

13th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME June 30, 2013 and July 1 (CANADA DAY)

"Put your hand to the plough" (Gospel)

(The following or something similar may be inserted in your homily):

1. We are blessed to live in Canada, especially as we see the conflict, violence and heart wrenching poverty in many other parts of the world. God in his Providence has called us to be here. We can rejoice and be grateful for the good life we have. But we must also be mindful of our obligations as citizens and stewards of what God has given us.

2. God calls us to work for the common good of all our fellow citizens, the good of each and every one. God calls us to solidarity. As Pope John Paul stated, this is "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and each individual because we are all really responsible for all." (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis 38.4)

3. Many of our fellow citizens cannot rejoice in their life in Canada. We are thinking of the hundreds of thousands who live below the poverty level, who are struggling to have enough to eat after they pay the rent, especially for their children. They are working in minimum wage or low paying jobs, or have had to resort to inadequate welfare payments, or are on inadequate disability pensions. Many do not have affordable housing. After paying their rent, there is not enough left for everything else.

4. Our federal and provincial governments are not disposed to do much for the poor because the majority of Canadians are not concerned about their plight. Governments will take significant action to overcome poverty if a large number of voters voice their concern and protest the inaction of our governments. Better than individual actions you may take, is to join with an anti-poverty organization working for the poor such as Dignity for All. This is a national organization supported by many groups, churches and citizens which is calling for action by the Federal Government to enact a federal anti-poverty law, binding successive governments. There is an all-party committee of Members of Parliament working to get the Federal Government to do this. You can get their websites on the Internet and sign on in support of their efforts. We have to join with others, work with others, to bring about social change.

In Quebec and Ontario grass root movements prevailed on their provincial governments to pass a law to overcome poverty and social exclusion. However, the government cutbacks in spending have stalled anti-poverty programs. Savings in government spending should not be made on the backs of the poor.

5. It is important too, to express your concern to your M.P. and to your provincial member of the Ontario Legislature.

6. Jesus identified himself with the poor, saying "I was hungry and you gave me to eat. Whatever you do for the least of my brethren, you do for me" (Matt. 25). The poor are brothers and sisters to us, as well as to Jesus. In today's Gospel, Jesus calls us to make a determined effort for his Kingdom, uniting us in justice, love and peace. Let us "put our hand to the plough" for the poor.