

## Pastor's Column

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### Thoughts on Labor Day Weekend

“On this Labor Day weekend, let me offer for your reflection ten ‘habits of the heart’ suggested by Robert Bellah in his book of the same name, relating to work in the world, which is of course, where most of us spend most of our time. He suggests we be:

- ◆ Gentle in treating the environment
- ◆ Just in our treatment of our fellow workers
- ◆ Wise in our use of creation’s resources
- ◆ Sensitive to others as they pursue their vocations and tasks
- ◆ Careful in the use of technology
- ◆ Frugal in energy consumption
- ◆ Vigilant in preventing waste
- ◆ Fair in determining prices
- ◆ Honest in the ways we promote the sale of our products
- ◆ Equitable in earning a profit

These principles would go far toward establishing a wise and orderly universe, but they are only a start.

Maddeningly, as Catholics and followers of Christ, we are held to a crazy and worldly unwise standard, a both/and principle that admits that good sometimes comes from bad, that bad things do happen to good people, that pain and suffering are not always either avoidable or meaningful, that our enemies must be loved, that healthy lifestyles do not guarantee longevity, that some poor people are lazy but still deserving of our help etc. etc. What a counter-intuitive reality!

As my fourteen year old son would say, ‘get used to it!’ Ours is a relational God, who formed a community, knowing we would need both laws and exceptions to them and most importantly, knowing we would need a faith community to deal with life among a whole bunch of free-will endowed creatures.

The principle certainty that is ours is that our God ‘is near... whenever we call’ and the main assurance we have is that God, through Jesus, knows and loves us completely.

That will just have to do!”

—Michele Chollet, *Celebration*, 09/03/2000



## INTERFAITH COMMITTEE FOR WORKER JUSTICE

*A Social Action Program of the San Diego Faith Communities*

### Catholic Teachings on the Rights of Workers

*Economic Justice for All: A Catholic Framework for Economic Life*  
A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops

As followers of Jesus Christ and participants in a powerful economy, Catholics in the United States are called to work for greater economic justice in the face of persistent poverty, growing income gaps, and increasing discussion of economic issues in the United States and around the world. We urge Catholics to use the following ethical framework for economic life as principles for reflection, criteria for judgment, and directions for action. These principles are drawn directly from Catholic teaching on economic life:

1. The economy exists for the person, not the person for the economy.
2. All economic life should be shaped by moral principles. Economic choices and institutions must be judged by how they protect or undermine the life and dignity of the human person, support the family, and serve the common good.
3. A fundamental moral measure of any economy is how the poor and vulnerable are faring.
4. All people have the right to life and to secure the basic necessities of life (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, safe environment, economic security.)
5. All people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, to decent working conditions, as well as to organize and join unions or other associations.
6. All people, to the extent they are able, have a corresponding duty to work, a responsibility to provide for the needs of their families, and an obligation to contribute to the broader society.
7. In economic life, free markets have both clear advantages and limits; government has essential responsibilities and limitations; voluntary groups have irreplaceable roles, but cannot substitute for the proper working of the market and the just policies of the state.
8. Society has a moral obligation, including governmental action where necessary, to assure opportunity, meet basic human needs, and pursue justice in economic life.
9. Workers, owners, managers, stockholders, and consumers are moral agents in economic life. By our choices, initiative, creativity, and investment, we enhance or diminish economic opportunity, community life, and social justice.
10. The global economy has moral dimensions and human consequences. Decisions on investment, trade, aid, and development should protect human life and promote human rights, especially for those most in need wherever they might live on this globe.