

This Labor Day weekend we have an opportunity to stop and reflect on the importance of labor and workers, not because of what we can produce when we work hard, but because as workers we are created by God and therefore bear the image of God. But, it is easy to lose sight of the dignity and humanity of workers. In our current economic system, workers are often regarded as a means to an end rather than the end themselves.

It is when we begin to stop recognizing the inherent createdness and sacredness of workers that we must step back and ask ourselves if we have allowed the economic market to become an idol that we have sacrificed workers to. In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Social Statement on: Sufficient, Sustainable, Livelihood for All, it says, “When any economic system and its effects are accepted without question—when it becomes a “god-like” power reigning over people, communities, and creation—then we face a central issue of faith.”

The dignity of labor, the importance of community, the stewardship of creation are all central concerns of faith, but when our faith is put in the market rather than in God, we sacrifice these central tenets for the sake of productivity and profit.

That is why, this weekend, in partnership with the Chicago Federation of Labor, Arise Chicago has speakers in over 100 services, lifting up the sacred link between work and faith. Founded in 1991, Arise Chicago partners with low-wage immigrant workers to end poverty and exploitation. Arise unites faith communities with workers to allow people of faith the opportunity to live out our baptismal vows in tangible ways as we partner with low-wage immigrant workers.

So while many of us enjoy an extra day off this weekend, let us dedicate some of that extra time we have to rest from our work but also prayerfully give thanks for work and vocation, but also reflect on the injustice and struggle that many workers still face. Where might God be calling you to live out your faith in solidarity with workers at home and abroad? How can we refine our economic beliefs so that they can align with our faith? If Christ is our final sacrifice, why do we insist on the continual sacrifice of ourselves and others for the sake of productivity and profit?

It is my prayer that Labor Day weekend serves as a time to remind us not of the independence that we have, but of the interdependence we share with workers all around the world. Stirred to action by this truth, let us seek together more embodied solidarity with our most marginalized worker siblings.

Peace,

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