read carefully and reflect on the Labor Day statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops.

[The U.S. Bishops’ Labor Day statement is on the website below.]