

The Dignity of the Worker/ Worker Justice in the Bible

Genesis:

- 2:1-3 “1 And heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day G-d finished His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. 3 And G-d blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it He rested from all His work which G-d in creating had made.” (Jewish Bible)
- 2:15 “And HaShem G-d took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” (Jewish Bible)

Exodus:

- 3:7-8 “7 And the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and I have heard their cry because of their slave drivers, for I know their pains. 8 I have descended to rescue them from the hand[s] of the Egyptians and to bring them up from that land, to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivvites, and the Jebusites.” (Jewish Bible)

Deuteronomy:

- 5:13-15 “13 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; 14 but the seventh day is a sabbath unto HaShem thy G-d, in it thou shalt not do any manner of work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. 15 And thou shalt remember that thou was a servant in the land of Egypt, and HaShem thy G-d brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore HaShem thy G-d commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.” (Jewish Bible)
- 14:28-29 “28 At the end of every three years, even in the same year, thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase, and shall lay it up within thy gates. 29 And the Levite, because he hath no portion nor inheritance with thee, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that HaShem thy G-d may bless thee in all the work of thy hand which thou doest.” (Jewish Bible)
- 15:11 “11 For there will never cease to be needy within the land. Therefore, I command you, saying, you shall surely open your hand to your brother, to your poor one, and to your needy one in your land.” (Jewish Bible)
- 24:14-15 “14 Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates. 15 In the same day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto HaShem and it be sin in thee.” (Jewish Bible)

Psalms:

- 6 “1 Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. 2 Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint; heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony. 3 My soul is in deep anguish. How long, Lord, how long. 4 Turn, Lord, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love. 5 Among the dead no one proclaims your name. Who praises you from the grave? 6 I am worn out from my groaning. All night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. 7 My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes. 8 Away from me, all you who do evil, for the Lord has heard my weeping. 9 The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer. 10 All my enemies will be overwhelmed with shame and anguish; they will turn back and suddenly be put to shame.” (New International Version)
- 15 “1 Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? 2 The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart; 3 whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others; 4 who despises a vile person but honors those who fear the Lord; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind; 5 who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken.” (New International Version)
- 49 “1 Hear this, all you peoples; listen, all who live in this world, 2 both low and high, rich and poor alike: 3 My mouth will speak words of wisdom; the meditation of my heart will give you understanding. 4 I will turn my ear to a proverb; with the harp I will expound my riddle: 5 Why should I fear when evil days come, when wicked deceivers surround me— 6 those who trust in their wealth and boast of their great riches? 7 No one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them—8 the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough—9 so that they should live on forever and not see decay. 10 For all can see that the wise die, that the foolish and the senseless also perish, leaving their wealth to others. 11 Their tombs will remain their houses[b] forever, their dwellings for endless generations, though they had[c] named lands after themselves. 12 People, despite their wealth, do not endure; they are like the beasts that perish. 13 This is the fate of those who trust in themselves, and of their followers, who approve their sayings.[d] 14 They are like sheep and are destined to die; death will be their shepherd (but the upright will prevail over them in the morning). Their forms will decay in the grave, far from their princely mansions. 15 But God will redeem me from the realm of the dead; he will surely take me to himself. 16 Do not be overawed when others grow rich, when the splendor of their houses increases; 17 for they will take nothing with them when they die, their splendor will not descend with them. 18 Though while they live they count themselves blessed—and people praise you when you prosper—19 they will join those who have gone before them, who will never again see the light of life. 20 People who have wealth but lack understanding are like the beasts that perish.” (New International Version)

- 82 “1 God presides in the great assembly; he renders judgment among the “gods”: 2 “How long will you[a] defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked?[b] 3 Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. 4 Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. 5 “The ‘gods’ know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. 6 “I said, ‘You are “gods”; you are all sons of the Most High.’ 7 But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler.” 8 Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance.” (New International Version)
- 85 “1 You, Lord, showed favor to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. 2 You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins.[b] 3 You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger. 4 Restore us again, God our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us. 5 Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations? 6 Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? 7 Show us your unfailing love, Lord, and grant us your salvation. 8 I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants— but let them not turn to folly. 9 Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. 10 Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. 11 Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. 12 The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. 13 Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.” (New International Version)
- 90: 13-17 “13 Relent, Lord! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. 14 Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. 15 Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble. 16 May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children. 17 May the favor[a] of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us— yes, establish the work of our hands.” (New International Version)
- 104: 10-23 He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. 11 They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. 12 The birds of the sky nest by the waters; they sing among the branches. 13 He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work. 14 He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth: 15 wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts. 16 The trees of the Lord are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. 17 There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the junipers. 18 The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the crags are a refuge for the hyrax. 19 He made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down. 20 You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl. 21 The lions roar for their prey and seek their food

from God. 22 The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens. 23 Then people go out to their work, to their labor until evening. (New International Version)

