

Homily Ideas for the Sunday before Labor Day

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

From the reading from Wisdom:

“...who ever knew your counsel, except you had given wisdom and sent your holy spirit from on High? And thus were the paths of those on earth made straight.”

From the Responsorial Psalm:

“prosper the work of our hands for us! Prosper the work of our hands!”

From the reading from Philemon:

“...but I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that the good you do might not be forced but voluntary.”

From the reading of the Gospel of Luke:

“...Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple...anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.”

- ❖ What is black and white and red all over?
- ❖ When is a door not a door?
- ❖ What gets wetter and wetter the more it dries?
- ❖ These are examples of conundrums that many of us have played with as children and adults.
- ❖ Today’s readings could seem a bit conundrum when you put the ending of the responsorial psalm, “Prosper the work of our hands?” with the ending of the Gospel, “...anyone of you who does not renounce all this possessions cannot be my disciple.” Are we to prosper and have property or are we to renounce all our belongings?
- ❖ This would seem to be a pretty serious question; especially on this the day before we Americans celebrate Labor Day, a day directly giving recognition to those who work and indirectly to the benefits of working, that is, earning a living with some degree of prosperity and material goods.

- ❖ The first reading, from the book of Wisdom, appropriately enough provides some insight. Our paths are made straight through the application of wisdom sent from the Holy Spirit. In the work we do, in the way we work, in how we use the rewards for our labor, in each of these moments we have choices to make. In every aspect of our work life, we are faced with a choice between working for ourselves or working for the common good of our community—actually communities since we are each members of a number of communities—family, friends, church, neighborhood, city, state, nation, earth.
- ❖ The search for the proper good for the moment can be complex and difficult. So we need help, help from the source of all wisdom.
- ❖ But this grace is not forced on us. As Paul wrote to Philemon, “...I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that the good you do might not be forced but voluntary.” We need the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to understand how to make straight our paths in our work and to help us keep from making the acquisition and accumulation of wealth and property our chief interest.
- ❖ Since this wisdom is not forced on us, we must ask for it. We must open our hearts and minds to the message of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps more realistically, we must seek to empty our minds and hearts of our selfish aspirations and feelings so there is room for Spirit’s wisdom to influence, to guide, our lives. This, I believe, is the meaning behind Christ’s admonition that “...anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.”
- ❖ Take a moment with me now to consider your life at work. When are you most selfless, most considerate of others, during your work time? What one action could you take to expand that point of selflessness? Resolve to do that this week.
- ❖ Oh by the way the answer to the conundrums, in case you have forgotten them are: a newspaper, when it’s ajar, and a towel.

[PS: If you use these ideas, you might want to use a real-life example of someone shifting from a self-centered, materialistic approach toward work to a sense of faith-centered contribution to the common good and what caused the person to make this shift.]

Submitted by Louis Trenta