

Social Justice Homily Notes: (Yr.C) Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time
November 18th, 2007

Introduction

A generation ago, most people shared a similar experience of work; they usually worked for large companies; most people began with an entry level job and if they were competent and reliable, could advance to a better position which paid more; although strikes and layoffs occurred in certain industries, they were seen as temporary setbacks; once a person had worked for certain number of years at the same company, they were fairly secure until they retired

Today, most people have a very different experience of work; large companies can produce more goods with fewer workers thanks to automation and “outsourcing” certain activities to low wage countries; many people are hired as part-time workers or under contract for a limited period of time; people who may be competent, reliable and have worked for a company for many years could lose their job because a corporate takeover means they employer needs to downsize

This period of rapid change is causing many people to re-examine the role of work in their lives

Scripture Texts

In today’s Gospel, Jesus warns his disciples about turbulent times ahead, but adds “by your endurance you will gain your souls”; by doing so, he instructs them to look past the turmoil of present days and remain focused on the teachings which underlie the kingdom of God

As Luke records in his Gospel, the early Church faced great turmoil; the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans during the Jewish War; false messiahs, claiming to be Jesus, came forth; Christians were persecuted by Jewish authorities and Roman officials; splits within families arose over acceptance of the new faith; many people expected Christ’s immediate return

These events could become a distraction for believers; in his Second Letter to the Thessalonians, Paul warns them against becoming “busybodies, not doing any work”; he also reminds them of the example he has provided for them “with toil and labor we worked night and day so we might not burden any of you”

Application

As the Church teaches, work is an integral part of the human condition (Compendium of the Social Doctrine #264); it honors the gifts and talents we have received from God and by enduring the hardship of work, we join ourselves to Christ in his redemptive action thereby becoming holy (Catechism #2427); it can be a point of honor to work with one’s hands and provides a powerful witness to others by laboring in the style of Christ (Compendium of the Social Doctrine #264).

Living out these teachings about work poses many challenges for Catholics; our society measures the value of work by the amount of money one earns by doing it; as workers we need to recall our dignity and self-worth comes not from what we can buy with our earnings or how others perceive our occupation but our relationship with God; as both citizens and consumers we need to use our collective influence on government and the

marketplace to insure all workers receive a just wage and have their rights protected; our society sees work as directed towards individual fulfillment and prosperity; as workers, we need to recognize work as the opportunity to use our God-given talents to develop as people and contribute to the common good; as citizens and consumers we need to influence our government and the private sector to allow workers the opportunity to develop their potential as employees and people; these challenges are great, especially during these unstable economic times; yet, they provide a way to remain focused on God's Kingdom.