



JUST Love

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF PEACE, JUSTICE AND
ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINT ELIZABETH

Catholics and the Capitalocene

Many environmentalists suggest that we should name our geological age as the “Anthropocene” – the era in which human presence and energy use have had a decisive effect on the planet. Theologian Joerg Rieger suggests that “Capitalocene” would be a better name. He asserts that it is not humans indiscriminately who have had a negative effect on the planet. It is really capitalism and its institutions that are wreaking havoc on our planet and its life systems. 70% of carbon emissions are produced in the interest of 100 corporations. As Utah Phillips starkly puts it, “The earth is not dying, it is being killed, and those who are killing it have names and addresses.”



This month we celebrate Labor Day; in the USA anyway. In most of the world it is celebrated on May 1. Catholic Social Teaching is intimately involved with workers and their rights. In *Rerum Novarum*, the first Catholic social encyclical in 1891, Pope Leo XIII draws attention to the plight of workers under capitalism, “It is shameful and inhuman, however, to use men as things for gain and to put no more value on them than what they are worth in muscle and energy.” Few people realize that the Catholic Church was the first world institution to call for a just, living wage for workers – even if the Church’s own record in that regard is rather shameful. Joerg Rieger laments how little the world of work seems to be addressed in theology and in homiletics. Most of us spend

much more of our lives with coworkers than with family members. Yet the challenges presented by the world of work are rarely addressed in the pulpit. It was not so with Jesus whose parables are full of references to the kitchen, the garden, the construction site,

the fishing industry, the crushing burden of debt and predatory lending. Think how our religious imagination might be transformed if we regularly called Jesus by the activity at which he spent most of his life – Jesus the itinerant construction worker. This Labor Day spend some time reflecting on the place of work in your life -has it enriched you, enabled you to develop your talents and skills? Has it burdened you by its monotony, by the pressure to produce, by its hierarchies and class divisions? What impact has your work life had on your relationships? What can you do to make your life of work and that of others a participation in the creative activity of God?

-Watch a video about *Theology in the Capitalocene* with Joerg Rieger <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qzX7Bv2mes&t=332s>

-Read an issue of the zine *Left Catholic* devoted to labor and Catholicism. https://d1fdloi71mui9q.cloudfront.net/r4zRwIFhRIW2q3ouMWnG_Online%20PDF.pdf

-Learn about the work of the Catholic Labor Network <https://catholiclabor.org/>



Charity Earth Network (CEN) is sponsoring "Love and Justice Embrace: Transformative Justice and the Charism of Charity" at 1 p.m. Eastern on Sept. 18. Sister Christine Beckett, SCN, will lead this virtual conversation. For more information, view/download the flyer <https://sistersofcharityfederation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Love-and-Justice-Embrace.pdf>.



I have recently adopted a practice I learned from a sister I know. I collect crumbs after meals and from my toaster and save them to take outside periodically to feed the birds. It is a very small thing but it represents a big change in consciousness. It has made me aware of birds and their nutritional needs in a way I never had been before. When I see one fly by I think it may have enjoyed a piece of my English muffin. We're familiar with St. Therese of Lisieux and her "little way" – the importance of small things done with love. As Pope Francis comments in *Laudato Si'* – "Saint Therese of Lisieux invites us to practice the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness. In the end, a world of exacerbated consumption is at the same time a world which mistreats life in all its forms." What is a small daily gesture you can choose to break with the logic of selfishness?



JPIC DATES TO COMMEMORATE IN SEPTEMBER

1-October 4 Season of Creation – Find our Season of Creation booklet at this link https://www.scnj.org/_files/ugd/a2bb32_0de21070569c4383b127689443038d9a.pdf

4 Labor Day Watch this short video on Catholic Social Teaching on the Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2G8jGOva7Y>

8 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary "The Gospel says 'she arose and went in haste,' I really like to invoke Our Lady in this aspect. "Our Lady 'in haste,' who always gets things done quickly, never keeps us waiting, because she is the mother of all."
~ Pope Francis

9 St. Peter Claver "Where are the saints who tried to change the social order, not just to minister to the slaves but to do away with slavery?" ~ Dorothy Day

14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross "Christians hold to the radical notion that the one transcending God, who creates and empowers the world, freely chose to save this world not as a kindly onlooker from afar, but by personally joining this world and suffering its death."
~ Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ

15 Our Lady of Sorrows "Mary suffered the anguish of not being able to save her child from the hands of torturers and executioners." ~ Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ

27 St. Vincent de Paul Pray for the young people from SC schools who are gathering at Convent Station today for a day of Vincentian Service and Justice.

29 International Coffee Day Is your coffee Fair Trade? Good for Earth, good for workers. <https://shop.equalexchange.coop/>