

Labor in the Pulpits 2009
The Interfaith Council 7 – 10 minute Speaker Guide
Diocese of San Jose

Good morning. Thank you _____ for sharing your pulpit with me today. My name is _____ and I am a _____ representing hotel workers and the Interfaith Council for Economic Justice.

Labor Day weekend is the time we honor work and workers. In the church, we celebrate that God, who loves us and cares about all aspects of our lives, is also concerned with our work lives.

Catholic Social teachings urge us to protect human life and human dignity and promote the common good. We remember these words from the U.S. Catholic Bishops, “Our faith calls us to measure this economy, not only by what it produces, but also by how it touches human life.”

Last year, we spoke to you about hotel workers in Santa Clara County. Congregations like yours expressed support of hotel workers by signing 7,000 cards that we brought to hotel. Your support helped to give better contracts to workers.

The struggle has not ended, many hotel workers still have harsh work loads, understaffing, persecution when they organize and lack of health coverage.

The conditions of hotel workers today reveal the deepening economic divide – multiplying wealth and luxury for the few, while the working poor struggle to secure the basic necessities of life.

[Worker gives testimony OR use one of the hotel worker stories below.]

Rigoberto is a room service server at a hotel in Santa Clara. He’s worked at his hotel in room service for eleven years. Three years ago, a new company took over his hotel, changed Rigoberto’s job classification, and cut his hourly wage from \$13 to \$8.50 per hour. With his job at the Hyatt, Rigoberto is unable to support his wife and sons, who live in Mexico. They don’t have money to buy any clothes, shoes, or supplies for his son’s classes. Rigo hopes to have more time to spend with his family and community.

Eleazar is a room attendant at a hotel in Santa Clara. She's worked there for 3 years. Each day, she typically cleans 17 or more rooms. In a full day, Eleazar makes 33 beds, changes up to 99 sheets and 132 pillows. Because she cleans so many rooms, she does not take her 10 minute rest breaks. Her hips and lower back hurt from lifting so many mattresses. She often wakes up in the middle of the night because of the cramps in her legs and stiffness in her fingers. Eleazar hopes to have a safer workload.

Margarita is a room attendant at a hotel in Santa Clara. She is the sole provider for her family, including a husband who is battling a serious illness. She earns only 11.58 an hour, which barely covers her family's basic needs. Margarita cannot afford her hotel's health care plan, so she sometimes cannot purchase all the medicine she needs for her diabetes. She hopes to be able to have good quality health care.

We can respond to Jesus call that you heard today in James 2:5: "Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him?"

What can you do to be rich in faith and heirs to God's kingdom?

1. You can support hotel workers through prayer.
2. You can participate in the work of the Hotel Workers' Committee of the Interfaith Council.
3. You can sign the Statement of Principles to put your faith into action today.

The Interfaith Council for Religion, Race, Economic and Social Justice
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