

DATE: August 18, 2008
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BISHOP MURPHY’S LABOR DAY MESSAGE CALLS FOR RENEWED FOCUS AND ACTION ON JUST ECONOMY, THE DIGNITY OF WORK AND RIGHTS OF WORKERS

WASHINGTON – In his 2008 Labor Day statement (www.usccb.org/sdwp), Bishop William Murphy calls for “renewed vigor as we seek to build together a society that cares for its own, reaches out to the poor and vulnerable, and offers true hope to all,” Bishop Murphy (Diocese of Rockville Centre) issued the Labor Day statement as Chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development. He called attention to the needs of the nation’s workers, current economic inequalities and the responsibilities of all citizens to help improve conditions.

Bishop Murphy drew inspiration in his message from the late Monsignor George Higgins, the “labor priest” who worked for more than fifty years on behalf of workers’ rights and was an outspoken and strong bridge between the Catholic Church in the United States and the labor movement.

In describing how Monsignor Higgins might address current economic stresses and difficulties faced by today’s average working man and woman Bishop Murphy wrote, “Above all, Monsignor Higgins would be concerned about the worker, the person, and the family whose lives are affected by a host of factors. He would weigh up and measure all those factors by their overall impact on human beings. Monsignor would have pointed out the lack of union

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representation in so many of the emerging industries and workplaces where exploitation has been most evident.” The Church, Bishop Murphy wrote, “continues to focus on the dignity of the worker as the key to the question of work and as the cornerstone of Catholic teaching on economic life.” He also said the “challenge of overcoming poverty brings the Catholic community together.”

Pointing to the coming national elections, the Labor Day statement reminds Catholics to use Catholic social and moral teaching to assess issues of economic justice, human life and dignity. Bishop Murphy cited the bishops’ *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, a document updated and issued by the bishops every four years, in stressing the importance of forming a correct conscience in decision making, based not on personal feelings or individual popularity, but rather on the truth of the human person and human society. This is determined, Bishop Murphy explained, by examining “candidates and issues from the perspective of human life and dignity, the true good of society, the common good of us all in our nation and in this world.”

The Labor Day statement highlights the section of *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* that addresses economic justice, work and workers’ rights. He said the bishops’ statement in outlining the key elements of what comprises a just economy, “makes both links and distinctions between the fundamental duty to oppose what is intrinsically evil (i.e., the destruction of unborn life) and the obligation to pursue the common good (i.e., defending rights of workers and pursuing greater economic justice).”

Bishop Murphy closes the statement with a prayer that all “share justly and freely in the goods of society and advance the good of every person and the common good of all.”

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