- Psalm 112 “1 Praise the Lord.[b] Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in his commands. 2 Their children will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. 3 Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever. 4 Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous. 5 Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice. 6 Surely the righteous will never be shaken; they will be remembered forever. 7 They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord. 8 Their hearts are secure, they will have no fear; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes. 9 They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor, their righteousness endures forever; their horn[c] will be lifted high in honor. 10 The wicked will see and be vexed, they will gnash their teeth and waste away; the longings of the wicked will come to nothing.” (New International Version)
- 146:6-9 “6He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them— he remains faithful forever. 7 He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, 8 the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. 9 The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.” (New International Version)

Isaiah:

- 30:1-14 “1 Woe to the obstinate children,” declares the Lord, “to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin; 2 who go down to Egypt without consulting me; who look for help to Pharaoh’s protection, to Egypt’s shade for refuge. 3 But Pharaoh’s protection will be to your shame, Egypt’s shade will bring you disgrace. 4 Though they have officials in Zoan and their envoys have arrived in Hanes, 5 everyone will be put to shame because of a people useless to them, who bring neither help nor advantage, but only shame and disgrace.” 6 A prophecy concerning the animals of the Negev: Through a land of hardship and distress, of lions and lionesses, of adders and darting snakes, the envoys carry their riches on donkeys’ backs, their treasures on the humps of camels, to that unprofitable nation, 7 to Egypt, whose help is utterly useless. Therefore I call her Rahab the Do-Nothing. 8 Go now, write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness. 9 For these are rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to the Lord’s instruction. 10 They say to the seers, “See no more visions!” and to the prophets, “Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. 11 Leave this way, get off this path, and stop confronting us

with the Holy One of Israel!” 12 Therefore this is what the Holy One of Israel says: “Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and depended on deceit. 13 this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly, in an instant. 14 It will break in pieces like pottery, shattered so mercilessly that among its pieces not a fragment will be found for taking coals from a hearth or scooping water out of a cistern.” (New International Version)

- 58:3-7 “3 ‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’ “Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. 4 Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. 5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? 6 “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?” (New International Version)

Jeremiah:

- 5:26-28 ““Among my people are the wicked who lie in wait like men who snare birds and like those who set traps to catch people. 27 Like cages full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; they have become rich and powerful 28 and have grown fat and sleek. Their evil deeds have no limit; they do not seek justice. They do not promote the case of the fatherless; they do not defend the just cause of the poor.” (New International Version)
- 22:3 & 13 “3 This is what the Lord says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place... 13 Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his own people work for nothing, not paying them for their labor.” (New International Version)

Amos:

- 8:4-7 “4 Hearken to this, you who swallow up the needy, and to cut off the poor of the land. 5 Saying, “When will the month be delayed, so that we will sell grain, and the Sabbatical Year, so that we will open [our stores of] grain, to make the ephah smaller and to make the shekel larger, and to pervert deceitful scales. 6 To purchase the poor with money, and the needy in order to inherit them, and the refuse of the grain we will sell. 7 The Lord swore by the pride of Jacob: I will never forget any of their deeds.” (Jewish Bible)

Micah:

- 6:8 “8 He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord demands of you; but to do justice, to love loving-kindness, and to walk discreetly with your G-d.” (Jewish Bible)

Matthew:

- 6:24 “8 He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord demands of you; but to do justice, to love loving-kindness, and to walk discreetly with your God.” (New International Version)
- 20:1-16 ““For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. 2 He agreed to pay them a denarius[a] for the day and sent them into his vineyard. 3 “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. 4 He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ 5 So they went. “He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. 6 About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ 7 ““Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. “He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’ 8 “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’ 9 “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. 10 So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. 11 When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 12 ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’ 13 “But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? 14 Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. 15 Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ 16 “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.” (New International Version)

Mark:

- 2:27 “27 Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” (New International Version)

Luke:

- 3:10-14 “10 “What should we do then?” the crowd asked. 11 John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.” 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?” 13 “Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them. 14 Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?” He replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.” (New International Version)

- 12:13-21 “13 Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” 14 Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” 15 Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” 16 And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. 17 He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ 18 “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. 19 And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.” 20 “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ 21 “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.” (New International Version)
- 16:19-31 “19 “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. 20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores 21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 24 So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ 25 “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’ 27 “He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, 28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ 29 “Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’ 30 ““No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ 31 “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’” (New International Version)

1 Corinthians:

- 3:6-9 “6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. 9 For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.” (New International Version)
- 12:26 “26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” (New International Version)

James:

- 5:1-6 “5 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. 5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.[a] 6 You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.” (New International Version)

Relevant Passages in the Roman Catholic Lectionary (September 2021):

September 26th

1st Reading: Numbers 11:25-29

Responsorial Psalm: 19:8, 10, 12-13, 14

2nd Reading: James 5:1-6** (the wages of laborers kept back by fraud cry out)

Gospel: Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48